

CELEBRATING A SHARED HERITAGE

A beautiful light was extinguished in Haddock, GA on Monday, October 13, 2003. Willie Pearl



Turk Morgan Kinslow died after a long and painful bout with leukemia. This remarkable woman and I shared a great great grandmother and great grandmother. Thanks to Willie Pearl's unusual awareness of who she was and **whose** she was, I was able to track six generations of my family back from slavery to today's accomplishments and achievements. She shared freely and helped to give the bare facts needed to document their lives through census tracts, and the few written records available for those born into slavery.

Willie Pearl was the granddaughter of Thomas Turk, a young slave born to Queen Victoria Lester and an unknown white father during the Civil War. Queen Victoria Lester, a slave on the plantation of David and Dennis Lester, later married my great great grandfather, Madison Blount. Tom Turk, however, was reared with the Turk surname. Queen reared him with her growing family with Madison Blount. The Blount's first child, Emma Frances, was my great



Grandma Queen in the Garden

Queen Victoria Lester Blount

grandmother.

Thomas Turk married Laura Duncan and reared six children. Census tracts show that he lived right next door to Queen's brother, King Lewis. The family retained close ties, which Willie Pearl was able to recount to the end of her life. Kin from all over the country returned to celebrate her homegoing services on October 18th.

Willie Pearl's father, Robert Turk, was one of those six children. Robert married Fannie Middlebrooks and moved his young family to Pittsburgh, PA to seek better employment opportunities than those available to him in the rural South of that time. Willie Pearl was born in Haddock and began the first grade of school in PA when tragedy struck. Robert's father, Tom Turk, and his young wife, Fannie, died within a day of each other.

The young Turk family returned to GA, where he buried his wife and reared his children with the assistance of extended family on both sides. Willie Pearl remembered her days at the Holt Chapel School, where she was taught by one of Queen Victoria Blount's daughters. Her father remarried and had two more children.

The young Willie Pearl was undaunted by the tragedy of her early life. She married Evans Morgan, Sr. in 1936 and reared four successful children. After Mr. Morgan's death, Willie Pearl married James Kinslow in 1972. He preceded her in death.

Robert Turk lived with Willie Pearl in his later years. Willie Pearl lived with a daughter, Lillie



Harris, in the same home where she spent most of her life.
What a remarkable life it was!

When Willie Pearl died at the age of eighty-seven (87), she celebrated sixty-three (63) years of faithful membership at Adams Tabernacle C.M.E.. She served in a variety of roles from usher at her church to the Home Comfort Society of Haddock, GA. Willie Pearl's work life encompassed forty years of employment at Cherokee Products and eighteen years as a Housekeeping Supervisor at what is now the Oconee Regional Medical Center.

Grandchildren and great grandchildren shared stories of her impact upon their lives. The mixture of firm discipline and unconditional love sprang from Willie Pearl's firm grasp of her roots. We who are blessed by a strong sense of heritage will be sustained like a tree planted by the waters of life.

Sylvia Ryce Cornell
Cousin and Friend