

April 6, 1956

The attached is a verbatim copy of the OBITUARY of Mrs. Katie Chambers Newsom, which I made from a printed extract from the CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE of July 9, 1885.

It was written by one of her sons, J.D. Newsom, who was a Methodist Minister.

One of her daughters, Hester's sister, Francis Orpha Newsom, married James Turner (she was his second wife).

Johnnie Turner, one of James Turner's grandchildren gave the printed copy of the OBITUARY to my brother Henry Newsom, some years ago. Johnnie's father, Lett Turner, was a son of James Turner's second wife, hence a cousin of mine.

H.N.

May 12, 1964

I have recently learned from the record in the Family Bible in the possession of LeRoy Newsom that J.D. Newsom's full name was Joseph Duckworth Newsom. (He was born March 17, 1828).

H.N.

#### OBITUARY

(Extract from CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE, July 9, 1885)

NEWSOM -- MRS. KATIE NEWSOM, the subject of this memoir, was born near Camden, South Carolina, August 30, 1801. She was the daughter of Capt. J. Chambers, who won his title under Gen. Francis Marion, in the struggle for independence by our revolutionary fathers. Capt. Chambers, seeing a large family growing up around him, determined to seek a newer country than South Carolina, where he could settle his sons and daughter around him in life and business. Nothing was thought of more ambitious nor honorable than farming. When this daughter was just three years of age, but distinctly within her recollection, the father made his first move to Tennessee. After three years experience here, he decided that this was not the country for him. In 1807, in a flatboat with his family and servants, he

descended the Tennessee River and down the Mississippi to near the mouth of Cole's Creek. The year following, with his same craft he continued his voyage down the Mississippi, landing at where the city of Baton Rouge now stands. It was then a straggling village, populated almost entirely by French and Spanish. A few years previous to this, the native born American citizens, some of whose families intermarried with that of Capt. Chambers, gathered from the country around some from as far up as the city of Natchez, and as day dawn rushed into the Spanish fort, compelling the surrender of the military, by which the Catholic priests were suppressing Protestant worship and compelling Roman Catholic marriages. This landing was in February 1810; the river was at its flood, and some of the party descended it in a small row-boat to where the Bayou Manchac, then a formidable stream, made out from the great river, carrying a vast quantity of its surpulous waters out through the lakes. The voyagers passed down this to its confluence with the Amite River fourteen miles east of the city of Baton Rouge. Here the veteran and patriarch raised and settled his eight children near him, and here his dust is quietly reposing. A residence as comfortable as the means of those times could afford, was built and a farm opened.

The father had come to feel the absence of public preaching, and the means of grace for himself and family. There was occasional preaching in private houses and sometimes in the woods, by Craig, John Bowman, J. Ireys E. Bird and others. Not two miles from the Chambers old residence the oak tree can be pointed out where John Ireys E. Bird has been heard to deliver the message of his divine Master.

The old captain determined to build a house of worship. Saw mills were then almost unknown, hence the most practical way to procure planks was by hand with the old style whipsaw with a piece of timber on a scaffold with one man on top of the log, another on the ground underneath. The saw was drawn up and down until a plank was made. Cypress timber was procured from the vast breaks where this species of timber then stood in its primeval grandeur, and from this primitive mode lumber was procured for the walls, floor, pulpit and seats.

How this writer has been entertained by the account of the playful frolics of the girl who, in some of her capers, would run up on the skids of this makeshift saw mill and leap from the scaffolding to the accumulated sawdust below, in all the abandon of childish merriment and glee.

How difficult to associate these girlish, playful romps with the staid old mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, who has so often taken her preacher-son to her withered arms, pressing him to her heart, and with tears of joy pronounce blessings on him after long months and sometimes years of separation. With some help from the neighbors, the house was built. It was, perhaps, the first Methodist Church in the State of Louisiana; certainly the first in that part of the State. It was years after this before there was any Methodist Church either in New Orleans or Baton Rouge. It was long known in that region of country as Old Salem. Here the children and many of the grandchildren of this chief builder were gathered into the fold of Christ, and from it two grandsons went forth to preach the gospel -- one delivering his first discourse and the other almost his first from this massive, quaint old pulpit. This house was standing until during the late war, when vandal hands pulled it down and split it to splinters to kindle the camp fires of an invading army.

Miss Katie Newsom [Chambers] was married to Mr. James Newsom, Esq., in the nineteenth year of her age. Her husband died in 1858, leaving her a pilgrimage of twenty-five years of widowhood to pursue to the end of her life. She was the mother of thirteen children, one of whom died in infancy. All the others, seven sons and five daughters, grew up to the full estate of manhood and womanhood, all became heads of families except one, who though she lived to thirty years of age never married. Those of her children who have died left a clear testimony behind of an abiding faith in a crucified redeemer, four sons and two daughters who now survive her, are laboring to lead godly lives, one of these sons is a member of the North Mississippi Conference. She leaves forty, or forty-five grandchildren nearly, if not quite all of whom are members of the Methodist Church, one a preacher of the gospel.

Perhaps not less than forty great-grandchildren, who in this are followers in the lead of their fathers' mother.

She joined the Methodist Church in her thirteenth year, but made no clear profession of religion until her seventeenth year. For more than sixty-six years she was true to the church of her choice, and faithfully adhered to its wholesome doctrines. Her religion was rather on the demonstrative order, not noisy, but at times she did not hesitate to speak out as the spirit gave her utterance. She was rather given to reprove sin than any other mode of speaking for Christ, and as she was often unspareing in this her motives were not always well understood. Her religious training was that of more than two generations ago, and took on the mold and stamp of the plain primitive style, of the early pioneers of Methodism, when Church form and style were unknown, knowing that this had in its message brought a religion which would convert the soul, and affording an assurance of ultimate and final salvation she was unwilling to take on anything else, no innovations, no trained singers for her, this plain severe training of her youth sometimes assuming the dogmatic, she carried with her to old age. She was an excellent singer and in the days of her prime had a truly sweet voice in song, the charm of its melody could often be distinguished in the congregations, she thought there was nothing better nor more acceptable to God than "singing with the spirit and with the understanding also." As she applied her needle and thread, or went about other domestic duties in providing for her large family, sweetly singing those old time tunes set to old style Methodist hymns thus unconsciously giving vent to the happy religious feelings of her soul, she laid deep impressions of childhood which though forty-five years ago are fresh in memory today.

Let us thank God for mothers who love to, and often in true religious feeling sing spiritual hymns in the hearing of their children. She never lost her love for singing often after time and age had split and cracked her voice, she would try some of her old time songs, and at times when her children and grandchildren would gather about her to sing for her gratification, she would join in some familiar tune and hymn, when old men would stop with hearts too full, and voices too husky to preserve the melody, and listen to

something which carried them back across the experiences of half a century. For many of the first years of her married life her husband was a good liver, then it was one of her great pleasures to entertain the preachers and have them make her house their home, in those days there was no long stay of the preacher at any time at one place, it was a few days rest or as in most instances it was to "Tarry but a night." Well does this writer remember how family habits and family rules had to be suspended or adjusted to suit the eccentricities or the necessities of the preachers she entertained. The children must remain up to prayers at night, and be up to prayers in the morning, when an early start was required in order to reach a given point in time. An early breakfast was served, and the children had an early rousing to be at prayers; for with her a preacher present meant family prayer night and morning. The preachers of the school of her training have all passed away - - B. Tabor, J. Matthews, J. Bowman, B. Pipkin, T. Clinton and others.

The latter two she ever admired for their plainness and unpretentious style. So often have I heard her speak in comendation of them, that I used to think I ought to do and talk like them. These worthy sons of the gospel have all passed on to glory before her. She loved the younger preachers, but somehow with her they never grew to fill the place of the old time ministers. After her husband's death she quit keeping house and made her home with her children. Some seven or eight years before her death, by an unfortunate fall, she had a knee dislocated and was never able to walk afterwards. It was an affliction to her to have to be waited on in her old age. She preferred doing for herself. Her helplessness from age, and this crippled knee was an affliction which she strove hard to bear with patience. Too helpless to change her home among her children, the last years of her life she spent at Mr. T. Pearson's, her son-in-law where she had the faithful untireness attention of her daughter. During the early part of the spring she seemed to be doing well for one of her age, though signs of failing strength were manifest. For a day or two she appeared to be unwell. While sitting up she suddenly showed signs of sinking. She was placed in bed, when she lapsed into a slumber of stupor, from which she was never effectually aroused. After lying for hours

in this condition, she ceased to breathe, as if the machinery of life had worn out, and the wheels of nature stood still. No groan, no struggle; as quietly as an infant would fall asleep, she passed away from earth, the matriarch of more than fourscore years, on May 21, 1885. The ensuing August 30, she would have been eighty-four years of age.

J.D.N.