

The

Fannie

Moffitt

Sale 1955

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MISS FANNIE And HER MONEY

Who'll Get \$400,000 Miss Fannie Moffitt

Fortune In Grundy?

By ED DIDDLESTON
(First of a Series)

A MAN stepped back from the \$7,500 copper casket.

Within it Miss Fannie Moffitt, the heiress of Grundy County, lay in final slumber. Against the wall hung a giant pall of 50 dozen red roses, which "Miss Fannie" loved. She loved color.

"I hadn't realized," the man said, "that Miss Fannie's face was so white and fair—" He was her attorney.

A weeping woman stood beside him. "I didn't know," she said, "that Fannie's hair was so gray—"

It was Sept. 11 in Tracy City at the Foster Funeral Home. Miss Fannie Moffitt of Altamont had died the day before at the age of 62, at the Cumberland Heights Clinic near Coalmont. Far out on the hills, autumn leaves were slowly settling on the 8,000 to 12,000 acres Miss Fannie Moffitt owned.

From the colored hills miners were hacking coal. From the hills, lumberjacks were felling trees. All of it was pouring royalties toward the big sand-red brick house in Altamont where an old dog called "Pup" was wondering why his mistress didn't come home.

Old Pup just knew he missed her. He couldn't know that one of her last queries had been of him: "Is Puppy eating? Go buy him something—"

He couldn't know the burning query that was racing over the fog-shrouded Cumberland plateau: Who would receive the \$400,000 fortune "Miss Fannie" had left behind her? Who would receive her \$100,000 trust fund of Portland Cement and American Telephone stocks? Who would receive her five bank accounts?

Two Wills Drawn

Twice her attorney had drawn up wills for her. And twice she had refused to sign. Her uncles, Tom and Jim Northcutt, hadn't left wills. Why should she? It had all come to her.

"Suppose I don't make a will?" Miss Fannie had said in her deep voice on April 15, five months before her death. "What would happen?" She put the question to her attorney.

Ben E. Caldwell, in his Chattanooga office, had looked across his desk at Miss Fannie. She was a 200-pound woman in a wide-brimmed hat, and its brim tipped a little with the weight of luscious artificial roses. She was about 5 feet 1 inch tall. Long gloves hid the two huge diamonds on her pudgy little fingers, and she wore low-heeled shoes.



—Staff Photo by Bob White

THE HOUSE OF FORTUNE—This is the 12-room home of Miss Fannie Moffitt in Altamont, Grundy County. After her death Sept. 10, between \$14,000 and \$15,000 in cash and checks was found hidden inside. Heirloom furniture and bricabrac are valued at \$10,000 to \$15,000. It goes under the auctioneer's hammer Thursday, Friday and Saturday in Altamont. More than 200 potential bidders are expected to attend.

"Miss Fannie," Caldwell said, "if you don't make a will, there will be one heck of a fight."

Miss Fannie's big blue eyes half closed. For a moment she seemed lost in thought. Then she said, again in the deep voice she'd had since girlhood, "That's all right. Let 'em fight!"

Later, back home in Altamont, she told a friend, Mrs. Harvey Greeter, "When I get ready to make a will, I'll write it myself, and I won't have to have a witness. And they'll never break it!"

She was right. Miss Fannie read voraciously through the nights and slept through the

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Who'll Get

(Continued From Page One)

days, and somehow she had learned that a holographic will—a self-written will—is almost shatter-proof.

Perhaps death overtook her unaware. She had not seemed to realize she was seriously ill, even when the death rattle began and they placed a little metal pump in her throat.

If Written—Never Found

If she wrote a will, it's never been found. If she wrote a will, perhaps it's lost in her cluttered 12-room house, along with a missing Indian war club said to have been used in the Battle of the Little Big Horn, Custer's Last Stand. Her father, James Moffitt of McMinnville, once an agent in the Indian Territory, left her his mementoes . . . and one, a little Indian doll, protruding from an Indian medicine bag, still hangs by her parlor fireside . . . although he has been dead 59 years.

They've looked in the medicine bag, and everywhere. But much else came to light. In her cedar chest in the chilly parlor, with her mink-trimmed coat of golden squirrel, they found approximately \$12,500 in checks—royalties from the coal mines and the timbering, and dividends from investments. In the same chest was \$350 cash.

nearby city, and he had attended the funeral. The trip had brought him near his old home, and he came by to see relatives.

"When he drove through Altamont, I suppose some people thought he'd come back to claim the loot! Well, he didn't know Miss Fannie was dead until we told him!"

Who WILL get the money? About 40 persons have filed claims. Their cases are set for the February term of court, in Tracy City, according to the Grundy County Herald. The land will be sold next year.

Some think two first cousins have an excellent chance to receive "the lion's share." One is a Nashville man, Fred S. Potter, 51, of 1403 Sweetbrier Ave., an employe of the State Highway Department, Division of Public Works.

What does he plan to do with his inheritance, which might exceed \$75,000?

"Haven't given that much thought," he said this morning. "I plan to buy a home. However, I don't know the amount I might receive from the estate."

He was born in McMinnville, is married, but has no children. Potter has lived in Nashville several years, and once lived on Twenty-fourth Ave., South, in Birmingham. "I last saw Cousin Fannie Moffitt about three years ago when I visited Altamont," he said.

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On an old-style phonograph, Miss Fannie often played "Listen to the Mocking Bird" and other old melodies. They looked there. Inside were two rolls of money, each of \$500. On top was a loose \$50 bill. Another \$500 was found in a dresser drawer. Altogether it ran between \$14,000 and \$15,000.

But Miss Fannie's big house, holding many treasures, didn't have electric lights or running water. Once it had acetylene lights, like many an affluent country home of 50 years ago. Lately she used lamps.

There was no radio, no television. But there was music. Sometimes she played upon an old upright piano that had been her mother's. At church, she joined in the singing with an alto voice which she didn't venture to display in solo. And she dropped-fat greenbacks when the plate was passed.

Then, amid wild speculation as to who'll-get-the-money, a curious thing happened. A few days after her death an old acquaintance passed through Altamont. He had once been a handsome man, and perhaps he still is. He came through by merest chance.

Stories of Romance Spread

But when he reappeared, vague stories of an old romance broke out furiously in Altamont and swept across the Cumberland plateau.

Miss Fannie might have laughed her deep "Ha! ha!" had she heard them. She might have used one of her favorite expressions, "That's a humdinger!" Or she might have been furious.

Somebody had tried to suggest that Miss Fannie had seriously cared for a "beau."

"It's a lie!" cried wiry Mrs. Susie Fitch, 77, who for 44 years had faithfully served the spinster. If Miss Fannie had any secrets, "Miss Susie" likely would have known. And "Miss Susie" doubts that her beloved mistress ever cared very much for any man except her close kin.

"Yes, I've heard the lie," Miss Susie said, and tears came down her withered cheeks. "But I never heard 'em till Miss Fannie was dead. Any man that tells me it's so, I'll knock out his brains with an axe! If anybody had said it to Miss Fannie in her lifetime, she'd have gone to them and scratched their eyes out! And she may come back and DO IT YET!"

We asked John McClure, 82, what he thought about the stories of a "beau." He's a lifelong resident of Altamont, with memories of days when they "dumped fox ears, and wildcat ears, on the county court clerk's table, for a \$1 bounty on cats, and 50 cents on foxes. Then they'd take the hides over to H. B. Borthcutt's big store and sell 'em."

McClure started work for Northcutt, Miss Fannie's grandfather, when 17, and he's had a chance to observe. Romance?

"It's a damn' lie!" McClure said.

At last we found the brother of the man some say Miss Fannie admired. "She liked him," the brother told us. "But it was a one-sided affair." If Miss Fannie loved his brother, her love was not returned—so THE BANNER reporter was told.

Coincidence, he said, had set off the stories. An in-law of the handsome brother had died in a

his mother was Mrs. Robert Potter, the former Miss Susie Moffitt, daughter of Mrs. Frances Sims Moffitt, second wife of Miss Fannie's paternal grandfather, Addison B. Moffitt.

The other first cousin is Mrs. Mabel Massie Ward, about 65, of Bryn Mawr, Penn. She also is expected to receive the share of her brother, James Massie of Tupelo, Miss., who died 10 days ago.

The two mothers of the three first cousins were half-sisters of Miss Moffitt's father.

One lawyer sees it this way: "Mr. Potter will receive one-third of the personal property, roughly estimated overall at \$200,000 and mostly in cash. Mrs. Ward will receive two-thirds — her share and her brothers. Both will receive respective shares of one half the real estate, or possibly all the real estate. However, half the real estate bought by Miss Moffitt's uncles, Jim and Tom Northcutt, may go to two second cousins, Avery Northcutt of Spencer, Tenn., and his sister, Mrs. Teeney Hardin of Texas."

It's expected a trust fund will be set up for faithful Mrs. Susie Fitch, and several hundred dollars may go to Mrs. Fannie Wheeler Martin, 77, Miss Fannie's beloved "Cousin Fannie," of 501 Colville Ave., Chattanooga. Years ago Mrs. Fannie taught school in Tracy City and Altamont. Uncle Sam may take \$65,000 or more in inheritance taxes.

Meanwhile, the auctioneers will come, next Thursday, Friday and Saturday, at 10 a.m., Nashville time . . . to the great house where the road bends gently into Altamont.

The treasures of Miss Fannie's parents, her grandparents and her great-grandparents will be sold. Many a car from Middle Tennessee will roll through Monteagle, headed south. Just past Monteagle, on Highway 41, the cars will swing sharply to the left and travel down Highway 56. After 18 miles, they'll see the house . . . and a great crowd.

The buying crowd may find "Miss Susie" weeping, and old Pup grieving too . . . for the lady with the great big diamonds who no longer comes in at the gate, with roses on her hat. . . .

The end will be at hand, for the last stronghold of a great mountain family.

(Continued Tuesday)

Moffitt Estate Auction Aug. 15

Lands, Buildings Of Wealthy Spinster Will Be Offered

ALTAMONT, Tenn.—(AP)—Lands and buildings owned by the late Miss Fannie Moffitt will be offered at public auction here Aug. 15 as the second chapter in closing out the wealthy spinster's huge estate, Arthur Curtis, administrator, disclosed yesterday.

Thousands of antique seekers were attracted to this mountain community last December when Miss Moffitt's personal property was sold in a week-long auction.

The 70-year-old spinster died last Sept. 10, leaving no will but an estate valued by Curtis at between \$250,000 and \$300,000.

Portions of a trust valued at \$100,000 are now being distributed in a two-one split between Mabel Massie Ward of Bryn Mawr, Pa., and Fred Potter of Nashville, the two surviving first cousins.

Mrs. Ward is receiving two shares to Potter's one because her brother, James G. Massie of Tupelo, Miss., also had qualified as an heir, but died later, leaving no heirs except Mrs. Ward.

Brick Residence at Auction

To be sold at the Aug. 15 auction are the 12-room brick residence here where Miss Moffitt lived in seclusion with an aged friend, Susie Fitch; another home in the same community, and five houses and lots in the nearby resort community of Beersheba Springs.

Other items included are a 100-acre farm in Burrough's cove near Viola, a 400-acre tract of coal land west of Coalmont and several valuable timber tracts, on one of which Miss Moffitt refused a \$50,000 offer before her death.

A total of 110 tracts covering 8324 acres in Grundy county will be offered in the sale, which will be handled by three real estate auction firms.

Some 140 or more claims have been made against Miss Moffitt's estate by persons representing themselves to be kinsmen and

therefore heirs of the spinster, Curtis said. These must all be settled before Curtis can complete his administration of the estate.

Curtis' attorneys, William Able and Francis Barker, are defending the estate against the claims which are pending in court.

\$50,000 Suit

The hearing on a \$50,000 suit, filed against the estate by Mrs. Mattie Lusk, is set for July 10. Mrs. Lusk charges that "a vicious dog" maintained by Miss Moffitt bit her as she went about household duties in the Moffitt home. The suit was filed against the spinster before her death and was refiled against the estate.

Another suit, brought by the Foster funeral home of Tracy City against the estate, was passed for reassignment a week ago, with no date set. The funeral home seeks collection of an \$8,500 bill for Miss Moffitt's funeral.

Still another matter of litigation is a \$750 bill for funeral flowers from Measles Flower shop, involving a floral blanket with 50 dozen roses. The same shop, acting as agent for a monument firm, submitted a \$5,000 claim for a tombstone, similar to the types that stand at the graves of Tom and Jim Northcutt, uncles of Miss Moffitt from whom she inherited much of her property.

While Miss Moffitt's two surviving first cousins had agreed to set up a trust for Susie Fitch, the spinster's companion has filed a claim for \$2,500 "for services rendered since 1942."

Mrs. Ward and Potter will receive proceeds of all the personal property, including the trust funds and a big share of real estate proceeds. However, neither they nor any of the more distant kinsmen can receive final settlements from the estate until legal obligations are determined by the courts and paid by the administrator.

MISS FANNIE And HER MONEY

Took Medicine, Attended Ward-Belmont, Won Rings

By ED HUDDLESTON
(Second in a Series)

The curtain was about to go up at the Ryman Auditorium. The play was Shakespeare's "As You Like It."

A mother and daughter came down an aisle—Mrs. James Moffitt and her daughter, "Miss Fannie," of Altamont in Grundy County.

The mother was tall, handsome and gracious, despite her weight of 235 pounds. She was well-dressed and poised, a graduate of Burritt College in Spencer, Tenn. But her plump and pink-cheeked daughter, equally well-dressed, may have been of less commanding presence.

Of the daughter it would later be said, "If she'd had personality, the sky would have been the limit!"

Mother and daughter sat down, and suddenly there were muted words of pleasure as they greeted a cousin, Mrs. Fannie Wheeler Martin, sitting in the next seat. "Cousin Fannie" Martin had been Miss Fannie's first teacher. Both were named for Miss Fannie's grandmother Northcutt.

Happily the little group murmured together. Then the mother turned to her daughter: "Baby, have you shown Cousin Fannie your new ring?"

The blue-eyed daughter lifted her hand. The former school teacher saw a diamond of far more than two carats. (Like a bull's eye," she said later.)

"Baby," the mother said presently, "have you told Cousin Fannie how you got your ring?"

"Well, I had the flu," Miss Fannie said, "and they wanted me to take my medicine, and I wouldn't, and Uncle Tom gave me this ring, and I TOOK my medicine."

Miss Fannie Moffitt was in her 20's then. It occurred between 1914 and 1922.

Mrs. Moffitt's husband had

died when Fannie was three years old. Mother and daughter were devoted, inseparable. Together they went to Florida in the winter and sometimes to New York where they made a round of theaters. Once they went to Cuba. Often they came to Nashville, stopping at the Maxwell House.

Everyone 'Worshipped' Mother

Everybody in Altamont "worshipped" Miss Tim," their affectionate name for the mistress of the wealthy Northcutt household. "Miss Tim" had been a Northcutt before her marriage—the only daughter of H. B. Northcutt, the mountain merchant-prince whose two sons, Tom and Jim, were bachelors.

Fannie Moffitt was H. B. Northcutt's only grandchild. Anybody with a lick of sense knew she'd be an heiress someday. It was said "Miss Tim"

and her brothers feared someone would marry Miss Fannie "for her money."

It never happened. Fannie didn't marry.

On Sept. 10 she died at 62, leaving no will. Her estate, a mercantile, coal and timber fortune, is valued at \$400,000. About 80 persons, claiming kinship, are expected to engage in a Tracy City legal brawl for the money. ("Let 'em fight!" Miss Fannie said, five months before she died.)

The stone that glistened in the Ryman's light is one of two large diamonds to be cried at an auction beginning Thursday in Altamont, at the old Northcutt home. The sale may continue through Saturday, depend-

ing upon speed of earlier bidding. Miss Fannie's heirlooms and personal property will face the hammer.

As the auctioneer's ratatata floats down the asphalt street, where ox-carts once lumbered through the mud, it will strike the ears of a 77-year-old woman, Mrs. Fannie Wheeler Martin. It was she who saw the diamond in the Ryman.

Mrs. Martin, of 501 Colville Ave., Chattanooga, now visiting in Altamont, recalls days when the big Northcutt house was in its prime, directed by "Miss Tim." She kept a cook, a maid and a yard boy, "and there wasn't a straw on the yard," Mrs. Martin said.

Mrs. Martin was 15 years older than the little cousin at whose home she stayed while teaching her first school in Altamont. They called her "Cousin Fannie."

They walked together to school—the very first day for the little heiress, six years old. She was wearing a bow of satin ribbon that bound four braids of silky blond hair. The child's complexion was fair and florid, and she wore high-buttoned shoes because her ankles were weak.

"Fannie," the soft-voiced teacher said as they walked along, "you must mind me. Because if you don't, I can't make the others mind."

"I'll Be Good"

The little girl looked up and murmured, in a rather deep voice, "I'll be good. I'll be good . . ."

Two or three days later, at recess, the teacher heard a little boy yelling. Somehow he had fretted Fannie, who "lit into him with a briar switch." It had come from a blackberry bush.

Mathematics sometimes irked the little girl. Sometimes she'd stamp her foot and say, "Darn it! . . . Cousin Fannie, what's eight times eight?"

Fifty years later, did she still say "Darn it?"

The answer came from Mrs. Susie Fitch, Miss Fannie's faithful servant and companion: "Sometimes she might say some little old something like 'Hell!'" "Miss Susie" has served Miss Fannie's household since 1909. Even then, 114 years had passed since the fortune began, around 1825, at Adrian Northcutt's trading "stockade" at Altamont. He was Miss Fannie's great-grandfather, born in 1799.

Old store books show he traded in deer skins, whisky, and wildcat scalps on which a bounty was paid. In one winter, more than 1000 deer skins were bartered or bought at his "stockade."

In return, he supplied many things, including inordinate quantities of powder and shot. By 1854, his 25-year-old son, H. B. Northcutt, was helping in the store.

They sold bed cords, fine felt hats, shoes, calicoes, silk handkerchiefs, tools, candles. They even sold a perfume called "Oil of Prairie Flowers." A two-week trip by ox-cart brought the goods from Nashville.

The store burned during the War Between the States. Financial hardship came. But part of the store was rebuilt between 1867-70.

In 1869, pioneer Adrian Northcutt died at 70, the father of 15 children. Polk Knox Northcutt was youngest, and two of his children may inherit a portion of Miss Fannie's \$400,000.

They are Avery Northcutt of Spencer, Tenn., and his sister, Mrs. Tenney Hardin of Texas. They may inherit half the real estate bought by Jim and Tom Northcutt, Miss Fannie's bachelor uncles.

H. B. Northcutt was 40 years old when his father Adrian died in 1869. H. B.'s sons, Tom and Jim, were 5 and 2 years old.

As they grew older, they saw surreys rolling along bumpy roads, loaded with baggage and headed for Beersheba Springs, overlooking the Collins River Valley.

The travelers were often Nashville residents, enroute to the mountain for the summer, or fleeing Nashville's plagues of yellow fever, typhoid and cholera.

Second Store in Beersheba

So a second store was started, in Beersheba, to glean nickels and dimes from summer residents. Tom Northcutt, black-haired and happy-go-lucky, opened the store each spring, sleeping upstairs at night. He was fat. ("Bet he wore a two-yard belt.")

This was the uncle who, nearing 60 years, was to give his niece a two-carat diamond. He may have been Miss Fannie's favorite. Perhaps they saw many things alike.

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Jim, reddish-haired and more serious-minded, operated the year-round parent store at Altamont. He was a man "so conversant with many things that you had to know an awful lot before he'd tell you anything."

The day of candlelight was going. Lamplight glowed in the hills. Tom and Jim's wares now included coaloil. Barter hadn't ended. Silver could still make some men proud.

Jim Northcutt knew such a

man, who sold some pigs for silver. "And it made him so proud he had his wife make him a 'moneypuss' for it—that's what he called a purse. At Saturday night poker games, when he was well-oiled, he'd take out his 'moneypuss' and swing it around his head. And as he swung it he'd yell, 'Eight pieces o' silver and half a dollar over! Don't need quarter from any man!'"

Dollars Accumulate

Nor did the Northcutts. Long ago the nickels and dimes had turned to dollars. In 1885, when 56 years old, H. B. Northcutt built a massive 12-room house. There he died in 1910, rich, powerful on the plateau, and his children were to increase their heritage, despite occasional losses. Part of their investments would be in the hotel at Beersheba. They also acquired several cottages, or received them from their father. Some of these summer rental residences remain as part of Miss Fannie's estate.

By the time "Miss Tim's" hair was white, she wore a diamond even larger than that which Uncle Tom had given Miss Fannie. It's said that "Miss Tim's" diamond was three carats. The house already held several eighteenth century treasures, of cherry and walnut, and Victorian horsehair pieces.

"Miss Tim" added Dresden, Staffordshire, Wedgewood, a silver tureen and a three-foot-tall epergne. Miss Fannie loved bisque and milk glass.

As the more ornate things came, somebody moved out upon the back porch perhaps the rarest piece of all, a stretcher-base tavern table—with the stretcher designed for the feet of weary travellers, in a dirt-floor tavern.

After Miss Fannie's death, it was found covered with oilcloth and holding pots and pans.

"Miss Tim" may or may not have moved it to the back "gallery." No one moved the great four-poster bed of cherry. It was dismantled for the auction while a BANNER reporter looked on.

This was the bed upon which the mother and daughter slept. "You'd have thought they were sisters," Miss Susie said. "They were always together."

"Miss Tim" accompanied her daughter to Nashville and lived with her here, while Miss Fannie attended Ward-Belmont College, not long before World War I. She received a "certificate" from the school, and this is said to have brought Miss Fannie's second diamond ring—also of more than two carats—a gift from her

mother. Miss Fannie also attended the Vanderbilt School of Expression.

vantage" from the days when Miss Fannie had "every ad-
"she used to sit by the cand-
bucket in her uncle's store."

The world itself was her cand-
bucket, as some see it. There's
still \$400,000 in the bucket.

Many think it all began to
turn to ashes in 1928. Her adored
mother was stricken with ap-
pendicitis. "Miss Tim" reached
a Sewanee hospital at 11 a.m. At
6 p.m. She died on the operating
table.

Miss Fannie was 35. How fast
the years were going! She was
too stricken to attend the fu-
neral. She did not face the open
grave.

Nor did Miss Fannie ever go
to the cemetery after her
mother's death, until they bore
her there in September, in a
\$7500 casket...

She sleeps beside her Uncle
Tom, who gave her the diamond
that sparkled at the Ryman,
when troupers played "As You
Like It."

(Continued Wednesday)

Altamont Spinster's Estate, Over \$250,000, Stirs Kin

By MOUZON PETERS
Times Staff Writer.

ALTAMONT, Tenn., Oct. 26—A fantastic story is unfolding here in the mountains of Grundy County and it becomes more unbelievable with each passing day. But

ESTATE AROUSES MANY RELATIVES

From Page One.

sand dollars in cash and securities which Miss Fannie had stuck around in every conceivable place. There was over \$1,000 in cash in the top of the phonograph. One hundred dollar bills are turning up here, there and everywhere, in shoe boxes, inside old magazines, stuffed into gloves and tucked away in dresser drawers and forgotten."

Miss Moffitt used mail-order accounts with stores in Chattanooga and Nashville and, while she had ordered many articles during the past several years, she had left many of the packages unopened, stacked in various corners of the big house. Some of the parcels bear postmarks dating back several years. One of them contained a costly evening dress purchased by mail from one of Nashville's smartest shops. "We've found at least 50 expensive hats," said Curtis, "some of them never removed from their mailing cartons."

The unusual Altamont spinster decided a few years ago that she would install a bathroom and ordered fixtures from a plumbing house. Apparently realizing, belatedly, that this would require such additional jobs as piping water from the well and installing an automatic pump which, in turn, would necessitate putting in electric power, she abandoned the project. The bathtub, lavatory and other bathroom fixtures, still in their crates, are in one of the rooms.

The house contains thousands of dollars worth of antiques in furniture, silver, china and what-not. One beautiful table was given to one of Miss Moffitt's ancestors by Felix Grundy, an early governor of Tennessee.

In addition to the personal property, Miss Moffitt, it is being learned from a check of courthouse records, owned between 8,000 and 12,000 acres of timber and coal land in Grundy County.

Public Auction Sale

The administrator said that as soon as he completed an inventory of the personal property, he would advertise a public auction sale. This, he indicated, could not be before early December. He has installed electric lights in the big brick house so that, as he said, "I can find my way around and see what I'm doing." Miss Fitch, who lived with Miss Moffitt for many years, is helping as she can, but she is 77 years old and didn't know very much about her friend's affairs.

Miss Moffitt, as niece and nearest relative, was the sole heir in 1942 to the estates of both Tom and Jim Northcutt, bachelor brothers, with whom she made her home. They and their father before them operated a thriving general store here and held extensive real estate, timber and coal interests. Their sister married James Moffitt, with Frances Moffitt being the only child. Frances, or "Fannie" as she was called by girlhood friends, was given a good education at Ward Belmont and Vanderbilt University and was permitted to travel extensively. She elected to settle down here eventually, though, and when her parents died, she stayed on with the two uncles, becoming as confirmed a spinster as they were bachelors.

Among the attorneys seeking to bring order out of the chaos of claims by kinsmen of varying degrees are Ben E. Caldwell and his associate, Hager Odom, of Chattanooga and former U.S. Sen. Tom Stewart of Winchester and Nashville.

Represent First Cousins

Caldwell and Odom are representing two first cousins of the late Miss Moffitt. They are James Massie of Mississippi and Mrs. Mabel Ward of Pennsylvania. Stewart represents another first cousin, Fred Potter of Tennessee. "As far as we can find out," Caldwell said, "these three are the only first cousins living."

A second cousin — and there are many claimants in this category—Avery Northcutt of Spencer, Tenn., has filed suit in chancery court to force liquidation of the estate and division of the proceeds among the heirs. His suit also asks the court to determine which of the numerous claimants are really heirs.

"There are a lot of knotty problems, both of law and genealogy, to be settled by the court," Caldwell pointed out. "This is the sort of thing that might be settled in months or it might take years. After all, there's something like a half-million dollars worth of property at stake. No one with what he considers a valid claim is going to give up easily."

Caldwell said that he had been handling Miss Moffitt's legal affairs for many years. She would ride a bus to Chattanooga, then take a taxicab to the attorney's office. "I told her the last time she was here several months ago," said Caldwell, "that she should make a will. She wanted to know what would happen if she died without leaving a will. I advised that a lot of people would learn she had a sizable estate and there would be a heck of a fight."

"She thought about it a minute, then shook her head and said: 'That's all right. Let 'em fight.'"

it's true — as attorneys throughout Tennessee and the South will testify, and some of them will be called on to do just that.

Elderly Miss Frances Moffitt, who lived quietly here in a 12-room two-story brick house with even more elderly Susie Fitch, died a few weeks ago after many years of semi-seclusion. She was a member of a once-prominent family, but the huge house was the only publicly visible mark of her aristocratic heritage and in it she lived in a manner so unassuming that many would have thought her poverty-stricken.

All around her, the little homes of Altamont have had electric power with all the accompanying appliances and conveniences for years. Miss Fannie just never got around to having her house wired for electricity. Many surrounding homes had running water and bathrooms. Not so, the big brick house. Everyone else owned a radio or television set or both. Miss Fannie's only entertainment were her books and an old hand-cranked phonograph with records as old as the music box itself.

She had few visitors. A vicious dog discouraged the occasional salesman and Miss Fannie, herself, didn't go in for the social life. If she had relatives who stayed in touch with her, no one here knew them.

Died Intestate

Miss Frances Moffitt died, though, a few weeks ago (Sept. 10) at the age of 64. She left no will. And now she is picking up kinsmen by the score. Everyone is mourning the passing of "dear Cousin Fannie," filing their messages of regret, for some reason, with the court-appointed administrator of her estate.

The administrator, Arthur Curtis, former postmaster of nearby Coal-mont, estimates that Miss Moffitt has left an estate which is valued in excess of \$250,000 and may run as high as a half-million dollars.

Day by day, as Curtis pokes through the stacks and piles of books, newspapers, magazines and parcels, as he examines the contents of bureau drawers, trunks and boxes, he finds additional evidence of Miss Moffitt's wealth and her peculiarities.

"I haven't been through the entire house yet," he said, "and I've already found several thou-

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Time Out for Make-Believe ...



ALTAMONT, Tenn.—Three-year-old Lucy Smith of Tullahoma, Tenn., wants to see just how she looks decked out in one of Miss Fannie Moffitt's rose-piled hats and rose-painted pocket-books. Miss Fannie was obsessed by the beauty of a rose. Lucy is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Frank O. Smith.



—Staff photo by Jack Corn
Mr. and Mrs. Fred Potter of 1403 Sweetbrier ave., Nashville, are especially interested in the auction. As a first cousin of Miss Frances Moffitt, Potter is expected to get a slice of the \$400,000 estate.

Miss Fannie and Her Money:

Northcutt Fortune Had Little Trouble

Weathering Depression

By ED HUDDLESTON
(Fourth in a Series)

The Northcutt store in Altamont was sold in 1929, but the spreading Big Depression had nothing to do with it. The Northcutt fortune was solid as a rock.

Tom and Jim Northcutt just weren't as young as they used to be. They were going to take it easier, and efficient younger men were poking through the old store, taking inventory.

One of them lifted something from a nail keg: "What's this?" It was a canvas "buckshot bag." He looked inside and whistled. The bag held silver coins . . . dating back to the 1850's.

"Ah," sighed one of the Northcutt brothers, wearily. "Pa must have left that there—"

Pa, their father, had been dead 19 years.

Jim, the older brother, sat at a desk, pouring over old accounts

More serious-minded than Tom, he'd been at the task for many hours.

'\$50,000 Due'

Now he closed the dogeared volume. "I'm just through one book," he said, "and I've already found \$50,000 due!" He stood up and stretched. "I'll just quit."

Some people say a big portion of the amount never was collected.

That was 26 years ago. The house has outlasted the business

by as many years. H. B. Williams owns the old store now. Today the household is ending. Bits of it, bought in bedlam far worse than any at the old store, will be miles apart tomorrow, in scores of different homes.

The Northcutts are sleeping together, in a peaceful cemetery almost ringed by pine trees, just east of town. It's on a hilltop.

Great thick rectangles of polished granite mark their resting place. And about each hori-

zontal slab a massive headstone lifts.

H. B. Northcutt is sleeping beside his wife, another Fannie.

They came of the 19th century, when Fannie was a glamor name. Beside them rest their two bachelor sons and their widowed daughter, Tom, Jim and "Miss Tim," Fannie's mother. At the end of the row the yellow clay is bright, above Miss Fannie's grave.

There has been no time to place a marker there.

Loved Nice Things

But one will rise, and it will be as handsome as the others. Miss Fannie loved nice things—velvet and roses and bisque, and milk glass and candy and PEOPLE, despite nationwide publicity which has suggested otherwise.

"Well, maybe she wasn't a hermit, but she had her own set," a man said, "and she stuck to them." Most people do. And old friends are sticking by Fannie Moffitt's memory.

"There wasn't a nicer, finer woman anywhere than Fannie Moffitt," said middleaged Mrs. Jim Dickerson, who runs a restaurant not far from the Moffitt mansion.

She knows some people have wondered why Miss Moffitt didn't have a refrigerator in her big house. But maybe Miss Moffitt didn't think she needed a refrigerator. She obtained locker services in McMinnville.

When Miss Fannie needed fresh meats kept, she could easily have



MRS. H. B. NORTHCUTT

it brought from McMinnville and placed in the freezer or refrigerator at Mrs. Dickerson's restaurant. It's near the mansion door.

Had somebody called Miss Moffitt stingy? Mrs. Dickerson said, "Well, she's given me cookies and fruitcakes, and cheese by the big

hoops. I've known her all my life . . . and did you ever see her cattle? They were mud-fat. This summer she sent me some setting eggs from her fine White Rocks."

Robin Hood in Reverse

Another said, equally sincere, "Miss Fanny gave, all right, but she preferred to give to those who didn't need it. She was a Robin Hood in reverse. Oh, I know she helped the poor in some cases, but

she helped the poor who were closest to her."

"Bet she gave away 100 dolls at Christmas time! Christmas won't be the same around here for a lot of folks with Fannie Moffitt gone—"

Another reminded, "When they wanted a new school here, she wasn't willing to sell any land." And someone else said, "Nor when they wanted land for a church in Beersheba—"

"But she gave \$100 on new church seats in Altamont—"

"How about the time when Miss Susie broke her hip? Did Miss Fannie pay the bill? She did not. Miss Susie (Mrs. Fitch) had worked for her for 40 years or more! Miss Susie fractured her hip when she fell off a truck. And Miss Fannie took the view that it wasn't her truck, and Miss Susie hadn't been working for her at that particular moment, and so she didn't pay—"

"It's got to be straightened up," she said, "about the bathroom fixtures they say Miss Fannie bought and then didn't buy that old bathroom stuff in the first place! Her mother bought 'em, nearly 20 years ago or more. She died, and they just didn't get put in—"

Denies Meat Story

Caldwell said, "Here's one thing I wish you'd straighten out. When she died a lot of papers said she kept meat hanging in a bedroom upstairs. She did nothing of the kind.

"Meat was not taken upstairs in the house until I suggested it. Miss Moffitt knew nothing of it. Blame it on me. She'd been taken to the hospital. Some meat had been stolen from the smokehouse. I suggested to Miss Susie that she have the remainder taken upstairs for safekeeping. Miss Moffitt never knew part of her house was briefly used as 'a smokehouse.'"

"Miss Fannie had a reason, or thought she had a reason, for most of the things she did or didn't do," Mrs. Harvey Greeter said quietly. She was one of Miss Fannie's closest friends as the final years came, and Mrs. Greeter also feels that in those closing years Miss Fannie lost something of her backward look, and perhaps entered into the happiest period of her life. "For instance, there is the question, why didn't she have electric lights, with all her ample means?"

"I think this is part of the reason: When Altamont homes were being wired for electricity, Miss Fannie's uncles were aged and ill. Drilling and wiring through the thick brick walls of the old home would have been impractical, perhaps to the detriment of the sick. So Miss Fannie's house wasn't wired. Electricity came to Altamont in 1941.

"After her uncles death, of course she could have had the wiring done. I don't know exactly

this. There had been some misunderstanding about a right of way. Miss Fannie's land was involved. It ruffled her a little, and she continued to do without lights.

Pretty Dress

Mrs. Greeter added something else: "Years ago when I was a school teacher, I needed a pretty dress to wear to a party." Her eyes suddenly glimmered, and she blinked before continuing, "Miss Fannie found out about it.

"She insisted that I wear a dress of hers—a royal blue velvet. I took a few stitches, and I wore it . . . Everyone said it was beautiful." Mrs. Greeter now is the wife of a prosperous Altamont lumberman.

And so the disputa rages, from

(Continued on Page 23)

Miss Fannie

(Continued From Page One)

40—or more—are expected to join the wrangle.

The biggest crowd in Altamont's history is expected to assemble Thursday about the shuttered Northcutt-Moffitt mansion, 70 years old. In contrast to smaller neighbors, it looms up almost fortress-like, 50 feet from highway 56, just as you roll into the heart of town.

If you drive southward through Monteagle, swing sharply to the left from Highway 41, just after passing the town. Highway 56 intersects 41, almost at a right angle. You'll go through Tracy City. Altamont is next.

Here the Northcutt family fortune began to pyramid at least 130 years ago, at the old "stockade" of Miss Fannie's great-grandfather. Some items are believed to be 30 years older.

Auction Time 10 O'clock

At 10 a.m. Nashville time, the chant of an auctioneer will begin the dispersal of Miss Fannie's heirlooms. Contents of the house are believed worth between \$12,000 and \$15,000. The spinster's diamonds have been appraised at \$4,500, and are said to have a current retail value of \$9,000.

All will go before the hammer—furniture, bricabrac, silver, china, jewelry, and great cases of books, old and new, but mostly old. Miss Fannie read and read.

"She could talk to you about any subject in the world," an old friend said. "After the death of her mother, Miss Fannie seemed to lose faith in life. She took to reading more and more."

The habit came slowly and gently, as habits overtake all. Her widowed mother, "Miss Tim," was a college woman, rich, intelligent, gracious, and she had a keen mind.

Why shouldn't she read? "Miss Tim" read. What more natural thing than that mother and daughter should read together in the quiet rooms of the big house?

They did, for years. Miss Fannie appears to have inherited her literary taste from her mother.

"After that man grabbed the horse's bridle, I guess 'Miss Tim' worried more," Mrs. Susie Fitch told a reporter. "Miss Susie," 77, has worked for Miss Fannie 44 years. "Miss Tim would sit up late and read, until her brothers came home from the store. She wouldn't go to bed until then. And Miss Fannie would sit right there and read with her mama.

Years later it would be said of Miss Fannie, "You may have to wait till 5 p.m. to see her."

It sounded odd, and it went out upon the press wires of a nation when Miss Fannie died. "Eccentric . . . recluse . . ." were two of the words often used.

Family Custom

But the more closely a reporter looked at her habits, the less eccentric they seemed. Did not this one originate from family custom, with devotion driving it on? Nor was she a "recluse." She went to church, to picnics, ball games, to moving picture shows in Tracy City, Monteagle, Nashville; to the monthly "Dutch Club" at Tracy City, and on more than one occasion ventured into square dances there.

She waved at passing neighbors, received them in her home, and after it became too cluttered and unkept, she took her preacher and nine other guests to a restaurant for dinner. Afterwards she bought gifts for all. That happened not long before her death.

She lent her books, and she lent her handsome silverware. ("I know it'll come back polished.")

Once in her "old age" (she was only 62) she had a basket all ready and bulging with food for the church supper. She lacked transportation for a few minutes—but in her uncertainty she found a way to send the heavy basket on ahead. She caught a ride later on. "Anti-social"? Phooey!

Loved People

"She loved PEOPLE!" declared her cousin, Mrs. Fannie Wheeler Martin of Chattanooga, who should know. She was Miss Moffitt's first school teacher. Intermittently, until a few years ago, Mrs. Martin lived 13 years in the Moffitt home.

Sometimes, Mrs. Martin recalls, Miss Fannie wandered into the parlor at night and played the piano. "She played beautifully. Sometimes she played 'Silver Threads Among the Gold' and 'When You and I Were Young Maggie,' but the nicest part of it was that she knew I LIKED them, and that I would be hearing them upstairs in bed. That was after I WAS gray. Another one of her favorites was 'Woodland Echoes,' a waltz."

The night-reading came rather early, yes. But Miss Fannie did not come of a people who went to bed with the chickens,

although she was born on the plateau.

Late Hours

Neither of her two uncles was averse to late hours. Some people say the two men dealt with "drummers" mostly at night. Maybe they preferred to see price lists privately, when customers wouldn't have a chance to look over a shoulder and see the wholesale price.

Or maybe they wanted their work and play unmixed. An element of sociability entered into it, especially in the case of "Uncle Tom." He liked fun, and it was to be had at stag parties in his store at Beersheba, after dances at the hotel. Many a silver-haired Nashvillian of today and yesteryear partook of "cheese and crackers" at Tom Northcutt's store "after the ball was over."

The merry group of young men, sons of summer residents, eventually acquired the title of "The Bodyguard" or "Tommy's Bodyguard." Its slogan was: "For the Preservation of Late Hours." If anyone were late, and arrived after the door was locked, a \$5 fine was levied. With them, Tom Northcutt was safe and happy.

So were the young men, in the far-off days of their youth . . . and their names, in maturity, have cast luster upon Nashville and other cities . . .

Miss Fannie was young too, in the days of "Tommy's Bodyguard." Many a well-known Nashville woman recalls her as "a very nice little fat girl, well dressed, with very nice manners."

Later, they were to remember her as quite a stout young woman of florid face who wore big picture hats, often with bright roses. Pictures suggest the hats may have grown more opulent as Fannie grew older. Perhaps they were far plainer, for a few years, after the death of her mother.

Fell In Love?

It was about that time, some think, that Miss Fannie may have fallen in love . . . with a handsome man of her own region. Others say she never fell in love at all.

We talked with the brother of the once-handsome man. This is the substance of what he told us: The two families were well acquainted. The man's mother was a friend of "Miss Tim," and took the orphan heiress home with

her for some time, immediately after the funeral, in 1928.

Miss Fannie, he said, made her home with the family for many weeks. She was welcome, but despite her wealth she was pitied, after a fashion. They tried to help her overcome the blinding grief. Time passed, but Fannie stayed on. She seemed quietly interested in the handsome son of her mother's friend.

The young man resented her attention but tried to conceal his irritation. The heiress was his mother's guest. How could he dare be rude?

The closing months of 1929 rolled around, and Fannie was still a guest. When would she leave? About that time a trip was planned to the Rio Grande Valley, where several residents of the plateau had bought land. (Her Uncle Jim was one, and he later lost money on the pipe-dream.) For there had been a short-lived vision of irrigation that would soon transform the wasteland. Maybe new fortunes would be made.

Miss Fannie had "a big Hudson automobile." The handsome young man drove. His parents went along. Several persons were in the group, including Miss Fannie.

Could it be that she was hoping he'd someday learn to love her? Was Miss Fannie thinking, "If I stay near, will he someday see how good and kind I am, even though my face is plain and my ankles weak, and overweight—?"

Scoffs At Idea

Mrs. Susie Fitch, her faithful attendant for 44 years, scoffs at the idea.

The trip ended in the winter months of 1929, according to the brother, and also according to several old friends of Miss Fannie's. The Hudson was rolling home. And she was still Miss Fannie.

The handsome young man pleaded with his mother. Please. "If she goes home with us, I'm NOT going—"

The mother was distressed. She did not want to hurt Miss Fannie's feelings. The mother loved her son. Her first duty was to him. What on earth should she do?

So the family paused in Chattanooga, before returning home. Miss Fannie went on ahead to her big house in Altamont, but she left with the obvious intention of rejoining them when they reached their own home. Her baggage was checked on through, straight to the home of her mother's friend.

Then the family of the handsome man—not accompanied by Miss Fannie—drove on through Altamont, and they didn't stop to pick up Miss Fannie. When they reached home, there was her luggage. They sent it back to her.

The handsome young man breathed deeply and freely again.

But back in the huge brick house at Altamont, what of Miss Fannie?

"Miss Fannie never spoke to my mother again as long as she lived." That was the way the brother of the handsome youth concluded his account. "It was a one-sided affair."

Read More Than Ever

If her heart were broken, perhaps she read more than ever now . . . by the Felix Grundy table in the hall . . . or near the little Indian doll at the fireplace . . . or in the gaunt second-story bedroom where they found her colorful hats. Some appeared not to have been worn.

In the huge bookcases, there's a de luxe edition of the works of Washington Irving . . . the works of Edward Bulwer-Lytton; Tolstoy's "Anna Karenina," and modern fiction, too. We saw a copy of Daphne du Maurier's "My Cousin Rachael."

Miss Fannie's literary taste was good, a reporter said, to Miss Susie.

She nodded: "Her mama wouldn't let her read trash."

Miss Fannie's mother had been dead 27 years. Outside the window, the wind was whining low. A mist was turning to sleet. The trees were bare.

Winter was at hand . . . and the auctioneer was coming.

Miss Fannie And Her Money

Dividend Checks Piling Up, She Consents To Trust Fund

By ED HUDDLESTON

(Fifth of a series)

I COULDN'T think of anyone else but you, Cousin Fannie, to come and live with me—"

The words had a lonely sound. It was odd to hear them spoken by a woman worth \$400,000, whose fortune was augmented by royalties and dividends. Yet the words were spoken in 1942 by Miss Fannie Moffitt of Altamont, in Grundy County.

Her uncles, Jim and Tom Northcutt, were dead. They were her last close kin. They made no wills. There was no need. They were bachelors, and she the only child of their only sister.

Like the uncles, Miss Fannie had never married. She was 49 now, and romance had shied away from the graying woman

whose mother had feared someone would "marry her for her money."

Her face was plain, she took little exercise, and Miss Fannie still loved candy, just as she had loved it when she sat by the candy bucket of her uncles' stores.

Invitation Accepted

Now she was asking "Cousin Fannie" to come and live with her in the 12-room mountain mansion, "Cousin Fannie"—Mrs. Fannie Wheeler Martin of Chattanooga—came.

There were old ties, of blood, and happy times together. She was a soft-voiced gentlewoman, a former school teacher, and now a widow, by no means penniless, but large fortune had not been hers.

She came to the big house in Altamont where hundreds of persons are swarming today, and the auctioneer's chant is ringing. For they're ringing down the curtain on the things of Fanny Moffitt . . . to the tune of dollars and cents . . . just as the curtain was rung up, for more than a hundred years, to the tune of dollars and cents, in the country stores run by her people. . .

Next year, when much of her fine old furniture has been refinished by new owners, Fannie Moffitt's land will be sold. It will be divided, along with her personal property, as the courts of Grundy County and Tennessee may see fit.

40 File Claims

More than 40 persons have filed claim to the estate, asking a share. They claim kinship. An equal number is expected to join the fracas later. About 80 persons, in all, and maybe more.

This is happening to the estate of a woman who said, just 13 years ago, "I couldn't think of anyone but you, Cousin Fannie—"

Cousin Fannie remained until a few years ago when a niece in Chattanooga became a widow. The two Fannies talked and read, and "Miss Susie" (Mrs. Fitch) 77, served them both. The cousins had a sense of humor, but Miss Fannie's was more robust.

Cousin Fannie recalls Miss Fannie's pride of good eyesight. For Fannie Moffitt never needed glasses. Or so she thought.

Both women were reading in the parlor. Cousin Fannie said something and Miss Fannie failed to hear. Her ears weren't as strong as her eyes. Her cousin repeated.

Still Miss Fannie didn't hear. "Fannie Moffitt," cried the former school teacher, "can't you hear ANYthing?" "I Sure Can See!"

The 200-pound woman of fortune surveyed her cousin, who was holding a book very close to her eyes.

Miss Fannie concerning her uncles' estates. They had been dead a year, and no one had qualified as administrator.

Why Fret?

Miss Fannie knew the inheritance was hers, and that was that. She was accumulating royalties and dividends from coal mines and timbering and gilt-edged stocks. Why fret?

"But you can't cash the

checks," Caldwell said. The uncles had long been ill before their deaths, and Miss Fannie had checks five or six years old, a great batch of checks.

"I can cash 'em!" Miss Fannie retorted, with emphasis upon the I. She was an only child.

"Well, you try it sometime," Caldwell murmured, but he said it gently. Miss Fannie didn't



"I LOVED HER SO—" a faithful servant says as the curtain falls upon a great mountain family. "Miss Susie" (Mrs. Susie Fitch) looks at picture of her late mistress, Miss Fannie Moffitt, whose personal property was on the auction block today at Altamont, Grundy County. Against mantel hangs beaded Indian medicine bag, holding Indian doll. It was brought from Indian Territory by Miss Moffitt's father. In cedar chest around \$12,500 in checks was found after Miss Moffitt's death

"Cousin Fannie," said Miss Moffitt, with great deliberation, "I DON'T hear well, but I SURE CAN SEE!"

Ben Caldwell, her Chattanooga attorney, had a similar encounter with Miss Fannie.

"It was back in 1944," Caldwell said, "before I had wound up the estate of her uncles. I suggested that she modernize the house. How about electric light? She said, 'No, sir. No, sir. You're not going to do it!'"

"You wear GLASSES, and YOU'RE reading under ELEC-TRIC lights. I read by the old oil lamps—and I don't have to wear GLASSES!" However, she promised to have a bathtub installed. But she never got around to it.

Caldwell first met Miss Fannie in 1941 while he was covering 33 Tennessee counties for the state's Inheritance Tax Dept. Later, with the Hamilton National Bank, in charge of investment work, he conferred with

Continued on back

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like to be crossed. "Take one over to the store and try to cash it."

She eyed him and hesitated: "Cashed one the other day—"

"How did you sign it?" he asked.

"Signed it myself!" she snapped.

"That's different," Caldwell said. His voice was still very gentle. "It was made out to you. Take one that's made out to an uncle. It's yours, of course. But try to cash it—"

Miss Fannie was suspicious. She said the bank, if qualified as administrator, might take some of her assets "and run

off with it." The family had lost money in banks—

"You could sue them and collect," Caldwell assured her. And finally she agreed. In 1947 Caldwell set up a trust fund for her, with about \$37,000 she had received from a cement company investment.

Cement stock had made money for her uncles. Thereby, similar cement stock for the future was all right with Miss Fannie. That's how Caldwell reinvested the \$37,000. Today the trust is said to be valued at \$100,000.

Pretty soon Miss Fannie was saying to Miss Susie, when the lawyer was expected, "Go out

(Continued on Page 23)

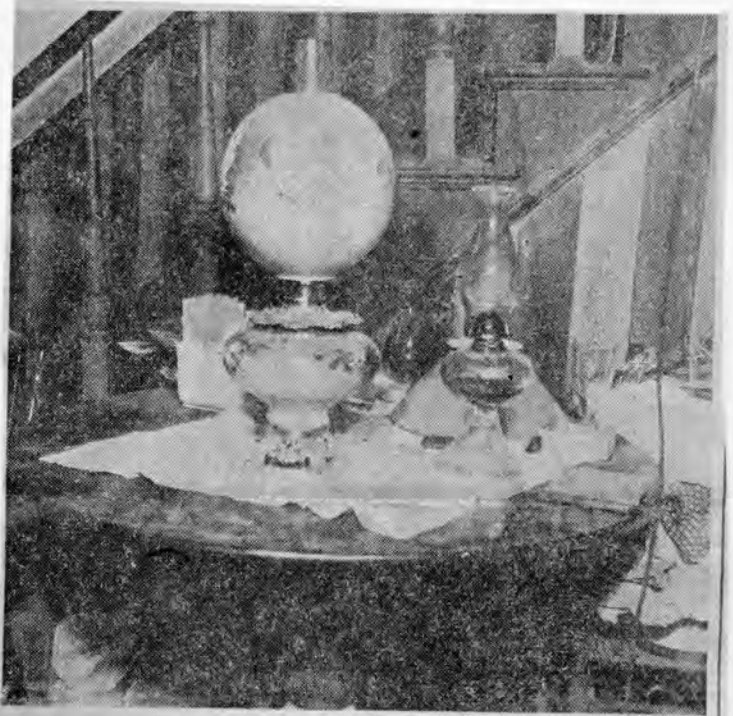
Miss Fannie

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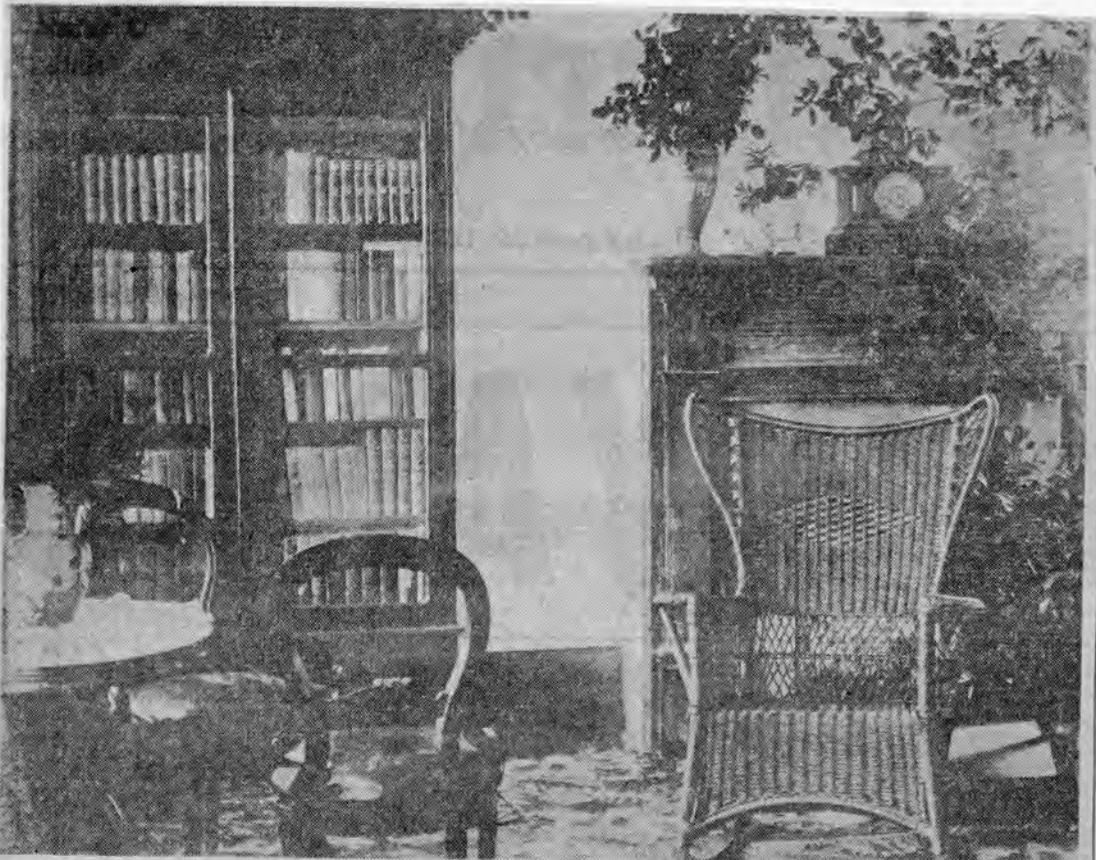
Altamont and across the Cumberland plateau. There are many viewpoints.

Since Miss Fannie's death, a national magazine has had writers and photographers in Altamont, presumably preparing a story about Miss Moffitt which would make her name known to millions across America.

In death she has acquired a distinction far more than she knew in life. Miss Fanny Moffitt is having the last laugh. And her laughter was a great big chesty "Ha! Ha!"



—Staff Photos by Bob White
THE FELIX GRUNDY TABLE also will be cried. It was owned by Adrian Northcutt, great-grandfather of the late Miss Moffitt, and is said to have belonged to Grundy, distinguished criminal lawyer, congressman, senator and a member of President Martin Van Buren's cabinet. Grundy was a contemporary of Andrew Jackson.



CHRISTMAS TIME in Miss Fannie Moffitt's mansion, Altamont, Tenn., where auction crowds will swarm Thursday, Friday and possibly Saturday. No husband rocked in the wicker chair—Miss Fannie remained a spinster and left a \$400,000 fortune, but no will. At left is one of several big bookcases, all filled with excellent books. Miss Fannie read through the nights and slept when dawn was breaking. This picture was made many years ago.

Moffitt Estate Land, Homes Bring \$206,510 At Auction

Altamont—(P)—The last of the estate of the late Miss Fannie Moffitt, wealthy Altamont spinster, was sold at auction Wednesday as buyers paid \$206,510 for 20,000 acres of valuable farm, timber and mineral lands and residential properties.

Miss Moffitt, 70, died last Sept. 10, leaving no will but an estate valued by the administrator, Coal-mont banker Arthur Curtis, at between \$250,000 and \$300,000.

The properties, included in about 150 tracts located in and

near this mountain town, were inherited by the spinster from her relatives, H. B., T. B., and J. H. Northcutt.

Three auction firms handling the sale in front of the Grundy County courthouse offered buyers all of the real estate in one lot, but there were no bidders.

Among buyers who purchased larger amounts of the property were George Ramsey of Mont-eagle, representing Phipps & Ram-

sey, strip mine operators of Coal-mont, and George Marott, agent-manager for Southern-Western Lumber Co. of McMinnville.

Ramsey paid \$30,000 for 1,200 acres on coal lands in the sixth district of Grundy County and Marott paid \$52,000 for 10,999 acres of timber and building sites in Altamont.

The 12-room brick home where Miss Moffitt resided with her aged companion, Susie Fitch, was

bought by Vernon Northcutt of Altamont for \$11,000. Northcutt paid another \$11,000 for timber-lands and building sites in the Altamont area.

Property classified as mineral lands by the auction firms sold for \$161,385; farm lands, \$11,550; timber and residential properties at Beersheba Springs, \$6,050; and timber, houses, store buildings and lots in Altamont, \$27,525.

Thousands of antique seekers

gathered here in December when Miss Moffitt's personal property was sold at auction, bringing a total of \$16,226.

Adding this to the proceeds from Wednesday's sale would put the value of the spinster's estate at \$222,736.

Mrs. Mabel Massie Ward of Bryn Mawr, Pa., and Fred Potter of Nashville, Miss Moffitt's two surviving first cousins, will receive a big share of the money from the real estate and also the proceeds from the personal property sale.

Miss Fitch, the spinster's companion, bought a small home

Miss Fannie's Hats, Vases— All Will Go—But Memories

By WILLIAM KEEL Staff Correspondent

ALTAMONT, Tenn. — The auctioneer had disposed of a large part of the cherished belongings of the old Moffitt-Northcutt mansion by last night—but there's one thing there he'll never sell.

He can't put a wealth of memories on an auction block.

The old-fashioned house and its contents will always be a part of Altamont—in the minds of those who live here. To some, like aging Mrs. Susie Fitch, Miss Frances (Fannie) Moffitt's companion and servant, the memory will be always lurking. To others, it will grow dim in time.

The auctioneer's gavel, which will pound again tomorrow, by last night had sold nearly \$15,000 worth of the cherished heirlooms of one of Grundy county's oldest and most famous old families. Yesterday's sales amounted to \$3,500. The auction will continue tomorrow and Tuesday. In the backyard of the mansion estate is located the first Grundy county courthouse. Miss Fannie used it for a storehouse.

The 12-room brick house itself was built in 1885 by N. B. Northcutt, Miss Fannie's grandfather. He was her mother's father. Two mountain fortunes merged when she married James Moffitt.

But the keen-witted Miss Fannie will play the leading role in the memories of most folks when they pass the big, two-story, red-shuttered house on the side of a gently rolling hill.

Lady of the Roses

Miss Fannie, the lady of the roses, whose obsession for roses was widely known.

Miss Fannie, the unconventional, who slept by day and read by night, devouring everything from

Bible stories to Guy de Maupassant.

Miss Fannie, the mysterious who left this world without leaving a will for reasons only she really knew.

Miss Fannie, the eccentric, who wouldn't hear of installing electricity or plumbing in her home although her fortune will total near a half-million dollars.

Miss Fannie, the music lover, who played the piano and violin, enjoyed listening to the Victrola.

Miss Fannie, the carefree old lady who liked square dancing and people.

Miss Fannie, with her 132 hats, the envy of many other women.

It's the melting of all those personality traits into one human being, plus her fabulous accumulation of expensive possessions, that will make Miss Fannie long remembered.

She Was Short, Plump

The 62-year-old spinster, a short, plump woman with a wry sense of humor, didn't leave a will. Her relatives—about 40 of them—are getting ready for the court fight for her property in Tracy City next year.

The court will determine what disposition is to be made of the old house and the real estate.

Gone now are truckloads of Miss Fannie's prized possessions—her antique furniture, her bric a brac, her silver, her spinning wheels, fur coats.

Gone is the hand-painted china bearing Miss Fannie's ever-present rose. She liked roses printed on dresses, on vases, even on her pocketbooks. Many of her hats, most of them wide-brimmed, bore clusters of roses of all descriptions.

Miss Fannie, sweeping along

under a fantastic hat in her low-heeled Oxfords, was a familiar sight in Altamont. The combination put even more emphasis on her stocky figure.

What Kind of Woman?

What kind of a woman was Miss Fannie?

You get different answers to that question.

Vernie Smith, who drove her around frequently, tells how on Christmas Eve she would go into McMinnville and buy expensive presents for her family and friends.

He said Miss Fannie just didn't take to newfangled things. "She had a 1937 Ford in her garage with 10,000 miles on it but she just let it sit and rust. She never bothered to fix it up and sell it."

Smith said he also drove her to the movies.

"Her favorite actor," he said, "was Clark Gable."

On her finger at all times, he said, was a big diamond.

"She liked to buy dresses that were too small for her," he said, "and then she would have her seamstress alter them."

For 44 Years, Servant

"Miss Susie" Fitch, swears by Miss Fannie. She was her servant for 44 years.

"She was a nice person," said Miss Susie, who had some tart things to say about relatives who didn't appear on the scene until Miss Fannie "passed."

"She was good, friendly and sociable. She was a hearty eater, enjoyed a good meal. She liked music and she liked to read. And she liked to get about too."

What would Miss Fannie think

across the street from the Moffitt residence at Wednesday's auction for \$1,800 and will make her home there.

The elderly woman, beneficiary of a trust fund which Mrs. Ward and Potter agreed to establish, has filed a claim for \$2,500 against the estate "for services rendered since 1942."

The claim is among 140 or more which Curtis said had been filed against the estate, most of them by persons representing themselves as heirs of the spinster.

Want Ads turn things into cash.

about the auction if she were there?

"She might get a kick out of it, but then again when she saw those people handling her things, she might get her temper up too. She didn't have a quick temper but when she got stirred up—"

Grundy County Judge J. L.

Rawlings said he considered Miss Fannie "a simple, unconventional, friendly person."

"She didn't care what anybody thought. She wasn't dependent on anybody for anything. She had everything she needed. She was sufficient unto herself."

Sale Reflects Miss Fannie

By WILLIAM KEEL
Staff Correspondent

ALTAMONT, Tenn.—The colorful personality of Miss Frances (Fannie) Moffitt flared to life again here yesterday as the auctioneer put her prized family possessions on the block.

The first day of a three-day auction put \$6,683 into the auctioneer's till for later distribution to relatives.

The late 62-year-old spinster's flair for the colorful and unconventional seemed gaudy to some

there who hadn't known her. But to those who did know the eccentric Grundy countian, who died without leaving a will, color was part and parcel of Miss Fannie.

A Kick Out of Life

The spry, rollypoly woman, who got a kick out of square dancing and life in general, died last Sept. 10.

The little mountain city assumed a sort of festive air for the auction yesterday. Oldtimers said it was the biggest sale in their recollection.

The P-TA set up refreshment

tables beside the big, red-shuttered Moffitt-Northcutt mansion. It also offered a \$1.50 plate lunch in a nearby school to the crowd which came from as far away as New York.

The crowd soon saw yesterday that Miss Fannie, last member of a long dynasty, liked color — bright, blazing red for example.

Red roses were painted on expensive china dishes. A love seat was red and white candy-striped.

But they'll see even more color when her 132 hats, many of them

(Continued on Page 16, Column 1)

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This was in the county paper last wk. - Maybe it will become something some day - the Northcutts served dinners there - at court last wk.

Mr. Terrons We are having this built - is on the lot above the school - just across the highway - from where Gussie + Walter W. old home is -

Miss Fannie's Hats, Vases— All Will Go—But Memories

By WILLIAM KEEL
Staff Correspondent

ALTAMONT, Tenn. — The auctioneer had disposed of a large part of the cherished belongings of the old Moffitt-Northcutt mansion by last night—but there's one thing there he'll never sell.

He can't put a wealth of memories on an auction block.

The old-fashioned house and its contents will always be a part of Altamont—in the minds of those who live here. To some, like aging Mrs. Susie Fitch, Miss Francies (Fannie) Moffitt's companion and servant, the memory will be always lurking. To others, it will grow dim in time.

The auctioneer's gavel, which will pound again tomorrow, by last night had sold nearly \$15,000 worth of the cherished heirlooms of one of Grundy county's oldest and most famous old families. Yesterday's sales amounted to \$3,500. The auction will continue tomorrow and Tuesday. In the backyard of the mansion estate is located the first Grundy county courthouse. Miss Fannie used it for a storehouse.

The 12-room brick house itself was built in 1885 by N. B. Northcutt, Miss Fannie's grandfather. He was her mother's father. Two mountain fortunes merged when she married James Moffitt.

But the keen-witted Miss Fannie will play the leading role in the memories of most folks when they pass the big, two-story, red-shuttered house on the side of a gently rolling hill.

Lady of the Roses

Miss Fannie, the lady of the roses, whose obsession for roses was widely known.

Miss Fannie, the unconventional, who slept by day and read by night, devouring everything from

Bible stories to Guy de Maupassant.

Miss Fannie, the mysterious who left this world without leaving a will for reasons only she really knew.

Miss Fannie, the eccentric, who wouldn't hear of installing electricity or plumbing in her home although her fortune will total near a half-million dollars.

Miss Fannie, the music lover, who played the piano and violin, enjoyed listening to the Victrola.

Miss Fannie, the carefree old lady who liked square dancing and people.

Miss Fannie, with her 132 hats, the envy of many other women.

It's the melting of all those personality traits into one human being, plus her fabulous accumulation of expensive possessions, that will make Miss Fannie long remembered.

She Was Short, Plump

The 62-year-old spinster, a short, plump woman with a wry sense of humor, didn't leave a will. Her relatives—about 40 of them—are getting ready for the court fight for her property in Tracy City next year.

The court will determine what disposition is to be made of the old house and the real estate.

Gone now are truckloads of Miss Fannie's prized possessions — her antique furniture, her bric a brac, her silver, her spinning wheels, fur coats.

Gone is the hand-painted china bearing Miss Fannie's ever-present rose. She liked roses printed on dresses, on vases, even on her pocketbooks. Many of her hats, most of them wide-brimmed, bore clusters of roses of all descriptions.

Miss Fannie, sweeping along

under a fantastic hat in her low-heeled Oxfords, was a familiar sight in Altamont. The combination put even more emphasis on her stocky figure.

What Kind of Woman?

What kind of a woman was Miss Fannie?

You get different answers to that question.

Vernie Smith, who drove her around frequently, tells how on Christmas Eve she would go into McMinnville and buy expensive presents for her family and friends.

He said Miss Fannie just didn't take to newfangled things. "She had a 1937 Ford in her garage with 10,000 miles on it but she just let it sit and rust. She never bothered to fix it up and sell it."

Smith said he also drove her to the movies.

"Her favorite actor," he said, "was Clark Gable."

On her finger at all times, he said, was a big diamond.

"She liked to buy dresses that were too small for her," he said, "and then she would have her seamstress alter them."

For 44 Years, Servant

"Miss Susie" Fitch, swears by Miss Fannie. She was her servant for 44 years.

"She was a nice person," said Miss Susie, who had some tart things to say about relatives who didn't appear on the scene until Miss Fannie "passed."

"She was good, friendly and sociable. She was a hearty eater, enjoyed a good meal. She liked music and she liked to read. And she liked to get about too."

What would Miss Fannie think

B-D THE NASHVILLE TENNESSEAN, Sunday Morning, Aug. 5, 1956

Auction Firms Named For Spinster's Estate

ALTAMONT, Tenn. — Three auction companies have been chosen to handle the sale of lands and buildings owned by the late Miss Fannie Moffitt here Aug. 15.

They are the Dave King Auction company, Manchester, the M. P. King Auction company, McMinnville, and the Bob Winton Auction company, Winchester.

Attorneys for the estate will be W. M. Ables and Henry Barker, Tracy City and South Pittsburg.

20,000 Acres Offered

To be offered at public auction at 10 a.m. (CST) at the courthouse here are approximately 20,000 acres of land, including the 12-room, two-story brick residence where Miss Moffitt lived in semi-seclusion with a friend, Susie Fitch. Another home in the same community and

five houses and lots in the nearby resort community of Beersheba Springs will also go up for sale.

Thousands of antique seekers were attracted to this mountain community last December when the wealthy spinster's personal property was sold in a week-long auction.

Leaves No Will

Miss Moffitt died last Sept. 10, leaving no will but an estate valued at more than \$500,000.

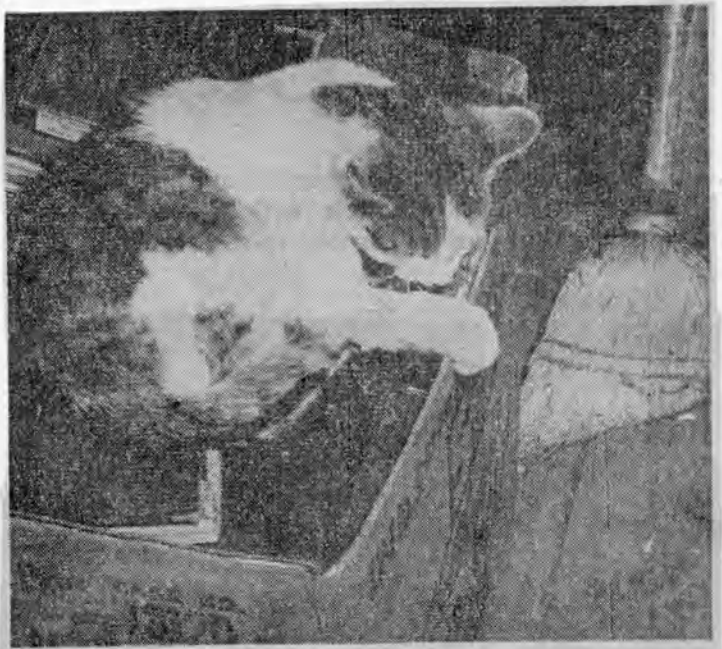
More than 300 claims have been made against the Moffitt estate by persons representing themselves as heirs.

When relatives told the elderly spinster that there probably would be "a lot of fighting" over the estate if she did not make a will, Miss Moffitt reportedly answered, "let 'em fight."

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"MISS FANNIE'S" TREASURES. Here you see a sterling silver compote of coin silver, 11 inches tall, dating to 1850 and very conservatively appraised at \$90. Beside it stands a solid silver epergne by Tiffany (which "Miss Fannie's" attorney thinks should bring \$1000). Partly obscured is a 12-inch Wedgewood plaque of 1850 in pale green and white, appraised at \$50.



One of Miss Fannie Moffitt's cats curls up atop a box of its mistress's books which are about to be auctioned. Just to the left of the cat, but not shown, is the warm stove, about the only normal thing in the room to the bewildered animal.

about the auction if she were there?

"She might get a kick out of it, but then again when she saw those people handling her things, she might get her temper up too. She didn't have a quick temper but when she got stirred up —"

Grundy County Judge J. L.

Rawlings said he considered Miss Fannie "a simple, unconventional, friendly person."

"She didn't care what anybody thought. She wasn't dependent on anybody for anything. She had everything she needed. She was sufficient unto herself."

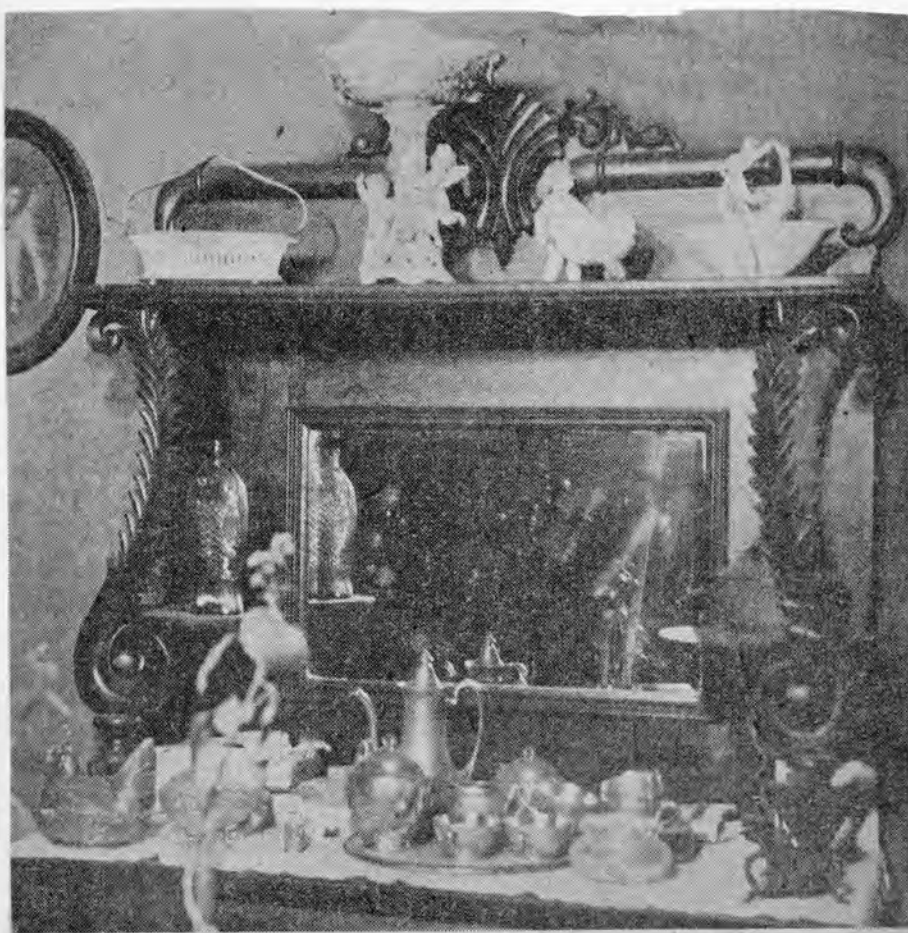
... as Spinster's Possessions Cross Block



Auctioneers' helpers hold aloft a "gents chair," enjoyed by generations by the old Northcutt family, as prospective

buyers put a mental price tag on it.

—Staff photos by Jack Corn. It sold for \$75.



The Dresden compote atop this sideboard is valued at \$350. It was made about 1875. Other treasures include a pair of early Pittsburgh flint glass compotes dating to 1830 and appraised at \$150, a Hepplewhite corner cupboard of inlaid cherry (made about 1790), an Empire table said to have belonged to Felix Grundy, \$5,000 in diamonds, and much more.

300 Share In Moffitt Estate

Altamont, Tenn. — (AP) — Chancery court decided Tuesday that nearly 300 persons should share in the estate of wealthy spinster Miss Fannie Moffitt, who reportedly said she would let her heirs fight it out rather than leave a will.

The 18 months of litigation to determine the legal heirs to the approximately \$430,000 estate ended when Chancellor Glenn Woodlee approved nearly 300 claims ranging from about \$82,000 to \$2.50.

An 80-acre timber tract is still tied up in litigation growing out of a belated tax claim by the federal government and disposition of the land could alter the value of the estate. W. M. Ables, South Pittsburg, attorney for the administrator, said.

Able said the heirs will divide about \$230,000 and the remaining \$200,000 will go for state and federal taxes, attorneys fees, expenses and court costs.

Principal among the heirs, who are scattered across the country from California to Pennsylvania, are Mrs. Mable Massie Ward of Philadelphia, and Fred Potter, of Nashville. Mrs. Ward's legacy is estimated at about \$82,000; Potter's at about \$41,000.

Miss Moffitt died in 1955 in her large home here and although it was equipped with electricity and telephones, she frowned on such modern conveniences and she and her companion, Mrs. Susie Fitch, got by on kerosene lamps and without indoor plumbing.

The elderly spinster reportedly said when advised if she did not leave a will her heirs would fight over the estate. "Let 'em fight."

142 File Claims As Heirs Of Grundy's Miss Fannie

TRACY CITY—A total of 142 persons have listed themselves as claimants to the estate of the late Miss Fannie Moffitt of Grundy County, who left a fortune estimated at \$350,000 to \$400,000.

Miss Moffitt, the subject of a NASHVILLE BANNER feature serial in December, left no will. "Let 'em fight!" she told her attorney, Ben Caldwell of Chattanooga.

Twenty-two attorneys, representing contenders, Wednesday attended a pre-trial conference before Chancellor Glen W. Woodlee in the Tracy City courthouse.

The attorneys came from Nashville, St. Louis, Chicago, Chattanooga, Murfreesboro, McMinnville, Dayton, South Pittsburg and Winchester. The number also included Grundy County attorneys. Miss Moffitt's family home, the spacious old Northcutt-Moffitt mansion, is located in Altamont, Grundy County.

A Nashville man, Fred S. Potter, 61, of Sweetbriar Ave., is expected

to receive a sizeable portion of the mercantile, coal and timber fortune. Around 8,000 acres of land are involved. Potter is a first cousin of the late heiress.

The attorneys had one general, complex purpose, to clarify the status of the various claimants. A. D. Litem and Pat Lynch of Winchester were among the guardians appointed to represent some of the "Unknown Heirs."

The court will hear the involved issues at the next regular term, in May.

Bisque, Antique Furniture Await Altamont Auction



Miss Moffitt loved hats. About 50 original models, from the best shops of Chattanooga and Nashville, were found in her bleak, uncarpeted and unpapered bedroom. Most of them, in pastel colors, were lush with gay roses, ostrich plumes, pheasant feathers, rhinestones and fur. A woman called them "\$50 hats." Notice fine old Federal table, too. These items and countless others will be offered at the Altamont auction, Wednesday through Friday.



She also "loved bisque and milk glass." Costlier pieces, including figurines, have been removed to a bank vault for safekeeping. See the superb Staffordshire hen, third shelf from top?

... as Spinster's Possessions Cross Block

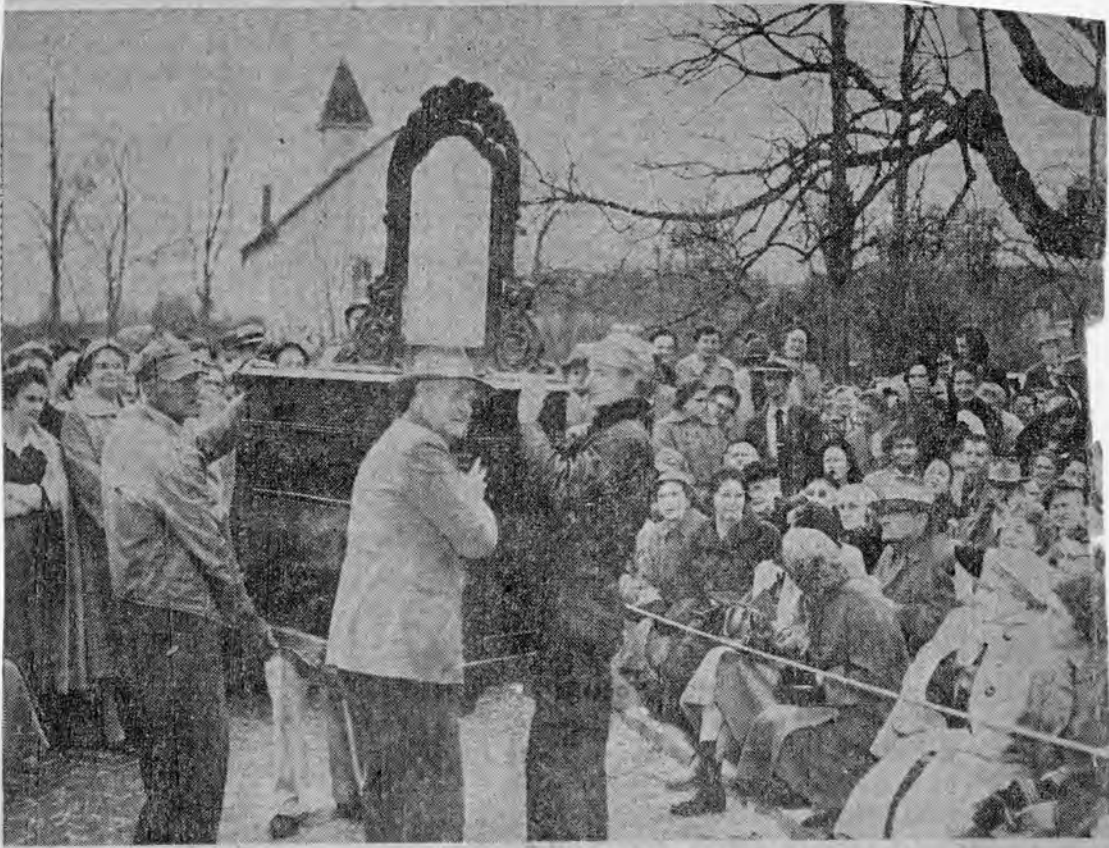


Auctioneers' helpers hold aloft a "gents chair," enjoyed for generations by the old Northcutt family, as prospective buyers put a mental price tag on it. It sold for \$75. —Staff photos by Jack Corn

Miss Fannie And Her Money



MISS FANNIE'S PARLOR, in its prime. From the phonograph, searchers recovered \$1,050, after Miss Fannie's death.



But the sale goes on and the auctioneer's helpers display a huge antique chest of drawers as the crowd of 2000 watches closely. Some of the buyers came from as far away as New York.

Time Out for Make-Believe ...



ALTAMONT, Tenn.—Three-year-old Lucy Smith of Tullahoma, Tenn., wants to see just how she looks decked out in one of Miss Fannie Moffitt's rose-piled hats and rose-painted pocketbooks. Miss Fannie was obsessed by the beauty of a rose. Lucy is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Frank O. Smith.



—Staff Photo by Don Foster
SOLID SILVER—This three-foot high epergne (table center piece) was sold for \$635 to Martin Scott of Alexandria. Holding the silver piece is George A. Smith of the Chattanooga Auction Galleries.

Sale Of Miss Fannie's Effects Grosses \$6,677 On First Day

(Related Story on Page 20.)

By ED HUDDLESTON
(Banner Staff Writer)

There's nothing slipshod so far about the settlement of Miss Fan-

nie Moffitt's \$400,000 estate.

Auctioneers chanted up \$1,100 per hour to its credit Thursday. In six hours of selling personal property they grossed \$6,677.40. As the first day of the sale end-

ed, accountants were only \$3.45 out of balance, despite the hubbub.

Arthur R. Curtis, cashier of the Bank of Coalmont, is administrator. A few pieces of fine old furniture failed to bring what had been anticipated, but virtually all items moved speedily, at good but not sky-high prices.

Curtis, however, apparently decided the eager crowd of antique hunters was no push market for diamonds. One of the late Miss Moffitt's two large diamonds, well in excess of two carats, was bought in by the administrator at \$1,375. The second was not offered. It is expected they will be marketed later through jewelers.

A virtually interested spectator, as the Moffitt household was dismembered, was a Philadelphia lawyer, Richard C. (Dick)

Sorlien, representing Mrs. Mabel Massie Ward, about 62, of Brynmawr, Pa.

A first cousin of Miss Moffitt, she may receive two-thirds of the estate—her own share and that of her brother who died about two weeks ago.

Mrs. Ward did not attend the sale. However, she has asked that Miss Moffitt's diamond brooch, appraised well in excess

Note to U. S. Senator Gore:
Your wife, Mrs. Pauline Gore, apparently plans to spend less than \$27.50 for your Christmas present this year.
Mrs. Gore attended an auction of effects of the late Miss Frances Moffitt, saying she hoped to buy an old Nicholas Amadi violin for you for Christmas.
Another bidder got the violin for \$27.50.

Continued on back

Moffitt Auction Surpasses \$10,000; Enters Third Day

(See Related Story on Page 3)

By ED HUDDLESTON
Banner Staff Writer

Tracy City—Ten thousand dollars in two days.

That much has poured into the estate of the late Miss Fannie Moffitt in two days of auctioneering at Altamont in Grundy County. Sale of her personal property is in its third day.

Next Friday and Saturday other articles from her household will be auctioned at Altamont, Arthur R. Curtis, administrator, said. Included will be furnishings of other houses which Miss Moffitt owned in Beersheba Springs and Altamont.

All articles so far sold and those slated for the hammer today have come from Miss Moffitt's 12-room family mansion. 70 years old, in the heart of Altamont. Contents from "two full bedrooms" are yet to go, said Ben E. Caldwell, her Chattanooga attorney. Miss Moffitt's personal Victorian bedroom set is to be sold today.

Sales Pass \$3,700

Friday's sales grossed slightly more than \$3,700, about half the Thursday total of \$6,677. Bisque, milk glass, Majolica, cut-glass, much silver, and many books constituted the bulk of the offerings Friday.

A pair of flint-glass compotes

and several bisque figurines will be sold today. Miss Moffitt's finest bisque pair sold Friday afternoon.

They were a baker-boy with his baskets and a plump little girl companion-piece. About 11 inches tall, the pair brought \$130.

Other bisque pieces went for \$8, \$40 (a girl and a dog), and a good pair, about 12 inches tall, brought \$47.

One was the figure of a girl with a white hen and three yellow biddies at her feet. The other was a boy with fighting roosters before him. One rooster's wing was chipped, which reduced the price. A miniature wolf was among the bisque pieces.

Miss Fannie like heart-and-flower patterns, and a small heart-shaped dish of blue, milk glass will go today. Her diamond dinner-ring is said to be heart shaped. With her other diamonds, it is expected to be marketed through jewelers.

Her squirrel coat with broad mink cuffs brought \$150, bought by Mrs. Naomi Schenck of Glenwood and McCallie Avenues in Chattanooga. She also purchased Miss Moffitt's best piece of Wedgewood Friday. It was a pale green and white plaque with three figures. Price: \$112. Mrs. Schenck bought the Felix Grundy table Thursday for \$170.

Pitcher Brings \$37

A two-pint Sterling pitcher sold for \$37 and brought from

the auctioneer the comment "that would have brought \$80 yesterday. The crowd of five to six hundred sat in a heated tent or drifted about through the house and yard.

A superb Staffordshire hen, about to go for around \$37.50, was bought by Miss Moffitt's attorney, Caldwell, for \$40, as a gift for Mrs. Caldwell. It had been appraised at a larger figure, and the auctioneer told the crowd, "It's worth \$100." He is Charles W. Clements of Chattanooga Auction Galleries.

The hen, shown in a BANNER picture earlier this week, was believed made about 1850. A hand-woven coverlet brought \$45, and a 40-piece set Haviland china went for \$130. Forty Mexican silver dollars sold for \$37. A Majolica vase brought \$6; six Sterling soup spoons, \$6; and six individual salt dips with tiny spoons, all Sterling, \$15. Many sets of knives, forks, and spoons were cried, many of heavy Sterling.

At one point, Mrs. Susie (Miss Susie) Fitch, Miss Moffitt's companion and servant, said, "Think I'll pile up the rocks and sell them too—"

A BANNER reporter was about to pick up a bisque figurine. "Don't touch them," a guard cautioned. "Miss Susie" intervened in the reporter's behalf: "He told the truth about Miss Fannie . . . the truth will stand when the world's on fire."

of \$600, and a diamond ring, be acquired as a portion of her share.

Miss Moffitt took much interest in the richness and number of her hats, "and we have found 139," said Ben E. Caldwell, her Chattanooga attorney. Several hats were sold Thursday.

More will be sold today, but the drop in temperature on the mountain may reduce the crowd, estimated Thursday in excess of 2,000.

The sale is expected to be completed Saturday.

"After that, we think we will have a rummage sale," Curtis said. No date has been announced.

As the sale was cried, and hundreds swarmed the property, Miss Moffitt's faithful old dog, Pup, looked out a window from an upstairs room. Mrs. Susie Fitch, 77, who has served Miss Moffitt 44 years, is taking good care of the grieving dog, about nine years old.

China and silverware are expected to comprise a sizable part of today's offerings. Much of it is Victorian or Edwardian.

The top price Thursday was paid for a solid silver epergne by Tiffany, about three feet tall. It brought \$635. Miss Moffitt's mother is said to have paid well

in excess of \$1,000 for the elaborate banquet table piece.

It was bought by Martin Scott, auctioneer and insurance man of Alexandria, Tenn. He indicated he may resell it. A tureen, or covered compote, of coin silver, brought \$275.

Top price in furniture was brought by a Hepplewhite corner cupboard. A massive thing, pegged together it stands nine or ten feet tall. The cupboard dates to 1790.

The buyer was Miss Margaret Rowan of Athens, Tenn., who paid \$500.

"I came to buy it, and I definitely plan to keep it," she said happily. A distant relative of Miss Moffitt's had stayed in the

bidding until the price reached \$425.

An Empire-styled table, once owned by Felix Grundy, sold for \$170 to Mrs. Naomi Schenck of Glenwood Motel, Chattanooga. In a few weeks the refinished table, roundtop, may be seen there.

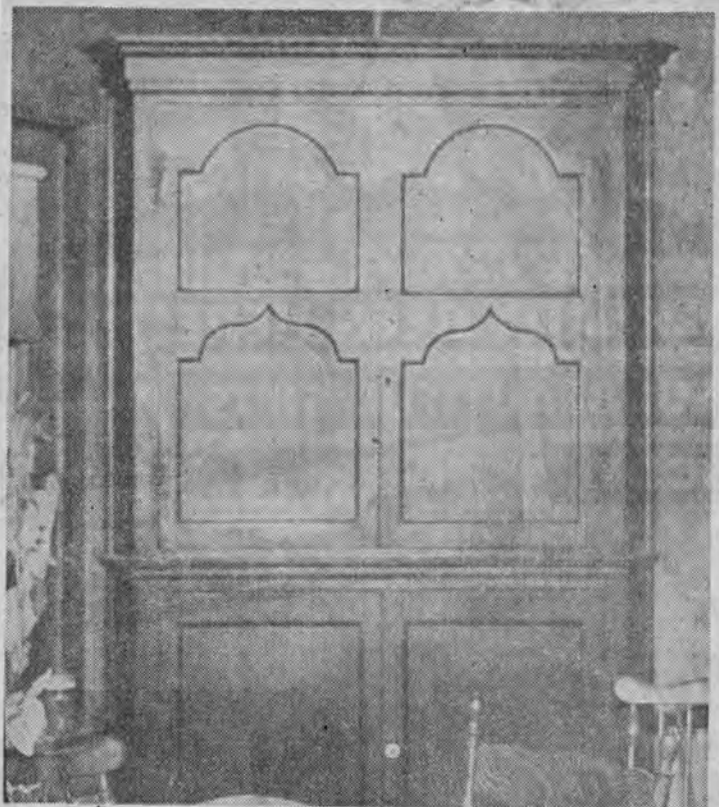
An early tavern table, which has aroused much interest among authorities on antiques, failed to stir the fancy of the crowd. Battered and in need of extensive repair, it sold for only \$38.

"Best buy of the day," said Charles W. Clements, auctioneer. He is with Chattanooga Auction Galleries, the firm conducting the sale.

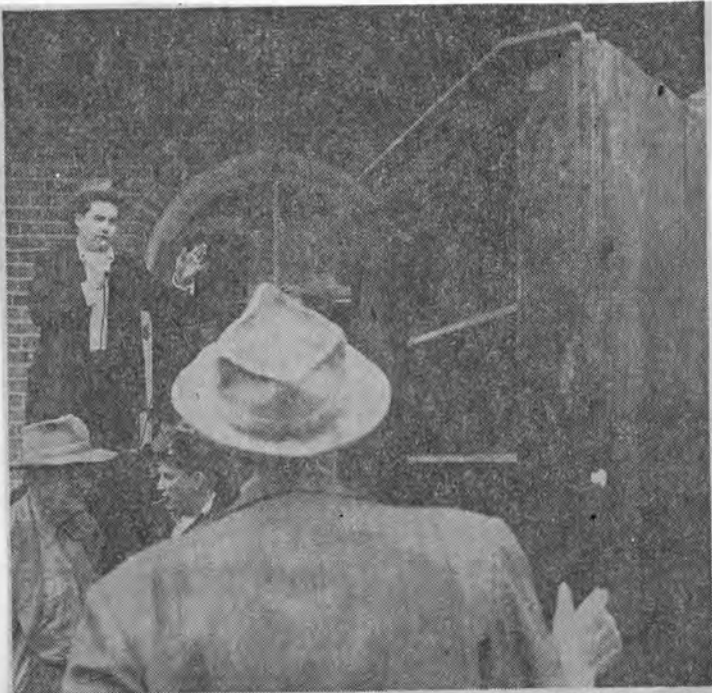


WHERE A DREAM HAS ENDED. . . other dreams will begin. New owners will bring new hope to this solid cherry four-poster. It also belonged to Adrian Northcutt, father of 15 children, who began the family fortune at his "stockade" or trading post in 1825. The bed long has stood in the first-floor bedroom of the 12-room Altamont house.

Miss Fannie and Her Money



—Staff Photo by Bob White
ONE OF MISS FANNIE MOFFITT'S TREASURES. This Heppelwhite corner cupboard of inlaid cherry will be cried to the highest bidder at the two-or-three-day auction which begins at 10 a.m. today in Altamont, Grundy County. Will it bring \$500? \$800? \$1,000. A family heirloom, it's nine or 10 feet tall and believed made about 1790.



—Staff Photos by Don Foster
SOLD FOR \$500—Miss Margaret Rowan of Athens, Tenn. paid the highest price Thursday for furniture. She bought the Heppelwhite cupboard of inlaid cherry which dates to about 1790.



THE BIDDERS and the curious huddle around the auction area at Altamont in Grundy County as the heirlooms of Miss Fannie Moffitt go on the block.



In this courthouse at Tracy City about 80 persons, asserting kinship, will fight over the \$400,000 estate of the late Miss Fannie Moffitt of Altamont, Grundy County, according to Ben E. Caldwell, Chattanooga attorney who has represented the spinster-heiress for 14 years.



—Staff Photo by Don Foster
GRANDSTAND SEAT—Gregory Fults, 8, Michael Fults, 10, and Brent Fults, 5, (top to bottom) didn't let the crowd at Altamont rob them of a view of the auction of Miss Fannie Moffitt's heirlooms. All are the sons of Mr. and Mrs. Chester Fults of Altamont.



—Staff photos by Jack Corn

And some were disappointed. "Oh, I do want that," Mrs. Bess Tankersly, right, seems to be saying to herself as she examines a copper luster pitcher. But her bid wasn't quite high enough.



Mrs. Susie Fitch, Miss Fannie Moffitt's servant for 44 years seems to be clinging desperately to her memories of a chapter in her life that is closing during her 77th year. Is she wondering what the future holds?



"Oh, no, it can't be true," murmurs Mrs. Susie (Miss Susie) Fitch as she sees the possessions of her late mistress, Miss Frances Moffitt, sold at public auction.



"MISS FANNIE'S" COAT of golden squirrel is donned by Mrs. Susie Fitch to accommodate Banner photographer Bob White. "Miss Susie" lived with Miss Fannie 44 years as faithful companion and servant. She's in the chilly parlor of the old mansion at Altamont, built in 1885 by the mountain merchant-prince, H. B. Northcutt, Miss Fannie's grandfather.



Mrs. Susie Fitch, Miss Fannie Moffitt's servant for 44 years, seems to be clinging desperately to her memories of a chapter in her life that is closing during her 77th year. Is she wondering what the future holds?

Moffitt Sale Ends; Auction Hits \$16,226

ALTAMOUNT, Tenn. —(P)— The public auction of the late Miss Fannie Moffitt's personal property ended yesterday with the total amount paid for the hundreds of articles reaching \$16,226.49.

The sale began last Thursday as a three-day event, but it was extended to five days in order to dispose of the many antiques, clothing articles and other items taken from the wealthy spinster's 12-room brick home here.

Arthur Curtis, Coalmont banker who is administrator of the Moffitt estate, expressed satisfaction with the auction, pointing out that the total amount paid by buyers was about twice the appraised value of the articles offered.

Miss Moffitt died intestate last Sept. 10, leaving few close relatives and an estate that has been estimated in value at more than \$300,000.

A crowd of 1500 packed the opening day sale in front of the spinster's home last Thursday, but the number of antique hunters dwindled as the auction progressed.

Curtis said last night that the only articles remaining to be sold

Page 20—THE NASHVILLE BANNER, Wed., June 5, 1957

Last of Miss Fannie's Land Sold; Bid Increase Expected

Winchester—The story of Miss Fannie Moffitt, elderly spinster who left no will so her heirs "could fight over" her estate is drawing to a close.

A final page was written Saturday when 80 acres of fine virgin pine, the only remaining property of Miss Moffitt, went across the auction block. High bidder for the property, on Cumberland Mountain on State Highway 56, was the Greeter Lumber Co. of Altamont, which originally held an option on the land.

Bob Winton of Winchester, one of the auctioneers handling the sale through Chancery Court, said the high bid amounted to \$29,250.

He explained that other bidders have 25 days in which to raise the bid and that a raise must amount to 10 per cent or more. He also stated that he, Dave King of Manchester and M. P. King of McMinnville, the heads of the other realty companies assisting in the disposal sale, expected the bid to be raised very shortly.

It was pointed out that in event the bid is raised another sale will

be held in front of the courthouse at Altamont.

When the sale is confirmed by Chancery Court and all expenses are paid, the money will be divided among the many relatives of Miss Moffitt, who are reported to be receiving from \$82,000 to \$2.50.

Also assisting in the sale were Ables and Barker, attorneys from South Pittsburg and Tracy City.

Miss Moffitt died in September, 1955.

Buyers Crowd in as Old Family Heirlooms Go on Block



Dec. 11, 1955 17

—Staff photo by Jack Corn
The Moffitt-Northcutt mansion yard is crowded as the auctioneer, standing on a platform on the porch, disposes of the old Grundy county family's cherished heirlooms.

Sale Reflects Miss Fannie

(Continued From Page One)

rose-adorned, are put on the block today or tomorrow.

Miss Fannie, an outspoken person with a sharp wit, would probably have snorted and made wry remarks about some of the prices paid for antiques handed down through the Northcutt and Moffitt families for generations. Nine dollars for one of her gaily colored, handpainted bowls, for example.

And she would probably have been even more indignant when a three-carat diamond gained a high bid of \$1,375. William Able, their attorney, withdrew the ring from the sale because the offer was too low.

But the remarks from awed

matrons as the silver services were brought out would have brought forth a smile from Miss Fannie.

She would probably have chuckled had she known the proverbial Philadelphia lawyer had shown up to help clarify the legal tangle she created by not writing a will.

The lawyer is Richard C. Sorlien, attorney for Mrs. Mabel Ward, a first cousin of Philadelphia, seeking a share of the estate.

Also on hand were Mr. and Mrs. Fred Potter of 1403 Sweetbriar ave., Nashville. Potter, a state highway department clerk, is seeking another major share of the estate as a first cousin.

"Oohs" and "ahs" greeted many of the articles as they were brought out of the big, two-story mansion to the crowd in front yesterday.

A 1790-1800 corner cupboard, put together with wooden pegs, brought \$500 from Miss Margaret Rowan of Chattanooga. She added an antique table for \$82.50.

Martin Scott, antique and automobile dealer of Alexandria, Tenn., paid \$635 for a fabulous silver epergne. A sterling silver punch bowl went for \$275 and 15 deep silver plates for \$26 a piece.

A table, estimated to be 200 years old, was sold for \$170. It was given the Northcutt family by Felix Grundy, for whom the

county is named. He was at one time postmaster general under President Martin Van Buren, Andrew Jackson's political protege.

A red and white striped love seat was sold for \$80, a "gents"

chair for \$75. A broken chair brought \$17.50.

But Miss Fannie would have frowned severely had she heard the price on one of her most personal and prized belongings—her violin. It sold for \$27.50.

Mrs. Fowler, Teacher, Dies

Mrs. Ethel Lockhart Fowler, retired schoolteacher of the Elora community, died Sunday at Lincoln County Hospital following a long illness. She was 80 years old and the widow of H. A. Fowler, a former state senator.

Services were Tuesday at the Elora Cumberland Presbyterian Church, with the Rev. R. E. Burroughs and the Rev. Leslie Jacobs officiating. Burial was in the McClure Cemetery near Huntland, with Gallant Funeral Home in charge.

Mrs. Fowler was a native of Grundy County. Following graduation from Ward-Belmont College in Nashville, she taught school in Grundy County and at one time served as principal of Altamont High School, and later as principal of a school in Alabama.

She then attended Teacher's Normal College in Murfreesboro and taught in the Lincoln County school system for 32 years prior to her retirement in 1957. A member of the first Parent-Teachers Association organized in the Elora Elementary School, she was presented a lifetime membership in the national PTA.

She was a member of the Elora Cumberland Presbyterian Church and of the Lincoln County Retired Teachers' Association.

Survivors include three sisters, Mrs. Irene Lusk of Cincinnati, Ohio, Mrs. Hazel Lusk of Morrison and Mrs. Georgia Lee Eller of Asheville, N. C., and a brother, Hugh Lockhart, also of Asheville, N. C.



Attended school with Fannie Moffitt
Senator Hoy Arthur Fowler - Ethel Lockhart Fowler Elora T.N Lincoln County
Hoy Fowler was from North Alabama
was in 6th grade when Ethel was teaching - They
married, moved to Elora, she taught school there



Senator Hoy Fowler & Ethel Lockhart *Studio* Fowler friends of Lennie Moffett

1
What Fannie Moffitt's mother
meant to me -

3
Written by
Ethel Lockhart Fowler
Girl

As a reminder, Fannie Moffitt was the Altamont Spinster, whose estate was over \$250,000, who passed away Sept. 10 - 1955 - She was the grand daughter of the late H.B. Northcut of the H.B. Northcut & Sons Merchants Store, which was the only store for years in the mountain town of Altamont, Grundy Co. Tenn.

Fannie Moffitt & I went to school together - She was worth thousands of dollars, I was just a little mountain girl, one of five children in a working family -

Fannie's mother was a teacher and was very much interested in the children of the town - She was known to us as "Miss Jim".

Miss Jim was a well educated lady for that time - a college graduate, and had traveled extensively - Her methods of teaching were many years a head of the times she lived -

Miss Jim, was not only my school teacher, but was also my music teacher - Oh, how we children loved and idealized her is beyond words -

In those days school buildings were very bare with practically no equipment. One year Miss Jim had desks made of different heights to suit different heights age children, also bought chairs for each desk for the school room, that we might be more comfortable, which we were overjoyed to have instead of the long straight benches that had been in use for years.

She did this at her expense.

She furnished so many things for our conveniences that are too numerous to mention, as pencils, scissors, writing pads, pictures & magazines -

It was through Miss Jim's teaching that I learned to appreciate good reading and literature. She instilled in me a desire for the best and an appreciation & love of the great musicians, paintings & writers.

She had a wonderful library, she shared her books with any who would take good care of them & returned them.

Having this privilege and trust shown me, impressed me for life. I learned early in life, to read good books. I have never had any desire to read trashy literature.

Mrs. Tim, also had a music class. There were several real talented music pupils in this little town. I wasn't one of the talented, but I learned to love the music of the great musicians. I do so much appreciate this love for good music that she instilled in me - she took some of us girls with her to Nashville when she and Fannie went to hear a special musician or ^{great} singer that came Nashville - Of course she was giving her daughter these advantages, and she was kind enough to let some of us other girls share these advantages, that Fannie might enjoy herself more. I can look back and feel so thankful that I had a chance to partake of some of these blessings - otherwise I couldn't have had -

Mrs. Tim wanted her daughter to become interested in art, paintings and fine china - so I was one that got to share some of these along with Fannie.

I was especially interested in china & hand painted china. Fannie and I started a set of china. She chose hand painted Haviland. I chose plain white Haviland. I couldn't afford a set of hand painted Haviland -

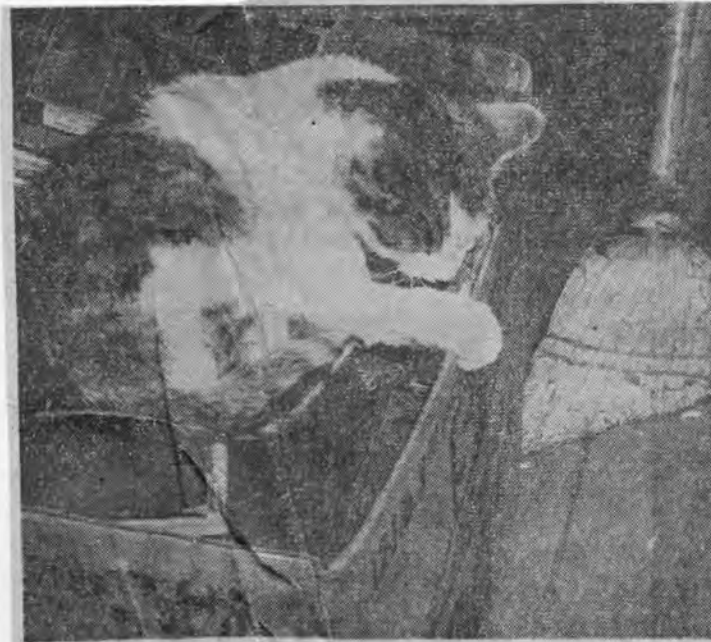
I bought mine, a few pieces at a time till I got a set service for six - Mrs. Tim had taken a course in china painting and had bought a kiln - She was going to teach me to paint, but she never got that far - I went away to teach - I became a country elementary school teacher.

Mrs. Tim bought this china through her father for whole sale price. He was a merchant - She was sweet enough to let me pay only the price that she got it for - so here I became a great lover of china and

Crystal - She never refused to give me any suggestions that I asked of her -

Out side of the Christian training my parents gave me, Mrs Jim was the person that created & instilled in me a love for the better things of life, as good literature a love for high type music & art. I can look back and feel so thankful that, tho I was a little mountain girl, that Mrs Jim lived in this little town too - that I happened to be one she liked - and chose as one of the associates for Fannie -

Articles of Fannie Moffitts



One of Miss Fannie Moffitt's cats curls up atop a box of its mistress's books which are about to be auctioned. Just to the left of the cat, but not shown, is the warm stove, about the only normal thing in the room to the bewildered animal.

MISCELLANEOUS SHOWER FOR BRIDE-ELECT

On Friday afternoon, May 16, Mrs. H. A. Fowler and Mrs. P. A. Damron entertained with a miscellaneous shower in the lovely home of Mrs. Fowler at Elora, complimenting Miss Carole Patrick, whose marriage to Donald R. Stuart will be an event of June 1.

Mrs. B. B. Higgins presided at the register, which was uniquely and attractively arranged under a pale blue umbrella.

The guests gathered in the attractive living rooms of the home, where a number of bouquets of summer flowers added their beauty to the decor of the occasion, which carried out a Florida scene, and was recreated to represent their wedding trip to Florida.

Mrs. Damron conducted two contests, with Mrs. Don E. Stuart and Miss Patrick winning the prizes. Mrs. Stuart presented her gift to the bride, which was a crystal toothpick holder concealed in a miniature bridal hat designed by her aunt, Mrs. Emmett Owens.

The gifts were presented in a small wagon decorated with an umbrella, drawn by Thomas Aubrey Rice, dressed in a raincoat and rain hat.

After the gifts were opened, Miss Jane Rice and Mrs. Charles Rice assisted the hostesses in serving an appropriate afternoon plate, on which were individual decorated cakes with miniature pastel parasols as favors, lime punch, pastel mints and nuts, from a lovely appointed lace-covered table decorated with silver candelabra with white tapers and a flower arrangement of white gladioli.

The honor guest was attired in a pink summer cotton frock with white accessories and wore a corsage of white carnations.

Margaret C. Owen Lincoln County Teacher of The Year

The teachers of Lincoln County have honored Mrs. Margaret C. Owen by choosing her as "The Teacher of The Year."

This recognition is due Mrs. Owen for many reasons. She has taught school for thirty-two (32) years, thirty (30) of these years being in Lincoln County. She received her elementary school education in Elora Public School, graduated from Central High School, and received the B. A. Degree from Middle Tennessee State Teachers College in Murfreesboro.

Her interests and activities in the educational world include: Life Membership in the National Education Association, President of Lincoln County Teachers Association, Delegate to the Tennessee State Representative Assembly, Delegate to the National Teacher's Association, Active member of American Childhood Education Association, and a charter member of Phi Chapter of Delta Kappa Gamma Honorary Society for Women Teachers.

Parent Teacher Association as well as other community and church activities have always been a part of Mrs. Owen's life.

Not having been blessed with children of her own, nevertheless her home has been a heaven for children of the community and those in need of a friend.

"Miss Margaret" is the kind of teacher who inspires her pupils to do their best, to be somebody and find their place in life. She has the gift of being able to communicate to others her boundless enthusiasm. Who can say how far her influence extends in the lines of others?

Not all good teachers receive the recognition due them yet all Lincoln County Teachers are happy to rejoice with this our fellow-teacher. We feel that we are joined by the many pupils who have passed through Mrs. Owen's Class room in sharing the joy this recognition must bring to one who richly deserves it.

MISS PATRICK HONORS BRIDESMAIDS

On last Friday noon, Miss Carole Patrick entertained at Largen Motor Inn, complimenting her wedding attendants. Miss Patrick became the bride of Don Stuart, Jr., on Sunday afternoon.

The table was decorated with handsome arrangements of pink carnations, clusters of pink wedding bells and greenery, and the places were marked by individual corsages which carried out the same color scheme.

Seated with Miss Patrick were Miss Rebecca Duffield of Bristol, Tenn., Miss Sally Lambertson, Miss Sandra Lambertson, Miss Claudia Pittenger, Miss Sally Mitchell, Miss Catherine Patrick, Mrs. Don Stuart, mother of Miss Patrick's fiance, and Mrs. Emmett Owens, aunt of the bride.

Miss Patrick presented each of her guests with jewelled purse boxes, adorned with pink mother-of-pearl. She wore a navy blue sheath, trimmed with touches of white, and her flowers were a pink shoulder corsage.

PARTY HONORS MISS PATRICK

On last Tuesday evening, Mrs. H. F. Holtz entertain in her home on Swanson Blvd., honoring Miss Carole Patrick, a bride-elect of the season, at a miscellaneous shower. Fourteen guests were present to enjoy the occasion with Miss Patrick. Games and contests were played.

Miss Patrick was attired in a frock of beige brocaded cotton-satin, with which she wore white accessories and white flowers. After the opening of the gifts, Mrs. Holtz was assisted by Mrs. Reuel Adams in serving delightful refreshments.

Party For Miss Patrick

On Thursday afternoon at one o'clock Mrs. Harold Patrick honored Miss Carol Patrick, a recent bride, with a Fragrance Luncheon at her home. Several of Miss Patrick's friends attended.

The dining table was decorated with pink carnations. A pink umbrella with streamers formed an attractive centerpiece. Each fragrance gift was laid at the end of a streamer. The living room and dining room carried out the pink theme.

The guests were served a three course luncheon with a salad plate as the main course.

Afterwards, the guests enjoyed an informal musical program.

**MISS PATRICK. MR. STUART
MARRIED HERE SUNDAY**

The First Methodist Church in Fayetteville was the scene on Sunday afternoon of the wedding of Miss Carole Patrick, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Patrick, to Don Stuart, Jr., son of Mr. and Mrs. Donald E. Stuart, all of Fayetteville.

The church was illuminated with burning tapers, in seven-branched standard candelabra, and the altar was decorated with a large arrangement of white stock, white gladioli, and white pompoms, with huckleberry vine entwining the altar and the candle sticks.

A program of appropriate music was rendered by Mrs. Walter Tanner, vocalist, and Mrs. Frank Pigg, organist.

Rev. E. E. Walkup of Nashville, and Rev. C. B. Smith of the Fayetteville church, performed the double ring ceremony.

The bride, whose brunette beauty was enhanced by her bridal toilette, entered with her father, by whom she was given in marriage. Her dress was waltz length, of imported Chantilly lace posed over taffeta. The dress was styled with a sweetheart neckline, fitted bodice with full skirt, and the long sleeves came to Calla points over the hands. Her veil of imported illusion was caught to a Juliet cap of the lace, and the cap was trimmed with satin beads and seed pearls. She carried a white prayer book, which bore two white orchids, and from which fell a shower of white satin ribbons and tiny love knots.

Miss Rebecca Duffield of Bristol was Miss Patrick's maid of honor. Her frock was of blue embroidered organdy, with a matching cummerbund of satin, and she carried a Colonial nosegay of pink carnations and pink miniature sweetheart roses.

The bride's two sisters, Misses Jane and Catherine Patrick, were her bridesmaids. They wore dresses of pink embroidered organdy, with pink cummerbunds, finished with a bustle bow in the back. To the bow was caught a single pink rose.

Thomas Barnes of Fayetteville was Mr. Stuart's best man. Ushers included Terrell Curtis of Goodlettsville, Robert Reed of Miami, Fla., Francis Jaekes of Murfreesboro, and Harry Robertson of Murfreesboro.

For her daughter's wedding Mrs. Patrick chose a yellow embroidered organza, with white accessories, and her flowers were a white shoulder corsage. Mrs. Stuart's frock was of pale blue lace, and her flowers were baby roses in shades of pink.

Immediately following the ceremony Mr. and Mr. Patrick entertained the wedding guests at a reception in the parlors of the church. Assisting them were Mrs. Carter Mitchell, Mrs. George Lambertson, Miss Claudia Pittenger, Miss Barbara Raby. A background of music was supplied by Miss Sally Mitchell, pianist, and Misses Sandra and Sally Lambertson kept the register.

After the reception the bride and groom left for a wedding trip in Florida, after which they will be at home in Murfreesboro. For travelling the bride changed to a beige sheath of embroidered cotton, with which she wore accessories of turquoise, and caught to her shoulder were the orchids from her wedding bouquet.