

**DESCENDANTS OF  
NANCY ANN (SMITH) McGOWAN (1818-1894)**

Nancy Smith McGowan's grandson, **George Washington McGowan** (1875-1955), son of Joseph Edward McGowan (1851-1907) and Cenev Pauline Parker (1848-1902), was a deacon of Elim Baptist Church. Brother George Washington McGowan said in a conversation with his granddaughter, Mrs. Monnie B. Baker Johnston, that "he helped dig half of the graves in the cemetery." His grandson, Armand Ray, remembered the story when he (Armand) was a little boy of seeing on a few occasions his grandfather discipline the rowdy boys during the church service by a stern glance and a time or two having seen his grandfather thump the wilder boys gently on their heads to get their attention. Brother George's daughter, Mary McGowan Everett, remembered walking with her daddy to church holding his hand while reciting her bible verses.

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**SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF JOSEPH EDWARD McGOWAN AND CENEV PAULINA McGOWAN OF THE ELIM COMMUNITY--** Lower row, from left to right: Alonzo Gideon McGowan, Waycross, Ga.; Mrs. Albert Freeman (Annie), Albany, Ga.; George Washington McGowan, Ludowici; Mrs. C.C. Freeman (Bertha), Waycross, Ga.; Top row, left to right: Joseph E. McGowan, Jacksonville, Fla.; Mrs. John Heape (Charlie), Charleston, S.C.; John Solomon McGowan, Jacksonville, Fla.; Mrs. J.L.D. Shaw (Laura), Ludowici. The first McGowan in this section was Gideon McGowan, who came from Ireland. His tombstone at Jones Creek Cemetery says, "Born 31, Jan. 1810. Departed this life 26 May 1856." He lived in the

Elim community, the old home being near McGowan's Crossing on the railroad. His son, Joseph Edward McGowan (1851-1907) married Cenev Paulina Parker (1848-1902). She was the daughter of George Washington Parker of Liberty (now Long County) and Sena Baxter Parker. Their last home was what is now the present home of Joseph Murray near McGowan's Crossing where the late Mr. and Mrs. Frank Murray lived. Joseph McGowan operated a grist mill-rice huller and cotton gin at Riceboro in Liberty County. The picture, made about 1954, is loaned by Mrs. J.L.D. Shaw of Ludowici.

Nancy Smith McGowan's great granddaughter, Vera Augusta "Gussie" McGowan Ray (1901-1988), the daughter of Brother George Washington McGowan and Mary Abelle Shaw McGowan (1879-1928), played the piano and the organ for Elim Baptist Church for many years. Sister "Gussie" McGowan Ray was a shining light of devotion for the Lord and remembered with much fondness by her children.



Vera Augusta "Gussie" McGowan Ray (1901-1988) Played The Organ for the Church

Mary Abelle Shaw (1879-1928), the wife of Brother George Washington McGowan (1875-1955), was the granddaughter of charter members, **John Shaw (1796-1863)** and **Sarah Ann Harnage Shaw (1809-1883)**, and the daughter of Jeremiah Lamar Shaw (1832-1898) and Mary Abelle Smart Shaw (1845-1911). Thus the descendants of Sister Gussie McGowan Ray

and her husband, James Johnson Ray (1887-1943) are descended from three charter members of the church through their ancestor, Gussie.

Sister Gussie's son, Armand Ray (1936-2007) was a deacon of Elim Baptist Church for over fifty years. He was the oral historian for the early years of the church and one of the best storytellers of what was happening during the lean years and the prosperous years of the church from 1940's until 2007. He had a wonderful memory. Brother Armand was also a craftsman and by his own hands helped build and maintained a number of buildings of the church. His passion for Christ was evident in everything he did. It was a blessing to hear him pray. His love for Elim Baptist Church was an essential part of his life from the time he was a young boy when he had cleaned out the red wasps from the ceiling of the church to the last weeks of his life when he enclosed part of the picnic shelter and made a much needed storage shed. He was a Sunday School teacher who taught with intelligence and practical wisdom. He supported missionary work by giving meaningfully to the many missionaries who spoke of their need from Elim's pulpit. Brother Armand was especially thankful to the many women who served in the church. On mother's day of 2007, he stood in front of the church congregation and read out the past names of the women of the church to voice his appreciation of women who had served during the 150 years of Elim Church History. This was a man who was truly loved by all.



Jimmy Armand Ray  
(1936-2007)



Sister Gussie McGowan Ray was the mother of three deacons of Elim Baptist Church: Jimmy Armand Ray, Millen Calhoun Ray, and George Byron Ray. Brother Millen served on the cemetery committee for a number of years and Brother Byron was superintendent of Sunday Schools for a

number of years. The Ray families have loved and supported Elim Baptist Church by service, membership and financial contributions over the generations.



Rowe Family - Rhonda, Retha, Jake and Clay  
Picture Taken in 2005

Sister Gussie's children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren continue to support Elim Baptist Church. Her granddaughter Rhonda Ray Rowe, daughter of Ruben Ray and Retha Ray (1932-1984), serves in a number of capacities in the church. She and her daughter, Retha Rowe, have performed touching and poignant duets on special occasions in the worship services during the year. Her husband, Clay Rowe, is a deacon of the church.

To name a number of Ray descendants of the charter members of the church: Donna Ray Purvis; Millen (1926-2008) and Weida Wells Ray and their children Lynn Sherer, Faye

Yarbrough, Sheila Whisman, Cal and Darlene Ray and their son Troy and Tracy Ray and their children Devon, Amber and Hunter, and James and Bertie Ray and their children Eric, Derrick and Dathan; Byron and Deleita Wells Ray and their children Harry and Melita Ray and their children Carlton and Britney, Jared and Vera Anderson and their children Keith, Kaitlyn and Kendall, Shannon and Sarah Holdsclaw, and Lindsey Ray; Bruce and Navin Ray and their children Josey and Austin; and Armand Ray's children Cynthia Alvarado and her sons Aaron and Adam Alvarado, Ted and Tina Ray and their children Delton and Mason, and Tim Ray.