

How I Found Effy Opal Taylor Peck

**Note- the name of Effy's son has been removed to protect his privacy.*

Effy Taylor was the daughter of my grandfather's sister. In more simple terms, she was my first cousin, once removed. Her parents were Laura Esther Cox and George Taylor. They were married 28 Aug 1898 in Washington County, Tennessee. Apparently, George had to travel away from the area to find work, as their only child, Effy Opal was born in Indiana on 16 Feb 1904. But to begin with, I didn't know that.

To start at the beginning, I found my great aunts and uncles fairly easily, since my family hasn't moved around very much. Most of them (on both my father and mother's sides) lived and died within 20 miles of their birthplaces. Laura was the exception. I knew from my grandmother's Bible record that she existed, but I didn't know what happened to her. I knew that she had married George Taylor, because that was also listed in the Bible record.

Thank goodness for searchable census databases online! They were easy to find in 1900. They were living in Washington County, Tennessee. In 1910, they were in Greene County, Tennessee and Effy was listed as being 6 years old. In 1920, they were living in Jefferson County, Tennessee and Effy was listed as being 15 years old. At the time, I thought, "well, Dandridge is close. They have a courthouse. I should go there!" So, I did. I got there and after poring through several genealogical books at the Dandridge library, I had found that George and Laura were buried in one of the local cemeteries, Westview Cemetery, in Jefferson City. I went to the courthouse in Dandridge and found Laura listed in the death register. I found that she had died in 1931. After that, I got directions and headed for the cemetery. George and Laura were easy to find and I put flowers on their grave and looked all around them for their daughter, Effy, but she was not there. I left happy that I had found Laura, but I was still bothered that I didn't know what had happened to Effy.

Fast forward about three years. I and two of my friends decided to make another trip to Dandridge and browse the genealogy collection at their library. It was on that trip that I found Laura's obituary in the newspapers on microfilm. It read:

Mrs. George P. Taylor. Mrs. Laura Cox Taylor, 49 died early Wednesday morning at her home at Jefferson City after a brief illness. Her husband G. P. Taylor employed at New Castle, Indiana and her daughter, Miss Effy, was teaching at Woodland, Mississippi. Her death came as a great shock to her family and friends who did not realize the seriousness of her illness.

Funeral services are to be held Thursday afternoon from the First Baptist Church of Jefferson City by the pastor, Dr. C. W. Pope and interment will be in Westview. Besides her husband and daughter, she is survived by two sisters, Mrs. C. F. Hilton and Mrs. R. L. Jobe of Jonesboro; five brothers, Carl and Daley of Jonesboro, Laney and Alf of Kingsport and R. G. Cox of Fall Branch.

Well, happy day! Now I knew where Effy was! She was teaching in Woodland, Mississippi. Now it's not practical for me to pick up and go to Woodland Mississippi, although, I must admit the thought crossed my mind a few times. I searched every online source that Chickasaw County had and couldn't find Effy. I posted queries on the county message boards, the Taylor message board and the Jefferson County, Tennessee message board, but no one answered. I wrote a letter to the Chickasaw County Board of Education and asked if there was any way of researching someone who was teaching there in 1931. Well, they must have thought that I was crazy, because no one ever answered my letter.

One thing haunted me. I had a photo of Effy. It was a very small photo (2" x 2") and she appeared to be about 14 or 15 years old. On the back was written, "Effy Taylor Peck". Peck...hmmm. She wasn't married in 1931, when Laura died, but apparently, at some time, she married someone with the surname "Peck". So, I started searching for her by that name. Nothing. Not a single thing. So, I gave up... for a long time.



To understand what happened next, you must know that my grandfather died in 1960 in an explosion at the Tennessee Eastman Company. I was just a baby when it happened and have no memory of my grandfather, but he is intriguing to me. My aunt gave me the scrapbooks that she put together when he died and occasionally, I'd pull them out and look through them.

In the fall of 2009, about 7 years later, I picked up one of the scrapbooks and was looking at some of the notes that the family received when my grandfather died. When I saw one small note, my heart almost stopped. There, in the bottom corner of a page was a small card, 3" x 6" that read:

Dear Sallie: I am sad today because I have just received a letter from Aunt Rowie telling of Carl's passing. I have such happy memories of visits at Grandma's when Carl and I were young. I never called him "uncle" because he wasn't much older than I am.

Words are so inadequate at a time like this but I want you to know I am thinking of you and the children. Sincere Sympathy, Effy

My aunt, bless her heart, had written at the top of the note who had sent it, (Effy Taylor Peck) and her address! There are no words to describe how excited I was. I

was just giddy when I realized what was there before me. I knew where Effy was living in 1960 and it wasn't anywhere near where I thought she might be. She was in Warners, NY on Brickyard Road. I could hardly wait to pull up "Anywho.com" and see if there were any Pecks living in Warners, NY. When I hit the button, I got two hits, and amazingly, they both lived on Brickyard Road! I didn't get an answer at the first number. I then called the second number and found that this man was Effy's son. I could NOT believe my luck, after years and years of searching.

He grilled me a bit about our ancestors to make sure I wasn't a nut and I passed by answering all the genealogical questions correctly. Effy had done some genealogy and he had her files, and he gave me a little bit of information on George's family, who hailed from East Tennessee, but had also been a mystery to me. We had a very pleasant conversation and he filled me in on Effy's life.

Effy was, indeed teaching at a small school in Mississippi when she found a "pen pal", Harry Peck. They corresponded for a time, and Harry decided that he wanted to meet and marry Effy! He got on a train and began the 1112 mile journey to Woodland, Mississippi. They were married in Grainger County, Tennessee and I assume they stopped to see Effy's father before going to Warners, since Grainger County is a neighboring county of Jefferson County.

Effy had a full, happy life there in Warners and she continued teaching. Her son said that he recalled making trips to Tennessee and seeing his grandfather, George Taylor, who lived until 1966. He was gracious enough to send me a photograph of Effy and I am keeping it on my desk to remind me of this:

IT ALWAYS PAYS TO GO BACK AND LOOK AT THE THINGS YOU THINK YOU'VE ALREADY FULLY RESEARCHED. YOU JUST NEVER KNOW WHAT YOU MIGHT FIND!

To add a little more to this story, Effy's son who is in his late 70's has made the drive from New York twice to visit and we've become very good friends. He said that I'm the closest relative to his mother that he knows. He has given me several of Effy's scrapbooks for me to keep safe—scrapbooks that she made while going to various schools and colleges.