The Roberts Family

and their

Reese and Goodhew Relations

Robert, a name said to mean "bright renown," was introduced to England by the Normans. The Normans were originally Vikings who settled on France's northwestern coast, converted to Christianity and assimilated with the French people. They were known as the "Northmen," and their duchy became known as Normandy. In 1066, they conquered England. The surname *Roberts*, meaning Robert's son, emerged in the latter part of the 13th century and became common in England and eventually Wales.

Born in England about 1788, John Henry Roberts I emigrated to Warren County, Georgia, on the northeastern side of the state, close to its border with South Carolina. There, he met and married Maria B. Jones (1798 to 1847) in March 1815. She was the daughter of Sterling Jones (1768 to 1854) and Anna Fickling (1780 to 1811).

John was then in his late twenties, and nothing is known of his origin or ancestry in England. But he was enterprising, and in Warrenton, the county seat, he prospered as a merchant and was also appointed postmaster in 1821. In 1830, he owned ten slaves.

Maria gave birth to the couple's six known children—three sons and three daughters—before her death in 1847. John died in 1855 and was buried beside her in the Warrenton Cemetery. One of their children was John Henry Roberts II.

Dr. John Henry Roberts II (about 1817 to after 1880)
Temperance Emeline (Tempy) Baker (about 1825 to before 1880)
Their Children:
John Henry Roberts III (1848 to unknown)
William Thomas Roberts (1850 to 1919)

Having completed the two-year course of studies at the Medical College of Georgia in Augusta, John Jr. married Tempy Baker in Warrenton on Oct. 18, 1847. She was the daughter of Henry Harris Baker (1797 to 1865) and Eliz-

abeth Saxon (1802 to 1860). The Baker family farmed in Warren County.

In 1850, John was a practicing physician in Warrenton with assets of $2,300, which included a dozen slaves, and he and Tempy were the parents of two-year-old John Henry Roberts III. Their second son, William, arrived before year's end. In February 1851, the family relocated to Rome, a young city of fewer than three thousand in northwest Georgia, where he purchased an established business: Family Provisions & Groceries. Although he had given up practicing medicine, he stated in a newspaper ad: "I expect soon to open a stock of Drugs and Medicines, and hereby solicit Physicians' Prescription orders." In the census of 1860, he and Tempy were the parents of two sons: John Henry III (age 12) and William Thomas (10), and the family's assets were estimated at $4,000. The Civil War marked a turning point for the family. John was young enough to be drafted into service, but family lore tells us that he worked as a doctor at the Confederate hospital in Augusta, caring for the ill and wounded of the Army of Tennessee. At Rome, the Noble Bros. Foundry, which manufactured cannons and locomotives, attracted the attention of the Union Army and was a prime factor in the occupation of the city by Sherman's troops in 1864.

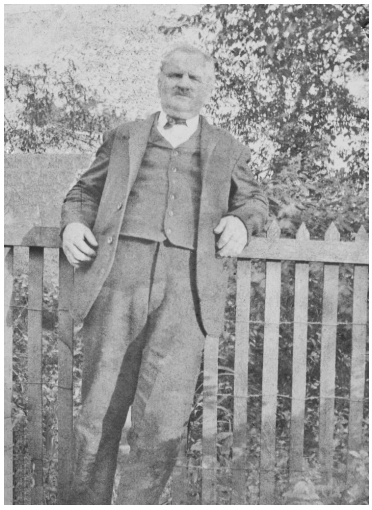
After the war, the family's fortunes crashed. By 1870, John made a modest living as a notary public, while his son 21-year-old Henry worked as a store clerk and 20-year-old William as a barkeeper. The family's assets had by then dwindled to $200. Nothing would come of whatever prospects John may have imagined for himself and his sons. Tempy died in the 1870s, and in 1880, John, age 63, was living in Greenwood, Etowah County, Alabama, a rural community fifty miles west of Rome. He worked there as a school teacher, boarded with a farmer and his wife, and complained of rheumatism. His younger son, 30-year-old William, also lived in Etowah County with his wife and their five young children. There is no record of John's death. (The fate of John Henry Roberts III is also unknown.)

Two very different ancestral lines came together when William Thomas Roberts married Serena Marcilla Reese in Jefferson County, Alabama, in 1873. The daughter of Francis (Frank) Reese (1807-87) and Matilda Power (1811-75), Marcilla had grown up in the Sandusky community near Elyton, the village that served as county seat. She was the youngest of five daughters and one son. In 1870, her father owned 80 acres, valued at $100. He raised a little cotton, but primarily made a living as a wagonmaker. Both he and Matilda were literate, and their eldest daughter taught at the common school. The nobility of Serena Reese's ancestry lies in sharp contrast to the modesty of the Roberts family's circumstances. See *Addendum I: The Reese Family.*

William Thomas Roberts (1850 to 1919)
Salena Marcilla Reese (1854 to 1910)
Their Children:
Annie Fay Pickens (1873 to 1950)
James Henry Roberts (1875 to 1921)
Lula Cleopatra Hoehn (1876 to 1917)
Rosa Lee Roberts Roberts (1878 to 1973)
William Francis Roberts (1880 to 1948)
Ella M. O'Dell (1885 to 1967)
Harry Alfred Roberts (1888 to 1953)
Edwin Wilkes Booth (Ed) Roberts (1891 to 1960)

William Thomas Roberts wed Marcilla Reese in Jefferson County, Alabama, in 1873. They spent the early years of their marriage in Georgia, where their four eldest children were born, before moving to Etowah County, Alabama, about 1878. By 1880, they had settled in Pratt (later known as Pratt City), in Jefferson County. Pratt was the state's largest mining community, only a few miles from Sandusky, where Marcilla had grown up. The founding of the nearby city of Birmingham in 1871 and its rapid growth created a demand for building tradesmen, and William readily found work

as a self-employed house painter. They were a family of modest means, but William would tell his children about his father having been a doctor in Augusta, Georgia, during the Civil War—a story that would linger in the family lore for generations. Marcilla's more impressive Reese ancestry was probably unknown to them.



William Thomas Roberts

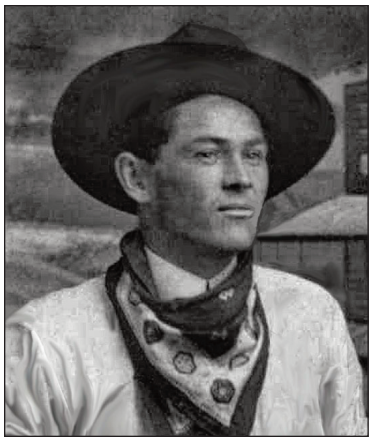
Marcilla gave birth to 13 children, eight of whom reached adulthood. In 1900, the family lived on Fourth St. in Pratt. Their two unmarried older sons, James and William, were then employed as coal miners. (Three of the four Roberts sons would eventually follow their father's lead and become house painters.) William and Marcilla Roberts are not known to have ever owned real estate, but two of their daughters married reliable, ambitious men who purchased houses side by side on Roe St. (later 39th St., South) in the heart of Birmingham's Avondale neighborhood: Lula to Charles A. Hoen, a railroad engineer, and Ella to John Calvin O'Dell, the manager of a drugstore. (In the late 1920s, John O'Dell would found the O'Dell Drug Co., a highly successful wholesale pharmaceutical business.) In 1910, William and Marcilla were living with the Hoen family, while their youngest child, 19-year-old Edwin Wilkes Booth Roberts[1], known as Ed, was living with the O'Dells. Ed had completed only one year of high school before going to work with his father as a house painter who did odd jobs. That year, Marcilla died at home, survived by 60-year-old William. He would live with one or another of his daughters' families until his death nine years later. He was buried at the Oakland Cemetery in Ensley.

Several blocks away at 3619 5th Ave., South, lived John W. Goodhew (1871–1940), his wife Mary Frances (Fannie) Marshall (1871–1924) and their six children. John's parents, George B. Goodhew and Charlotte Champ, had emigrated from Chatham, Kent, England to St. Thomas, Ontario, Canada, in the 1840s before settling in Covington, Kentucky. He was a cabinetmaker, but his son John would become a railroad man. Birmingham had been founded in 1971 at the crossing of two new railroads. The city was laid out in a grid of streets and avenues on either side of the east-west railroad reserve, a wide, elevated median bisecting the city. As if by magic, Birmingham rapidly grew to became a mining and industrial center reliant on its steel rails and on railroad men like John Goodhew. He arrived with Fannie and their daughter in 1896 and went to work as a steam locomotive engineer. Fannie gave birth to another four daughters and a son there, and John purchased the large, comfortable Fifth Ave. house he and Fannie called home throughout their lives. Many of their neighbors were also employed by the railroad, and their home was a short walk to Avondale Methodist Church and popular Avondale Park. See *Addendum II: The Goodhew Family*

Edwin Wilkes Booth (Ed) Roberts (1891 to 1960)
Nellie Mae (Nell) Goodhew (1897 to 1976)
Their Children:
Edwin Donald Roberts (1917 to 1982)
Hazel Nell Roberts (1921 to 2008)

The marriage of Ed Roberts and Nell Goodhew began on shaky ground. They were wed in a civil ceremony on July 23, 1914, ahead of which Ed and his father had posted a $500 bond[2], which guaranteed that the couple fulfilled the legal requirements for marriage. That sum would be paid by the prospective groom as a penalty if an impediment to the marriage were to be found. (No money changed hands at the time of its posting.) Although the bond guar-

1. How he came to be named Edwin Wilkes Booth Roberts is a mystery. Edwin Thomas Booth was the best known American actor of the 19th century, his fame however eclipsed by his actor brother John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of President Abraham Lincoln. There is no kinship connection between the Roberts and Booth families.



Edwin Wilkes Booth Roberts, about 1915.

anteed that the couple were of legal age, Nell was six months shy of her eighteenth birthday. She had completed only one year of high school before going to work as a stenographer at age 16. When Ed registered for the military draft three years later, the couple were living with her family, and Ed had taken a job as a fireman for the Birmingham Southern Railroad. It was a lowly entry-level position, most likely urged upon him by Nell's father. Employment with the railroad probably spared Ed from being drafted. According to the World War I draft registration, he was of medium height with blue eyes and dark brown hair. Nell was slim and taller than her husband.

Three years into the marriage, their first child, Edwin Donald, arrived on Dec. 15, 1917. In 1921, Nell gave birth to a daughter, Hazel Nell. Ed's railroad career was short-lived; by 1925, he had returned to house painting and dabbled at carpentry. Throughout the 1920s, the family moved from rented house to rented house in the Avondale and Woodlawn neighborhoods until, in 1930, they were managing a rooming house with five tenants at 2207 7th Ave., S., across the street from the Third Presbyterian Church. Their monthly rent was $35. To further make ends meet, Nell had returned to work as a stenographer.

Birmingham was hard hit by the Great Depression of the 1930s, its full-time workforce plummeting at one point from 100,000 to 15,000. The effect on the Roberts family was life-altering. Ed Roberts can be fairly described as a ne'er-do-well. He had neglected the responsibilities of being a husband and father, and in about 1934, Nell divorced him, claiming that he refused to seek work to support the family. About that time, Donald dropped out of Philips High School in his junior year and did what his father was incapable of: He took a job as a machine operator at the nearby Continental Gin Company to help support his mother and sister.

By 1939, Ed was remarried to Annie Belle Dickey Hubbard, a divorcee twenty years his junior and the mother of a nine-year-old daughter. According to the 1940 census, they lived in the city's West End neighborhood, and he—but more likely Annie—was employed as a bookkeeper for a wholesale flour company, earning $1,320 annually. Ed continued painting houses, and the 1950 census described him as a "decorator," most likely because he worked indoors. His health had, by then, begun to decline, and he died in 1960 and was buried at Elmwood Cemetery.

There was little praiseworthy in the life and character of Edwin W.B. Roberts. But like his father, he managed to woo and marry a woman from a good family; in Ed's case, a woman who deserved a much better husband. To learn more, see *Addendum III: Nell Goodhew Roberts.*

Edwin Donald Roberts I (Dec. 15, 1917 to Nov. 15, 1982)
Margaret Helen Smith (Jan. 26, 1917, to March 10, 1980)
Their Children:
Edwin Donald Roberts II (b. Dec. 13, 1946)
Joe Michael Roberts (Oct. 14, 1948 to Feb. 12, 2007)

The Donald Roberts family's story continues in "Growing Up Roberts: Second Thoughts."

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ADDENDUM I: THE REESE FAMILY

THE REESE FAMILY can be traced back to ninth-century Wales where they were among the most illustrious families. Wales is a country in southwest Great Britain notable for its rugged coastline, mountainous terrain, distinctive language and Celtic culture. It was conquered by England in 1283, but while Wales became a constituent of the United Kingdom, it retained a fiercely independent spirit and identity. The original *Rhys* surname, meaning a twist or change, would eventually become *Rees* when members of the family emigrated to England and finally *Reese* in America. Over the centuries, various Rhys men had distinguished the family by marrying daughters of Welsh kings, forming alliances with English kings and resisting the authority of the Church of England. When dissatisfaction with the church erupted in the late 17th century, the Rees family came to embrace Calvinist Presbyterianism, and for several generations the ministry became the family trade. The name *David* was carried forward from one generation to the next, and each family apparently dedicated their first-born son at birth to the ministry.

Frank Reese's great-great-great grandfather, was Sir David ap Rhys (1656 to 1745), of Brecon, Brecknockshire, in southern Wales. The son of Sir Thomas, Prince of South Wales, he married Gladys (1654 to 1685) about 1678; the daughter of Redwallon, the Prince of Powis, she died seven years later, leaving him with one known child, his son the Rev. David Reese II (1676 to 1724). A Presbyterian pastor, he married Maude Owens (1680 to 1724), the daughter of Sir Meredith Owens of South Wales, and fathered seven children with her. They were among the Protestant families induced to settle in Ulster (Northern Ireland), where, in 1689, he participated in the Siege of Derry, a Protestant act of rebellion against James II, the last Catholic King of England, Ireland and Scotland. Following the siege, they returned to Wales before relocating to London. For a short time, he pastored a Presbyterian congregation at Southwark, the area around the southern end of London Bridge. This was most likely St. Thomas Presbyterian Church, built in 1703. Owing to their nonconformist faith, Calvinist Protestants in London endured persecution, which may explain why he emigrated to America with his family in 1710, landing at New Castle, Delaware.

The family eventually migrated to the Poplar Tent community in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina (present-day Charlotte). It was said that "North Carolina was settled by the freest of the free; by men to whom the restraints of the other colonies were too severe." Rev. Reese was an intelligent, well-educated man with a library that included *Shakespeare's Plays, Paradise Lost and Regained, Ancient History* and various religious and medical works. He and Maude died in 1724 and were buried in the Poplar Tent Presbyterian Church Cemetery, near Concord, North Carolina.

One of their sons was David Tasker Reese (1708–87). In 1738, he married Susan Ruth Polk (1719 to 1800). A farmer and church elder, he was described as "a born statesman and one of the best of men." He strongly opposed England's oppressive control of the colonies, but when the colonists united to secure their independence, he was too elderly to take up arms. The pen became his sword, and in May 1775, he was one of the signers of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, which is thought to have been the first such document written in the thirteen colonies. In the Revolutionary War that followed, he and his second son, Thomas, were appointed by the Provisional Congress to procure firearms and provisions for the local militia.

Thomas Reese (1742–96) began his education at an academy in Mecklenburg County, the only school within one hundred miles. It's said that he "was so determined upon a classical education that he cheerfully gave up his share in his father's estate to bestow all his means upon an education." Thomas's studies continued at the College of New Jersey at Princeton, where he graduated in 1768. Eventually renamed Princeton University, the school had been founded in 1742 as a Presbyterian institution of higher learning with an expansive curriculum to educate young men for various professions, not solely ministerial work. (Princeton is the fourth-oldest of the nine colleges chartered before the American Revolution.)

After graduation, he accepted a ministerial call to the Salem Presbyterian Church, Sumter County, South Carolina, where he was ordained in 1773—the year he married Jane Harris (1754 to 1804) of Mecklenberg County. He was described as "a thorough student, well versed in theology, mental and moral philosophy." In 1788, his theological essay on the influence of religion in civil society earned him a doctorate of divinity degree from Princeton, making him the first Carolinian to be so honored. In 1792, after serving the Salem Church congregation for two decades, he took his ministry to Pendleton Village in northwestern South Carolina, where he owned a plantation on Twenty-three Mile Creek. Although critical of the institution of slavery, he owned a large number of slaves, but was said to have done "much to promote the religious life of the colored race in his district." He died there at age 54 in 1796.

Thomas and Jane were the parents of seven children. The two eldest of their four sons would graduate with honors from Princeton, and their third son would earn a degree in medicine in Philadelphia. But Henry Dobson Reese (1785 to 1856), known as Dobson and the youngest, was apparently less inclined to scholarship. He was described as "a mechanical genius. He could build houses, carriages, wagons, and make different kinds of furniture; in fact, he could make anything in wood and iron that he needed. His talent in this line was remarkable." Dobson was a boy of eleven when his father died, shortly after composing his will: "To my beloved son Henry Dobson, I bequeath one Negro boy named Cyrus, one Negro boy named Toney & one Negro girl named Daphne with her offspring, also a fourth part of my books and my silver buckle. It is moreover my will that after having received a good English education he be bound out an apprentiss to such Trade or Mechanical Profession as my executors may think him best adapted for."

In about 1808, Dobson wed Rebecca Pickens Harris (1786 to 1865) over the objection of her father, which led the young couple to slip away and exchange their vows on a flat-boat in the middle of a river. They lived quietly on a farm near Pendleton in Anderson County, South Carolina, where over a period of 25 years, Rebecca gave birth to eleven children. After the Alabama territory achieved statehood in 1822, "Alabama fever" swept the Carolinas, and many of their children took advantage of the opportunity to purchase inexpensive land there. Most of them eventually settled in Perry County and Greene County in the west-central area of the state. In those days, transportation was limited to horse-drawn wagons and carriages. Two of the brothers, Francis and Carlos, having learned how to build them from their father, brought that essential trade to Alabama: Carlos in Marion, Perry County; Francis in Elyton, Jefferson County. Sometime in the 1850s, the elderly Dobson and Rebecca followed their children to Greene County, Alabama, where they lived their remaining few years.

Francis T. Reese (1807–85), known as Frank, had married Matilda McKenzie Power (1811–75) in Pendleton, South Carolina, in 1829. before relocating to Benton (Calhoun) County, Alabama, in the 1840s. By 1860, they were living in the Greens community near Elyton in Jefferson County. Matilda would give birth to six daughters and one son. In 1870, only their daughters Flora Ann, then 24, and Marcilla, 17, remained at home. Marcilla married William Thomas Roberts in 1873. After Matilda's death two years later, Frank relocated to Calhoun County, where his daughter Jane Catherine Self lived with her farmer husband and numerous children. Nearly seventy years old, Frank continued to make a living as a wagonmaker and married Mary Kennedy Richie, a 47-year-old widow with teenaged children, in 1877. He lived another eight years.

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ADDENDUM II: THE GOODHEW FAMILY

The Goodhew surname, sometimes spelled *Goodhewe* or *Goodhue*, first appeared in 13th-century England and is thought to have been a nickname for a trusted servant. It remains an extremely rare name in the English-speaking world. Our Goodhew ancestry began at Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, in 1790 with the birth of George Goodhew and stems from his marriage to Charlotte Champ in Chatham, Kent, in 1830. Their older children were born in England prior to the family's emigration to Ontario, Canada, around 1840; the younger were born in St. Thomas, the Ontario village where they settled, midway between Toronto and Detroit, a few miles from Lake Erie.

George Goodhew I (1790 to 1864)
Charlotte Champ (1808 to 1897)
Their Children:
George Goodhew II (1833 to 1925)
Charlotte Ames (1836 to 1907)
Anna Barrow (1840 to 1908)
Caroline Jenkins (1842 to 1915)
Mary Liebfried (1846–87)

In 1853, the family had only to cross Lake Erie in relocating to Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, Ohio, where George became a naturalized citizen in 1858. Two years later, at age 70, he was working as a grocer in Dover, Ohio. Following his death in 1864, Charlotte lived with their daughter Anna and her family in Dover.

George Goodhew II (1833 to 1925)
Catherine Ann (Kate) Morris (1845 to 1932)
Their Children:
John William (Will) Goodhew (1871 to 1940)
Edward Thomas Goodhew (1873 to 1915)
Charles Goodhew (1875–82)
Fred Albritton Goodhew (1876 to 1945)
Florence Kate Schroeder (1878 to 1972)
Nellie Grace Hartje (1880 to 1955)
Frank See Goodhew (1882 to 1957)
Ben H. Goodhew (1885–94)
Vincent Boring Goodhew (1887 to 1939)

Young George was born in Dover on the English Channel, only 31 miles from Calais, France. As a child, he emigrated with his parents to Canada and then at age 20, to the United States. He settled in Covington, Kenton County, Kentucky,[1] where he married Isabella [surname unknown] in 1854. Four years later, she died, leaving him with an infant son, George S. Goodhew. By 1860, he had married Miranda Duncan and was working as a cabinetmaker, with a personal estate of $175. Miranda's younger sister lived with them.

In October 1869, by then twice widowed and the father of two, George wed 24-year-old Kate Morris. Her paternal lineage can be traced eight generations to 17th-century England. Her great grandfather Samuel Morris II (1739 to 1816) of Stratford-upon-Avon had emigrated with his family to Long Cane Creek, South Carolina, in 1788. His son Richard

1. Across the Ohio River from Cincinnati, Covington was founded in 1815. In 1860, its population numbered 16,000.

Morris moved to Fair Haven, Preble County, Ohio, around 1805, where his wife Sophia gave birth to Kate's father John Morris in 1821. Kate was born from John's marriage to Matilda Gift.

In 1870, George worked as a pattern maker,[2] with real estate valued at $1,400 and a personal estate of $300. Jennie, the ten-year-old daughter from his second marriage, resided with them; his 14-year-old son George was living nearby with a wealthy farm family, employed as their domestic servant.

By 1880, with the nation's population shifting westward, George, Kate and their five children had relocated to the southeastern corner of Kansas. In Sheridan, a community in Cherokee County, he was employed as a carpenter. Their daughter Nellie was born there in 1881. But, apparently dissatisfied, they soon returned to Covington. There, they would reside in various houses along Jefferson Ave. In the first eighteen years of their long marriage, Kate gave birth to nine children, seven of whom reached adulthood.

George Goodhew II

In 1910, George, then 76 and celebrating four decades of marriage to Kate, continued to work full-time as a pattern maker for the railroad. They owned their home at 1649 Jefferson Ave., which they shared with their married seamstress daughter Florence Ducker (31), her daughter Clara (8), their unmarried music-teacher daughter Nellie (29) and house-painter son Vincent (22).

A decade later, 85-year-old George had retired and purchased 1716 Jefferson Ave., a two-storied brick house that they shared with their widowed daughter Florence. George died in 1925 and was buried at Highland Cemetery, Fort Mitchell, Kentucky. Kate remained in their home, and in 1930 lived there with her widowed daughter Nellie Hartje (49) and her two teenaged sons. Letters she wrote to her granddaughter Nell Goodhew Roberts in distant Birmingham, Alabama, reveal an intelligent, loving woman. Kate died at age 86 in 1932 and was buried beside George. Nellie Hartje and her unmarried son maintained the Goodhew family home on Jefferson Ave. until her death in 1955.

John William (Will) Goodhew (1871 to 1940)
Mary Frances (Fannie) Marshall (1869 to 1924)
Their Children:
Alice M. Patterson (1892 to 1976)
Nellie Mae (Nell) Roberts (1897 to 1976)
Bessie M. Walker Moore (1901–76)
Flora Rebecca Woods (1904-90)
John William (Bill) Goodhew II (1906–88)

Said to have been known to the family as Will, John William Goodhew was the firstborn of George and Kate's seven sons and two daughters. At age nineteen in 1890, he began his lifelong railroading career as a fireman[3] in Covington before marrying Mary Frances Marshall in December of that year. Known as Fannie, she was the firstborn of William R. Marshall (1845 to 1930) and the recently deceased Margaret Morris (1847–89) of Covington.

2. A pattern maker is a woodworker who crafts to precise specifications an object that will be used to create the mold in which a foundry will repeatedly cast that object in metal.

3. On a steam locomotive, the fireman controls the steam, feeding coal or wood to the firebox and water to the boiler.

Young men in those days were drawn to railroading, and if Will Goodhew was looking for work on the rails, he had only to look south to Birmingham, Alabama. Founded in 1871, the city had developed around the crossing of the Alabama & Chattanooga and South & North Alabama Railroads. Nearby deposits of iron, coal and limestone—the essential minerals for producing steel—gave the young city a vital industrial base, and by 1890, Birmingham's population numbered 26,000. Twenty years later it would top 133,000, when the populations of long-established Nashville and Atlanta were 110,000 and 155,000.

In the mid 1890s, Will, Fannie and their daughter Alice moved to Bessemer, Alabama, where they rented a house.[4] Bessemer, in the shadow of Birmingham a few miles to the northeast, was newly founded and set to become a center for steelmaking and later the manufacture of railroad passenger cars. There, he worked as a railroad engineer, and their second daughter, Nellie Mae, was born in 1897. Within a few years, Will's brother Edward Thomas Goodhew, his wife and four young children also relocated to Bessemer. Edward bought a house there and went to work as a machinist at an iron foundry.[5]

The Goodhews: *Bottom Row (l-r),* Flora, Margaret Patterson, Bill and Bessie; ***Middle Row,*** John and Alice Goodhew Patterson, Nell and Fannie; ***Top Row,*** unidentified lady and Will.

By 1910, John W. Goodhew (37), a railroad engineer, had purchased a home in Birmingham at 3619 Fifth Ave. South,[6] a few blocks from popular Avondale Park. Nearly all of their neighbors were railroad workers, and passenger trains entering the city from the east still made an Avondale stop only five blocks from their doorstep. At that time, the family included Fannie (37); their daughters Alice M. (18), Nellie M. (13), Bessie M. (9) and Flora (6); and son William (3). Alice was employed as a clerk. The large Victorian house would remain the family home for decades to come.

The booming young city's shops and offices provided employment for women as well as men, and as the older Goodhew daughters came of age, they took jobs and then wasted no time in marrying. Having only a seventh-grade education, 18-year-old Alice wed John Milton Patterson, a coal miner and farmer, in 1911. In 1913, with only one year of high school to her credit, Nell took a job as a stenographer for Dr. Gwin Specialist Co. on the eighth floor of the Farley Building. In July 1914, she married Edwin W.B. Roberts in a civil ceremony. Two years later, 15-year-old Bessie married Thomas Guy Walker, who worked as a clerk for ACIPCO, the American Cast Iron Pipe Company. The family was blessedly unaffected by the first world war and flu epidemic of 1917.

In the 1920 census, the Goodhew household included Will and Fannie (both 48), their daughter Flora (15), son William (13), their daughter Bessie Walker (19), her husband Guy (23) and their son Douglas (2). Will remained employed as a locomotive engineer, and Guy continued to work for ACIPCO. He and Bessie moved to 1820 29th

4. Fannie's father had remarried in 1891, and by 1900, he and his wife (as well as Fannie's sister Florence and her husband) had moved to Zion, Alabama, in nearby Walker County, where he was farming.

5. Edward was an enterprising young man, having registered a patent for a grinding machine before leaving Kentucky. The family were apparently about to move to Birmingham when he was killed in Walker County in August 1915, due to the negligence of the Empire Coal Co. His wife Lucy accused the company of murder and was awarded compensation.

6. Fifth Ave. South, then known as Avenue E, is one of the longest uninterrupted streets in the city.

The Goodhew home at 3619 Fifth Ave. S. on a snowy winter day.

Bill Goodhew

Will and Fannie Goodhew with their grandsons, Donald Roberts and Doug Walker, 1918.

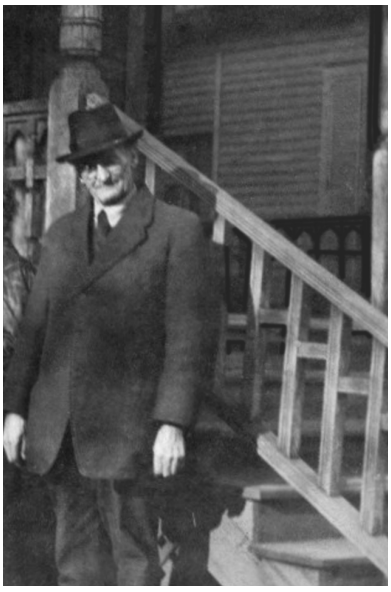
Ave. North early in the decade before his death at age 26 in 1923. Then in 1924, Fannie Goodhew died; she was buried at Elmwood Cemetery. That same year, Flora, then 20, married James L. Woods. Bessie married again in 1926, to 34-year-old Eugene E. Moore, a World War I veteran and service engineer for a heating company. As a widower in 1930, John William (58) and his son Bill Jr. (23) remained in the family home with Bessie's family, her husband paying a monthly rent of $27.50. It was a full house with Eugene and Bessie Moore (38 and 29); her children Douglas (12), Margaret (9) and Guy Walker (7); and her sister-in-law Belle Walker (31). Will continued to work as a locomotive engineer for the "steam railroad," and Bill had taken a sales position with a steel products company.

The Goodhews rarely traveled the 475 miles between Covington and Birmingham, but remained in close touch by letter. In 1931, Kate Goodhew wrote to her granddaughter Nell Roberts in Birmingham: "Tell Daddy they took Sue Gardner to the insane asylum at Longview last week.… Tell Alice it is far more profitable to raise hogs than girls. I know a man that sells $1800 worth of hogs in a year. Now he has two girls. I don't believe he could get .05 apiece, so he just keeps them.… How is my big boy [13-year-old Donald]? I have written him twice, but he doesn't answer. I hope he is not sick.… I am still making quilts, have another one to do now.… Did Daddy like his book?… Did you like the book? I have read several other articles by Halliburton [the American travel writer and adventurer Richard Halliburton]. He flew to the prison islands of the French and lived just like the prisoners. It is something awful. I wish you could come to see us sometime." She died the following year.

After the U.S. economy crashed in the early 1930s, tens of thousands in Birmingham lost their jobs, profoundly disrupting family lives. Nell, claiming that Ed refused to seek work to support their family, divorced him in 1934. That same year, young Bill Goodhew married Cecil Susan Patterson (1909–97). The daughter of an office equipment salesman, Susan had graduated from Birmingham-Southern College. Although the city's steel production had been reduced by half, Bill had proven himself as a salesman of metal products and was transferred to New Orleans. The couple would make their first home on Dufossat Street there and eventually settle in Birmingham, where they reared three sons.

In 1938, Will Goodhew, at age 66, wed his next-door neighbor Mary Falkner, a 48-year-old widow. They exchanged vows at the Cathedral of St. Paul, and he moved into her home. Following Nell's divorce, she and her teenaged children—Donald and Hazel—were living in the Goodhew home. Having space to spare, they rented one bedroom to help make ends meet.

In 1933, the divorce rate among women in the United States was 1.3 per one thousand and even lower in the Southern states where men were more apt to abandon their wives and children. As a single mother, Nell faced economic uncertainty as well as the social stigma of divorce. But she was a Goodhew and a lady, strong willed and undeterred.



Will Goodhew, about 1939

Only two years into his second marriage, 69-year-old John Will Goodhew died in January 1940 and was buried at Elmwood Cemetery. According to that year's census, Nell, 43, Donald, 22, and Hazel, 19, remained in the Goodhew home. As the nation began gearing up for the possibility of going to war, Nell took a job as an assistant clerk with the Selective Service. In time, she became manager of the local draft board in Bessemer and made a career of registering 18-year-old young men as candidates for military service. After 26 years and three major wars, she retired in December 1966, moving from Bessemer to an apartment at 2510 Caldwell Ave. on Birmingham's Southside. She enjoyed nearly a decade of retirement before developing a brain tumor. She died in 1976 and was buried in a plot she'd purchased near her parents' graves at Elmwood Cemetery.[7] To learn more about her, see *Addendum III: Nell Goodhew Roberts.*

Over time, all of the Goodhew children and grandchildren moved on, most of them leaving the city for its southern suburbs. The large, old-style Victorian house they had filled with life for nearly four decades was sold and then razed in the 1950s.

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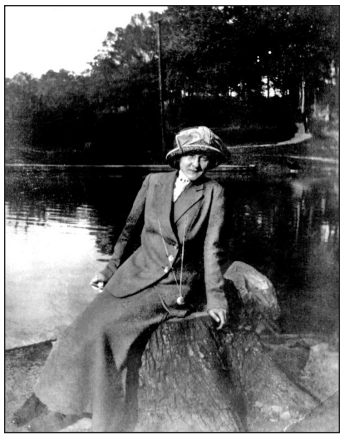
7. Nell was one of the three of the four Goodhew sisters who died within months of each other that year.

ADDENDUM III: NELL GOODHEW ROBERTS



Above Top and Middle: Nell, about 1914, with Edwin Roberts. Bottom: Nell, undated. *Right:* Nell, about 1932; *Far Right:* Donald, Hazel and Nell with an unidentified gentleman, about 1934.

She was the only grandparent my brother Mike and I knew. Not one of our friends had a grandmother like her: a divorcee and working woman, only 49 years old when I was born. To us, she was Nanny. Although her brother or one of her sisters would occasionally turn up for a family get-together, I knew her for thirty years without knowing all of her, without once considering the living she'd done prior to becoming our grandmother. To my mind, Nanny had arrived on the planet at the same moment as I.

Now I know that the Goodhews weren't the typical Southern family. Her father, a native of England, had grown up in Canada before the family emigrated to Covington, Kentucky, which was practically a suburb of Cincinnati, Ohio. He had taken no side in America's Civil War before marrying and settling in Alabama to work for the railroad. There, Nellie Mae, their second child, was born in 1892. So, the Goodhews were more or less Yankees in the heart of Dixie, which may account for the absence of a Southern twang in Nell's distinctive speaking voice.

Tall, willowy, blonde and bespectacled, young Nell grew up in the Avondale Park neighborhood among other families of railroad employees. At the turn of the century, Birmingham was booming. There was a job for anyone who could do practically anything, and one year of high school and beautiful handwriting qualified Nell for office work on the eighth floor of the Farley Building, the young city's fourth steel-frame highrise. Within a year, she met and married Edwin Wilkes Booth Roberts. He was not only shorter than Nell but also less than her in every other department. Ed would prove to be a lazy rascal, without maturity enough to be a responsible husband and father. After nearly twenty years, she divorced him in the early 1930s, citing his neglect in supporting her and their teenaged children, Donald and Hazel. During that decade of the Great Depression, most women would have endured a failed marriage and spared themseves the financial hardship and shame that inevitably followed divorce. But not Nell. Her widowed father opened the Goodhew home to them, and Nell went to work.

Helen Roberts loved and respected her mother-in-law. They were both ladies, ladies who taught their sons to act like gentlemen, and dedicated career women, women who thrived on the daily routine and their interaction with coworkers and clients. In Nell's case, the clients were young men who appeared before her on their eighteenth birthday and for years after carried in their wallets an identification card

bearing her signature. With one son and six grandsons, she knew how to handle boys on the verge of manhood—boys who would never see her again unless she ordered them to report for a physical, the dreaded first step toward being drafted into the U.S. Army. Then, they would find her waiting at the Greyhound Station at the crack of dawn to see that they boarded a chartered bus headed for Gunter Air Force Base in Montgomery.

Nell never owned a home of her own. In all the decades that she managed the Selective Service office in Bessemer, she rented an apartment on the same block. For Mike and me, there would be no fabled holiday visits to grandmother's house. She came to us. While Hazel relied on her mother to help maintain her chaotic household and rear her troublesome sons, Helen and Donald asked only for the occasional pleasure of her company. Nell had never learned to drive, so "getting Nanny" was one of our Thanksgiving and Christmas rituals. Being Methodist allowed her to celebrate the holidays with a glass of wine, so Helen kept a bottle of Mogen David in the pantry, many many years past its having gone from sweet to sour.

On a Sunday afternoon in 1952, Nanny invited Mama, Mike and me to a movie matinee at the Ritz Theatre. In a whisper as an intense adult plot quickly unfolded, she asked if we wanted to leave. Without hesitating, Mike and I said no. Afterward, she apologized, "I thought it was a musical!" It was *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

As Mike and I grew up, Nanny took pride in our accomplishments. She was at Auburn for my graduations, at Parris Island when Mike completed his Marine training, at the airport when I departed for the Middle East and at First Presbyterian for his wedding. She never forgot our birthdays, but appeared ageless herself. After 26 years and three wars, she retired from the Selective Service and moved to a Southside apartment. She was proud of her Goodhew roots and never spoke of the man who'd made her a Roberts. Ten years into a pleasant retirement, she was felled by a brain tumor. Surgery only made things worse, and the last time I saw this strong-willed daughter of a railroad engineer, she said, "I've run off my tracks."

—Don Roberts

Left Top, Nell and Donald Roberts, 1944; ***Middle,*** Nell and Hazel Fulton, 1946; ***Bottom,*** Nell, about 1950; ***Below,*** Nell with grandsons Mike and Donny Roberts, Panama City Beach, 1954; ***Right,*** Nell, about 1973.