

The Griswold Twins, Lucy and Nancy

Researched and Written by Patricia M. Street (Dec. 2010)

Steven Griswold and Sarah Purdom married October 30, 1822, in Franklin County, Tennessee. They raised thirteen children in their modest log home in Altamont, Tennessee. Among those children were two sets of twins. With such a large family it's no wonder Steven was interested in education and served as trustee for the Altamont Academy, the earliest known school in Grundy County.

The first twins were girls, Lucy Adaline and Nancy Emaline, born June 12, 1835. Lucy Adaline Griswold married John Thompson at the age of nineteen on November 2, 1854, in Grundy County, Tennessee. Their union produced four children, Joseph (1856), Harris Gilliam (1857), Mary (1859), or "Mollie" as she would come to be known, and Bella (1861). In 1861 the Civil War broke out, and John joined the Confederate Army. He was a member of Colonel Carnes' Confederate Regiment and fought in the Battles of Murfreesboro and Missionary Ridge. It isn't hard to imagine how difficult life was for a woman trying to raise four children on her own. The war brought hardship to many families, and the Thompson's were no exception. News came to Lucy in 1863 that her husband John had died at the Battle of Chickamauga. Now a widow, Lucy was the sole provider for herself and her children. No doubt, this is the reason twin sister Nancy recorded in her Bible that Mollie came to live with her and her husband.

Nancy Emaline Griswold married Robert Sanders on December 7, 1854, in Grundy County, Tennessee. Having no children of their own it was natural for them to offer to help Lucy. Nancy wrote in her Bible: *"Mary Thompson born 10th December 1859 in Grundy County and came to live with R. Sanders on the Friday after the 4th Monday in September 1865, her father John Thompson was a soldier in the Rebel Army and was killed at the Battle of Chickamauga."* Nancy and Robert lived in Altamont. He was an attorney and served as Clerk and Master in Grundy County. He also taught and served as trustee for the Altamont Academy.

Lucy remarried January 1, 1866. Abner Street was twenty-two when he and Lucy Griswold Thompson, then 31 years of age, were united in marriage. They became parents of three children, Eliza (1866), Elisha (1867) and Nancy Adeline (1872). Abner worked in the mines, and according to family history, he killed a man at which time he left Grundy County, leaving his wife and children behind never to be heard from again.

The entries in the Bibles of Sarah Purdom Griswold and Nancy Griswold Sanders provide a glimpse into the lives of this family. Births, deaths, marriages were recorded along with comments that act as a window into their very souls. Sarah records the death of her granddaughter Nancy Street, daughter of Lucy and Abner: *"Nancy Adeline Street died the 4th of September 1873 age, if she had lived until the 16th, she would have been 14 months old."* No explanation is given as to why the child died. Entries in both Sarah and Nancy's Bibles tell the story of Robert Sanders' death. Nancy's entry: *"Robert Sanders died August 14th A.D. 1874 near the village of Beersheba Springs Grundy County - Tennessee, age 51 years 7 months and 8 days. Peace to his ashes, Job 14 Chapter 14 v. If a man die shall he live again? This is the text Brother Wheeler preached, Mr. R. Sanders funeral from, on the 14th day of March 1875."* It appears Brother Wheeler had preached the same sermon in 1874 and again in a church service in 1875. Sarah gives the reason for Robert's death: *"Robert Sanders died the 14 August, 1874. Death caused by falling off what is known as the Stone Door in Beersheba Springs, Grundy County, Tennessee."*

Two years later Nancy writes: *"Mollie Thompson was married to Mr. J.B. Woodlee 28 December 1876."* No doubt it was a joyous occasion celebrated by both Lucy and Nancy. The daughter they shared was beginning a new chapter in her life. The next entry was for sure a reason to rejoice: *"Little Nannie Woodlee was born, October 10, 1877."* Mollie and J.B.'s first child was no doubt named after Nancy. Imagine the glow on Nancy's face as she held this precious gift. There's nothing like a newborn baby to bring joy and happiness. By little Nannie's first birthday, Mollie was already expecting her second child.

But joy was short lived; the next entry in Nancy's Bible is heartbreaking. Written directly under the birth announcement of little Nannie: *"Died 25 day of May-1879, this little darling babe met with an untimely death by falling into the well at its grand ma Woodlees. The well being 32 feet is where she found her resting place in a watery grave (words indistinct) she was (words indistinct) life became extinct."* The anguish in Nancy's words almost takes your breath away. The child she loved as though it were her own grandchild was forever gone.

Drowning by falling into a well wasn't uncommon. In the days before "city water" a hand dug well was a family's water source. An open well and a curious toddler were a deadly combination. The very substance that sustained life could so quickly and cruelly take life.

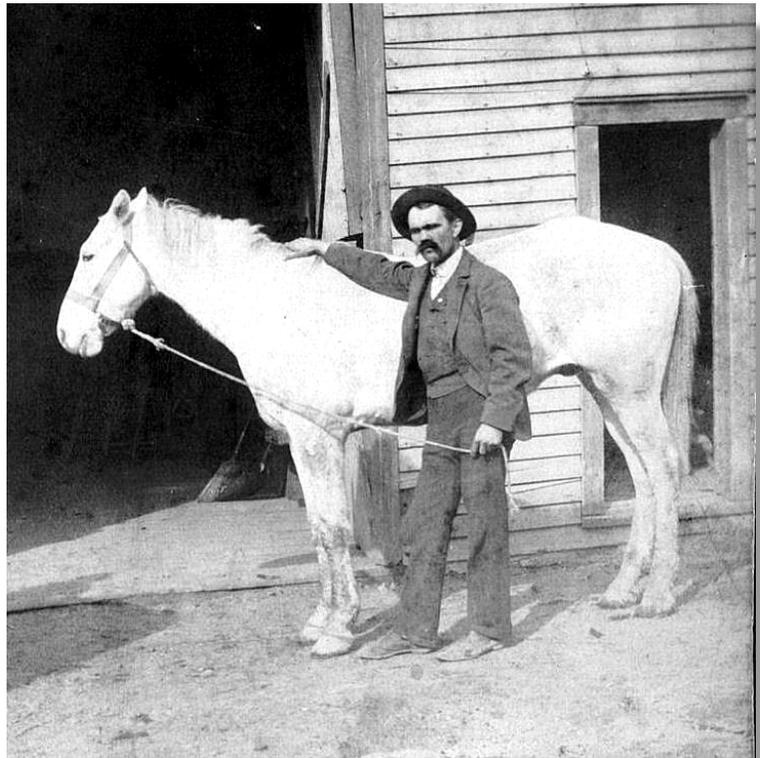
No doubt the days following little Nannie's death were difficult. But a ray of sunshine sprang forth, the next Bible entry says, *"Lucy Agnes Woodlee was born 30 October 1878."*

Baby Lucy certainly was not a replacement for little Nannie, but she was a new life and a new beginning for this young mother and father.

But it seems the good times were not meant to be. Nancy's next entry: *"Mr. J.B. Woodlee died 15 day of January - 1881. At his home near his place of birth on Collins River Aged 24 years 5 months and 10 days."* No mention is made of what took his life; whether illness or accident, it doesn't matter, the young father was gone. Now Mollie, like her mother Lucy, was a young widow with a child to care for. Lucy had faced so much tragedy in her lifetime. Her first husband, John Thompson, killed in the war, youngest daughter Nancy Emeline died at 18 months, second husband Abner Street abandoned her, granddaughter little Nannie Woodlee drown, and her son-in-law had died at age 24. Lucy must have ached for her daughter Mollie knowing first-hand the hardships she faced.



Elizabeth (Sanders) Street
(1867-1901)



Elisha Street
(1867-1902)

Lucy's surviving children by Abner grew to adulthood and married. Eliza Street married P. M. Sanders, and Elisha Street married Elizabeth (Lizzie) Sanders. P.M. and Lizzie were brother and sister, children of James and Catherine Walker Sanders of Grundy County.

Elisha and Lizzie were married in Grundy County, Tennessee, November 6, 1888. The birth of their first child came on November 26, 1889, a son, Taylor Thornton Street, followed by Katie, Lena, Oscar, Bonner and Douglas. Coal mining and farming were the most common occupations on the mountain, but Elisha chose to become a businessman and bought H.B. Thompson's livery stable in February 1900. But death would once more lay its cold dark hand on Lucy's loved ones. *Influenza*, the mere mention of this word must have brought fear to even the healthiest individual. On October 12, 1901, Lizzie Sanders Street, at age 34, succumbed to the dreaded influenza. Elisha was left with six children, the youngest less than a year old. But death wasn't through wreaking havoc on this family. March 9, 1902, Elisha Street died, influenza took another victim. In April 1902, an administrator's sale of Elisha Street's property was held at his livery stable in Tracy City.

Taylor, Katie, Lena, Oscar, Bonner and Douglas Street were left orphaned. Guardianship of Elisha and Lizzie's children was given to P.M. Sanders April 18, 1902.



**Elisha and Lizzie Street's Children Left to Rt: Taylor, Oscar, baby Douglas, Bonner, Katie and Lena
(Photo taken 1902— Lucy Adaline (Griswold, Thompson) Street with her grandchildren)**

The twins, Lucy and Nancy, had endured much sadness and loss in their lives. There were good times as well, but these seemed to get overshadowed by the bad.

The last entry in Nancy's Bible: *"Nancy E. Sanders died on the morning of October 3, 1903 at 1:30 A.M. in Altamont, Grundy County, Tennessee. Aged 68 years and 3 months. Funeral services held at the church by J.R. Stublefield, Sunday morning at 11 o'clock."* No mention as to the writer's name. It may have been Mollie, the daughter Nancy and Lucy had shared or maybe one of her other brothers or sisters. We may never know.

An obituary in the local paper dated October 1909, stated, "Mrs. Lucy Street died near Tullahoma." She is buried in the City Cemetery in Tracy City, Tennessee next to her son Elisha and his wife Lizzie. The last person laid to rest in the Street Family plot was Elisha Oscar Street, fourth child of Elisha and Lizzie. He died November 25, 1986, at age 91 and was buried next to his grandmother Lucy and his parents. Oscar was only six-years-old when his mother and father died.