"Mary Sumner Blount" c. 1825
North Carolina Portrait Index 1700-1860
Image from *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*

Olivia Cowper Raney
Memorialized in name of Raleigh's first Public Library
Image from Wikipedia

Mary Ann Bryan Mason
Title illustration for *A Wreath from the Woods of Carolina*, 1859. Image from Google Books

Fannie Neal Yarborough Bickett
Image from *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*;
Courtesy of the State Archives of North Carolina

"Deaconess" Emma Jane Karrer c. 1915
Karrer's possible admission into an Order of Deaconesses stillbeing researched. Photo from *Messiah: A Journey Through Time*

Nell Battle Lewis, circa 1918
Image from *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*;
Courtesy of UNC-Chapel Hill Libraries

"Celebrating Christ Church Women in Raleigh History"

February 19, 2020 – Lunch & Learn Series at Christ Church, Raleigh, NC
Lynn Hoke, Archivist of the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina

INTRODUCTION – RESEARCHING THE LIVES OF CHURCHWOMEN

Today we are honoring several women associated with Christ Church and various Episcopal Churches and Institutions in this diocese. Their birthdates range from 1777 to 1893. Research into the lives of churchwomen born between these early years presents two major issues: (1) documentary evidence; and (2) male dominance in the worlds of business, politics, education, medicine, religion, etc. I have spent a good part of the last 13 years searching just for the given names of as many of our "Mrs. John Somebody or Mrs. R. T. Somebody" as possible. However, many women remain known only by their husband's surname, unless they are clearly a "Miss."

I have also been documenting the major role women have played in founding and supporting our Episcopal churches in this diocese. I first ran across today's introductory woman – MARY "JACKIE" SUMNER BLOUNT – in 2012, while preparing a history exhibit for the ECW Annual Meeting hosted by the Rocky Mount Convocation.

One handout at the "history table" was entitled **"BY PEN & BY PURSE: CHURCHWOMEN MAKE THEIR MARK.**" It featured two-columns highlighting women from various churches in the host convocation who were either: (1) members of the original founding mission; OR (2) contributed money in support of building a church, educating young men for the ministry, maintaining a cemetery, supporting St. Mary's School, and purchasing or maintaining church property. The latter names usually came from wills, property deeds, or gift announcements.

In the other category I found the handwritten names of the men and women who signed the original "Petition for Organization." In five out of the six such petitions in our files, the women outnumbered the men – and they usually signed their given names, even if they were a "Mrs." Churchwomen did, indeed, make their mark.

MARY "JACKIE" SUMNER BLOUNT (1777 – 1822 @ 45 yrs)

So, Mary Sumner Blount is one of women who made my list in 2012 – because she resided in Tarboro and what's now the Rocky Mount Convocation. She's also among the minority of women who appear in the *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*. The first sentence of her biographical sketch may suggest, in part, the compiler's rationale for inclusion:

> "Mary Blount, daughter and wife of revolutionary generals, by whose benefaction Christ Episcopal Church, Raleigh, was built, was born in Warren County at the home of her father, General Jethro Sumner."

This father-general was a war hero and the owner of two plantations in Warren County, where Mary was born and grew up. At the time of his death, both of Mary's brothers had already died, so she inherited the estate of 35 enslaved people and 20,000 acres of land. The husband-general was Thomas Blount of Edgecombe County, owner of a large Edgecombe County plantation, on which

stood what's known as a "handsome house." It stands today as the Blount-Bridgers House, now used by Tarboro as an arts center. In 1896, at the same time General Blount was beginning his 16-year stint representing North Carolina in Congress, he entered his second marriage – this with 19-year old Mary – 18 years his younger. Congressman Blount died in Washington in 1812, followed ten years later by Mary.

At her death in 1822, Mary's own estate, with that of her husband's, was substantial. While she spread it around to many relatives and friends, she also made an interesting and specific bequest. Is his history of Christ Church Davyd Foard Hood quotes from the Edgecombe County Wills, Book E:

> "*Whereas a large sum of money is due to me by virtue of the will of my late husband, I give and bequeath the same or all such part thereof as remain due to me at my death to Duncan Cameron, Esq. of Orange County and the Reverend William Hooper now of Fayetteville with a request that they will use their best endeavors to obtain payment thereof – In trust and confidence and to the intent that they shall apply the same to the Building of a Protestant Episcopal Church in the City of Raleigh."*

Estimates of the amount in 1822 range from $10,000 to $12,000 to $15,000 – clearly enough to purchase the property and to construct this church's first building. It began with a planning committee in 1826, construction by early 1827, and finally, completion and consecration in 1829.

I hope you all have a copy of Hood's illustrated history where you can read a bit more about the early history of Christ Church.

Thank you, Mary "Jackie" Sumner Blount!

MARY ANN BRYAN MASON (1802 – 1881 at @ 79)

Mary Ann Bryan Mason also has a sketch in the *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*. She was born into a long-time prominent New Bern family. At age 20 she married Richard Sharpe Mason, a native of Barbados, who was then serving as Rector of Christ Church, New Bern. The Masons were the parents of six children. After living away for twelve years, they returned to North Carolina in 1840, when Mason became rector of Christ Church, Raleigh.

Known now as a painter, sculptor, musician and writer, Mary Ann created *A Wreath from the Woods of Carolina*, published in 1859. Her preface provides some insight into her personality [NOTE: printed on handout]

> "The writer of these stories has always considered Flowers a most happy and charming medium through which to direct the opening minds of children to love and adoration of their great Creator. Prompted by this consideration and hoping they will afford pleasure as well as profit to the youthful reader, she now presents them in a volume, illustrated with engravings of the beautiful Wild Flowers connected with each story."

HANDOUT – pointing out "morality story" genre, subject, style, etc.

In addition to her "morality flower book" Mary Ann published *Her Church and Her Mother: A Story of Filial Piety* the following year. A decade later came *The Young Housewife's Counsellor and Friend: Containing Directions in Every Department of Housekeeping Including the Duties of Wife and*

Mother – later issued as *Mrs. Mason's New Cookery*. I found it online, under the longer title, at 392 pages: https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nc01.ark:/13960/t3ws9wx97&view=1up&seq=12
It is also available on order from Amazon in their scholar-recommended collection of reprints – re-formatted using an easy-to-read typeface.

Hood's history of Christ Church provides a touching story of Mary Ann's personal care for three wounded Confederate soldiers as the Civil War was ending. The Christ Church rectory stood not far from a Confederate hospital site, and Mary Ann insisted that three wounded soldiers come there to be tended. When one of them died, she wrote an eloquent and touching letter to his mother, describing his last days and the funeral, where "a bright wreath of fresh flowers graced his coffin."

EMMA JANE KARRER (1857 – 1927 at @ 70)

Without benefit of a biographical sketch and photo from the state's history and archives division, Emma Karrer's story comes in bits and pieces from early census records, city directories, the parish history of Church of the Messiah in Mayodan, diocesan newspapers, journals, Woman's Auxiliary reports, online United Thank Offering records, and – currently – from the annual trust reports in our Diocesan journals.

Emma Jane Karrer was the daughter of immigrants, Katherina Ziegler from Switzerland and Jacob Anton Karrer from the Bavaria area of southeastern Germany. The family shows up first in the Federal Census for 1860 in Ward 1 of Raleigh. Jacob was a grocer and Emma was listed as three years old, and as having been born in North Carolina. Jacob died in 1877 and Katherina died ten years later. Both are buried in Raleigh's City Cemetery.

A research note from several years ago indicates that Emma and her mother may have lived in Wilmington in the 1880s, but this has yet to be verified. Also unclear is how she became labeled a Deaconess in the photograph from Church of the Messiah's history. Another cryptic research note indicated a possible link between "Deaconess" and "Lutheran Church" in Wilmington. In any case, after her mother's death, Emma shows up in Raleigh again in the 1888 City Directory – as a "saleslady" residing at 302 S. Salisbury Street.

Wake county real estate records in 1895 show that Miss Emma Karrer bought a lot for $385, then sold it in 1919 for $3,000. Later she also owned a home on East Street in Oakwood and owned other properties.

In the 1896-97 Raleigh City Directory Miss Emma Karrer is listed as a "stamping & embroidery dealer" at 115 Fayetteville Street, and boarding on Edenton Street. The 1900 U. S. Census lists her as an "Art Embroidery Dealer" living with her paternal aunt, Babette Besson (b. 1839 in Germany) at 219 W. Edenton; along with Besson's daughters: Caroline (b. 1866); Jeanette (b. 1869); and Lucie (b. 1876).

So, there she was in Raleigh when the Christ Church vestry engaged Adolphus Gustavus Bauer, whose previous work included the Executive Mansion on Blount Street, to build what was called then a "mill mission" – St. Saviour's Chapel near the "factories" of northwest Raleigh. [see PHOTO] Opened in September 1894, the "mission" aspect of St. Saviour's included a site for religious, educational and social ministry. The first parochial report in 1895 noted a parish school with two teachers and 52 students. St. Saviour's moved in the late 1920s to the complex still standing on Tucker Street.

At some point around this time the St. Saviour's mill mission drew Emma Karrer's attention. She began serious parish and mission work through the Christ Church Woman's Auxiliary. In the Woman's Auxiliary Annual Reports, her first listing with Christ Church comes in 1905-1906 as the church's first Branch Librarian under the auspices of the Church Periodical Club. In 1906 she is also listed as Treasurer of the St. Saviour's Woman's Auxiliary Branch & Director of the Junior Auxiliary. For about two years she served the St. Saviour's mill mission at its original location at Johnston and West Streets in the section then called Smoky Hollow (where the huge John Cain complex is now going up).

Sometime in 1906 Emma was offered the opportunity to be what was called a "Parish Visitor" with some funding through what was known as the United Offering, changed to United Thank Offering in 1920. Her assignment from 1906 to 1919 was at Church of the Messiah in Mayodan, northeast Rockingham County. Bishop Cheshire was a great proponent of mill mission work and there were too few clergy, so the "women workers" – paid and unpaid – filled a gap.

The 1910 U.S. Census shows 53-year old Emma in Mayodan, as head of a household working as a "Missionary." She had 2 boarders, Mary Ramsaur, 21 & and Minnie B. Hill, 25, both public school teachers.

Records show that Emma was paid through the Treasurer of the General Board of Missions and in 1912-13 she received $300 for the year.

Not many details are known about Emma's day-to-day work, but there is some indication that it was appreciated. In October 1918, on the Feast of St. Matthew, which was her 12th anniversary at Church of the Messiah in Mayodan, there was a special Eucharist of Thanksgiving . . . a thank offering was made, and with it a ciborium purchased from the Gorham Company in New York, for use at the church. The announcement in *The Carolina Churchman* noted that "It would not be possible to estimate Miss Karrer's value in the Master's work during the last years, but her friends hope for her many more anniversaries." Alas, in less than a year Emma had resigned as Parish Visitor.

After Emma Jane Karrer died on April 15, 1925, her will contained the following bequest:

> "All the rest and residue and remainder of my estate I give devise and bequeath to the Trustees of the Diocese of North Carolina (Protestant Episcopal) to be invested and held as a Trust Fund the income from which is to be used to train young men for the Ministry of said church and young women for some church work."

The convention journal for 1927 indicates that the diocesan portion of Karrer's estate consisted of a house and lot on South McDowell St., Raleigh, next to the Southern Bell Telephone Company's property, which had a high value and an increasing value; "now this property rents for about $700 per annum; and whereas, there are specific legacies which must be first paid of about $6,000; and whereas, this property is now worth about $15,000 or more; and whereas , the Diocese can secure a fee simple title to this property by paying off the specific legacies and costs of administration, which will not exceed $6,500." The Trustees were so empowered – they paid off the legacies and took the property in fee simple.

In 1939, there was mentioned, as still on the books, of a "frame dwelling" at 117 S. McDowell. In 1954 the Trustees received the following report: "Since the end of calendar year 1953, the Trustees have completed the sale of the property on east side of South McDowell St. – bought by

the Raleigh Parking Company, with proceeds of $26,250 (minus advances, the Karrer Fund now has $19,188.39). A further note mentioned Emma's original bequest, but worded it differently:

> "The will of Miss Emma Karrer provides that the income from the legacy be used **for the purpose of educating young men for the ministry**." [p. 129]

Did you catch the difference?

As far as I know, this fund has not yet been utilized for young men OR young women. A recent check of the balance for the end of 2019 shows the Emma J. Karrer Trust Fund valued at $138,399.12 [with all but the original value of $15,000 being income and thus subject to distribution?]. I hope to work toward honoring the legacy of this enterprising, dedicated and benevolent churchwoman who found her later-in-life calling via the channels of this very church.

LUCY OLIVIA BLOUNT COWPER RANEY (1861- 1896 at @ 35 yrs)

The U.S. Census records for the Cowper family – Pulaski Cowper, a well-to-do insurance agent and his wife Mary Blount Grimes Cowper - living in Raleigh's East Ward in 1870 and 1880. Olivia Cowper was 9 in 1870 and Lucy Olivia Blount Cowper was 19 in 1880. There were six children in all, with one dying between the two census reports.

Most of what we know about Olivia Cowper Raney comes by way of reflection and recollection following her death during childbirth – less than two years after her marriage to Richard Beverly Raney. Richard was one year older than Olivia – the youngest of 12 children of Thomas Hall and Eliza Partridge Baird Raney, whose plantation home was in Granville County.

There might be more to discover about Olivia in the local newspapers – and one snippet did pop up during my research. She was noted for "best made child's dress by girl under 15 years" in *The Raleigh News* of October 28, 1875. Who bestowed this prize remains to be discovered.

By age 30 Olivia begins appearing each year in the Annual Report of the Woman's Auxiliary as Secretary of the Christ Church branch. This branch was first listed in 1887, and from 1890 to 1894, its secretary is "Miss O. Cowper" or "Miss Olivia Cowper." Then for 1895 and 1896, her listing changed to "Mrs. R. B. Raney." Her death on May 4, 1896, came just three days before the 1896 Annual Meeting.

According to a 5-years-ago web post by Leigh Sanders, a local author working on a novella about the Olivia Raney Library "love story," https://womenoflibraryhistory.tumblr.com/post/81201513295/olivia-raney

> "Olivia and Beverly were unconventional for the times: they married in their early thirties after spending years as friends and pen pals while he traveled the world. Olivia was an accomplished organist and choir singer at Christ Church with a stellar reputation, and Beverly was a self-made businessman and philanthropist. Their marital union only lasted for 17 months, and it was reported that when Olivia became sick Beverly hired three doctors to save her precious life from a rapidly progressive illness. The morning after she dies the headline in the newspaper announced "One of Raleigh's Most Cultured and Beloved Women Passes Away."

Through Google Books I was able to get an on-demand re-printed copy of the original "Exercises at the Opening of the Olivia Raney Library." These exercises were held in the Library Hall on the evening of Thursday, Jan. 24, 1901. The library's charter came from the State General Assembly in February 1899, with 15 incorporators, including Richard B. Raney himself, Olivia's brother Bryan Grimes Cowper, and Bishop Joseph B. Cheshire. Attending the Opening Exercises were the Governor, Lt. Governor, Speaker of the House, Mayor and Board of Aldermen of Raleigh. Pastors of the local churches were invited to seats of the rostrum.

A choir singing "For All the Saints" opened the program. Christ Church rector, the Rev. M. M. Marshall, gave a two-page opening prayer blessing the library as a rendezvous of learning. Marshall also delivered an address – first thanking Mr. Raney profusely, and then honoring Olivia Cowper Raney herself with these words:

"As her old friend and pastor, who knew her well during nearly the whole of her beautifully blameless life, I shall claim the sacred privilege of paying a brief but necessarily inadequate tribute to her hallowed memory.

When now some months more than twenty-six years ago I entered upon my duties as rector of Christ Church in this city, I found among my parishioners in the cultured household of Mr. and Mrs. Pulaski Cowper, a daughter, Olivia Blount, who though but thirteen years of age already abundantly manifested those singularly lovable characteristics for which she was every afterwards so justly distinguished. Hers was not only that sweet innocent and trustfulness of childhood which are always so attractive, but combined with a keen sense of humor which I have rarely seen equaled there was an ever joyous, sparkling vivacity which shone as a sunbeam in the household and lighted up all in the circle of her friends upon whom it fell. And underneath this winning exterior there was a thoughtfulness and strength of character beyond her years. An adept even this early, in all the sweet amenities of life she was intolerant only of insincerity and affectation.

But what I most distinctly recall in this favored child so richly endowed by nature and God's grace, was her tender sympathy for all sorrow and suffering and her ready willingness to minister in every way in her power to their alleviation. Her tender heart and high sense of duty were the well-spring from which flowed innumerable acts of thoughtful kindness so delicately done as to be unobserved and unknown to the world. And these noble traits, which made for her discerning and fond friends in every quarter, each succeeding year seemed only to develop and strengthen.

Dr. Marshall recounts 3 major life events for Olivia that took place at Christ Church:

May 20, 1877 – nearing 17, she stood before the altar of Christ Church to receive at the hands of Bishop Lyman the apostolic rite of confirmation. "Hitherto active in all good work and loving ministrations, she now became, if possible, even more so; and to the church of her childhood and of her love she gave in unstinted measure the best of her sweet services. With rare musical gifts enhanced by constant culture she became – and so long as her health allowed – continued to be the organist and choir director of Christ Church; and never did exquisite taste, skill, tact, uniform kindness and courtesy – and yet not without firmness and decision – combine to better quality one for the trying duties of that difficult position.

December 5, 1894 (at 34) – Olivia stood again before the altar of Christ Church . . . she plighted her troth in holy matrimony to that highly favored Christian gentleman who was henceforth to be the sharer of her every joy and sorrow.

May 5, 1896, "exactly seventeen months after her happy marriage, the earthly tabernacle of this sainted soul was brought to Christ Church for its burial.. . . And with the dying of the day we tenderly laid to rest this precious body in our beautiful Oakwood."

Dr. Marshall commended the practice of placing memorials in cemeteries and in churches to honor loved ones, then he continued: " but better than either I think it is, to perpetuate their good deeds and memories by gifts for the erection and endowment of buildings and institutions for benevolent and educational purposes that shall continue to benefit and elevate coming generations."

After his tribute to Olivia, Dr. Marshall, on behalf of his fellow Trustees, provided some information about the new library's costs, number of books, new librarian, present funding and future needs for an endowment, and access on a non-sectarian, non-partisan basis, and "without social distinctions among our own race." [16]

The original 1901 building downtown remained open until 1962, and was later demolished. The library reopened at a Fayetteville Street location, which closed in 1985. Now known as "Olivia Raney Local History Library" this legacy institution has been open at the Wake County Office Park since 1995. Don't rush out there now! It was closed for renovations in December and is expected to re-open this coming summer.

FANNY NEAL YARBOROUGH BICKETT (1870 – 1941 at @ 71)

Fanny Neal Yarborough Bickett of Franklin County proved a bit easier to follow - both in the public sphere and in our church records. Being married to a North Carolina governor surely helped in getting her an entry in the Dictionary of North Carolina Biography (which will pop up if you enter her name), but Fanny's professional career came after his term as governor from 1917 to January 1921. He died in December 1921, less than a year after leaving office. Bishop Cheshire offered a memorial in the January 1922 issue of *The Carolina Churchman:* "He loved his State and his people, and the people of North Carolina will not soon forget how he and his good wife made gracious and beautiful the Governor's Mansion in Raleigh."

Fanny's mother died when she was only three; her father and an aunt reared her. During her lifetime she studied with a governess, attended Louisburg College, graduated from St. Mary's School in Raleigh, studied at the University of Chicago, Harvard University, the University of North Carolina, and the Wake Forest College School of Law. She passed the State Bar and received a license to practice at the age of 60.

Here's some information that's not in the official profile. Before moving into the Executive Mansion Fanny was active in Woman's Auxiliary work at St. Paul's, Louisburg. Then, during Governor Bickett's term, Fanny became heavily involved in church work at the Diocesan level. She was an early and enthusiastic attendee at the annual Blue Ridge Conference near Black Mountain, NC. After the 1917 conference she wrote:

> "The uplift of "The Morning Watch," the solemn sweetness of the vesper services, the hopefulness of the various courses under the leadership of trained Christian men and women, the beautiful spirit of sympathy, co-operation and real fellowship and good will, are things that make me very thankful" [CC, Aug 1917, 9]

She called Blue Ridge "a place to have a good time" and felt that "God seems near there, and the spirit of peace on earth, good will to men dwells there." [CC, Sept 1917, 14]
Among the social events of interest that year was a North Carolina dinner "given by Mrs. Bickett" herself. So enthusiastic was she, that she agreed to chaperone the 8 attendees from St. Mary's School in the summer of 1919.

During World War I, Fanny chaired the War Work of the Woman's Auxiliary to the Board of Missions. In 1919 she was appointed to the Committee of the Fourth Province (Sewanee Province) "to work in the interest of the Church Institute for Negroes" an auxiliary to the National Board of Missions to develop interest and help in sustaining schools for training Negro leaders.

With this year marking the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote, I did note this in the biographical sketch: "In 1920 Fanny Bickett and her husband, along with suffrage leaders, appeared before a joint session of the legislature in support of women's suffrage."

In 1919-1920 she chaired the Woman's Auxiliary work for the Nation-Wide Campaign to raise funds for all aspects of the Church's work. The Woman's Auxiliary president offered this praise in the 1920 report to Diocesan Convention:

"I am glad to report that, under Mrs. Bickett's leadership, as chairman of the Nation-Wide Campaign for the Auxiliary, our women did good service in that great movement. Three of them served on the Diocesan Executive Committee . [1920 JC, 156]

After Governor Bickett left office the couple had purchased a home in Raleigh. From 1921 to 1924 Fanny served as President of the Diocesan Woman's Auxiliary. Early in her first year of office Governor Bickett died, and in February 1922 she wrote the Auxiliary a public appreciation through the *Carolina Churchman:*

"And now, dear friends, let me thank you for your tended sympathy and loving prayers. I have felt them about me as I have felt the Everlasting Arms, bearing me up as I am passing through the dark, dark waters"

Fanny did not move back to Louisburg, but remained in Raleigh for the rest of her life. Already heading in her parish and diocesan church work toward her career in social service work, she became head of the State Health Department's Infant and Maternal Welfare Bureau not long after Thomas died.

In 1923 she was appointed to a statewide committee of 5 to work out a program of prison reform legislation to be proposed to the next General Assembly. In 1924 she became Superintendent of Public Welfare for Wake County. Welfare programs were needed, but not funded, so "she had to depend on her own ingenuity to aid as many people as possible." [DNCB] This sketch of Fanny goes on to report:

"In 1937 the North Carolina General Assembly enacted two laws relating to the federal Social Security Act of 1935; the laws dealt with how public welfare was to be administered in the state. A burgeoning program developed. Fanny Bickett's office grew from herself and one secretary to twenty-four people. Known for her evenhanded racial policy, she hired several African Americans for both professional and clerical positions in the office. She was known as well for her effective handling of cases and staff and for her unyielding professionalism. Helping people was Fanny Bickett's first love, and she felt much compassion for her clients on the welfare rolls."

I first became acquainted with the name of Fanny Bickett through research on the Bishop Tuttle Training School, which operated on the campus of St. Augustine's College between 1925 and 1941. This School was initiated and funded wholly by the Woman's Auxiliary of the Episcopal Church (nationwide) – solely by private individuals, individual Auxiliary branches, and an annual $6,000 grant from the United Thank Offering. Fanny was a member of the initial Advisory Committee and later served as an Adjunct Faculty member. In the 1930s she served on the Tuttle School Board. At least 3 Tuttle School graduates worked in social service jobs in Wake County during the 1930s – perhaps alongside Fanny.

At the time of both the 1930 and 1940 U. S. Census Report, Fanny was living with her son's family in the Five Points area of Raleigh. She died at Rex Hospital in July of 1941 after a heart attack. "Her funeral was held at her beloved Christ Episcopal Church, where her passing was mourned by the entire city of Raleigh." Almost 40 years after Thomas's death, Fanny was buried beside him at Oak Lawn Memorial Cemetery in Louisburg.

CORNELIA "NELL" BATTLE LEWIS (1893 – 1956 at @ 63)

Unlike our other subjects today, **Nell Battle Lewis** left a huge footprint – in print by her followed by in print about her – not only in Raleigh circles, but in the whole state of North Carolina – and beyond.

An Internet search on Nell quickly provides numerous sites on which you'll find not only information, but live links to various other biographical information and scholarly articles – some with photographs. One of these sketches from the *Dictionary of NC Biography* provides a brief description of her religious ties. "A member of Christ Episcopal Church, she had long been interested in religion and in controversies such as that engendered by evolution during the 1920s. A theological modernist, she compiled and annotated a manuscript of a textbook, "The Way: Studies in the Teachings of Jesus of Nazareth" for her classes at St. Mary's."

Because these Internet pages are easy to access, I'll leave them for you to access. I'd like to share some biographical information from a less easily accessible source – the North Carolina State Archives. [security check; registration check-in; locker key; forms to fill out; etc. Worth it!

The following information comes from the "Scope & Content" introduction to the Nell Battle Lewis Papers, with the inclusive dates 1920 – 1956. This structure is similar for most archival collections – a brief description of the papers organized by topic, then chronologically.

Physical Description: Letters, magazines, books, pamphlets, reprints, brochures, newspaper and magazine clippings, invitations, bills, receipts, will, settlement of estate, pictures, advertisements, quiz contests, cards, genealogy, book thesis, and novel MSS. **53 boxes**

Acquisition: On loan from NC State Library, June 1962; then received by gift, Aug. 18, 1988

Description: Nell Battle Lewis, only daughter of public health pioneer Dr. Richard H. Lewis and Mary Long Gordon Lewis of Albemarle County, Virginia, was born in Raleigh, May 28. 1893. Miss Lewis' ancestry included . . . . Another maternal ancestor, Mary Long Daniel Gordon, was one of the original thirteen students enrolled at St. Mary's College when it opened in 1842.

She attended the public schools before graduating from St. Mary's College, Raleigh, and Smith College [*Phi Beta Kappa*], Northampton, Massachusetts. After YMCA canteen service in France with the American Expeditionary Force in 1918 and 1919, she returned to Raleigh and began work with the *News and Observer* in 1921. For 35 years, interrupted only by a period of illness and five months as an associate editor of the *Raleigh Times,* Miss Lewis served progressively as society reporter, general reporter, society editor, feature writer, and columnist.

During this time she was also director of publicity for the State Board of Charities and Pubic Welfare (1922-1924) . . . and later compiled and edited the first study of capital punishment in North Carolina. Having studied law under Assistant Attorney General Walter Siler, she practiced briefly before illness ended this phase of her career. Miss Lewis' defense of the girls involved in the Samarcand Arson Trial was her principal case and her exposition of conditions at that institution subsequently led to a reform of conditions there. Other areas of social welfare engaged her time and talents over the years – the labor movement, condition of women in industry, penal system, public library campaign, etc. Her cultural and political interests are reflected in membership and official connection with such organizations and institutions as the North Carolina Historical Commission, the State Literary and Historical Association, the State Folklore Society, the Wake County and the North Carolina Leagues of Women Voters, and State Federation of Women's Clubs, and the Olivia Raney and Richard B. Harrison libraries.

Miss Lewis was an unsuccessful candidate for the North Carolina Legislature in 1928. For a number of years she taught English and Bible at her alma mater, St. Mary's College.

On the 25th anniversary of her column "Incidentally," Nell Battle Lewis paused to sum up her philosophy on several subjects. An editorial in the *News and Observer*, following her death, described her beginning the column as a "gay and light" report on the current scene. The passing years, however, reflected her change in view point as she became seriously interested in liberal causes, only to become increasingly conservative later. But, as the editorial observed, the column was always marked with "sprightliness and vigor" and was "widely read and usually debated sharply."

A biography of Nell listed is by Alexander S. Leidholdtm – *Battling Nell: The Life of Southern Journalist Cornelia Battle Lewis, 1893-1956*, published in 2009. I'll give this author the final word today from his introduction to this 300-page study – with a 30-page bibliography [should you want to follow up].

"Cornelia "Nell" Battle Lewis inhabits a unique and notable niche in the annals of the southern press. She also claims a significant rung in the liberation and advancement of women in the American South and beyond. Her invasion of the fourth estate as North Carolina's first female columnist and one of a very few in the nation created a fissure in that bastion of masculinity that ha theretofore accepted women as society editors only. Lewis's admission to the state's almost exclusively male bar gnawed further into southern chauvinism. Her widely publicized activism in both of these fields set examples and broadened the occupational choices and opportunities of women who would follow in ever-widening streams. In her advocacy for workers, women, children, prisoners, and the mentally ill, she protested inequities, exposed horrors, and worked for change." . . . .

Lewis demonstrated conclusively the sincerity of her liberal prose with her championship of workers in 1929. In the wake of the disastrous communist-inspired labor uprising at the Loray Mill in Gastonia, NC, she worked exhaustively on site incurred vilification in person and in the press, and exposed herself to physical danger in the interest of justice for accused mill hands and their leaders. .

. . For over a decade she earned widespread acclaim and vituperation as a leading patron of the downtrodden and voiceless.

In a column posted in 1932 during her hospitalization for a baffling illness, Lewis signaled an abrupt about-face from her longtime liberal perspective by siding with management against labor. She would recant her former activism and embrace her new persona with all the conviction and fire she had invested in the old. The 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision would set aflame in Lewis the power of racism intrinsic to her apartheid upbringing."

The reader is invited to accompany a feisty, ground-breaking woman journalist through a turbulent and historic era in the post-Reconstruction Jim Crow South and to speculate about what accounted for her extraordinary transformation."

In conclusion:

Personally, I found Nell's story extremely fascinating – and informative for this period of Raleigh history, Episcopal Church history and North Carolina history. "Incidentally" [as her weekly column was called] must be a treasure trove of interesting tidbits and opinions. What a reprint that collection would make!

THANK YOU!!