



EFFIE MURRAY WHITE September 30, 1880-July 22, 1978

Effie Murray White was born on September 30, 1880, to Josh and Sally (Holt) Murray, former slaves owned by Andrew and Eli Murray on the Murray plantation in the Cross Roads community on Highway 119 in northern Alamance County. She and her husband Charles worked as tenants on the Murray farm, as did their six children. Effie was a faithful member of Kimes Chapel Baptist Church but occasionally attended events at Cross Roads Presbyterian Church.

As the matriarch of the large African-American branch of the Murray family and the possessor of an uncanny memory, she was regarded as the expert on her family's history, able to recall generations of her family members' birth and death dates, marriages, children, and other events in their lives. She was widely known and revered in her community, but late in her life after author Alex Haley visited her on a 1974 journey to Alamance County attempting to complete his massive family history, *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*, she achieved national fame.

Haley's research had convinced him that his great-great grandfather (Tom Murray) had lived as a slave on the Murray plantation in the late 1850's. Several descendants of the Murray family helped him with his research, but Effie was his major and most convincing source. Sitting on the front porch of her simple log cabin home with Haley, she related the stories of her ancestors that provided the Alamance County missing link in Haley's efforts to uncover his past and complete his famous book, *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*. The book was published in 1976 and was quickly followed by the blockbuster television mini-series broadcast in January 1977. Haley won the Pulitzer Prize later that same year. The book and television series spawned a nationwide interest in genealogy research and publication that still thrives today. Effie died at the age of 97 on July 22, 1978, four years after Haley's famous conversation with her. In the eulogy he delivered at her funeral, he praised her as someone who "should be thought of now as an ancestor, as a woman who lived to share her

history with the world.” She was survived by twenty-six grandchildren, forty great-grandchildren, twenty-two great-great grandchildren, and a timeless story of race relations in Mebane, Alamance County, and the American South.