

Narrative of Alvin Marion and Emma Copeland Gorham (Charles & Martha Gorham)

Alvin: Hello! My name is Alvin Marion Gorham. I was born in 1837 in Atlanta, Georgia. My parents were John Clark and Martha Adcock Gorham. By 1850, we had moved to Carroll County, Georgia and there were six of us kids: me, Andrew Jackson, Walton Fleming, Mary Catherine, George Washington, and Martha. Our grandmother Sarah Adcock lived with us then. We farmed like most everyone else around us. In 1860 I married the prettiest girl around, Emma Copeland.

Emma: Oh, Alvin, how you carry on! I also grew up in Georgia. My parents farmed like all our neighbors and the girls learned how to keep house and tend to babies. We also worked in the fields. I was 18 years old when we married in Paulding County. A year later, our daughter Ida Elizabeth was born and we called her "Sissy." We didn't have much but we were very happy. But that didn't last long because all the men were talking about the problems in our country.

Alvin: There was much talk of war. We didn't like the way those Yankees were trying to tell us what we could and couldn't do. We just wanted them to let us alone. We were pretty good at hunting, so my brothers Walton, Jackson and I joined the First Confederate Volunteer Regiment that was forming over in Powder Springs, not far from where we lived. We thought we would whip those Yankees and be home in the spring in time to plant the crops. But it didn't turn out that way. We were privates in the Infantry and from the start, it was tough. We walked and walked and walked. There were never enough supplies. We had brought our hunting guns from home and it was a good thing. We were a rag-tag lot. We were led by Captain Goodwin and Colonel Smith. We rode a train down to Mobile and fought in two engagements at Fort Gaines, Alabama. We were really outnumbered. They had over 3,000 and we had just over 800. We had to surrender the fort. This is where Dauphine Island is now. We did more fighting, but mostly we walked and had little to eat. It was a sad day when the South surrendered and we had to go home, a defeated lot.

When the war ended, the south was devastated and nothing was the same. Most people had lost what little they had. Many of my family and friends had died in the war: some in engagements, but some from disease and dysentery. Every family was affected in some way or another.

Emma: One thing that was so hard was that we couldn't hear from each other much during the war. If he wrote a letter, it would take months if it was delivered at all. I didn't know whether he would come home at all. When he did come home from the war, he was a different man than when he left. I could tell he had experienced many hardships. But he was so glad to see little Sissy. She had really grown in the years he was gone. In 1864, our second daughter Mariette was born; in 66 Martha Louella; then John Alvin in 68; Laura Della in 69; Harvey lee in 72; Maggie Olivia in 75; and Dessie in 82. We had a beautiful family. We worked hard but we had good times too. We enjoyed each other.

Alvin: After the war, several of our neighbors were beginning to move west. The Southern Homestead Act of 1866 had passed allowing Confederates and others to homestead the five southern states that had been part of the Confederate States of America. Alabama was one of them. Some of the land was owned by the railroad, but some was public land where a family would homestead for five year and it would be theirs. We moved to Blount County and later, my brother Walton and I came to the Holly Pond area. It was a good place with good people and we lived out the rest of our lives here.

Emma: The people here in Holly Pond were very nice. They helped us get settled in. The community was really growing. They had construction going on everywhere. The town already had a post office and several stores, blacksmith shops, and a school. We fit right in and set out to make our living here. Our children had grown up and were beginning to marry and start their own families. Sissy married Jack Archer while we were still in Blount County; Martha Louella married Enos Lewis, John Alvin married Lizzie Holcomb, Laura Della married Tom Burgess, Harvey Lee married Dora Stisher; Maggie Olivia married George Dodson, and Dessie married Floyd Amos. Marietta never married. She always had health problems and she died in 1896, just 32 years old. She is buried right here in Holly Pond Cemetery. Most of the family stayed around here and raised their families. You would probably be surprised how many of you are related to us through all our children's families.

Alvin: Emma died in 1912, the same year Holly Pond became an incorporated town. She was laid to rest in Holly Pond Cemetery near our daughter. One year later, I joined her here in Holly Pond Cemetery.