

LUNENBURG COUNTY, VIRGINIA HERITAGE

MASSIE FAMILY by John A. Massie

This will go back a few years before Massie became a name in Victoria.

John W. Phelps, born December 13, 1862, Lynchburg, VA; wife Amelia Elizabeth Tucker, born March 12, 1873, Grandville County, NC. Married October 2, 1890. Lived in Bluefield, W. VA.

On June 1, 1902, they were blessed with a sweet little girl. Her name was Lola Mae. It was not long before this little girls hands found the ivories of the piano keyboard and she soon knew her talent on the keyboard was a wonderful way to make people smile and praise the Lord.

In 1910 the family moved to the little railroad town of Victoria, VA for John Phelps to take a job as Yard Conductor. They first attended the Christian Church located on the corner of Sixth Street and Washington Ave. Lola was now 10 years old and was called upon to play the organ. Her feet could not touch the pedals so someone had to pump the pedals for her. At some point in time the family joined the Baptist Church where Lola continued to play the keyboard.

As she grew up she attended the little three room school house which stood behind what was the Victoria Shoe Factory.

On a winter day in 1916 she went through a foot of snow to visit her dear friend Estelle Breedlove who lived nearby with her husband, A.W. Now on this day the Breedloves had a special house guest by the name of Hume Massie. He was the fourth child of Arnold Douglas Massie from Amherst County, VA. (born December 22, 1860, died April 5, 1942. Mother, Odelia Sowers Wood born November 11, 1872, died January 9, 1957. They were married January 16, 1889.) Mrs. Breedlove introduced Hume to Lola Phelps. Well, Hume was a bit shy but after some coaching from the Breedloves found the courage to ask Lola Phelps for a date. Things began to work out well but in March of 1918 Hume was drafted into the Army. He served in the 80th Division and was involved in much bloody fighting in the Argone Forest. The

Lord spared his life and upon returning to the U.S. and being discharged from the Army, came back to Victoria where he got a job on the Virginia Railroad. He started dating Lola Phelps again. He described her as “real sweet, quiet, easy to get along with, and always ready to play the piano.” He soon asked her to marry him and she accepted. On December 19, 1922, they were married by Preacher Harold of the Victoria Baptist Church. She had been practicing the Christmas music and Preacher Harold objected to the date. However, the wedding was performed. Present at the wedding were the Breedloves, Swains, Estha Tucker (Scoggins), D. Brown, Mr. and Mrs. Phelps. Dr. Lewis, one for the few men in the town who had a car drove them to Burkeville to catch a train to Florida for their honeymoon.

They settled in the home place with Lola’s parents at 1529 Sixth Street. In February 1924 their first son John was born and about the same time the Engineers and Firemen came out on a strike and Hume lost his job. There were many tough days to follow as the “Great Depression” lasted for several years. During this time Hume worked a job on the Seaboard Railroad in Florida for several years. Lola Massie and son John spent two years in Florida where Hume worked. This job was seasonal due to the way fruit came in. After a few years in Florida they came back to Victoria where second son Edwin was born on March 7, 1934. Hume took a job with the Victoria Supply Company as a salesman. He specialized in building material and kitchen stoves.

Meanwhile, the family continued to be active members of Victoria Baptist Church. Lola was, of course, playing the piano and organ. Additionally, she was Superintendent of the Beginners Department. Hume served as a Deacon and in other positions. She and Hume headed up the BYPU (Baptist Young People’s Union) which met on Sunday evenings. Lola Massie had 27 years perfect attendance and played the organ for 76 years.

In 1939 Hume and Lola opened the Massie Furniture Store on Main Street in Victoria. As time went on, the Massie Furniture Store prospered and expanded. Gordon Clark was hired as refrigeration and air condition technician. Gordon was talented and a great asset to the business. Fred Graber was employed as salesman and bookkeeper. Young son Edwin worked at the store also. In 1969 the business was closed. Some remaining parts and supplies were sold to Charles Duckworth in Chase City.

Now on September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland and WWII got underway.

During high school years John showed an interest in mechanical and electrical technologies. He built the first "Go-Cart" in Victoria. This was before the word "Go-Cart" had been coined. A good friend, Ralph Underwood, served as advisor and mentor. Also, John and Ben Whaley constructed a telephone line between their homes, a distance of about one and a half miles. We used scrapped phone parts, electric train transformers, doorbells, and discarded railroad batteries. A real novelty.

In 1941 John graduated from Victoria High School and pursued his education at Bliss Electrical School in Takoma Park, Washington, D.C. During the time at this school, Pearl Harbor was bombed and the United States declared war on Japan and continued to get involved in all the fighting. John graduated from Bliss Electrical School and took a job with IBM on June 8, 1942. John was drafted into the Navy and serviced IBM machines at the Naval Security Station in Washington, D.C. for his entire military career. After the war John returned to his job with IBM. John's best friend, Ben Whaley, was drafted out of college and was a Browning Automatic Rifleman in WWII. He did not return after the war. He and his partner were killed in France November 11, 1944, soon after the invasion of Normandy.

Soon after returning to IBM, John married Shirley C. Wright . They had three children and settled in Northern Virginia.

1 – John Randolph born March 24,1949

2 – Gerald Edwin born April 8, 1952

3 – Jean Marie born March 21, 1957

The family was active in Braddock Baptist Church located in Alexandria, VA.

On May 23, 1976, Shirley suddenly died of a cerebral hemorrhage while visiting daughter Jean at VPI who was being inducted into the National Honor Society.

On March 19, 1978, John married Jean Miller, a friend of 17 years in the Church. The family now had five children. Kimberly Jean born February 22, 1961, and Kristie Bryan born August 13, 1964. All five children were raised in Braddock Baptist Church where Jean is serving as organist, following in the shoes of her beloved Mother-in-law, Lola Massie.

John retired from IBM on March 1, 1989.

After the war the draft was still active for a few years and younger son, Edwin, of Hume and Lola Massie, became eligible for draft. However, he enlisted in the Naval Reserve and during his enlistment he spent two years active duty in Northern Virginia.

As time went on Hume and Lola Massie bought an apple orchard just East of town on the Poor House Road and the orchard was active and prosperous under Hume's care. The Lord called Hume home on February 1, 1977. The operation of the orchard was continued by Edwin Massie. As years passed climate and marketing conditions changed in this part of Virginia and the orchard was closed in 1993. The farm now produces hay.

Lola Massie continued to live in the old home place. She was just two months shy of being 101 when she passed away on April 6, 2003.

The old home place at 1529 Sixth Street in Victoria is in the process of being remodeled by Edwin Massie.

Edwin Massie and wife Sandra continue to live on the farm. John and wife Jean continue to live in Northern Virginia in a home they built in 1979.

Submitted by John A. Massie

May 2008

