

Additional Information About The Second Marriage of Mary Jane McLean

Robert Donovan Smith was born in Vicksburg, Mississippi on December 14, 1839. At the time of the birth of Mary Jane's and his first son, Charles Donovan Smith on December 11, 1864, he was a planter in Yazoo County, Mississippi. Later he became a contractor building railroad lines. In 1886 he and his son formed the contracting firm of R. D. Smith & Son. After the completion of a contract to build a twenty mile section of track at Verbena, Alabama, Charles and his brother, Walter Lane Smith born January 31, 1869, bought out their father's interest and formed the firm of C. D. Smith & Company. Charles was only twenty-four years old at the time.

His progress in this line of activity was so rapid that soon they became the leading contractors in the South, injecting into the work his own wonderful energy, his rare capacity for organization and a system the like of which no contracting firm in this section of the country had previously known. His firm constructed in the State of Mississippi one thousand and eighty miles of railroad. For twelve consecutive years it was engaged in construction work for the Illinois Central and Yazoo & Mississippi Valley railroads, doing practically all of their work south of the Ohio River. His firm built the direct line of the Y. & M. V. road from Lake Cormorant to Tutwiler, Mississippi, which, all things considered from the contractors' viewpoint, was one of the most difficult pieces of work his firm did. His firm also built the Illinois Central's line from Corinth, Mississippi, to Haleyville, Alabama. In the development of the transportation system for Greater New York, Mr. Smith and his associates built a section of the subway from Flat Bush Avenue, Brooklyn to the Manhattan Bridge. His firm built for the Santa Fe Railroad the line across the Mojave desert from Parker, Arizona, to the main line, ninety-eight miles, hauling all water for man and beast an average of twenty miles. Another large contract was the construction of the Atlanta, Birmingham & Atlantic railroad from Brunswick to Birmingham.¹

Mary Jane Smith died on September 7, 1900 and Robert Donovan Smith passed away on May 6, 1908. Both are buried at Oak Hill Memorial Cemetery, Birmingham, Alabama.²

Charles Donovan Smith married Vida Vandergrift of Birmingham, Alabama on December, 22, 1892. They had one daughter, Marie V. Smith.

Celia Ann Smith was the second child of Mary Jane and Robert. According to the recollections of Louise Day (Smith) Oates, "*Celia Ann (Teedie) Smith never married but traveled all over the world. She was very stylish, a fine golfer, and great friends with her half sister, Lillie. She died December 1938 in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi from injuries in a car wreck.*"³

Walter Lane Smith attended the University of Alabama. Walter was a partner in C. D. Smith & Company for many years and from 1925 to the time of his death, was the President and Treasurer of Memphis Stone and Gravel Company. He married Mary Louise Day and they had four children; Robert Day Smith, born February 13, 1907; Walter Lane Smith, Jr., July 4, 1908; Louise Day Smith, December 15, 1909; and Charles Donovan Smith, April 9, 1918.⁴

Walter Lane Smith died March 23, 1931 and Mary Louise died August 31, 1975 in Memphis, Tennessee. Both are buried at Elmwood Cemetery in Memphis, Tennessee. Of their children, only Louise Day (Smith) Oates is living as of 2001. The others are buried at Elmwood Cemetery, also.

End notes:

- ¹ C. P. J. Moody, *Mid South & Its Builders*, 1920, page 85; Unknown Newspaper, Memphis, Tennessee, November 16, 1909.
- ² Cemetery records, Oak Hill Memorial Cemetery, Birmingham, Alabama; tombstone inscriptions.
- ³ Granddaughter of Mary Jane McLean and Robert Donovan Smith.
- ⁴ E-mail, Louise Day (Oates) Dearborn