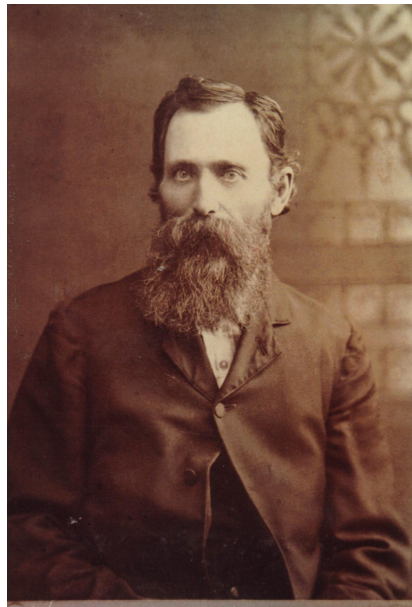


CHAPTER XXVI - PLEASANT GREEN RAGAINS 1853-1932



Pleasant Green Ragains

Pleasant Green was a tall handsome man. He had light wavy auburn hair and beautiful gray eyes with a hint of blue. As a young adult, he sported a smart handlebar mustache that bled into muttonchops, the fashion in his day. In his later years, he let this mustache grow into the full beard his granddaughters delighted in. They loved to pull his beard in a teasing way. Pleasant Green would then pull his granddaughters hair – just enough to remind them to be gentle.

His name, Pleasant Green, sounds strange to us today. His name reminds me of a gentle rolling meadow on a bright sunny day. Looking through countless volumes of census records, I was both pleased and surprised to find that the name, Pleasant Green was popular in the Midwestern United States, 150 years ago. As a child, my great grandfather, Pleasant Green, was known as Green. Later he was called simply, “PG.” To his adoring grandchildren, he was known lovingly as Grand Pap.

Pleasant Green’s mother, Mary E. Levins Triplet, and his father, David Ragains were married on December 6, 1851. It was the second or third marriage for David and the second marriage for Mary. Pleasant Green (Nov 1, 1853) was the first of five born of this union. The other four were David H. (1854), Martha (1857), Lewis (1858) and George (1860). These five were greeted into the Ragains clan by at least nine sired by his father, David, plus an older sister from his mother, Mary. They were Thomas (1834), Susan (1835), Abraham (1837), William (1841), Susan (1845), Charles (1845), James (1846) John (1848), Nancy (1848) and Nancy Levins (1852). P. G’s half brother, Abraham, and half sister, Nancy, were married on April 22, 1858.

The 1870 census attests to three additional siblings born to still another wife, Lucretia Chapman. These three were Julie Belle (1864), Katherine (1866) and Charles Jackson (1869). In 1860, young Green (Pleasant Green), age 7, is living with his father, David, as head of household, his mother, Mary E., brothers David, Lewis, George and sister Martha. Ten years

later, David is listed as head of an entirely new household with his new wife Sophronia Tune and three of Lucretia Chapman's children.

On May 13, 1880, PG and Mary Elizabeth Carlton were married. David signed as a witness on their marriage license. This marriage produced Jennie (Feb 15, 1881), Frank (Aug 4, 1884), Grant (Dec 3, 1886) and Augusta (Nov 15, 1888). Augusta lived only five months and ten days. Jennie followed her little sister in death just two years and three months later. Jennie was only 20 years, 5 months and 16 days when she died.

PG is listed as a laborer in the 1880 census and as a farmer on his marriage license. There is evidence that he was much more than that. He helped build the Mount Zion Baptist Church in Vienna, Illinois. Over 100 years later, this church is still going strong in its same structure. PG was appointed County Commissioner for Johnson County, Illinois, on Nov 26, 1889 by Governor Joseph W. Fifer. His appointment was the result of a popular election earlier in 1889. This term ended on "Tuesday next after the first Monday in November 1892." He also hand crafted a wooden bowl and serving spoon that is still used by his heirs.

Mary Elizabeth, or Grannie, as she was called, "was heartbroken at the tragic loss of their two daughters and this distressed Grandpap. Grandpap had heard a lot about this place called 'Oklahoma' and thought that, perhaps, a change in a new place would help mend his wife's broken heart. In view of this, he called his two sons, Frank and Grant (then in their teens) in and they talked the situation over man-to-man fashion, and decided that a move to a new land was in order." (Quoted from *In The First Place* by Elizabeth Maud Ragains Ward.)

Thus, in September 1902, the P.G. Ragains family sold their farm. "They loaded all their possessions; everything from the hammer to the livestock in a railroad boxcar; and with hope in their hearts and dreams for a better future, they headed for a new home in what was then Oklahoma Territory. Their journey ended when they landed at Norman, Oklahoma, where they lived until Grandpap found a place near Carpenter, a small town about 10 miles from Elk City. It was here that Grandpap, Grannie, Frank and Grant started a new life in a new land, working hard to improve their property and making a wonderful home for themselves and a heaven for the grandchildren which were to follow." (Quoted from *In The First Place* by Elizabeth Maud Ragains Ward.)

During this time, his oldest son, Frank, met Malinda Maude Sims. Frank and "Linda" were married on February 4, 1906, on the Sims farm in Custer County. Pleasant Green eventually decided to settle in Carpenter, just a few miles north of Elk City. There he took up farming, banking and Mammoth Jack breeding. On February 14, 1910, he homesteaded 152.72 acres of land. On October 25, 1910, he invested \$500 in the Carpenter State Bank and became its Vice President. Almost a year later, an incident at the bank, prompted bank teller, A. C. Carter, to write a letter of apology to PG for his conduct the day before. The letter reads, "You would have been perfectly justified if you had killed me, and you showed yourself one of the bravest and most considerate men I ever met and so far ahead of myself as a man "It is not known what Mr. Carter did to P. G. to cause him to write to write such a letter.

After living a full and wonderful life, Pleasant Green died on February 13, 1932. Mary Elizabeth was in poor health and was losing her eyesight. Grant stayed home to help care for her. Later, a nurse was hired to help Grant with his mother, who was now confined to a wheelchair and totally blind. At age 85, Mary Elizabeth died. Grant and Mary's nurse, Zillah, were eventually married.

A family portrait picturing PG, Mary, Frank, Malinda Maude and Grant has survived the years. They are standing in front of their home in Carpenter, Oklahoma with a champion Kentucky Mammoth Jack named General Boyle and three other mules. PG paid \$700 for General Boyle in 1912. With the same money he could have bought a brand new Model T Ford touring car and had money left over. The Ragains posing with their mules for a photo was an obvious and proud display of wealth.

I wish to extend a special thank you to Pleasant Green's great granddaughter, Betty Ann Ward Chandler, for lending me the "Tot Papers" and other family archives. I'm also grateful to Betty's mother, Elizabeth Maud Ragains Ward, for her remembrances, "In The First Place", a historical family essay first printed in The Ragains Family Cookbook commemorating the 1988 Ragains' Family Reunion. I also wish to thank my mother, Emma Lou Ragains Sterling, for sharing her fond remembrances of her "Grandpap," Pleasant Green Ragains and "Grannie," Mary Elizabeth Carlton.