

The First Hardie Reunion

The first Hardie Reunion was held 30-31 March 1974 at Thornhill. The following is Anna Minnigerode's account of the meeting. Printed in the Summer 2009 Newsletter.

By ANNA MEADE MINNIGERODE

Thornhill, like Talladega itself, was glowing with life, light, and color March 30 and 31 as 140 descendants of John and Mary Meade Hardie got together for the "Gathering of the Hardie Clan". Dogwood was bursting into bloom. Azaleas were brilliant in coming-and going stages, as were the peach and cherry blossoms. The old purple wisteria vine had climbed into the treetops, and the new white wisteria bushes were beginning to unfurl their cascading petals. Late daffodils and early narcissi tossed their heads and the dogwood trees – a phalanx 100 strong.

The host and hostess, Gordon and Anna Meade Minnigerode were directing traffic over the family cemetery, up the stairs to the 1864 writing on a bedroom windowpane, and then down to the photographs of John and Mary Meade Hardie. Across the hall, hangs the artist Charles Martin Hardie's picture of Thornhill given to the Minnigerodes by his daughter Constance Hardie Marchal. Constance's beautiful mother in flowing white graces the canvas.

Talladega artists Ludy Abernethy, Sarah Whitson and Sara Hammett, friends of the host and hostess, gathered a myriad of spring flowers from local gardens, spreading out as far as the Bliss, Wright and McGehee estates. Muffet Robbs assisted them and later organized a truck to transport the dozens of gorgeous arrangements. The spectacle of a truckload of flowers, accompanied by the "artist" arrangers, traveling through town and out to Thornhill caused much comment from the Talladegans who witnessed the gay jaunting group.

Before, during and after the Saturday luncheon photographers, amateur and professional were snapshotting and clicking all over the terrain – inside the house and out. Isabel and Bill Gwinn, Mead and Pam Gwinn, Susan (Gwinn) and Al Goetze were "shot" in the flower-bowered dining room with the host and hostess. Joe Meade, Cynthia (Meade) and Bill Sullivan, David and Laura were next.

Floating around the garden in old fashioned, fluffy frocks were Thomasine and Elizabeth Clayton with their parents, the Charles Claytons, and grand-mother Mrs. Robert Bradford. Also present were the Ralston Longs with Dudley, Frances and Billy and Kay Kimbrough with Mary Elizabeth and Will, Charlotte Bradford (from Atlanta) and her sister Shep Sims with son Brad.

Completing the Uniontown contingent was the great lady of the family, Belle Duncan Ware, number one great-granddaughter, whose 89th birthday was celebrated later in the Afternoon. Walter and Mary (Ware) Hearn, with daughters, Isabelle and Anne planned it. Other members of this "family" who "gathered" were the Clarence Cooks, the Macon Donahoo's and daughter Dottie Jackson, and T.M. Jr. and Lois Donahoo. All the above mentioned plus the Moreman group are descendants of Mary Isabella (Hardie) and Taul Bradford, who were married and lived in Talladega. She was the elder daughter of John Hardie. His younger daughter, Annie is famous for scratching her name in 1864, with her new engagement ring, in the upstairs windowpane at Thornhill. It's still there.

The Moremans are an important part of the Hardie clan. Otis is president of the newly formed Hardie Clan Association [Thornhill Foundation]. Marcus and Lucille Moreman, Mark, Michele and Brad came from Camp Hill, James and Floy Moreman drove from Huntsville, and son Jimmy from Jacksonville, sister Mary came all the way from New York City for the occasion.

Also present in the Mary Isabella Hardie line were Anne (Bradford) Train and husband Dr. Kirk Train of Savannah, Dr. and Mrs. Joseph Kenneth Bradford of New Orleans plus daughter Judy Huff with husband

Blanchard from Columbus, GA. Anne and Kenneth enjoyed seeing their first cousin on their mother's side, Elizabeth Hicks. Their maternal grandfather was Judge J.E. Camp.

Seven sons there were in the John Hardie family. The eldest, John T., and his brother William settled in New Orleans where their descendants are legion and delightful.

Present from the John Hardie family in New Orleans were Fontaine and Lillian Martin with son Teddy and Louise. Also present were his sisters Helen T and Morgan Shaw, and Nina and Cal Williams and their children, Michael and Mary Sue Lanaux and Alice and Hil Hutchinson.

Their cousins, Philip and Emily Hardie of Auburn brought nephews Bill Bell (great-great-grandson number three) and his wife Peachy, Newton Gary Hardie and wife Nell, and Newton III, Lynn and John. His sister Sue (Hardie) Mitchell with son Jeff Flowers came from Washington, and Mrs. Newton Hardie from Pendleton, S.C.

Also present in this line were Jessie Bartlett (whose first husband was William Huger Hardie) with her children and grand-children. William Hardie Jr. had his sons Edward and William III. Robin (Hardie) and Dick Griffiths brought Jennifer and Hugh. Jennifer organized name tags for the 125 Hardie descendants and spouses. New Orleans was also represented splendidly with William Hardie descendants. Eben and Ruth Hardie brought their two oldest grandchildren Eben III and Marion, also nephew Darwin Fenner Jr. with his wife and children, Mary Jane and Jo Anne.

James White Hardie, who was married four times, was well represented through his second wife, Francina Bradford. (Note: Mary Isabella Hardie, mentioned above, married Taul Bradford, Francina's brother, so there were many double first cousins.) From El Paso came Bradford Hardie Jr. and his sister Sarah with husband Mervin Moore. Another sister, Thula Hardie Hendrick, was present. She very thoughtfully sent the beautiful flowers, a memorial to John and Mary Meade, for the Presbyterian Church, where more than 100 "Hardies" sat near the memorial window to Mary Meade Hardie at the Sunday service. With Thula were Darthula Hendrick Buck with husband Gray and son Tom.

From Dallas, Tex., came Alva Finley Hardie's granddaughters, Agnes Mikkelsen and Katheine Miller Houghton. Lucita Hardie Wait flew in from Miami and her brother Charles Alva Hardie came from Montreat, N.C., with wife Barbara and daughters Sandra and Cathie. Sandra has offered to help with secretarial work on the "Hardie" line.

Thomas Chalmers Hardie, youngest son of John, married Hannah Jane Welch at Magnolia Hill, a plantation near Alpine. Her niece, Willie Wallace Welch, is well known in Talladega. Her first cousin, Hannee Sleeper of Waco, Tex., is the only living child of Thomas and Hannah, and only living grandchild of John and Mary Meade. Her nephew James Finley Hardie Jr., who is chaplain at Georgia State Hospital, gave the invocation at the dinner at the Ramada Inn.

Joe Meade, as secretary and treasurer of the Hardie Clan Association [Thornhill Foundation], will work with Otis Moreman and Sandra Hardie on the first project of the association, which is putting the Hardie tombstones in the cemetery at Thornhill into better condition. This cemetery belongs to the Hardie family in Perpetua. Joe received a few checks from members of the clan to add to the small legacy from Joseph Hardie, son of John and Mary Meade. He had no Children, and until his death in 1910 took a great interest in the cemetery. Joe's father, Hardeman Meade; continued this interest until his death in 1963.

Letters and telegrams were read at the dinner and the grand finale was a charming poem written by Thornton Hardie's son Bill of El Paso. Unfortunately; several of those present failed to sign the guest book. Thus, Charlie Hardie of Montreat, N.C., hopes everyone will send him all names and addresses of their families, those not present in particular. Two relatives descended from John Hardie's sister Helen were welcomed with pleasure at the gathering, Ruth Zeigler Baylis and her daughter Beverly.

The "family" were honored by the presence of the Presbyterian minister and Mrs. Miles Wood. He gave a beautiful blessing to the group assembled at the luncheon and more tributes from the pulpit on Sunday morning.

Elizabeth Hicks, Willis Welch and Philip Montgomery rendered invaluable behind-the-scenes service at the luncheon. Members of the Hardie clan considered Talladega one of the most beautiful places they had ever seen and were charmed with the warmth of the Talladegans that they met. They can't wait to come back!

