

# Elsie Renfro Wed To Dr C W Knight

Miss Elsie Moore Renfro, daughter of Mr and Mrs Josiah Renfro, became the bride of Dr Charles William Knight of Glasgow, Ky in a lovely ceremony yesterday afternoon at 4:30 o'clock at the First Baptist church. Dr Malcolm B Knight of Ocala, brother of the bridegroom, was the officiating clergyman.

Southern smilax, Boston fern and white gladioli formed the effective church decorations. The chancel and choir rails were banked with southern smilax and lighted white tapers in branched candelabra illuminated an arrangement of white gladioli in a large brass urn placed against a background of Boston ferns.

A program of wedding music was played by Mrs Mable L Stone, organist. Miss Elizabeth Provence of Jacksonville, soloist, sang, Because (D'Hardelot), and, If God Will Only You (Densmore). Mrs Stone's selections included Wedding Intermezzo (Nevin), Romance (Rubenstein), Salute d'Amour (Elgar), Ave Maria (Schubert), and, Traumeri (Schumann). She played the traditional wedding marches, and Liebestraum (Liszt), during the ceremony.

Mrs George Williams, sister of the bride, was the matron of honor and only attendant. The bride entered the church on the arm of her father, by whom she was given in marriage. They were met at the altar by the bridegroom and his best man, Lt Col E T Moseley, of Evansville, Ind. Ushers were Lawrence W Renfro, brother of the bride, Dr Carlyle Marney of Louisville, Ky, Dr G F Holloway of Glasgow, Ky, and Lt George B Williams, brother-in-law of the bride.

Prior to the ceremony, the candles were lighted by Miss Patty Hill and Miss Louise Illingworth of Jacksonville, students of Florida State College for Women.

### Beautiful Bride

The bride was beautiful in her wedding gown of white marquise over satin. The gown was a long torso model which featured a shirred bodice and a lace yoke outlined with a ruffle of self material. The long tight fitting sleeves ended in points over the wrists, and the full floor length skirt was gathered to the waistline. The bride's finger tip veil of sheer illusion was caught to a head dress fashioned of pearl loops. Her bridal bouquet was of white camellias interspersed with sprays of tuberose on a background of white netting with leaves of illusion arranged in a cascade effect. The bride wore as her only ornament a gold lock- et that belonged to her mother, and she carried the same handkerchief her mother carried on her wedding day.

Mrs Williams' dress of periwinkle blue crepe was designed similar to that of the bride. Her bouquet was fashioned of yellow Pernet roses with a cluster of blue iris on a background of matching net and arranged in a cascade effect. She wore a matching arrangement in her hair.

Miss Hill wore a dress of pink taffeta and Miss Illingworth's dress was of pink net and taffeta.

They wore flower arrangements in their hair.

Mrs Renfro, mother of the bride, chose a black crepe dress trimmed in aqua with matching accessories. She wore a corsage of Pink Perfection camellias with a cluster of violets. Mrs Charles William Knight, mother of the bridegroom, wore a blue crepe with matching accessories and a corsage of Hermia camellias.

**How women and girls may get wanted relief from functional periodic pain**

Cardui, many women say, has brought relief from the cramp-like agony and nervous strain of functional periodic distress. Taken like a tonic, it should stimulate appetite, aid digestion, & thus help build resistance for the "time" to come. Started 3 days before "your time," it should help relieve pain due to purely functional periodic causes. Try it!



**CELERY . . . . 7c stalk  
Green Cabbage 3 1/2c lb.  
LOVETT'S  
SOUTH MONROE**

**THE  
WHITE WAY  
LAUNDRY AND DRY  
CLEANERS**

# Elsie Renfroe

## in the 1940 United States Federal Census

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[Source](#)

Name: Elsie Renfroe  
 Respondent: Yes  
 Age: 23  
 Estimated Birth Year: abt 1917  
 Gender: Female  
 Race: White  
 Birthplace: Georgia  
 Marital Status: Single  
 Relation to Head of House: Daughter  
 Home in 1940: Tallahassee, Leon, Florida  
 Map of Home in 1940: Tallahassee, Leon, Florida  
 Street: E Madison  
 House Number: 115  
 Inferred Residence in 1935: Tallahassee, Leon, Florida  
 Residence in 1935: Tallahassee  
 Sheet Number: 5A  
 Attended School or College: Yes  
 Highest Grade Completed: College, 5th or subsequent year  
 Hours Worked Week Prior to Census: 0  
 Income Other Sources: No  
 Neighbors: [View others on page](#)

### Household Members

	Age	Relationship
Josiah Renfroe	61	Head
India B Renfroe	53	Wife
<b>Elsie Renfroe</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>Daughter</b>

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# Elsie Renfroe Knight

in the U.S., Obituary Collection, 1930-Current

Detail

Source

Name: Elsie Renfroe Knight  
Gender: Female  
Death Age: 99  
Birth Date: 7 Jun 1917  
Birth Place: Bainbridge  
Death Date: 3 Jul 2016  
Spouse: Charles  
Child: Charlie Knight  
Ren Knight

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# Miss Elsie Moore Renfroe

in the U.S., Newspapers.com Marriage Index, 1800s-current

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Remove

Detail

Source

Name: Miss Elsie Moore Renfroe  
Gender: Female  
Marriage Date: 29 Jan 1946  
Father: Josiah Renfroe  
Mother: Renfroe  
Spouse: Charles William Knight  
Siblings: Lawrence W Renfroe

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# LEGACY

*Our Mission: Researching, preserving and promoting the Legacy of Florida Baptists*

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**LEGACY, as the monthly newsletter of the Florida Baptist Historical Society, has as its mission to highlight the legacy forged by the people and events in Florida Baptist history. During 2022, the LEGACY's monthly issues will feature Florida Baptists' missions' commitment as reflected in the people and events that inspired their fellow Baptists in the fulfilment of the Great Commission of Jesus Christ to faithfully, "go and make disciples of all nations."**

### **World War II Affected Florida Missions and Missionaries**

As the 1940s began, Florida was still reeling from the effects of the Depression. However, the Sunshine State soon benefited – but not by choice – from the evolving World War II that grew out of two escalating regional wars: one in Europe led by Adolph Hitler; and a second conflict that was underway in China as the Japanese sought to expand the land of the “Rising Sun.” And before long – December 7, 1941 – the Japanese executed a surprise air-bombing attack upon the U.S. Pacific Naval Fleet docked at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and the United States was unceremoniously drawn into World War II. During the war years, half-way around the world, a Florida native and Southern Baptist missionary Rufus Gray was executed for his Christian faith.

The evolving war-driven opportunities, “produced dramatic economic, demographic and cultural shifts in Florida,” observed Florida Baptist Historian Mark Rathel. The economic stimulus generated an unprecedented development of 172 military installations across the Florida landscape at the height of the war effort. Profitable Federal government contracts for everything from housing to foodstuffs, “revived the state’s agricultural and manufacturing sectors,” including the state’s previously moribund ship-building industry, explained University of South Florida History Professor Gary Mormino. During the decade between 1940 and 1949 Florida’s population increased 46.1 percent compared to the 15 percent growth of the U. S. population. Florida Baptist churches also benefited from the influx of new residents as pastors and churches sought to address the evangelistic and mission opportunities they encountered.

### **WMU Societies Responded to the War Effort**

Some churches, like First Baptist Church, Brandon, reported that their Woman’s Missionary Society “joined the war effort” by making Red Cross requested supplies. As did many other women’s groups, church W.M.U. societies prepared knitted stretch bandages for military medical units, and made socks, sweaters and fingerless gloves, among other garments, for military personnel stationed overseas.

State W.M.U. president Theo Thomas (Mrs. Robert) Lee, in her 1943 message to the Florida W.M.U. annual meeting expressed concerns about the women’s community service at the expense of their local church’s ministry. “We must not substitute canteen work for community missions; we must not substitute nurse’s classes for mission study classes; we must not substitute the study of war maps of this world for the blood-stained trail of human redemption taught us in the Bible; we must not substitute the giving of ten percent in the purchase of war bonds and stamps for bringing the tithe to the store house of God. Moreover, we must not lose ourselves in the doing of only humanitarian deeds. Our task is far more comprehensive than that; our task is ever to hold before the world the Kingdom of God.”

### Florida Baptists' Own Missionary Rufus Gray



In the years leading up to the beginning of the war, Floridian **Rufus F. Gray (b. 1915; d. 1942)**, a native of Titusville, whose family had moved to Ft. Pierce, made a confession of faith in Jesus Christ at the First Baptist Church. Subsequently, at age 19, Gray felt God's call to foreign missions' service while attending a Florida Baptist Convention-sponsored Deland Baptist Assembly in 1934. Gray later attended and graduated from both Furman University and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. While in Louisville, Gray and his Furman sweetheart Marian Peeler, who had graduated from the Woman's Missionary Union Training School, married in 1939.

The Grays applied for appointment for missionary service in the Far East. And during the 1940 meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, they were among a group of 17 young adults presented who recently had been commissioned to foreign missions' service.

The Grays left for China in September 1940, where they entered the language school at Peiping. They left Peiping for Shanghai on March 13, 1941, and went to Baguio, Philippines to continue their Chinese language study. Unfortunately, as Japanese military forces invaded the Philippines, the Grays were among a group of 175 missionaries (including eight Southern Baptists) and 225 civilians arrested and jailed by the Japanese on December 29, 1941. [A total of 88 Southern Baptist missionaries were detained by the Japanese during World War II and all but one – Rufus Gray – was eventually released.]

In mid-January, 1942, the Japanese military police began interrogating all missionary personnel. Based upon reports later filed with the U.S. Government and accounts by eyewitnesses, the Japanese suspected the School of Chinese [Language] Studies was being used to recruit spies for use in Japanese-occupied China. Additionally, the Japanese believed certain missionary personnel were spies for the United States.

Rufus Gray apparently had been targeted for special interrogation because of what were innocent, but incriminating, photographs that he made. An avid hobbyist-photographer, Gray had taken hundreds of pictures in China and the Philippines. It was later speculated that several of the Chinese individuals in the pictures may have been leaders in the anti-Japanese organization in Baguio. The Japanese had probably seized the pictures as evidence that Gray was an undercover agent for the United States. The Japanese military police reportedly aggressively interrogated and used waterboarding torture on Gray until he died without providing any incriminating information.

Florida native Rufus Gray holds the distinction of being the only Southern Baptist missionary who died during the war. The tragic death of the 27-year-old Titusville native, placed Gray on the honor roll of Christian martyrs who died defending their faith in and service to Jesus Christ.

### A Decade of New Leaders

As reported in the March issue of this LEGACY newsletter, W.M.U. Executive Secretary Louise Smith resigned in November 1943 to marry David Fair Boyd. To ensure the ongoing continuity in W.M.U. work across the state, the W.M.U. Executive Committee assigned to **Elsie M. Renfroe (b. 1917; d. 2016)**, the W.M.U. young people's secretary, the additional task of guiding the organization until a permanent leader could be employed. The W.M.U. search committee at the end of 1943 had initially identified and sought unsuccessfully to enlist Josephine Jones of Illinois, to lead the Florida WMU. However, in God's time, nearly six months (May, 1944) later, the committee received a telegram from Jones stating, "I am convinced God wants me to go to Florida."

served as young people's secretary 1940-1946

**Josephine Proctor Jones (b. 1902; d. 1974)**, at age 42, came to Florida from Illinois where she briefly served as state W.M.U. Executive Secretary. She had devoted her life to missions education through the W.M.U. having previously served as WMU director of the Birmingham (AL) Baptist Association and the Kentucky Baptist WMU. A native of Danville, Kentucky, Jones graduated from Centre College and the Women's Missionary Union Training School.



Meanwhile, the decade of the 1940s presented the unique challenge to the State Board of Missions on three occasions to experience a change in its executive leadership. Earlier in 1941, the State Board of Missions had to undertake the search for a new executive secretary-treasurer, to replace **Charles M. Brittain (b. 1873; d. 1943)**. After more than 20-years' service to the Board, C. M. Brittain resigned on May 7, 1941. The 67-year-old executive cited a seven-year-old heart condition that was endangering his life and work. The State Board, in quick order, voted to employ Charles H. Bolton – who until 1939 had served as the pastor of First Baptist Church, West Palm Beach – then accepted a position with the SBC Relief and Annuity Board.

Serving from 1941 to 1944, **C. H. Bolton (b. 1886; d. 1973)** subsequently held the distinction of having served the shortest length of time – three years and 15 days – of any Florida Baptist fulltime executive secretary-treasurer. However, to his credit during Bolton's brief tenure, much of the State Board's attention and actions during the war years and following, revolved around providing financial assistance in the starting of new mission work, providing construction loans to churches, and granting pastoral salary assistance to mission church pastors. Those actions were significant inasmuch as Cooperative Program income was sluggish between the Depression years and the end of World War II.

However, Bolton's most significant achievement had a lasting impact upon the Florida mission program. After three years of negotiations, Bolton secure a 1944 working agreement with the SBC Home Mission Board in which the two entities would jointly foster a city missions' program within Florida. This program employed newly designated superintendents of city missions – who were to organize new churches and assist struggling congregations – initially in four target cities. These missionaries included H.M. Liechty assigned to Jacksonville, Clifford Walker assigned to Tampa, Theo Farr, Sr. assigned to Pensacola, and J.E. Johnstone assigned to Miami.

In 1944 Bolton resigned to accept a Florida pastorate, which set into motion the State Board's search and enlistment of a new executive secretary. Initially, Board Chairman and Pastor, First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, **Homer Lindsay, Sr. (b. 1903; d. 1981)** served as interim executive secretary. Subsequently, during the January, 1945, State Convention meeting, **John H. Maguire (b. 1900; d. 1987)** of Alabama was officially introduced as the new executive secretary-treasurer. His service and influence will be highlighted in next month's LEGACY.

### **Jones' Missions' Service**

Josephine Jones, set the tone for what would be 23 years (1944 – 1967) effectively leading Florida W.M.U. In her first report to the organization, she said. "My prayer for myself and for all of us is that we may be faithful, for we know that if we plant and water God gives the increase."

To that end, one of the Union's first significant projects at the end of World War II was the World Relief and Rehabilitation Program adopted by the 1946 Southern Baptist Convention. The Florida Convention's solicitation allocation was \$150,850, of which the Florida Woman's Missionary Union was asked to raise \$50,000. Not surprising the women raised \$51,125 before the deadline. For several years Florida Baptist women continued to send money to similar relief efforts, providing food, clothing, and medicine to many who were the victims of the war.

Miss Jones' efforts to raise the mission consciousness and actions by Florida Baptist women resulted in the growth of the organization to 5,500 W.M.U. units by 1967, up from 1,534 groups that existed in 1945. The number of women and girls participating in W.M.U. groups doubled to over 80,000 members, up from 28,936 in 1945. She established a summer camp program for children involved in Girls in Actions and Royal Ambassadors, that continues to the present day. Additionally, Jones' mission commitment to reach with the gospel Seminole Indian and African-American children, resulted in the conducting of the first-ever summer camps for these underserved children.

In an effort to provide racial reconciliation – during a time of heightened racial tensions in the 1950s and 1960s – Josephine Jones started an inter-racial dialog with the presidents of the women's missions' organizations of the three African-American Baptist conventions that resulted in joint mission activities. The resulting Missions and Fellowship Conference continued to function well into the 1980s.

### **Brotherhood Undergoes Transition**

**J. Harrison Griffin (b. 1883; d. 1976)**, who served 20 years until 1938 as pastor, First Baptist Church, Winter Haven, was enlisted to lead the Brotherhood program between 1938 and 1945. The Brotherhood movement among Florida Baptist men enjoyed significant growth under his leadership. The number of Brotherhood organizations in churches nearly quintupled from about 50 in 1939 to around 240 in 1944. Although the war effort had depleted the availability of men in churches, enrollment by the end of the war had increased twenty-fold from 240 to 4,800 members.



Griffin worked diligently to enlist the men to become involved in the total life of their local churches and the denomination. During first half of the 1940's, the Brotherhood department gave special attention to the Hundred Thousand Club (to eliminate denominational agency debts), to the Million Dollar Campaign for Stetson, and to preparation for the evangelistic Centennial Crusade commemorating the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1845.

The State Board responded to an offer from The Sunday School Board-SBC that proposed to pay one-third of the salary of a qualified music leader if the Florida Convention would establish a program of church music. In an effort to accept free money, and save Convention money by filling two program needs, the Board approved a hybrid staff position combining the two emphases. In 1945 **Clifford A. Holcomb (b.1908; d. 1999)** was elected secretary [director] of the newly-created combination Brotherhood-Music department. A native of Birmingham, Ala., Holcomb was a veteran of World War II, with previous experience as a director of music and education for churches in Louisiana and Texas. In addition to sponsoring layman's rallies and a State Brotherhood Convention, Holcomb began planning activities to stimulate better music programs in the churches.



***This series on Florida Baptists' Missions' Commitment continues next month***

stances forced some immediate changes. Wartime travel difficulties often were the culprit. For example, "the government regulation prohibiting conventions of fifty or more delegates" required Jones to plan six smaller conferences in different cities instead of the one large interracial institute usually held at St. Augustine. Excellent attendance in each city indicated the pressing need for such training sessions.<sup>11</sup> Once released from wartime limitations, the interracial institute returned to the campus of Florida Normal and Industrial Memorial College until 1950. Then the new format called for smaller groups of Negro women leaders to visit Jacksonville for discussion of "problems and needs."<sup>12</sup>

The April 12, 1945, *Witness* carried the announcement of another travel complication: the Sunday School Board had canceled all Ridgecrest summer conferences because of the "critical condition" of war-time transportation, including "the necessity for transporting military personnel and materials to meet the demands of war, and the imperative priority in the transportation of wounded service men." For the same reason, all state and SBC summer camps, conventions, and conferences, including SBC and WMU, SBC, annual meetings, were canceled. Once again Florida WMU proved its flexibility and inventiveness, providing materials for "Y.W.A.-Camp-That-Stayed-at-Home." Elsie Renfroe encouraged YWAs to get together for several days or just one evening to "catch the importance of the Centennial celebration." A number of "Stay-at-Home" camps were reported in the *Witness*.<sup>13</sup>

Even with wartime limitations, Florida's well-developed tradition of local and associational camps provided missions education, recreation, and inspiration for 2,027 GAs and RAs.<sup>14</sup> Using an allocation from the State Missions Offering, WMU employed another Southern Baptist Seminary student, Robert Estes, to work in RA camps and promote RA work. After a successful summer, he challenged Florida Baptists:

We consider Florida predominantly a missionary Baptist state. Yet of the approximately 835 Baptist churches there are only 183 reporting an organization for the purpose of training our future man-power along missionary lines, meaning that 652 give no missionary training to our boys through the Royal Ambassador chapters. It is heartbreaking to think that a church could neglect such a vital part of God's program.<sup>15</sup>

### And Now Abideth Love

Responsibility for the expansion and growing effectiveness of young people's work over the past five years had belonged to Elsie Renfroe. She had successfully met every challenge. In the process she had also fallen in love. When Rev. Charles Knight, missionary to Nigeria, came to Florida to speak in 1944 summer camps and assemblies, he and Renfroe renewed a casual acquaintance from their seminary and Training School days. In the meantime, he worked on his doctorate at Southern Seminary and accepted a call as pastor of the Glasgow, Kentucky, First Baptist Church.<sup>16</sup>

Following in the steps of her mentor, Louise Smith, Renfroe sacrificed her WMU career for marriage. In December 1945, Renfroe presented her resignation to the Executive Board with the news that she and Knight were planning a wedding in January. Elizabeth Provence was soloist, and many other friends from Renfroe's WMU work were present for the ceremony in First Baptist Church, Tallahassee. Florida leaders and youth grieved over their "loss," but rejoiced in the happiness of one who had faithfully served God and Florida WMU.<sup>17</sup>

### The Laborers Are Many

In June, July, and August 1945, Provence directed her second crew of summer field workers. The 16 college and WMUTS students worked in 43 rural or small town churches in 17 associations, plus 4 camps. Called "a summer, or Vacation, School of Missions," the week's program in each church combined "the characteristics of a School of Missions, a Bible School and a soul-winning campaign." Provence requested prayer "that people's eyes may be opened to the missionary responsibility that is theirs, that churches may become more loyal denominationally, and that souls may be born into the Kingdom of God."<sup>18</sup>

She probably should have suggested praying for physical stamina in the face of the strenuous schedule. From the intensive efforts, 1,637 mission study awards were earned; over 500 boys and girls, not yet Christians, were taught the plan of salvation; 140 individuals made professions of faith; 169 made rededications; and 58 committed to special Christian service. The work also resulted in 13 new missionary societies or auxiliaries.<sup>19</sup>

### VICTORY! . . . and Failure

May 8, 1945, V-E DAY (Victory in Europe), brought great relief to those whose family members fought on the European front, but the war in the Pacific raged on. The detonation of two atomic bombs forced the unconditional surrender of the Japanese forces. Ironically, such enormous power to destroy human life, heretofore unimaginable by civilians, crashed the world scene while Southern Baptists were in the middle of their great Centennial effort to save souls.

Because V-E Day did not come in time to reschedule the SBC Centennial annual session, SBC leaders marked the occasion with a Centennial radio broadcast on the May 6 "Baptist Hour." Part of the program originated from Augusta. The Centennial Celebration actually took place during the 1946 SBC meeting in Miami.<sup>20</sup>

Whether the cause was war, or peace, or some other distraction, Florida Baptists heard a "report of failure" when they gathered in Jacksonville for the 1946 annual meeting. The Centennial Crusade report showed that the 875 Baptist churches in the state had baptized only 13,000 new members, fewer