

ANNIE PACE McSORLEY ARMSTRONG

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SELF WRITTEN INTERVIEW. NO TAPES.

MY INHERITANCE

My grandfather, John Francis McSorley, and his two brothers of Trilliegh, Ireland left Ireland during the potato famine which occurred around the year of 1848. The three young men entered the New York Port of Entry when they reached America. Since this looked to be a promising place they decided to look for work in New York City.

John Francis was subject to asthma attacks. His doctor advised him to move to Wilmington, North Carolina for his health. John took his doctor's advise and moved to Wilmington. He was not impressed with making Wilmington his home so he decided to locate in New Bern, North Carolina. I am not certain what part of the eighties he moved to New Bern or when he left New York, but he was well pleased with his choice. In the course of time he bought or had his home built which was located on Pollock street close to the corner of Middle street. The big brick building next to his property was on the corner lots. This store was called O'Mark & Son.

Since my grandfather was anxious to get his business in operation, the first floor of his home was used for his bootmaker's shop. An excellent trade which he had mastered while living in Ireland. The home had four floors so the rest of the structure was finished for living quarters. As years went by, his home became very much occupied. He utilized his bootmaker's shop for over thirty years.

According to Vital Statics, Volume 2, Page 226, John Francis on February 1, 1861 entered into a marriage bond with Mary Elizabeth Collins, a native of County Cork, Ireland. She came to New Bern from New York with her mother and father and established a residency in New Bern. John Francis and Mary Elizabeth entered into marriage which was performed May 1, 1861 at St Pauls Catholic Church with Father Croghan officiating. Judge William Gaston and Hardy B. Lane and the Bishop entered into a contract to build a Catholic Church the year 1840. The church was completed in 1841. Due to the death of the Right Rev Bishop England during the time the church was built, the church was not blessed until 1844 when Right Rev Dr. Reynolds paid his first visit to this portion of his diocese.

John Francis and Mary Elizabeth were really blessed by the Lord. They had nine beautiful children. Chairls and Thomas Emmett died when each was a month old. Mary Teresa, their oldest daughter died when she was forty-two. Other children were John Francis, Charles James, William Joseph, Margaret Catherine, Julianne Reilly and Eugene Devlin.

In the month of April, 1861 a Civil war between the North and South better known as the war between the States was declared. How devastating! Many of the families were sent to Goldsboro or Wilmington. Some of the families refused to leave New Bern.* The attack on New Bern was around March 12, 1862. Many of the Yankee troops faced many hardships. After leaving their boats and traveling by foot, the terrain was unbearable. The marshes, briers, woodland and their passage through swamps were very difficult. One of the high ranking officer's wives was in that group. Her boots were so torn from places that they had to travel that her husband had to throw them away. Many of the soldiers had to discard theirs. When this group of the army finally arrived in New Bern, they contacted Brigadier General Ambrose E. Burnside who had arrived before them. They told him of their plight so General Burnside gave my grandfather a requisition to supply boots for his soldiers that needed them.

The Battle of New Bern was a short one. When the Confederacy lost New Bern the war was lost. A major mistake by not defending the North Carolina Coast Line played a major part in the Civil War. In the month of December 1862 there were more Federal troops in New Bern than the number of Confederate forces in the entire state. (These last sentences were a quotation from information read from an account of the war in a Sun Journal newspaper). As time passed, the McSorley children developed in grace and stature. As future citizens of New Bern, they stayed very busy. My father, Charles James McSorley, the third child to be born to his parents union grew in wisdom and knowledge and as the old saying goes "He had a good head on his shoulders." Charles James was an excellent altar server at St Pauls Catholic Church and in later years was a member of the church choir. In 1886 at the age of nineteen he was pressman for the New Bern Journal morning newspaper. Later on in life he entered a

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partnership with Numa Nunn. Numa Nunn & McSorley's store was located on the corner of Pollock and Middle streets. The Elk Temple Building now occupies that corner. The Young men had a very good clientele. The younger set loved to patronize their store.

A group of Catholic friends were planning a picnic so Inez Angel stopped to invite Charlie McSorley. He told Inez if she would get the young lady that had just walked past his store to go on the picnic he would love to go. A beautiful friendship and love affair grew from that occasion.

The store and business was destroyed by fire so the young men had to find a different location. My father went into business for himself and rented a store on the corner of Middle and South Front street which is now called Tryon Palace Drive. Part of the building called Wheat First Butcher Singer is now located on part of the property which the McSorley store was located. The McSorley Toy Store under the original owner continued in business for over fifty years. Before chain stores became common in New Bern, my father had the first and finest toy store anywhere in the eastern North Carolina. His clientele was very good. Not only in New Bern but in all parts of the Eastern section of North Carolina. Bikes, tricycles, scooters, skates, the very best of electric trains, baby dolls, young girl dolls, baby carriage and all variety of games for children of different ages. Their was no law against selling fireworks at Christmas or the Fourth of July. His customers bought a big supply of fireworks.

If Mr Mac didn't have the toy you wanted, he would certainly try to order it for you. The dolls he sold were beautiful. The most beautiful ones were dolls with such lovely china faces, real long curls and beautiful eyelashes. The doll's clothes were the very richest and finest of material. These dolls came from Germany, France Italy, England and other places.

Charles James McSorley and Annie Lee Saunders were married May 22, 1895 in St Pauls Catholic Church. They were blessed with thirteen beautiful children. Four died from one year until six Two more sons died in their thirties. These are the names of their children: Charles James, Jr.; Robert Hunter; Annie Elizabeth, Nettie C.; John Emmett; Wm. Thomas; Robert Glenn; Elizabeth Claire; Mary Kathleen; Francis Stapleton; Annie Pace; Phillip Andrew and Paul Andrew.

Mr Mac, a favorite name that all of his customers called my father, had a unique soda fountain in his store. It was one of the finest marble fountains made. The soft drinks he served from this fountain were coca colas, pepsi colas, ice cream sodas, lemonade, lemon phosphate but if you ordered a glass of milk that had to be served from the ice box. Ice boxes were the IN THING of that period. All of our conveniences on the market now did not become obtainable until later.

In the summertime John McSorley, his brother, who worked for him made gallons of vanilla and chocolate ice cream in a big ice cream freezere outside the back of his store under a small shed. This cream had to be hand cranked, just like the small ice cream freezer one owned. This cream was made often. What a job my Uncle John accomplished.

Sunday was the special day the McSorleys enjoyed ice cream. After our dinner was over Paul McSorley or Francis McSorley had to ride to my father's store on a bicycle to get the cream. We lived about three-fourths of a mile from the store so riding back from the store had to be a lot faster. The ice cream was always nice and hard and very delicious. This trip called for fast riding and I am sure if there had been a patrolman around, my brother would have gotten a ticket for speeding.

During the course of my father's life, he attended a school in Norfolk, Virginia to learn methods of making different kinds of candies. Many people enjoyed the different kinds he had learned to make. Most of the New Bernians made a weekly trip to buy enough to last a week. Even the farmers on their trip to the city on Saturday would stop and buy some for their family. Chocolate strawberry and blackwalnut taffy were delicious. Coconut squares were good. Mr. Mac made his candies on the second floor of his store. His pot belly stove was a sight to behold. He used a big hook on the wall to pull the candy.

Another specialty sold at his store was his Ham sandwich. Everyone raved about these. Although he sliced his ham very thin, he always had severl layers of ham on the bun. I have tried to make them so that they taste like what he made, but I just don't make the cut.

Although my father gave his time to his business, he was a very active and fulfilled citizen. While the Young Men's Christian Association was active in New Bern, Mr. Mac enjoyed teaching and was a good gymnasium instructor. Fencing was his favorite class.

For many years my father served as a volunteer fireman, and at one time was foreman of the Atlantic Company. He was a very outgoing person. What he became involved within his activities he instilled the principal of importance and perfection. I can remember as a young girl the people of New Bern stayed alert for a fire alarm. New Bern had almost been wiped out with one fire and they certainly didn't want to experience anything that drastic again. The fire bell would sometime sound at night. It was very loud. It would wake every one in New Bern. Can you imagine four sons who were firemen getting from their beds, grabbing their fireman's suit, boots and whatever else was needed. These suits were always kept next to their bed. What a commotion! Everybody in the house was awake by the time they left the house. I can remember at least one of the boys was still putting on his paraphernalia before the last step on the porch was reached. I believe I would have made a good fireman as the excitement always made your blood tingle.

At one interval in his life, Mr. Mac served as an alderman for one term.

Charles James McSorley was appointed Ensign, September 10, 1901 by the Governor and Commander-in-Chief, Charles B. Aycock, New Bern Division, Naval Brigade, N. C. State Guard.

On November 27, 1902 Governor Aycock appointed and commissioned Charles James McSorley as a Lieutenant in the Naval Brigade on December 10, 1902

While Charles McSorley was a lieutenant in the Naval Reserve, he was chosen to be a delegate to attend the National Convention of Naval Militia at Washington, D. C. The delegates were President Taft's guest on board the Mayflower in welcoming the Battleship Fleet.

July 31, 1913 Charles James McSorley was appointed and commissioned, Commander by First Battalion, Naval Brigade, Governor, and Commander-in-Chief, Locke Geraig. The Adjutant General Laurence V. Young.

I, Annie Pace McSorley Armstrong, was born July 11, 1913. Many years have transpired since this paper has surfaced. The children of Charles James and Annie Lee Saunder McSorley, have always been very proud of their mother and father. To have a family of thirteen children is in itself a big blessing and undertaking. A most courageous couple. One we always will be proud of and admired.

My Mother was also very instrumental in encouraging my father to participate in the civic affairs. Although a mother of so many children she always had time to help others. At one time when her last children were quite small she took a baby to our home and took care of it until the baby was out of danger of dying. This lasted for several months. The baby's mother had died at birth, and the grandmother could not accept the fate of her daughter. My mother realizing that took care of the baby. Sewing was another way of helping people. She not only sewed for her children, but for others. Many a Christmas she would have my father bring home dolls from the Toy store so that she could make clothes that would be more appealing to the customers.

I am sure that My Mother is very happy where she is and enjoys wearing her crown.

May 22, 1936 Euclid Duval Armstrong and Annie Pace McSorley were married in St Pauls Church on my parents Forty-first wedding anniversary. Several generations of our family have been married in St Pauls Catholic Church.

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* Some of the families refused to leave New Bern. My grandmother, her mother and father went to Wilmington and remained there until it was safe to return. John Francis, my grandfather, refused to leave New Bern. He was known to make a remark that has been handed down from generation to generation in the McSorley family and I quote "I refused to leave New Bern. I am not scared of those damn Yankees".

Chairls is the Irish spelling for Charles in the 1800's.