



NEVILLE'S MATERNAL GRANDMOTHER

OLA FRANK GILLESPIE

b. 5/8/1881 *Hernando, DeSoto Co., MS*

d. 7/5/1934 *Jonesboro, Craighead Co., AR*



IV.

OLA FRANK GILLESPIE'S PARENTS & GRANDPARENTS

JOHN CORNELIUS GILLESPIE

b. 4/25/1843 *Jefferson Co., AL*
d. 10/30/1907 *Jonesboro, Craighead Co., AR*

m. 12/20/1879 *Hernando, DeSoto Co., MS*

SARAH ALICE MACKEY *(third wife)*

b. 8/13/1857 *Lafayette Co., MS*
d. 12/11/1911 *Jonesboro, Craighead Co., AR*

SAMUEL EDWARD GILLESPIE

b. 3/18/1815 *Abbeville Co., SC*
d. 3/27/1863 *Jefferson Co., AR*

m. 10/2/1838 *Blount Co., AL*

EDITH KELLY

b. 4/14/1818 *Blount Co., AL*
d. 7/17/1898 *Toledo, Lucas Co., OH*

DR. WILLIAM GEORGE MACKEY

b. 10/11/1814 *Lancaster Co., SC*
d. 2/13/1898 *Toccoola, Pontotoc Co., MS*

m. 4/11/1843 *Lincoln Co., TN*

MARTHA PETERSON RIVES

b. 2/25/1826 *VA*
d. 5/25/1868 *Hernando, DeSoto Co., MS*

OLA FRANK GILLESPIE'S ANCESTORS

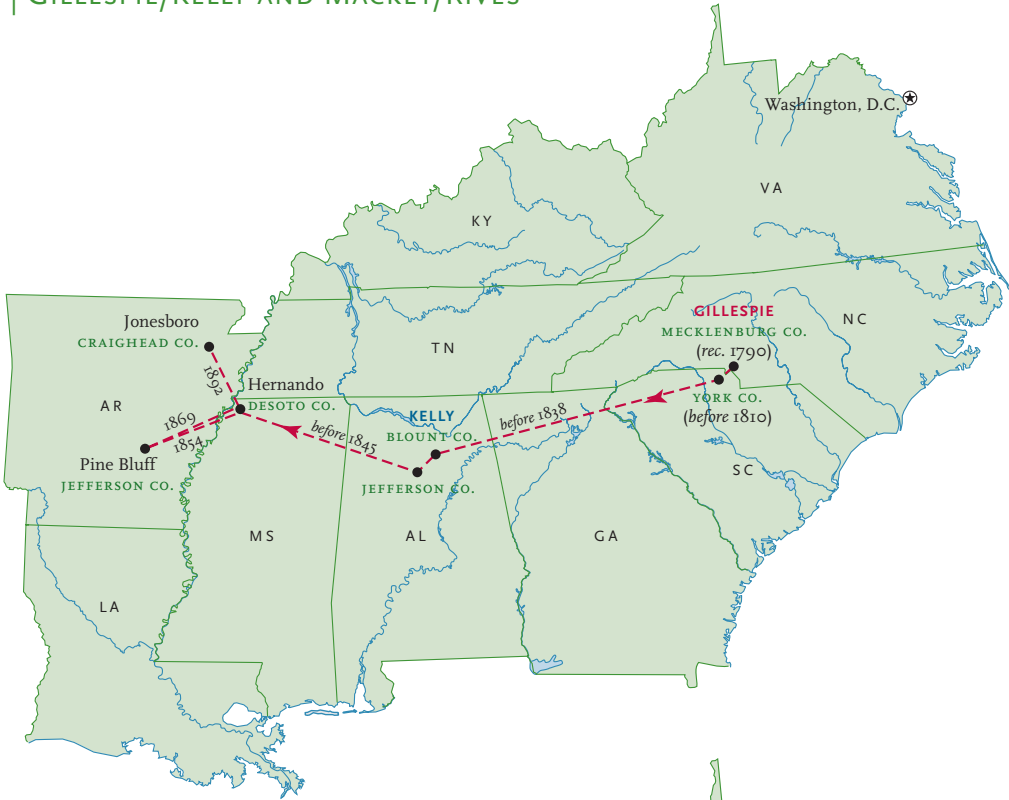
The Gillespie antecedents of Neville's grandmother **Ola Frank Gillespie (1881–1934)** are traceable to Scotch-Irish Gillespies living in North Carolina in the eighteenth century. In the early nineteenth century, Ola's grandfather **Samuel Edward Gillespie (1815–1863)** migrated across the Mid-South to Alabama, Mississippi, and, finally, Arkansas in 1854. He was the earliest of Neville's ancestors to live in Arkansas. Samuel Edward Gillespie married **Edith Kelly (1818–1898)**, who was from Blount County, Alabama. We have no records of her ancestry.

The only surviving child of Samuel Edward and Edith Kelly Gillespie was **John Cornelius Gillespie (1843–1907)**, who, with his third wife, **Sarah Alice Mackey (1857–1911)**, moved his family from Hernando, DeSoto County, Mississippi, to Jonesboro, Arkansas, in 1892.

Ola Frank Gillespie's maternal grandfather was **Dr. William George Mackey (1814–1898)**, whose forebears are recorded in 1759 in the Waxhaw Settlement, a Scotch-Irish enclave in Lancaster County, South Carolina. By 1845 all of the Lancaster County Mackey family had migrated westward to north Alabama and Tennessee. By 1860 the family of Dr. William George Mackey had moved to Hernando in DeSoto County, Mississippi.

Ola Frank Gillespie's deepest ancestral line is through her maternal grandmother, **Martha Peterson Rives (1826–1868)**, whose immigrant ancestor came to America in 1652. The Rives family lived for almost 175 years south of the James River in Virginia. They moved to Lincoln County, Tennessee, in the late 1820s.

MIGRATION | GILLESPIE/KELLY AND MACKEY/RIVES



BLUE is maternal
 RED is paternal
 arr. = arrived
 rec. = recorded



OLA FRANK GILLESPIE'S LIFE



Ola Frank Gillespie as a baby, early 1880s.

Neville's maternal grandmother, **Ola Frank Gillespie (1881–1934)**, is known to us today mostly through photographs, family records, and a few newspaper accounts. Ola was only fifty-three years old when she died, and her death occurred two years before Neville was born. Neville has said that her mother, **Margaret Alice Purifoy (1908–1973)**, Ola Frank Gillespie Purifoy's only child, was so devastated by her mother's death that she never spoke about her.

Ola Frank Gillespie was born on May 8, 1881, in Hernando, Mississippi, a small town just south of Memphis, Tennessee. She was the oldest child of **John Cornelius Gillespie (1843–1907)** and his third wife, **Sarah Alice "Sallie" Mackey (1857–1911)**.



Ola Frank Gillespie at about three years old, 1884.

At age ten, Ola Frank Gillespie moved with her family from Hernando to Jonesboro, Arkansas, less than one hundred miles northwest of Hernando. Jonesboro had a population of about 2,000 when the Gillespie family arrived in January 1892. We presume the move to Jonesboro was because Mackey relatives were living there.

At the time of the Gillespies' move to Jonesboro, Ola Frank Gillespie had two teenage half siblings: **Margaret Lee Gillespie (1875–1951)** and **Robert Henry “Bob” Gillespie (1876–1951)**,¹ the children of her father and her deceased aunt, **Martha Frances Mackey (1847–1878)**. It is unclear whether Ola's half sister and half brother were with the family on the move to Jonesboro in early 1892. They more likely remained with Mackey relatives in Hernando.

Ola Frank Gillespie had one sister, **Emma Edith Gillespie (1888–1976)**, with whom she was close throughout her life. Emma Edith was known in Neville's family as Aunt Deedie.² Her children were Margaret Alice Purifoy's closest first cousins. Ola also had two brothers, **John Lewis Gillespie (1883–1970)** and **William Thomas Gillespie (1892–1962)**. John Lewis Gillespie, who was two years younger than Ola, married but had no children. He lived most of his long life in rural Arkansas counties.³

William Thomas Gillespie, Ola's youngest sibling, was the black sheep of the family. In March 1916, he was convicted of an armed robbery in Memphis and sentenced to five to fifteen years in the Tennessee State Penitentiary.⁴ His crime is documented in a newspaper account and in a letter written by the victim of the crime.⁵ While he was in prison, Tom Gillespie's wife ran off with another man and abandoned their two children.⁶ Tom was released from prison in December 1918, after an intense family campaign to obtain his parole.⁷



The four Gillespie children in Jonesboro, February 1896: (standing, left to right) John Lewis Gillespie, age twelve; Ola Frank Gillespie, age fourteen; (seated, left to right) William Thomas Gillespie, age three; Emma Edith Gillespie, age seven.

In 1896 sixteen-year-old **Stanley Neville Purifoy (1879–1942)** moved to Jonesboro from Crystal Springs in southwestern Mississippi. He arrived in Jonesboro with the family of his older sister, **Julia Purifoy McDonald (1861–1949)**, who moved into a house next door to the Gillespies. In 1900 Stanley Neville Purifoy is recorded in the census as a laborer boarding in the home of John Cornelius Gillespie, a brick contractor in Jonesboro. Thus, Stanley Neville Purifoy and Ola Frank Gillespie first knew each other as teenagers in 1896. They married less than eight years later, after some years of courting.



Ola Frank Gillespie around age sixteen, c. 1897.



Ola Frank Gillespie at age seventeen at a lumberyard in Memphis, February 27, 1899. The lumberyard was across the street from the Snowden residence, where her older half sister, Margaret Lee Gillespie Snowden, resided for many years.



Ola Frank Gillespie seated next to Stanley Neville Purifoy during their courtship. The man seated in the foreground is probably John Wesley Mackey, Ola's uncle, who visited in Jonesboro in early 1904, shortly before the wedding of Stanley and Ola.

About one month before her wedding, in March 1904, Ola Frank Gillespie wrote a letter to a friend to tell her about the plans for her marriage ceremony.⁸ She also talked about her trousseau. The wedding took place at the First Baptist Church in Jonesboro on March 30, 1904. It was a grand event and, most notably, a double wedding. The local newspaper provided extensive coverage of the wedding.⁹

The other bride and groom in the double wedding were a slightly younger couple named Bessie May Birdsong (1883–1968) and Robert P. “Bobby” Harrington (1881–1970).¹⁰ The Harringtons moved to St. Louis in the 1920s.



A photographic portrait of Ola Frank Gillespie, presumably at her wedding in 1904.

In September 1904, just a few months after Ola Frank Gillespie and Stanley Neville Purifoy's marriage, they traveled to St. Louis (225 miles directly north of Jonesboro) to the World's Fair. The fair was called the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, a celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. Ola Purifoy wrote a letter home from the fair.¹¹

In 1908, almost four years after the Purifoy's married, Neville's mother, Margaret Alice Purifoy, was born. She would be their only child.



Ola Frank Gillespie and Stanley Neville Purifoy with baby Margaret Alice Purifoy, 1908.



Ola Frank Gillespie Purifoy (age twenty-seven), seated on the right with her five-month-old daughter, Margaret Alice Purifoy, and her mother, Sarah Alice Mackey Gillespie (age fifty-one).

Throughout most of their married life, Stanley Neville and Ola Frank Gillespie Purifoy lived at 821 Washington Street in Jonesboro. Their house was only about four blocks from where Ola Frank Gillespie Purifoy had lived as a child on McClure Street. Stanley Purifoy worked and traveled for the Singer Sewing Machine Company, and Ola Purifoy kept house and took care of Margaret Alice Purifoy.

Ola Frank Gillespie Purifoy's house was also only a few blocks away from the home of her sister, Emma Edith Gillespie Jackson, who had six daughters and one son. The children were often at Auntie Ola's house. One of Ola Purifoy's nieces, Ola Virginia "Jin" Jackson Faulkner (b. 1926), remembers her Auntie Ola as stern but quite lovable.¹²



Ola Frank Gillespie Purifoy (about age thirty-four) is standing at the left, and Stanley Neville Purifoy (about age thirty-five) is standing behind the pony. The woman at the right is unidentified. Margaret Alice Purifoy (about age seven) is at the front right; the young girl at the left is unidentified. The photograph dates from about 1915.



Ola Frank Gillespie Purifoy with her daughter, Margaret Alice Purifoy, in the mid-1920s.

Ola Frank Gillespie Purifoy's daughter, Margaret Alice Purifoy, graduated from Jonesboro High School in 1925, at age seventeen. Margaret then attended Jonesboro College, which was near her home in Jonesboro; she graduated in 1927. In the fall of 1927 she enrolled at Ouachita Baptist College in Arkadelphia, Arkansas, about

two hundred miles southwest of Jonesboro, to continue her music studies. When nineteen-year-old Margaret Purifoy went away to college, her mother went with her. Ola Purifoy rented an apartment just across from the college campus, and she lived with her daughter during her entire time at Ouachita Baptist College.

After college Neville's mother, Margaret Purifoy, returned to Jonesboro, where she perhaps worked as a music teacher and lived with her parents. In 1931 she married **Charles Davis Frierson Jr. (1907–1970)**.

Ola Frank Gillespie Purifoy sat for a studio photograph at about age forty-nine, in 1930. She had undergone a serious operation earlier that year. In a letter dated March 23, 1930, **Charles Davis Frierson Sr. (1877–1947)** wrote to his son, who was at school in Washington, D.C.: *“I guess you heard about Mrs. Purifoy’s operation; I certainly hope she gets in good shape soon. Of course Margaret P. is very deeply worried; so cheer her up by writing often and carefully.”* We believe that Ola Gillespie Purifoy had a breast cancer operation in early 1930, more than a year and a half before Margaret Alice Purifoy and Charles Davis Frierson Jr. married. Ola Gillespie Purifoy endured but, eventually, lost a four-year battle with cancer.



Ola Frank Gillespie Purifoy at about age forty-nine, c. 1930.

Ola Frank Gillespie Purifoy’s first grandchild, Charles Davis Frierson III, was born in the summer of 1932, on July 5. He was the only grandchild she would ever meet. We have a photograph of Ola Gillespie Purifoy taken with her four-month-old grandson in November 1932. Just eighteen months later, in May 1934, she was photographed with him again; this second photograph clearly shows the deteriorated state of her health.



Ola Frank Gillespie Purifoy (age fifty-two) in November 1933 with her sixteen-month-old grandson, Charles Davis Frierson III.



Ola Frank Gillespie Purifoy (age fifty-three) with her twenty-two-month-old grandson, Charles Davis Frierson III, in May 1934.

On July 5, 1934, less than two months after her fifty-third birthday, Ola Frank Gillespie Purifoy died at her home in Jonesboro. It was the second birthday of her grandchild, Charles Frierson III. Her death certificate cites the cause of her death as “*Sarcoma Bones*” and states that the Jonesboro doctor had attended to Ola Purifoy from May 1 to July 5, 1934. The certificate reports that Ola was fifty-two years old at the time of her death, though she was, in fact, fifty-three. Jin Jackson Faulkner recalls that her Aunt Ola had breast cancer. We presume that her breast cancer later metastasized into bone cancer, most likely a sarcoma in her upper leg. In the 1930s, bone cancer was difficult to diagnose, very painful, and untreatable.

Ola Frank Gillespie Purifoy’s obituary¹³ in *The Jonesboro Evening Sun* on July 5, 1934, reads, “Mrs. Ola Gillespie Purifoy, 52, wife of Stanley N. Purifoy, one of Jonesboro’s most beloved ladies, passed away at her home on West Washington Avenue, succumbing to a two years illness of complication of diseases.”

OLA GILLESPIE'S LIFE

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1. OLA'S HALF SIBLINGS, MARGARET LEE GILLESPIE AND ROBERT HENRY GILLESPIE

Neville's grandmother **Ola Frank Gillespie (1881–1934)** had two older half siblings: **Margaret Lee Gillespie (1875–1951)** and **Robert Henry Gillespie (1876–1951)**, the two surviving children of Ola's father, **John Cornelius Gillespie (1843–1907)**, and his second wife, **Martha Frances Mackey (1847–1878)**. The children were born in Hernando, Mississippi. Because Margaret Lee and Robert Henry were three and two years old when their mother died, they were primarily raised by their stepmother (who was also their aunt), **Sarah Alice "Sallie" Mackey (1857–1911)**, who married their father, John Cornelius Gillespie, on December 20, 1879.



Three-year-old Margaret Lee Gillespie, Ola Frank Gillespie's older half sister. The photograph is dated 1878, around the time Margaret Lee's mother died.



Two-year-old Robert Henry Gillespie, Ola Frank Gillespie's older half brother. The photograph is dated 1878, around the time Robert Henry's mother died.

In early 1892, when Margaret Lee and Robert Henry Gillespie were sixteen and fifteen years old, respectively, their father and stepmother moved to Jonesboro, Arkansas. The two teenagers most likely remained with relatives in Hernando but visited often in Jonesboro.

Robert Henry Gillespie and Margaret Lee Gillespie in the early to mid-1890s, photographed in Jonesboro, Arkansas, where their father and stepmother were living.



At age twenty-four, in 1899, Margaret Lee Gillespie (called Marguerite in the family) married twenty-six-year-old Charles Brinkley Snowden (1873–1930) in Memphis, Tennessee, where they also resided. Their home was at 1377 East McLemore Avenue, across the street from the lumberyard of the Memphis Lumber Company, where both Charles Brinkley and Margaret Lee Snowden worked for many years.



Margaret Lee Gillespie Snowden (age thirty) with her husband, Charles Brinkley Snowden (age thirty-two), 1905.



Charles Brinkley Snowden and Margaret Lee Gillespie Snowden, c. 1920.

The Snowdens had no children, but remained close to their Jonesboro Gillespie kinfolk. Their home was a Memphis haven for Gillespie relatives. In 1910 both of Margaret Lee Gillespie Snowden's younger half brothers, **John Lewis Gillespie (1883–1970)** and **William Thomas "Tom" Gillespie (1892–1962)**, were living with the Snowdens in Memphis, as was her half sister **Emma Edith "Deedie" Gillespie (1888–1976)** and her husband. In 1920 one of Tom Gillespie's children, seven-year-old John Stanley Gillespie (1912–1996), was also living with the Snowdens.

Charles Brinkley Snowden died on April 10, 1930, at age fifty-six, in Memphis. Interestingly, he is erroneously recorded in the 1930 census, dated April 11, 1930, as alive and age fifty-seven. He is enumerated as the head of a household that included his wife; his brother-in-law Robert Gillespie; and his seventeen-year-old nephew, John Stanley Gillespie.

Margaret Lee Gillespie Snowden outlived her husband by twenty-one years and passed away at age seventy-six, on September 23, 1951. Her brother, Robert Henry Gillespie, had been living with her for many years when she died.

Robert Henry Gillespie, called Uncle Bob in the family, first married Willie Ann Saunders (1864–1907) on September 3, 1902. We have learned nothing about that marriage.

On September 10, 1905, Robert Gillespie next married Mary Elizabeth West (1887–1966). They had two boys and divorced before 1920. The boys were raised by their father.



Robert Henry Gillespie (age twenty-nine) and his second wife, Mary Elizabeth West Gillespie (age eighteen), 1905.



Robert Henry Gillespie and his second wife, Mary Elizabeth West Gillespie, c. 1915.

Robert Henry Gillespie's oldest son was Robert Snowden Gillespie (1907–2000), who married in 1932 and had two children. He was a tobacco company executive and lived in Louisville, Kentucky, and Richmond, Virginia. He died in 2000, at age ninety-three, in Chevy Chase, Maryland.



Margaret Alice Purifoy with her first cousins Robert Snowden Gillespie and Francis Bearden Gillespie, playing in the woods in costumes in about 1915.



Robert Snowden Gillespie (left) with Francis Bearden Gillespie, c. 1930.

Robert Henry Gillespie's second son was Francis Bearden Gillespie (1908–1964), born less than one month after Neville's mother, **Margaret Alice Purifoy (1908–1973)**. He married and had one daughter while living in Pontotoc, Mississippi. In the 1940 census, Francis Gillespie is listed as a salesman in a retail whiskey store in Memphis. He died at age fifty-six, in 1964, in San Bernardino County, near Los Angeles, California. Robert Snowden Gillespie and Francis Bearden Gillespie were first cousins and close contemporaries of Neville's mother, Margaret Alice Purifoy.

According to census records, Robert Henry Gillespie first worked for a lumber company. In 1920, at age forty-three, he is recorded as a carpenter, divorced and living with his two sons. In 1930 and 1940, he is enumerated in the household of his sister, Margaret Lee Gillespie Snowden.

Robert Henry Gillespie died at age seventy-five, on October 5, 1951, less than two weeks after his sister passed away.



Robert Henry Gillespie at about age seventy-four, in 1950, the year before he died.

OLA GILLESPIE'S LIFE**PAGES 108–115****2. EMMA EDITH GILLESPIE, OLA FRANK GILLESPIE'S SISTER**

Neville's maternal grandmother, **Ola Frank Gillespie (1881–1934)**, had only one full sister, **Emma Edith Gillespie (1888–1976)**, who was seven years younger than Ola. Edith Gillespie was born in Hernando, Mississippi, and moved to Jonesboro, Arkansas, in 1892 with her family; she was three years old at the time. In Neville's family, Edith Gillespie was known as Aunt Deedie.



Ola Frank Gillespie's younger sister, Emma Edith Gillespie, and her brother William Thomas Gillespie at the Gillespie house at 307 McClure Street in Jonesboro, Arkansas, in the late 1890s.



Ola Frank Gillespie's younger sister, Emma Edith Gillespie, as a teenager, c. 1903.

According to Edith Gillespie's daughter, Ola Virginia "Jin" Jackson (b. 1926), the name Deedie was given to her mother by Neville's mother, **Margaret Alice Purifoy (1908–1973)**. When Neville's mother first began to talk, she could not say Edith, so she said Deedie instead.

Margaret Alice Purifoy as a baby with her twenty-year-old aunt, Emma Edith Gillespie, 1908.



At age twenty-one, on October 17, 1909, Edith Gillespie married Claude V. Jackson Sr. (1883–1953), a twenty-five-year-old native of Lonoke, Arkansas. The wedding took place at the home of Edith's sister, Ola Frank Gillespie Purifoy. For twenty-seven years, from 1912 to 1939, Claude Jackson Sr. worked for the city of Jonesboro as an electrical inspector and contractor. In the 1940s, he was an electrician at the Atomic Research Center in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

A 1909 newspaper account of Emma Edith Gillespie's wedding at the home of her sister, Ola Frank Gillespie Purifoy, and her brother-in-law, Stanley Neville Purifoy.

Jackson-Gillespie
 Quite a pretty home wedding took place at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Purifoy on Washington Avenue when C. V. Jackson of Pine Bluff and Miss Edith Gillespie were united in marriage. The ceremony took place at 5 o'clock, Rev. E. E. Dudley performing the ceremony in a very impressive manner. Only relatives, immediate friends and Miss Edith's Sunday School class were present. The bride was gowned in an elaborate white creation which she soon exchanged for a traveling dress of sage green. After the ceremony a reception was held followed by a wedding luncheon the color scheme of pink and white being carried out. The young couple departed over the 7 o'clock Frisco train for a visit in Memphis and then to the groom's home in Gleason, Tennessee. They will return in two weeks and spend a few days in this city before going to Pine Bluff where they will reside.

Edith Gillespie and Claude V. Jackson had seven children, six girls and one boy, all born in Jonesboro. One died as an infant, but the other six grew up in Jonesboro and were first cousins of Neville's mother, Margaret Alice Purifoy, who had no siblings. Although her Jackson cousins were younger than she was, they were Margaret's closest relatives as she was growing up.



Emma Edith Gillespie and Claude V. Jackson with their six children, 1937: (back row, left to right) Edith Maurine Jackson (age twenty-five), Claude (age fifty-four), Emma Edith (age forty-nine), Margaret Kathleen Jackson (age twenty-seven); (front row, left to right) Claude V. Jackson Jr. (age thirteen), Sarah Elizabeth Jackson (age twenty-one), Ola Virginia Jackson (age eleven), Lois Gillespie Jackson (age sixteen).



Margaret Alice Purifoy's Jackson first cousins, 1942: (left to right) Margaret Kathleen Jackson (age thirty-two), Edith Maurine Jackson (age thirty), Sarah Elizabeth Jackson (age twenty-six), Lois Gillespie Jackson (age twenty-one), Claude V. Jackson Jr. (age eighteen), and Ola Virginia Jackson (age sixteen). They are lined up according to their ages.

The seven Jackson first cousins of Neville's mother, Margaret Alice Purifoy Frierson, are as follows:

- MARGARET KATHLEEN "KATHLEEN" JACKSON (1910–1957) married Bert Elmo Henson (1905–1977) in Jonesboro in 1929. They lived Pontiac, Michigan, and had no children. Kathleen died at age forty-six.
- EDITH MAURINE "MAURINE" JACKSON (1912–1995) married Cecil Knight Province (1910–1988) from Clay County, Arkansas, in 1933. They had four children and apparently lived in Jonesboro all their lives. Maurine died at age eighty-two.
- MARY LOUISE JACKSON (1915–1915) was born on November 12, 1915, and died twenty-four days later, on December 6, 1915.
- SARAH ELIZABETH "LIBBY" JACKSON (1916–2002) married Homer Cecil Momany (1914–1991) on May 4, 1937. They had four children and lived most of their lives in Grand Blanc, a suburb of Flint, Michigan. Libby died at age eighty-six.
- LOIS GILLESPIE (LOIS) JACKSON (1921–2015) married Raymond Paul Gordon (1914–2002) in Pontiac, Michigan, in 1944. They had three children. Lois died at age ninety-four.
- CLAUDE V. "BUBBA" JACKSON JR. (b. 1924) married Betty Moxley (b. 1931) in Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1949. They lived in St. Ann, Missouri, a suburb of St. Louis, and had two children.
- OLA VIRGINIA "JIN" JACKSON (b. 1926) married Thomas "Tom" Henderson Faulkner (1920–2010) from Paragould, Arkansas, in 1945. They married in Galveston, Texas. Tom Faulkner notably earned five bronze stars during World War II (1939–45). They lived in Jonesboro for the last twenty-one years of his life and had two children.

Edith and Claude have fifteen grandchildren, who are among Neville's eighty-three or more second cousins:

Province Children

Edith Kathleen Province (1931–2007)
 Margaret Ann Province (1935–2013)
 Cecil Knight Province Jr. (1937–2011)
 Claudia Province (1940–2000)

Momany Children

Emma Doris Momany (b. 1938)
 Homer C. Momany (b. 1942)
 Bert Michael Momany (b. 1955)
 James Edward Momany (b. 1958)

Gordon Children

Raymond Paul Gordon Jr. (b. 1944)
 Michael James Gordon (b. 1956)
 Kathleen Margaret Gordon (b. 1959)

Jackson Children

Claude V. Jackson III (b. 1956)
 Linda Sue Jackson (b. 1958)

Faulkner Children

Tommie Jean Faulkner (b. 1946)
 William Hall Faulkner (b. 1947)

Claude V. Jackson Sr. (age fifty-nine) and Emma Edith Gillespie Jackson (age fifty-four), 1942.



Claude V. Jackson Sr. died in 1953, at age sixty-nine. He was described in his obituary as an electrician who had been a resident of Jonesboro for fifty-one years. He was also a Mason, a Baptist, and a volunteer fireman from 1913 to 1933. After Claude Jackson Sr.'s death, Edith Gillespie Jackson moved to live with her daughter Libby Jackson Momany in Michigan. By 1968, at age seventy-nine, Edith Jackson was living with her son, Bubba Jackson Jr., in the suburbs of St. Louis, Missouri.

In 1976, at age eighty-seven, Edith Gillespie Jackson died in a nursing home in Bunker Hill, Illinois, just across the Mississippi River from St. Louis. Her funeral was held at the Gregg Funeral Home in Jonesboro, and she was buried in Oaklawn Cemetery, beside her husband.



A double tombstone for Emma Edith Gillespie and Claude V. Jackson Sr. in Oaklawn Cemetery in Jonesboro, Arkansas.

A photograph of Edith Gillespie Jackson's five surviving children, probably taken at Edith's funeral in 1976, depicts Margaret Alice Purifoy's first cousins. Neville's mother, Margaret Alice Purifoy Frierson, did not attend her aunt's funeral in 1976, for she had died three years earlier, in 1973.



Margaret Alice Purifoy's first cousins at Emma Edith Gillespie Jackson's funeral in 1976: (left to right) Lois Gillespie Jackson Gordon, Sarah Elizabeth Jackson Momany, Claude V. Jackson Jr., Edith Maurine Jackson Province, and Ola Virginia Jackson Faulkner.

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PAGES 108–115

3. JOHN LEWIS GILLESPIE, OLA FRANK GILLESPIE'S BROTHER

Neville's grandmother **Ola Frank Gillespie (1881–1934)** had two younger brothers, Neville's great-uncles: **John Lewis Gillespie (1883–1970)** and **William Thomas “Tom” Gillespie (1892–1962)**. Neville has no recollection of hearing her mother mention either of these two uncles. The last picture of them with the Gillespie family is a 1905 photographic portrait of the boys with their parents, **Sarah Alice “Sallie” Mackey (1857–1911)** and **John Cornelius Gillespie (1843–1907)**.



John Lewis Gillespie (age twenty-two), Sarah Alice Mackey Gillespie (age forty-eight), William Thomas Gillespie (age thirteen), and John Cornelius Gillespie (age sixty-two), 1905.

According to family records, his United States Social Security Death Index, and the 1900 United States census, John Lewis Gillespie was born on October 15, 1883,* in Hernando, DeSoto County, Mississippi. We have learned about Lewis Gillespie largely through census records, his registrations for the draft, and a letter he wrote to his mother. Sometime before 1909, he moved to live with his half sister, **Margaret Lee Gillespie Snowden (1875–1951)**, and her husband in Memphis, Tennessee.

**John Lewis Gillespie's World War I (1914–18) registration and several websites sites give his birth year as 1884. At least five other documents give birth years ranging from 1878 to 1886. We have chosen to use 1883 for his birth year.*

On May 3, 1909, Lewis Gillespie wrote the following in a letter to his mother, Sallie Mackey Gillespie, in response to the news that his brother, Tom Gillespie, had quit school shortly after his sixteenth birthday:

*Monday night
5/3/09*

Dear Mamma & All—

How are everyone over in old Ark. Hope all are well. Sis [his half sister, Margaret Lee Gillespie Snowden] got Ola's letter a few days ago, and I certainly am surprised and sorry that Tom has quit school. I was so in hopes that he would finish school.

He must be a good boy now and work and save his money, and if I can ever get a start I will help him get some course in some school—for I do want him to have a better place in this world than I have—although tis my own fault.

But I want him to be a better boy than his bud [presumably Lewis himself] has done.

How is "the baby"? [Margaret Alice Purifoy (1908–1973), Neville's mother] Well there is no news to write and I am so tired I will say good night for this time.

With love and best wishes to all, I am your son & brother.

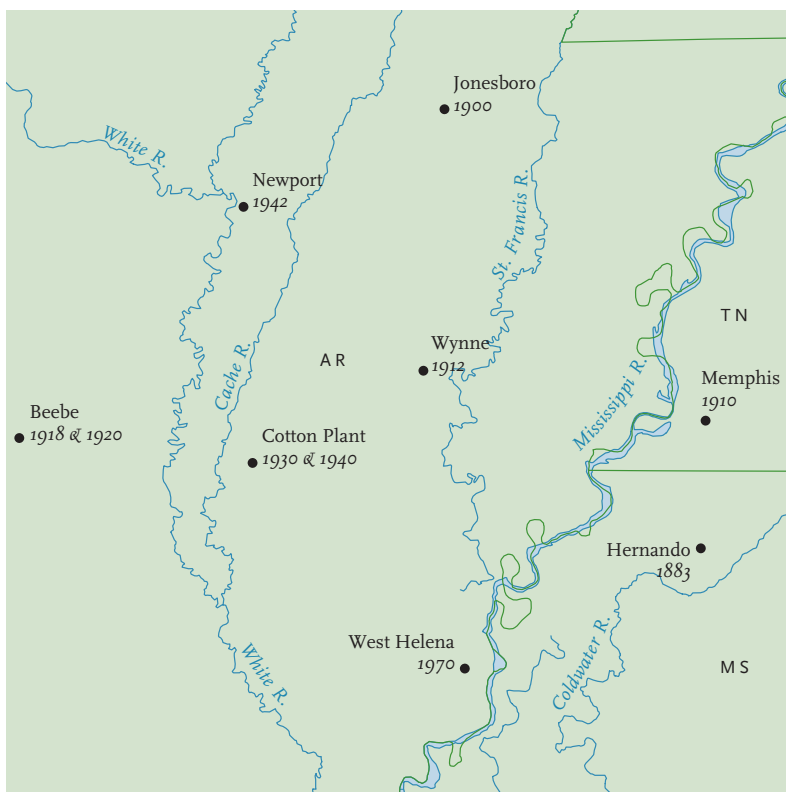
Lewis

Interestingly and coincidentally, the 1940 United States census reports that John Lewis Gillespie, like his younger brother, Tom Gillespie, finished only two years of high school.

On June 28, 1912, in Wynne, Cross County, Arkansas, twenty-eight-year-old John Lewis Gillespie married Vida Viola Vance (1882–1971), a thirty-year-old native of Tennessee. They had no children. In September 1918, about two months before the end of World War I, Lewis Gillespie registered for the draft in the town of Beebe in White County, Arkansas. He did not serve in the war. At the time of his registration, he was 5'8" tall with blue eyes. In 1920 John Lewis and Vida Viola Vance Gillespie are enumerated in Beebe. In 1930 and 1940, Lewis Gillespie was working in a grocery store in Cotton Plant, Woodruff County, Arkansas. He was living in Newport, Jackson County, Arkansas, when he registered for the World War II (1939–45) draft in 1942.

LIFE RECORDS FOR JOHN LEWIS GILLESPIE

YEAR	SOURCE	AGE	RESIDENCE	OCCUPATION
1883	Family	0	Hernando, DeSoto County, Miss.	
1890*		6	Hernando, DeSoto County, Miss.	
1900	Census	16	Jonesboro, Craighead County, Ark.	School
1910	Census	26	Memphis, Tennessee	Lumber company
1912	Marriage	28	Wynne, Cross County, Ark.	
1918	World War I Reg.	33	Beebe, White County, Ark.	Farmer
1920	Census	36	Beebe, White County, Ark.	Farmer
1930	Census	46	Cotton Plant, Woodruff County, Ark.	Grocery store salesman
1940	Census	56	Cotton Plant, Woodruff County, Ark.	Grocery store owner
1942	World War II Reg.	58	Newport, Jackson County, Ark.	
1970	S. S. Death Index	86	West Helena, Phillips County, Ark.	



This map notes eight locations and the years that John Lewis Gillespie was recorded at each location between his birth in 1883 and his death in 1970.

*Federal census records are not available for 1890 because they were mostly lost in a fire in Washington, D.C., in 1921.

John Lewis Gillespie died at age eighty-six, in June 1970, at a nursing home in West Helena, Arkansas. His wife, Vida Viola Vance Gillespie, died eight months later, at age eighty-nine, in February 1971.



John Lewis Gillespie and Vida Viola Vance Gillespie. Based on Viola's dress, we would date this photograph to the 1920s. The photograph, however, was probably taken closer to 1940, when John Lewis and Vida Viola were fifty-seven and fifty-eight years old, respectively.

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4. WILLIAM THOMAS GILLESPIE, OLA FRANK GILLESPIE'S BROTHER: THE BLACK SHEEP

William Thomas “Tom” Gillespie (1892–1962), Neville’s great-uncle, was the youngest brother of **Ola Frank Gillespie (1881–1934)**, Neville’s grandmother. Tom was born on November 6, 1892, almost exactly nine months after his father bought a house in Jonesboro, Arkansas.

William Thomas Gillespie (age five) in Jonesboro, Arkansas, 1897.



William Thomas Gillespie playing shoot-em-up on the stairs of the back porch at 307 McClure Street in Jonesboro, Arkansas, in about 1898. His sister Emma Edith Gillespie, around age ten, is at the left in the picture. His mother, Sarah Alice Mackey Gillespie, age forty-one, is seated behind Emma Edith, and his father, John Cornelius Gillespie, age fifty-five, is standing behind Tom. There is an unidentified male at the far left in the photograph.



In 1908, at about age sixteen, Tom Gillespie dropped out of school in Jonesboro and moved to Memphis, Tennessee, to live with his older half sister, **Margaret Lee Gillespie Snowden (1875–1951)**, and her husband, Charles Brinkley Snowden (1873–1930). Tom's older brother, **John Lewis Gillespie (1883–1970)**, was already living with the couple.

On February 12, 1911, Tom Gillespie was the subject of a testamentary letter written by his mother, **Sarah Alice "Sallie" Mackey (1857–1911)**. The letter reflects the concern she had for her youngest child, who was eighteen years old when the letter was written:

To my dear children

I write this so you will know my wishes. I can't live but a little while I am so weak.

I would like for Stanley [Stanley Neville Purifoy (1879–1942), her son-in-law] to be administrator and guardian for Tom, if he will. All money due Tom I want put in the bank until he is 21. Pay all necessary expenses until his school is finished. Then he can go to work for himself. Maybe by the time he is 21 he will know more and will put his money to some good use.

With love to all, Mother

On August 3, 1911, while his mother was still living, Tom Gillespie (age eighteen) married seventeen-year-old Elizabeth "Bessie" Cook (1893–). They had two children: John Stanley Gillespie (1912–1996), born on June 12, 1912; and Mattie Marie Gillespie (1914–), born on March 5, 1914.

Two years later, at age twenty-three, Tom Gillespie committed a crime that brought disgrace and anguish to the Gillespie family for many years. On the evening of Saturday, March 11, 1916, Tom Gillespie and an accomplice kidnapped and robbed at gunpoint a wealthy Memphis real-estate man, from whom they stole a diamond stickpin worth \$500 and \$13 cash. Tom Gillespie and his accomplice were captured four hours later and promptly convicted. On March 28, 1916, Tom was sentenced to a term of five to fifteen years in the Tennessee State Penitentiary in Nashville.

Tom Gillespie's convict record states that he was 5'6"; weighed 127 pounds; and had grey eyes, brown hair, and a fair complexion. It also notes that his trade was lumber inspector, his education was good, and his religion was Baptist. According to his convict record, any notifications were to be made to his sister Ola Gillespie Purifoy.

On June 5, 1917, at age twenty-four, Tom Gillespie registered for World War I (1914–18). His registration card states that he was a convict, imprisoned in the Tennessee State Penitentiary. On December 23, 1918, after thirty-three months, Tom was conditionally pardoned by Governor Thomas Clarke Rye (1863–1953), the governor of Tennessee from 1915 to 1919. The pardon occurred just twenty-three days before Governor Rye left office.

According to the records that we have found, Tom Gillespie next appears in a Florida census in 1935. He is documented in Tampa, residing with his second wife, Aurelia A. Hudson (1894–1968), who had been married twice previously and had a twenty-year-old son, Wallace Tyson McClellan Jr. (1914–1986). In the Tampa City Directory of 1935, Aurelia is listed as Tom’s wife. In the 1940 Federal census, Tom is again enumerated with his wife, Aurelia. In that census, he is recorded as an assistant surveyor on a Works Progress Administration (WPA)* airport project.



William Thomas Gillespie, Neville’s great-uncle. Note the diamond stickpin.

In 1953 the marriage of Tom Gillespie and Aurelia McClellan (her first husband’s surname) was recorded in Pinellas County, Florida, adjacent to Tampa. Tom and Aurelia had been living together as husband and wife for at least eighteen years prior to their marriage.

On July 13, 1962, at age sixty-nine, Tom Gillespie died and was buried in the Garden of Memories Cemetery in Tampa. Aurelia Hudson Gillespie passed away on January 2, 1968, at age seventy-three. She is also buried in Tampa at the Garden of Memories Cemetery.

5. THE ARMED ROBBERY COMMITTED BY WILLIAM THOMAS GILLESPIE

On Sunday, March 12, 1916, the Memphis newspaper, *The Commercial Appeal*, reported an armed robbery in which Neville’s great-uncle **William Thomas “Tom” Gillespie (1892–1962)** had been one of two participants. The criminals stole a diamond stickpin, alleged to be worth \$500, and \$13 in cash. With a bit of hyperbole, the newspaper writer called the event, “*One of the most spectacular robberies in the history of Memphis.*” Spectacular it was not! The robbery was, however, highly newsworthy, for it engendered great fear amongst the newspaper’s readers. For the victim of the crime, Sam L. Moore (1848–1939), it was likely the most frightening moment of his life. For the perpetrators, it was an incredibly stupid mistake.

*The WPA was a New Deal agency initiated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882–1945). The agency employed millions of unemployed people to carry out public works projects.

BANDITS KIDNAP AND ROB REALTY MAN

Are Captured Few Hours Later
By Police.

SAM L. MOORE VICTIMIZED

Decoyed From His Home and
Then Taken Away in Auto.

DIAMOND PIN RECOVERED

Taken Into Auto From Residence on
Walker Avenue to Iowa and South
Fifth Street—Robbers Evidently
Knew His Habits—Police Make
Quick Haul.

Set March 11-16

Four hours after they had executed one of the most spectacular robberies ever known in Memphis, W. T. Gillespie, 23 years old, and Roy Walker, alias Roy Walden, also 23 years old, were placed under arrest by Emergency Policeman L. B. Harmon and W. M. Davis.

The victim of the robbery was Samuel L. Moore, a realty dealer and former county tax assessor.

Mr. Moore was decoyed from his home at 9:45 o'clock last night, kidnaped and thrust into an automobile, and robbed of \$13 in cash and a diamond stick pin valued at \$50. A watch worth \$150 was overlooked.

The weakness in the plot of Gillespie and Walker lay in their choosing Harry Cutsinger as their chauffeur. Cutsinger works for J. A. Stevenson, a garage man on McLemore Avenue.

Gillespie and Walker went to Stevenson's place at 7:45 o'clock last night and tried to rent a two-seated machine. They failed to get it, and took the only available machine, with Cutsinger at the steering wheel.

Cutsinger told the police that he drove the men first to an address on Willoughby Avenue, where Walden lives. While there the two men told Cutsinger that they were going out on a little secret mission. They asked if he had a pistol. He said that he did. They took it from him, and then cautioned him not to talk.

The men were then driven uptown, and nearly two hours later they drove up in front of Mr. Moore's home, 380 Walker

Avenue. Just before reaching there they made their plot known to Cutsinger. It was then too late for him to withdraw.

Leaving Gillespie in the car, with a mask on his face, Walker went into the Moore residence. He asked Mr. Moore, who is a poultry fancier also, if he had any eggs to sell. Mr. Moore replied that he had.

"I want a dozen," Gillespie said, "for a lady who is outside in a machine. You sold her some eggs once before and she would like to talk to you about them."

Mr. Moore put on his hat and went out to see the lady. Gillespie walked behind him. On approaching the street Mr. Moore raised his hat. It was not to the lady, however, as he had thought, but to the masked man, who thrust a pistol in his face and invited him to take a seat. Gillespie shoved him in, and the signal was given to the chauffeur.

Walker demanded the diamond stick pin. He jerked for it at the same time. Mr. Moore realized his predicament, however, and told them that he would give them all he had, which he did with the exception of his watch, which was not demanded.

The bandits completed their task before they had gone a block. They then stopped and told Mr. Moore to get out. They thanked him for the money and diamond.

Cutsinger was given \$2, and promised a share in the proceeds from the sale of the diamond. He drove them to an address on Lucy Avenue, where Gillespie and his wife reside. The men got out there and dismissed Cutsinger.

Cutsinger drove to his garage and found Officers Harmon and Davis waiting for him. They were searching for the automobile as described to Capt. Condon over the telephone by Mr. Moore. Cutsinger told his story, and 20 minutes later Harmon and Davis located the men on Willoughby Avenue.

Diamond Is Recovered.

The diamond was recovered. The money, however, had been spent. The officers were told where the pocketbook had been hidden. It will likely be found. It contained some valuable papers and a check or two of minor value.

When the officers walked into the Willoughby Avenue house, Gillespie and Walker were in the act of leaving. Harmon and Davis were dressed as farmers, and not officers, and Davis found it necessary to fire his pistol to convince Gillespie that he was in earnest when he placed them under arrest.

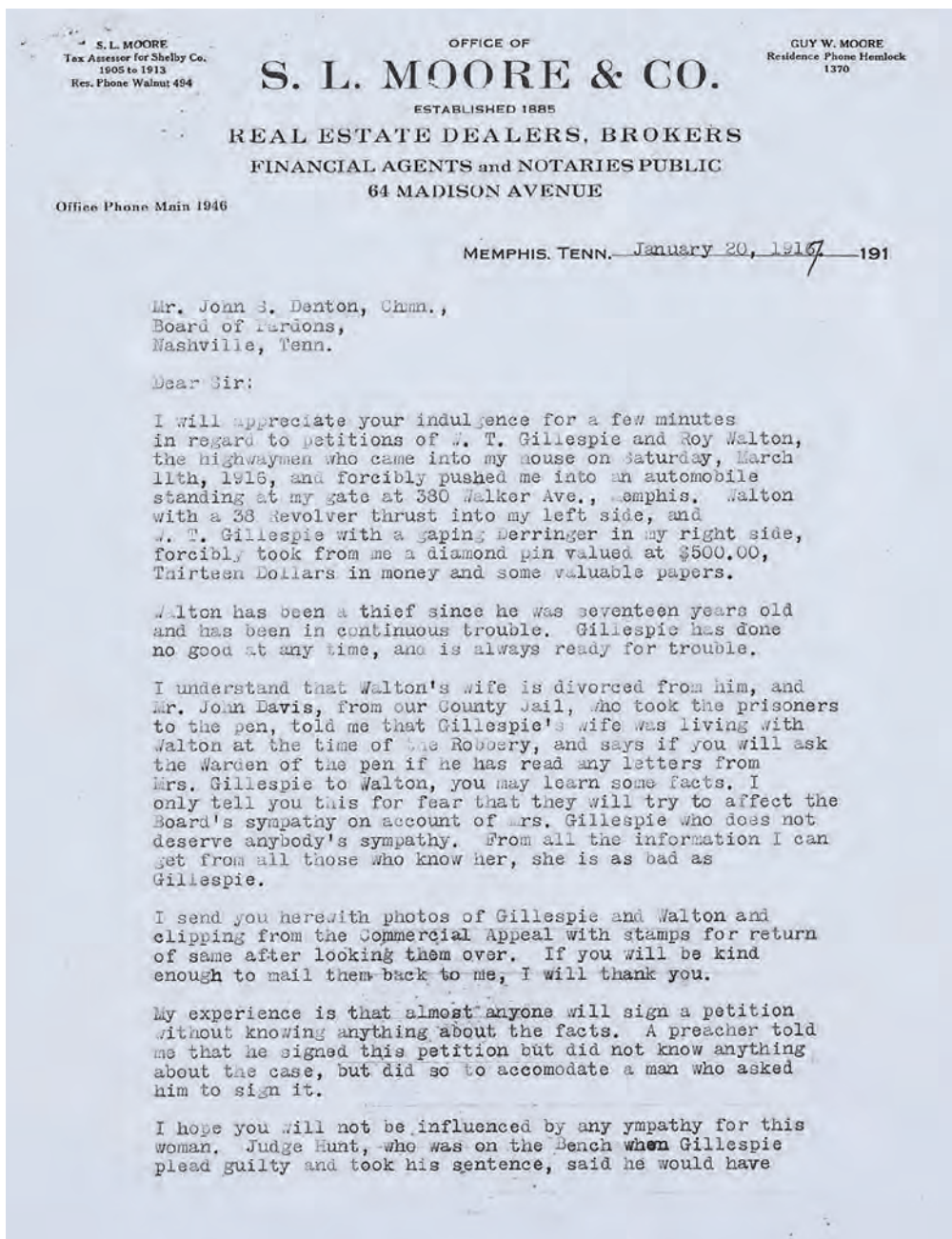
Gillespie is not known to the police. He says, however, that he is a Memphis man. Walker, who formerly drove a jitney, is well known to the police.

Police Commissioner McLain congratulated Capt. Condon and the arresting officers on their quick work.

The bandits worked quickly. There are few homes on the street immediately in the vicinity of the Moore residence—an ideal spot for the work of such crooks. The lights, too, are widely scattered, and though Mr. Moore was too busily engaged to get a description of his assailants, pedestrians, had there been any, would have been at a disadvantage.

Mr. Moore was not physically injured as a result of his experience, though he admitted that he felt "rather done up." He is the oldest real estate dealer in Memphis.

A firsthand account of the crime appears in a protest letter written on January 20, 1917, by the victim, Sam Moore, who was a sixty-eight-year-old real-estate agent in Memphis, Tennessee. The letter was written to object to Tom Gillespie's possible parole from prison.



A 1917 letter from the victim of the armed robbery undertaken by William Thomas Gillespie.

sentenced Gillespie for twice as long if the law would have permitted it.

I could get a petition of five-thousand names, signed by the best people of Memphis, in two days, asking you to keep both of these men in the pen until their terms expired. They are dangerous men to be let loose on any community.

Mr. Denton, please allow me one word about myself. I was born near Clarksville, Tennessee, in 1848, and have lived in Memphis for 63 years. I have a family of five married children, all of whom are favorably known here.

These men not only robbed me of diamond and money, but came into my home where I have lived for the past thirty years, and in the presence of my old wife and grandchildren, forcibly took me out, thrust me into an auto, with guns in my breast, they robbed me and shattered my nerves. And I most respectfully ask and beg of you that you allow the law to take its course and keep them confined behind the walls of the penitentiary, as it will certainly be to the best interests of the State and this community, and will be due me, as I believe, for the terrible manner in which I was treated, and I will ever be thankful to the Pardon Board of Tennessee.

Most respectfully yours,

A. L. Moore

I mail herewith letter from the First National Bank of this City.

A CHRONOLOGY OF THE 1916 CRIME

- On March 11, the crime was committed.
- On March 12, Tom Gillespie was taken into custody and indicted for carrying a pistol.
- On March 13, subpoenas were issued to witnesses.
- On March 20, bond for Tom was set at \$500.
- On March 23, at a hearing, Tom did not have a lawyer and pled guilty.
- On March 28, Tom was sentenced to five to fifteen years in prison by a special judge.
- On April 2, Tom was delivered to the Tennessee State Penitentiary.

Tom Gillespie's accomplice was Roy Walton (1892–). He had a previous criminal record, retained a lawyer, and pled not guilty to the crime. He was sentenced to three to ten years in prison by a regular judge.

William Thomas Gillespie in a photograph presumably taken sometime after he was released from prison, at age twenty-six, in December 1918. Notably, he is wearing a large stickpin in the middle of his necktie.





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6. THE ABANDONED CHILDREN OF WILLIAM THOMAS GILLESPIE: JOHN STANLEY AND MATTIE MARIE GILLESPIE

In early 1918, almost two years after **William Thomas “Tom” Gillespie (1892–1962)** was convicted and sent to the Tennessee State Penitentiary in Nashville, his wife, Elizabeth “Bessie” Cook (1893–), abandoned their two children. She left her three-year-old daughter, Mattie Marie Gillespie (1914–), and five-year-old son, John Stanley Gillespie (1912–1996), in Memphis, Tennessee, with Tom’s half sister, **Margaret Lee Gillespie Snowden (1875–1951)**, and her husband. During Tom Gillespie’s imprisonment, Bessie Cook Gillespie became involved with a man named Earl Patterson (1885–); she left Memphis with him in 1918 and went to live in Texas, where they later married. Bessie never again saw her children. However, in 1940, reflecting some sense of concern, she wrote a letter to Neville’s grandmother **Ola Frank Gillespie (1881–1934)**. Since Ola had died six years earlier, Ola’s sister **Emma Edith Gillespie Jackson (1888–1976)** answered the letter. Bessie responded to Edith with a longer letter (excerpted here).

Edith—Will you give my very earnest and sincere love to Margaret [Margaret Lee Gillespie Snowden]? I bear her no ill will over my two babies—It has been a wonderful thing that she has done—mothered and raised them—suffered over them—& does yet, I’m sure.

It is a great responsibility—this matter of raising children—& I can know and realize the things she has experienced—Thru her love for and her self imposed duty toward Stanley and Marie—My heart is warm and tender toward her—more so, as I myself learn, and realize the sacrifices she’s made for them.

In this letter, Bessie Cook Gillespie Patterson also told Emma Edith Gillespie Jackson about her twenty-one-year-old daughter, Evelyn, who was born in Texas in 1919, after she had left her first two children in Memphis. She wrote: “I have a daughter born the 2nd year of our marriage. Evelyn, a lovely girl and one who has compensated me in many ways for the loss of the two babies of long ago.”

Bessie Cook Gillespie Patterson, of course, never knew what happened to the children she abandoned, and we have had only partial success in our attempt to find out. No records past 1918 have been found for Mattie Marie Gillespie. According to Jin Faulkner (b.1926), Edith Gillespie Jackson’s daughter, Mattie Marie, was put up for adoption by the Snowdens, presumably between 1918 and 1920.

John Stanley Gillespie, Tom and Bessie Cook Gillespie's older child, is recorded in 1920, at age seven, living with the Snowden family in Memphis, and again in 1930, at age seventeen, in the Snowden household. In 1930 he is also listed as a laborer in a lumberyard. We have a photograph of him from about 1930.

Unfortunately, it appears likely that John Stanley Gillespie followed in his father's footsteps, becoming another black sheep of the Gillespie family. The following evidence is circumstantial.

According to California State Prison records from 1938, John S. Gillespie, a twenty-six-year-old native Tennessean, was convicted on two counts of second-degree burglary while working as a hospital orderly in Los Angeles, California. On January 22, 1938, he was incarcerated at San Quentin State Prison, north of San Francisco, in Marin County. His height is recorded as 5' 6", and he had blue eyes, a fair complexion, and light brown hair. He was paroled from prison on August 3, 1939, and discharged from parole supervision on November 22, 1945. At age forty-four, in Los Angeles County, John S. Gillespie married twenty-nine-year-old Betty A. Koenke (1927–) on July 14, 1956. He died in Monrovia, Los Angeles County, at age eighty-three, in February 1996.

While we do not have absolute proof, it is highly likely that this John S. Gillespie is William Thomas Gillespie's son, John Stanley Gillespie.



John Stanley Gillespie, William Thomas Gillespie's son, at about age seventeen, c. 1930.

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7. CAMPAIGNS FOR THE PAROLE OF WILLIAM THOMAS GILLESPIE

William Thomas “Tom” Gillespie (1892–1962), Neville’s great-uncle, entered the Tennessee State Penitentiary in Nashville on April 2, 1916, three weeks after his armed robbery.



The Tennessee State Penitentiary was built in 1898 and is located near downtown Nashville. It has been closed since 1992 and today awaits a plan for adaptive reuse.

For almost three years, the Gillespie and Mackey families undertook aggressive campaigns to secure a parole from prison for Tom Gillespie. That effort is recorded in eighty letters and documents on file at the Tennessee State Library and Archives in Nashville.

Tom Gillespie’s family mounted three campaigns to obtain his release. These campaigns were led by his half brother, **Robert Henry Gillespie (1876–1951)**; his half sister, **Margaret Lee Gillespie Snowden (1875–1951)**; and his sister **Ola Frank Gillespie (1881–1934)**, Neville’s grandmother. They made numerous personal appeals and recruited an amazing number of notable family members and friends to support Tom Gillespie’s parole.

THE FIRST CAMPAIGN FOR TOM GILLESPIE’S PAROLE

For the first campaign, we have letters and petitions written between December 20, 1916 (about nine months after his incarceration), and April 1917. Most of the letters were addressed to the governor of Tennessee, Thomas C. Rye (1863–1953), who served from 1915 to 1919.

Thomas C. Rye, the governor of Tennessee during William Thomas Gillespie’s prison term.



Most of the documents in the first campaign for Tom Gillespie's parole were letters from friends and family members who were political and civic leaders.

A photograph of a portrait of Mississippi's Governor (previously Lieutenant Governor) Lee M. Russell, who was Thomas Gillespie's first cousin and is Neville's first cousin, twice removed.



• LEE M. RUSSELL (1875–1943), the lieutenant governor of Mississippi, who served from 1916 to 1920, was Tom Gillespie's first cousin. He was the son of **Sarah Alice "Sallie" Mackey's (1857–1911)** sister **Louisa Jane Mackey (1854–1908)**. Lee M. Russell was later elected governor of Mississippi and served from 1920 to 1924.

In the first of several letters, none of which reveals their kinship, written on December 20, 1916, Lieutenant Governor Lee M. Russell wrote to Governor Thomas C. Rye on stationery bearing a picture of the Mississippi State Capitol:

I have personally made some investigations into this case at the request of his relatives and friends for the reason that I have known the family intimately since the boy's birth. Young Gillespie comes from one of the best families of Arkansas and has lived in Memphis for several years; his father died several years ago. . . .

Let me say that young Gillespie was never in any trouble before this time. He was led into this, I feel sure you will find, by a dangerous police character in Memphis. His poor wife and little children were in dire want and he could not get work.

The leader and another dangerous character misled this boy and persuaded him to hold up their victim. One witness (a defendant) turned state's evidence and was released; the leader—a most dangerous fellow, was able to hire a lawyer and stood trial and was given a sentence of from three to ten years, I am advised. Young Gillespie was unable to hire a lawyer but submitted the case to a Special Judge and was given a sentence of five to fifteen years. . . .

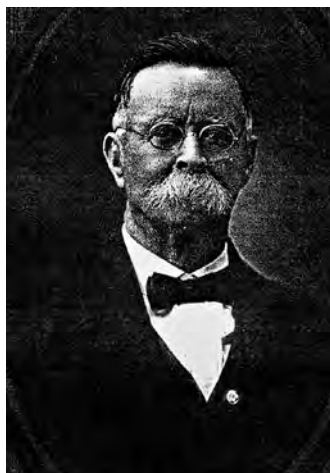
Gillespie has made a model prisoner, if I am correctly informed; he is truly repentant and all who know him feel that if he is pardoned now then he will make an upright and useful citizen.

United States Representative Kenneth D. McKellar of Tennessee in 1916. He later served as a United States senator for thirty-six years.



• **KENNETH D. MCKELLAR (1869–1957)** served in the United States House of Representatives from 1911 to 1917, and from 1917 to 1953, he was a United States senator from Tennessee. He was twice president pro tempore of the Senate. Representative McKellar wrote these rather tepid and halfhearted words to Governor Thomas C. Rye on December 30, 1916:

A number of years ago I was in the lumber business with my brother, and the Gillespies and Snowdens worked for us. We always considered them excellent people. I know Robert W. [should be H.] Gillespie is a splendid man, and Mr. and Mrs. Snowden are splendid people. It is hard for me to believe that their brother went wrong.



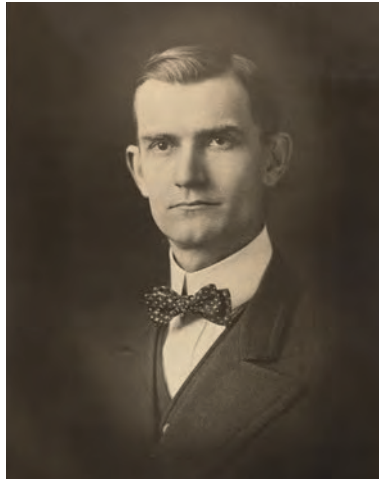
Leonidas William Mackey was William Thomas Gillespie's uncle and Neville's great-great-uncle. He was a Mississippi state legislator, a Presbyterian elder, and a leading citizen of Yalobusha County, Mississippi.

• **LEONIDAS WILLIAM MACKEY (1844–1931)**, Tom Gillespie's seventy-three-year-old uncle, from Water Valley, Mississippi, was also recruited to write a letter to Governor Thomas C. Rye in 1917. In part, his letter was a response to the letters of protest sent to Governor Rye by the victim, Sam L. Moore (1848–1939), and his friends. Without revealing his kinship, Leonidas William wrote:

I write you in behalf of Thomas W. Gillespie [should be W. Thomas]—a convict from Memphis, whom I have known from infancy, who is a member of a good family—of high standing. He has two little children being supported entirely by charity. . . .

Mr. Moore the prosecutor [the victim] is quite old [he was sixty-eight], and is very cruel and unreasonable even to his own family—bitter, unrelenting, does not know the meaning of mercy. Those who know Gillespie best think he has atoned for his offense—under the circumstances, I implore you for his children, for his sisters, and other relatives, to release him. I am 73 years old.

.....



Thomas Allen Hughes, Neville's great-uncle by marriage to her great-aunt Camille Frierson.

• THOMAS ALLEN HUGHES (1870–1939) was the brother-in-law of Neville's paternal grandfather, **Charles Davis Frierson Sr. (1877–1947)**. Neville's maternal grandmother, Ola Gillespie Purifoy, undoubtedly knew him when he lived in Jonesboro, Arkansas, and she must have solicited him to write to Governor Thomas C. Rye on behalf of her brother. Judge Thomas Allen Hughes made a rather indifferent plea on behalf of Tom Gillespie in a letter dated February 27, 1917, to Governor Rye:

Gillespie is a young man only twenty-three years and has a wife with two children. I have known his family a long time, and really think that his case deserves consideration by pardoning power. The particular circumstances of the offense are unknown to me, but representations will be made to you about that.

If you can find it consistent with your official duty to do anything for these people, I will appreciate it very much.

John Wesley Mackey, William Thomas Gillespie's uncle and Neville's great-great-uncle.



• **JOHN WESLEY MACKEY (1865–1937)**, Tom Gillespie's uncle, was very close to the Gillespie family. In fact, as a teenager in the 1880s, John Wesley Mackey lived with the family of **John Cornelius Gillespie (1843–1907)**, Tom Gillespie's father. John Wesley Mackey was a lawyer and judge who lived in Beaumont, Texas, when he wrote a letter in support of his nephew Tom. In that letter, written to Governor Thomas C. Rye on March 3, 1917, John Wesley acknowledged that he was an outsider and made his plea because of the suffering of Tom's family:

I am aware that the word of a stranger and an obscure person can have but little weight in a matter of this kind—nevertheless, I desire to add my plea. . . .

I was intimately acquainted with [Tom] Gillespie's father [John Cornelius Gillespie] from about the year 1875 to the time of his death in 1907; I have known the brothers and sisters residing in the city of Memphis and the state of Arkansas, during the whole of their lives, and know that they are without exception people of sterling, Christian character, and good citizens. . . .

Moreover, it is not the culprit himself who suffers most in cases of this kind. This boy has a wife and two small children, who were dependent upon for comfort, companionship and maintenance; he has brothers, sisters and other relatives of refined sensibilities, who have suffered and who are now suffering a humiliation and shame, such as has never heretofore been known to them.

In spite of these appeals, the Tennessee Board of Pardons officially rejected appeals for the parole of Tom Gillespie in the summer of 1917.

THE SECOND CAMPAIGN FOR TOM GILLESPIE'S PAROLE

In late 1917, the second campaign for Tom Gillespie's parole got under way. Efforts were apparently led by Tom Gillespie's sister Ola Frank Gillespie Purifoy in Jonesboro.

*Ola Frank Gillespie Purifoy,
William Thomas Gillespie's sister,
at about age thirty-four, c. 1915.*



Between November 4, 1917, and January 1, 1918, Ola Frank Gillespie Purifoy sent two handwritten letters to Governor Thomas C. Rye and one to the secretary of the Tennessee Board of Pardons. In addition to her passionate pleas, Ola relied on support from prominent people in Jonesboro, where Tom Gillespie had been born and raised. Some excerpts from Ola Purifoy's letters follow:

Jonesboro Ark

Nov. 4—1917

Hon T. C. Rye—

*I feel Gov. Rye that if you will look into this and grant this pardon that you will never regret it—
and will receive your reward—as our Savior has said “In as much as you did it unto the least of these
you did it unto me.”*

*Please give a few minutes to investigate this and give us our dear brother before another Christmas
has come.*

I am sending this with a prayer on this, Tom's birthday—May the Lord guide you.

Sincerely,

Mrs. S. N. Purifoy

821 W. Washington

Jonesboro Ark

Nov 16—1917

Mr. Ben Dunlap

Sec. Board of Pardons

. . . So I again beg of you to give this case your most prayerful consideration as in doing so you will lift a great burden from a grief-stricken family.

I feel sure if given his liberty Tom's first offense will be his last and you will never have cause for regret.

Thanking you in advance for a kindness you cannot estimate the value of.

I am sincerely

Mrs. S. N. Purifoy

821 W. Washington

Jonesboro Ark

Jan. 1—1918

To His Excellency Gov. T. C. Rye

Dear Gov. Rye—

Can't you give us our brother, Tom Gillespie, to begin this new year as a new man? . . . Tom was born and raised in Jonesboro—lived here until the death of our father and mother six years ago—then went to Memphis and lived a few months where he was married. Came back here and lived until about three years ago.

So you see Jonesboro people know him better than anyone else and when such prominent men as the following who have known him since infancy have written in his behalf I feel sure you will not do wrong in paying some heed to them.

Hon. T. H. Caraway—M. C. from this district

Leut. Gov. Lee M. Russell of Mississippi

Judge Gordon Frierson—Mayor of Jonesboro

Post. M. Charles B. Gregg—Ex-Mayor of Jonesboro

Mr. H. W. Applegate—Ex-mayor of Jonesboro

Mr. Jno M. Gregson—Supt of Sunday School

Mr. J. M. Birdsong—Sec of Sunday School And many others. . . .

Will you not, Gov. Rye, use every effort in your power to set him free? And in so doing help to make a Christian man of him. As he realizes only the best people can help him now I have his promise to live a good straight life from now on.

May the Lord guide you in this is the earnest prayer of his sister—

Mrs. S. N. Purifoy

821 W. Washington



*United States Representative
and (later) Senator Thaddeus H.
Caraway of Arkansas.*

• **THADDEUS H. CARAWAY** (1871–1931) was a United States representative from Arkansas in 1917. He served as a United States senator from 1921 to 1931. In a letter to Governor Thomas C. Rye (copied to Ola Frank Gillespie Purifoy) from November 12, 1917, he wrote:

I have known him [Tom Gillespie] ever since he was a small child, and know his family well. They are people of character and standing, and always have been so. . . .

I feel certain, considering the family from which the young man came, that if he were pardoned now he would make a good citizen. I therefore ask if you will not pardon him. This is no perfunctory request. I am deeply in earnest and hope it may be done. We will undertake to take him back home and see that he makes a good citizen.



*James Gordon Frierson Jr.,
mayor of Jonesboro from
1917 to 1921.*

• **JAMES GORDON FRIERSON JR. (1872–1951)** was the mayor of Jonesboro in 1917. He is Neville's great-uncle, but he is not related to Tom Gillespie. On November 7, 1917, Mayor Gordon Frierson

wrote to Governor Thomas C. Rye at the behest of Tom Gillespie's sisters Ola Frank Gillespie Purifoy and **Emma Edith Gillespie (1888–1976)**. The letter was rather perfunctory:

This young man was born in this town, and while I do not personally remember anything about him, I do know that his family are excellent people. It is at the request of two of his sisters that I write you this letter. . . . I write this to say that if you can see your way clear to release this young man, you will make some innocent people very happy indeed.

It is interesting to speculate about whether Neville's grandfather **Charles Davis Frierson Sr. (1877–1947)**, who was a chancery circuit judge in Jonesboro at the time, was asked to write a letter on Tom Gillespie's behalf. I would guess that he was asked, but I also suspect that he would have declined.



• **TOM GILLESPIE** wrote a letter on his own behalf to the Tennessee Board of Pardons on November 18, 1917:

Having heard the Board is to meet again in a few days, am writing to ask if it will be possible to bring my case up for reconsideration. The papers were first presented last April and were put aside for 6 months. It is now seven months, and during that time new papers and letters have been sent to Governor Rye. Hoping to hear favorably, from you soon, and thanking you in advance for whatever you may do in this matter.

*I am,
Yours Respectfully*

The campaign to obtain Tom Gillespie's release from prison in late 1917 resulted in another failure. He continued to serve his term through 1918.

THE THIRD CAMPAIGN FOR TOM GILLESPIE'S PAROLE

• **MARGARET LEE GILLESPIE SNOWDEN**, Tom Gillespie's half sister, wrote a letter to Governor Thomas C. Rye, in November 1918. The letter was written on the stationery of the Memphis Lumber Company, her husband's employer. It said:

Owing to the terrible times we are having in this city on account of the epidemic has caused me to again turn to you in time of distress. W. T. Gillespie's oldest child, the boy, is sick with influenza, and his [Tom's] brother [Robert Henry Gillespie] has been confined to his bed four weeks with influenza. W. T. Gillespie, if pardoned at once can take my brother's position and hold it for him, and thereby help his brother and family in their time of need.*

*In the United States, 650,000 people died in the flu epidemic of 1918–19. It is estimated that fifty million people died worldwide. Such an epidemic is today called a pandemic because it occurs all over the world.

Later that month, Margaret Lee Gillespie Snowden again wrote to the Tennessee Board of Pardons in Nashville:

My brother Robert Gillespie is in a dying condition at the Baptist Hospital, with cancer—the doctor has told us his true condition. This brother is the one who has made three trips to Nashville in behalf of our brother Tom Gillespie who is now serving a three-year term in the prison in your city. My brother is dying and wants to see Tom once more before he has to go.

It should be noted that Robert Henry Gillespie, Tom's half brother, was forty-two years old in 1918, and he survived his bouts of influenza and cancer. In fact, he lived for thirty-three more years and died at age seventy-five, in 1951, in Memphis.

THE CONCLUSION—TOM GILLESPIE IS PAROLED

On December 18, 1918, the Advisory Board of Pardons issued a report to Governor Thomas C. Rye. The concluding paragraph of that report is printed below.

Because of his excellent prison record; his previous good character; the recommendations of numerous citizens and officials of prominence; and on account of the fact that his fellow prisoner who was just as guilty as he is to be paroled under the lesser sentence which he got, and feeling that this prisoner should be accorded the favor of not serving longer than Walton but that they should be released at the same time, we therefore recommend that Your Excellency grant him a pardon conditioned as in parole cases.

W. David H. Stewart
Respectfully submitted,
ADVISORY BOARD OF PARDONS.
Lewis S. Pope Chairman

On December 23, 1918, after thirty-three months in prison, William Thomas Gillespie was free at last.



William Thomas Gillespie after his release from prison. He is wearing a stickpin in his necktie.

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8. A LETTER FROM OLA FRANK GILLESPIE A MONTH BEFORE HER WEDDING

On February 25, 1904, about a month before her wedding, **Ola Frank Gillespie (1881–1934)** wrote a letter to Zaida Rawlins (1881–), a former classmate. Zaida lived in Denver, Colorado, at the time. She was a friend of both Ola Gillespie and Bessie May Birdsong (1883–1968), the other bride in Ola Frank Gillespie's 1904 double wedding. Bessie Birdsong's father, Bessie's fiancé, and Bessie's prospective father-in-law all worked for the Cotton Belt Railroad. The letter was typed on the stationery of a local jewelry store, T. J. Ellis & Co., which defined itself as a watch inspector for the Cotton Belt Railroad.

Ancestry.com records that Zaida Rawlins was born in Utah and was the daughter of a railroad superintendent who lived in a number of Western states. She presumably became a friend of Ola Frank Gillespie and Bessie May Birdsong because of railroad connections.

In the letter, Ola Frank Gillespie first wrote about a recent visit from her uncle **John Wesley Mackey (1865–1937)**, a younger brother of her mother, **Sarah Alice "Sallie" Mackey (1857–1911)**. John Wesley Mackey had lived with the Gillespie family in Hernando, Mississippi, when he was young. At the time of his visit in early 1904, he was a thirty-eight-year-old lawyer from Beaumont, Texas. He was on his way to New York to embark on a Grand Tour of the Middle East and Europe.

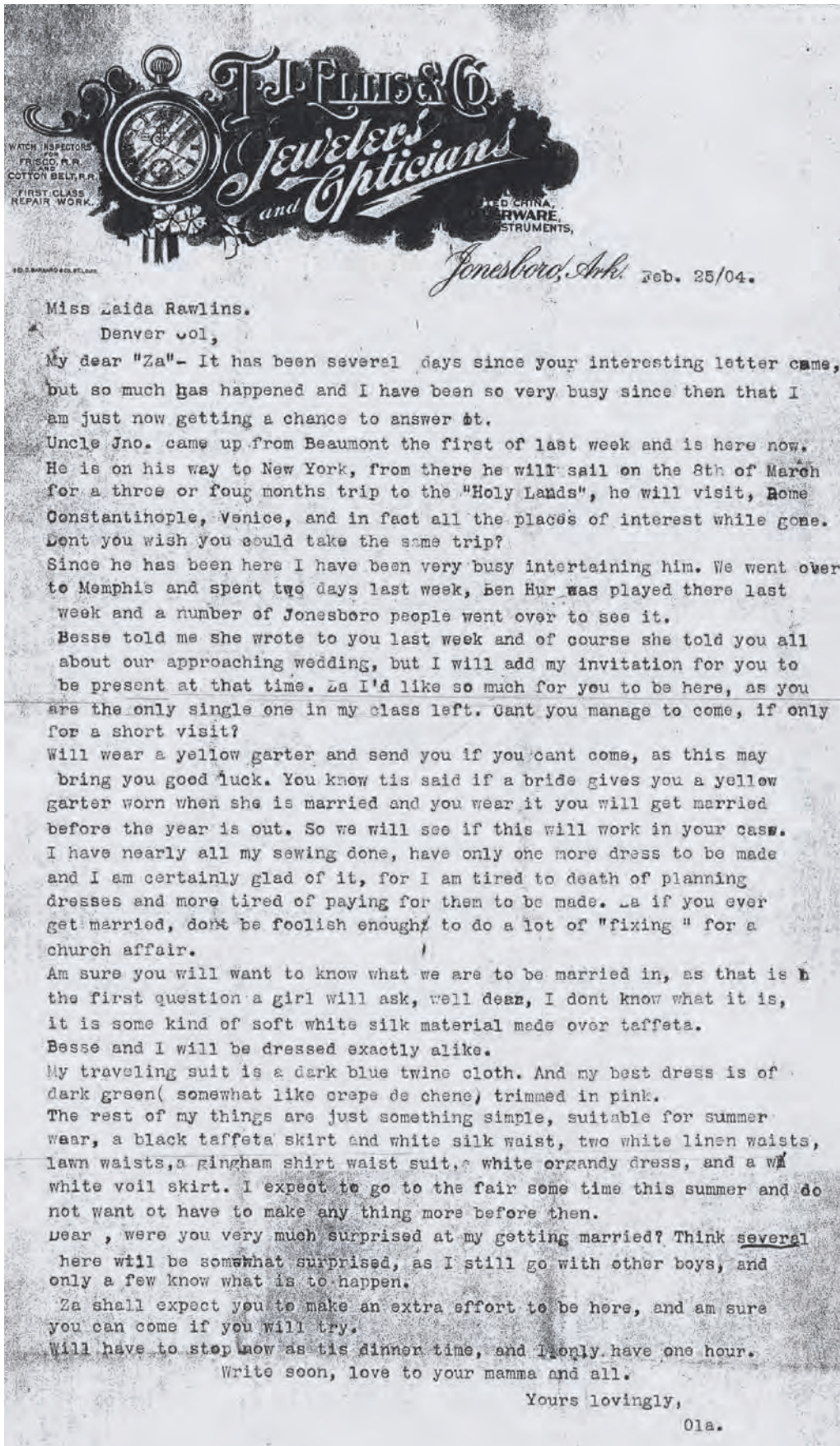


Ola Frank Gillespie's uncle John Wesley Mackey, who visited her the month before her 1904 wedding.



Ola Gillespie, shortly before her wedding in 1904.

Most of the letter is about Ola Frank Gillespie's wedding trousseau. She was making many of her own clothes and was quite interested in the fashions of the time.



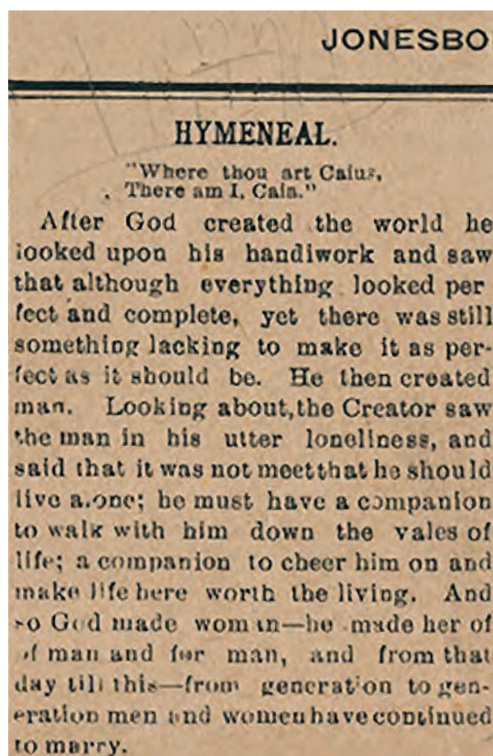
A letter written by Ola Frank Gillespie a little over a month before her wedding to Stanley Neville Purifoy on March 30, 1904. The play, Ben Hur, that is mentioned in the letter, opened on Broadway in 1899, and toured the country for twenty-one years.

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9. OLA FRANK GILLESPIE AND STANLEY NEVILLE PURIFOY'S 1904 DOUBLE WEDDING

On the evening of Wednesday, March 30, 1904, at ages twenty-two and twenty-four, **Ola Frank Gillespie (1881–1934)** and **Stanley Neville Purifoy (1879–1942)** married at the 1st Baptist Church in Jonesboro, Arkansas. They were married in a double wedding ceremony, an event at which two couples marry. Most often the brides or grooms in a double wedding are related; in this case, they were all just good friends. The other couple in the double wedding was Bessie May Birdsong (1883–1968) and Robert P. Harrington (1881–1970) of Jonesboro. The wedding was recorded in the local newspaper under the heading “*Hymeneal*” (pronounced (“HY-muh-NEE-al”), a poetic adjective used to relate something to a marriage. The heading is followed by a Roman phrase, “*Where thou art Caius, / There am I, Caia.*”^{*}



Last night a large crowd assembled at the First Baptist church to witness a double wedding among Jonesboro's most popular young people—Mr. Robert P. Harrington to Miss Bessie May Birdsong and Mr. Stanley N. Purifoy to Miss Ola Frank Gillespie. The church was beautifully decorated with palms, ferns and pot flowers. The attendants were: Messrs. Chas. L. Klapp, Jeff A. Houghton, Gordon Matthews and Hardy Little, ushers. Mr. Frederick Hamilton was best man for Mr. Purifoy and Mr. Taylor Puryear for Mr. Harrington. Mrs. W. W. Cate was matron of honor for Miss Birdsong and Mrs. Curry Ray for Miss Gillespie.

^{*}The phrase “*Where thou art Caius, / There am I, Caia*” comes from early Roman writing. Caius (pronounced “Ky-us”) was a Roman patrician, and Caia (pronounced “Ky-a”) was his wife. The phrase has a meaning similar to the biblical phrase spoken by Ruth in the Old Testament book of Ruth 1:16: “Whither thou goest, I will go.” It is essentially a wedding vow.

Just before the ceremony was performed Miss Ola Dudley rendered a beautiful solo, "Since Thou Art Mine." Miss Grace Morse presided at the organ and played the wedding march. Messrs. Houghton and Little marched down the right aisle and Messrs. Matthews and Klapp down the left. They were followed by the matrons of honor Mesdames Cate and Ray. The grooms marched down the aisles to the altar with their best men where they met their brides. Dr. S. A. Smith performed the ceremony and the words which were very appropriate and impressive, were made all the more so by the low strains of music on the violin in the hands of Mrs. A. W. Hall. After the ceremony Dr. Smith offered an eloquent prayer and then the procession filed out.

Misses Birdsong and Gillespie wore beautiful silk grenadines over taffetas, each carried bride's roses and wore the real orange blossoms, which were presents of Mrs. T. K. Lane. Mrs. Cate wore a blue liberty satin and Mrs. Ray blue silk crepe. Both carried La France roses.

After the wedding the relatives and immediate friends of the contracting parties repaired to the home of Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Birdsong where a very elaborate reception was given.

The happy young people left today for short bridal tours after which Mr. and Mrs. Purifoy will return to Jonesboro to reside and Mr. and Mrs. Harrington will go to Graysboro to reside. Mr. Harrington is the only son of Mrs. Ben Harrington. He has lived in Jonesboro since quite a small boy and is an energetic young business man, whose every acquaintance is a true friend. Mr. Harrington holds a position at present in the Cotton Belt offices at Graysboro, Tex. His bride is the beautiful daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Birdsong, and is one of the city's most popular young ladies.

Mr. Purifoy is a native of Mississippi. He came to this city about eight years ago and has proven himself to be an excellent young business man. He is at present with the Singer Sewing Machine Co. of this city and has many friends here. His bride, Miss Gillespie, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Gillespie, who moved here from Mississippi when Miss Ola was very young. She is very popular with a very large circle of our best young people and is an accomplished and comely young lady.

They have the best wishes of a large number of friends for a long, happy and useful journey through life, with whom the Times-Enterprise joins in congratulations and hope that their way may always be bright and their sky ever blue, and they may never have cause to look back on their wedding day with sorrow.

Those who attended the wedding from a distance were: Miss Glicher and Mr. Ferris of St. Louis; Mrs. McGowan of Louisville, Ky.; Chas. Lee, Pine Bluff; Robt. Gillespie and Mrs. Chas. Snowden, Memphis; Misses Florence and Inez Benjamin, F. C. Seford of Helena.

"Hymeneal," a newspaper account of the double wedding of Ola Frank Gillespie and Stanley Neville Purifoy, in The Jonesboro Daily Times-Enterprise in 1904.

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10. BESSIE MAY BIRDSONG AND ROBERT P. HARRINGTON

Bessie May Birdsong (1883–1968) and Robert P. “Bobby” Harrington (1881–1970) were the other couple in the double wedding of Neville’s grandparents **Ola Frank Gillespie (1881–1934)** and **Stanley Neville Purifoy (1879–1942)** on March 30, 1904.

Bessie May Birdsong, born in Texas, was the daughter of James Monroe Birdsong (1859–1912), a railroad conductor in Jonesboro, Arkansas. Bobby Harrington was born in Missouri, and his father was also a railroad conductor. At the time of their marriage, Bobby Harrington was a clerk working for the Cotton Belt Railroad, the familiar name of the St. Louis Southwestern Railway. This rail line essentially ran from St. Louis, Missouri, to Dallas, Texas.

The two couples remained good friends in Jonesboro in the years after they married. During that time, Bobby and Bessie May Birdsong Harrington had two children, Hope Elizabeth Harrington (1905–1996) and James Harrington (1910–1985). Hope Elizabeth Harrington was to become a lifelong friend of Neville’s mother, **Margaret Alice Purifoy (1908–1973)**.

Sometime in the 1920s, Bobby and Bessie May Birdsong Harrington and their two children moved to St. Louis, where Bobby Harrington continued to work for the railroad. The families remained close, and the Harringtons visited often in Jonesboro.

Bessie May Birdsong Harrington, age fifty, in May 1934 in Jonesboro, Arkansas, about two months before Ola Frank Gillespie Purifoy died.



Hope Elizabeth Harrington, Margaret Alice Purifoy’s childhood friend, married Clarence D. Cowdery (1898–1985) in St. Louis on April 7, 1928. In 1937 Neville’s mother, Margaret Purifoy Frierson, held a reception in honor of Hope Harrington Cowdery in Jonesboro. Hope also attended the wedding of Neville and myself in Jonesboro in 1958. She died at age ninety-one, in 1996, in Durham, North Carolina, twenty-three years after Neville’s mother died.



A photograph that appeared in The Jonesboro Evening Sun on Sunday, August 3, 1937: (left to right) Margaret Alice Purifoy Frierson, age twenty-nine; Hope Elizabeth Harrington Cowdery, age thirty-one; Dorothy Barton Rebsamen (1905-1986), age thirty-one; and Bessie May Birdsong Harrington, age fifty-three.

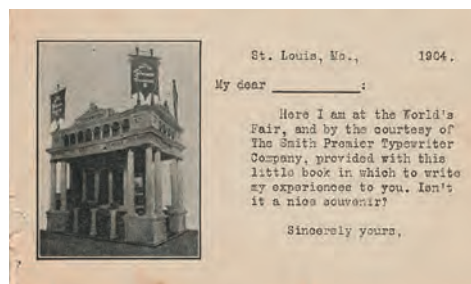
Bessie May Birdsong and Bobby Harrington lived long lives, far exceeding the lifespans of Ola Frank Gillespie and Stanley Neville Purifoy. Bessie May died on January 5, 1968, at age eighty-four, a few months before her sixty-fourth wedding anniversary. Stanley and Ola Gillespie Purifoy, by contrast, were married for only thirty years. Bobby Harrington died just over two years after his wife, on January 7, 1970, at age eighty-eight. They are buried together, as are Stanley and Ola Purifoy, in the City Cemetery in Jonesboro.

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11. "MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS, LOUIS, MEET ME AT THE FAIR"

In early September 1904, Neville's grandparents **Ola Frank Gillespie (1881–1934)** and **Stanley Neville Purifoy (1879–1942)** attended the World's Fair in St. Louis, Missouri. They had been married for five months. Using promotional materials made available by the Smith Premier Typewriter Company, Ola Gillespie Purifoy sent a note from the fair to her father, **John Cornelius Gillespie (1843–1907)**, and his family back in Jonesboro, Arkansas.



Dear Homefolks -
 Am here -
 sitting on steps
 of Liberal Arts
 Bldg - tired out -
 Having a time
 seeing some
 sights.
 Harry & Stanley
 had to room ^{with}

two men &
 Mary & I are in
 room with
 Healthouse girls -
 best we could
 do -
 Bye - bye -
 Ola Stanley

Ola Frank Gillespie Purifoy wrote this note from the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair to her father, John Cornelius Gillespie. The postmark is September 5, 1904.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century was a golden age for world's fairs. The first major United States world's fair was held in Philadelphia in 1876 to celebrate the one-hundred-year anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. In 1893 the Chicago World's Fair, called the World's Columbian Exposition, commemorated the four hundredth anniversary of Christopher Columbus's discovery of America in 1492. The 1904 St. Louis World's Fair, called the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, was a celebration of the 1803 purchase of the Louisiana Territory (one year delayed). That fair was also combined with the third modern Olympic Games.*

In St. Louis, the fair was held on the grounds of Forest Park, a 1,371-acre park in the western part of the city. It was the largest fair ever held in the United States. The fair buildings were built of staff, a mixture of plaster of Paris and hemp, applied to a wooden frame. All of the buildings except the Fine Arts Building (now the St. Louis Art Museum) were removed after the close of the fair.



The Palace of Liberal Arts at the St. Louis World's Fair was a temporary building and was razed shortly after the fair closed in December 1904. Ola Frank Gillespie Purifoy wrote her postcard home from the steps of this building.

The St. Louis fair is remembered for inspiring the song "Meet Me in St. Louis, Louis,"** written in 1904. The song was further popularized by the 1944 movie *Meet Me in St. Louis*, starring Judy Garland (1922–1969). Attendance at the St. Louis World's Fair totaled almost twenty million people*** during the seven months that it was open.

Interestingly, Neville and I attended the last of the truly grand American world's fairs in 1964 at Flushing Meadows in New York. We were twenty-eight and twenty-seven years old that summer. The fair attracted 51 million people, although the United States' population was about 192 million. The 1964–65 New York World's Fair was a financial disaster; the fair needed to draw seventy million in attendance just to break even. Thus ended the era of America's big world's fairs.

*The first Olympic Games of the modern era were held in Athens, Greece, in 1896. The second Olympics took place in Paris, France, in 1900.

**Louis is pronounced "LOO-ee" in the song. In the name of the city, it is pronounced "LOO-is."

***That was almost twenty-five percent of the United States' population (about eighty-two million) at that time.

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12. REMEMBRANCES OF OLA FRANK GILLESPIE PURIFOY

Neville's grandmother **Ola Frank Gillespie (1881–1934)** died more than eighty-two years ago. The living person with the clearest firsthand recollection of Ola is her niece and namesake, Ola Virginia "Jin" Jackson Faulkner (b. 1926).

A recent photograph of Ola Virginia Jackson Faulkner, Ola Frank Gillespie Purifoy's niece. She is a first cousin of Neville's mother, Margaret Alice Purifoy. Jin Jackson Faulkner was especially helpful in our research of the Gillespie family.



Jin Jackson Faulkner was eight years old when her aunt Ola Frank Gillespie Purifoy died in 1934, so her remembrances of Ola are from the early 1930s. What follows are a selection of memories written by Jin. They are her remembrances of her Aunt Ola.

"Lois [Jin's older sister] told me that we usually had Christmas dinner with Auntie Ola, Uncle Stanley, and Margaret."

"Uncle Stanley was always playing games with us and Auntie Ola would fuss at him. She always tried to have us behave like little ladies & gentlemen."

"When Kathy [Jin's niece] was born on July 1, 1931, Lois and I were sent to Auntie's house. At the time, we were living at 311 McClure. While there Auntie [Ola] kept us occupied with learning embroidery."

“Auntie always gave us treats in the Kitchen. The table and chairs were like the ones in old time ice cream parlors. The treat was usually pineapple sherbet.”

“I didn’t like carrots as a child, & Auntie would often have English peas and carrots mixed together. I would eat the peas & leave the carrots, but Auntie wouldn’t let me get by with that. She made me eat the carrots before I could have dessert.”

“I remember the house at 821 W. Washington had beautiful hardwood floors & they were always shiny & slick. The side & back yards had lots of trees; so shady and cool in the summertime.”

“I remember Auntie was stern, but loving, & we all loved her very much. I do remember that her casket was placed in the living room when she died.”

“We loved Uncle Stanley, too. After Auntie died, he would come & eat Sunday dinner with us sometimes. He could be so funny and make us laugh.”

“One dinner (I don’t remember what it was), but some of the foods were running together & Mother offered to get us another plate. To which Uncle Stanley replied: ‘Why? It all goes down together anyway.’”

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13. OLA FRANK GILLESPIE PURIFOY'S OBITUARY

Ola Frank Gillespie (1881–1934), Neville's grandmother, died of cancer on July 5, 1934, at age fifty-three.



Ola Frank Gillespie Purifoy (seated), two months before she died. With her are Stanley Neville Purifoy; her daughter, Margaret Alice Purifoy Frierson; and her grandson Charles Davis Frierson III.

Ola Frank Gillespie Purifoy's obituary appeared in *The Jonesboro Evening Sun* on July 5, 1934, the day she died.

MRS. PURIFOY ANSWERS CALL

Prominent Jonesboro Lady
Called By Death This
Morning At 8:30.

Mrs. Ola Gillispie Purifoy, 52, wife of Stanley N. Purifoy, one of Jonesboro's most beloved ladies, passed away this morning at 8:30 at her home on West Washington Avenue, succumbing to a two years illness of complication of diseases.

The deceased was the daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Gillispie. She was born in Hernando, Miss., and moved to Jonesboro with her parents when quite young.

She was united in marriage on March 30, 1904 to Stanley N. Purifoy, and to this union one child was born, a daughter, Mrs. Charles Frierson, Jr.

Active Church Worker.

She joined the First Baptist Church of this city when a small girl and has been an active and leading member ever since, being a prominent member of the W.M.S. and Mary K. Eagle Society of the church.

Mrs. Purifoy was prominent in social circles, being a member of the Sorosis Club.

Surviving are her husband and daughter, Mrs. Charles Frierson, Jr.; three brothers, J. L. Gillispie of Cotton Plant, R. H. Gillispie of Memphis, W. T. Gillispie of Michigan, and two sisters, Mrs. Claude V. Jackson of Jonesboro and Mrs. Charles E. Snowden of Memphis. One grandson, Charles Frierson, the third, survives.

In the death of Mrs. Purifoy Jonesboro has lost one of its most popular ladies. She possessed a lovable disposition and easily won friends. A legion of friends mourn her loss.

Funeral Tomorrow.

Funeral rites will be held Friday afternoon at three o'clock at the First Baptist Church, conducted by the pastor, Rev. Dow H. Heard, assisted by Rev. H. Lynn Wade, pastor of the First Methodist Church. Interment will be at the city cemetery in charge of Gregg Funeral Home.

Pall bearers will be: C. B. Gregg, C. A. McMeen, Joe Little, J. M. Patrick, P. S. Osborne, E. C. Barton, Gordon Crenshaw, D. B. Aycock, H. L. Berkshire, Dr. E. J. Horner, W. R. Stuck, E. Whitfield, T. J. Ellis, R. L. Muse, C. W. Claunch, J. R. Gregson, P. C. Barton and C. D. Frierson, Sr.

*Ola Frank Gillespie Purifoy's
obituary in The Jonesboro
Evening Sun on July 5, 1934.
She was age fifty-three years
old, not fifty-two, at her death.*