

## My Life in West End Atlanta

Before I was two years old, the Trimble family (my father Ben Perkins, my mother Anna Elisa and I) moved from Russellville, Kentucky to an area called West End. Originally called Whitehall, it was established in 1854 and is the oldest neighborhood outside of downtown Atlanta. A duplex house on Lawton Street became our home. We lived upstairs at number 47 and my uncle Sam Linch, his wife Faye and children Albert and Lauralisa lived downstairs at number 49. It was a very congenial neighborhood, and I made many friends. In particular, I remember Michael Kingsbury who lived with his mother a few houses away on Mathews Street. Michael became a prominent musician in Atlanta, and I am still in touch with him almost 75 years later. He recently told me that many famous people such as Bert Parks came from West End.

Not too far from our house, there was a bridge that crossed over railroad tracks. Every day freight trains went along the tracks and just under the bridge. Mother took me frequently to see the train go just under where we were standing on the bridge. I remember the excitement of hearing the steam engine, seeing the steam and smelling the smoke. We came to know the engineer who frequently was in the locomotive. I remember his name was "Mr. Maclain." It was a big thrill for a young kid four years old to have him address me by my first name.

All of the young kids attended Peeples Street School which was built around 1910. There were no school buses in those days, and we walked to school. I remember many events taking place which were sponsored by the school. There was a Spring Festival which took place at the Wrens Nest, the historic home of Joel Chandler Harris, the author of the Uncle Remus stories. "Brer Rabbit and the Tar Baby" was my favorite. There were frequent weekend events behind the school where the parents helped out. I remember my mother doing palm reading to tell the fortunes of those who stepped forward. There were newspaper drives where the students went door-to-door in the neighborhood and collected old newspapers which were then sold for the benefit of the school.



When school was out, my cousin Albert and I engaged in the things that young children do -- like riding our bicycles. I remember a fascination with insects such as lightning bugs, June bugs and wasps. If we went out after dark on a humid evening, the lightning bugs would be flying around in the air and we would catch them using a glass jar with a top. After we had caught many, the jar would literally glow with light. June bugs were a type of beetle that we would catch, tie a thread to their leg and fly them like a miniature kite. There was a huge wasp nest around the corner, and we enjoyed arousing its occupants by shooting the nest with our water guns. On one occasion, after we had inundated the nest with water, the wasps came out in formation and took off after us, and we were only able to avoid them by running as fast as possible.

Inevitably, Albert and I got into trouble. One day, we saw these beautiful plants going along the fence. They had a small red fruit which we picked and broke open. After rubbing our eyes with our hands, we experienced a horrible stinging sensation. We ran home in tears to our parents who then informed us that we had picked hot peppers and rubbed the juice into our eyes. I can still remember this as though it happened yesterday!

A favorite pastime was visiting the Barnwell's Store. To get there you walked down Mathews Street and around the corner to Oglethorpe Avenue. The lady who ran the store had stick candy in jars that we could buy for a penny each. I remember licorice was one of my favorites. Every Saturday neighborhood kids would go to the Gordon Theater to see cartoons and a serial movie which was continued each week.

Holidays were especially enjoyed. Halloween was a time to carve a pumpkin into a jack-o'-lantern and go trick or treating. In those days, kids were serious about a trick for those who did not treat. One trick I remember consisted of placing a TNT firecracker in the Jack O'Lantern of someone who pretended to not be home. After the explosion we looked back and there was a mess of pumpkin all over the porch.. Needless to say, next Halloween that lady gave us some really great candy!

Every Thanksgiving, the Trimble family would go to visit my grandparents Benjamin and Jessie Andres. He was a Presbyterian minister in a nearby town. My grandmother treated me like a king, giving me treats of all sorts. She made a marvelous souffle'. I remember they had a pecan tree in their yard. To harvest the fruit of that tree, they would spread sheets out beneath the branches and then beat the branches with long poles. The pecans would then fall onto the sheet which made it easy to gather them up.

Christmas was very special! Kids would choose gifts from the Sears Roebuck catalog and then, magically, Santa Claus would find out what we wanted and put it under the tree on Christmas Eve. One gift I particularly remember was a small steam engine which had a boiler chamber you filled with water and a flywheel. The water was heated and then propelled the flywheel which you could then connect to various devices. This showed me how work could be done using steam. I also remember my father giving me an electric train one year. I could control the speed of the train, and even make smoke come from the engine by place a small tablet int the smoke stack.

The summer before I entered the sixth grade my parents built a custom home on a beautiful wooded lot in Decatur, Georgia. The Linch familsy had left for Europe where Sam had an important position in the post war government for Germany. There was no internet or email in those days so Albert and I continued to correspond by mail. Although both of us and our families had left the West End area it is something I will always remember!