

Memoirs of the Rufus S. Plonk Family

Taken from paper clippings, personal notes and family discussion
of May E. Plonk and Nan Plonk (Hager) Ormand
for My Children
in the hope that they might enjoy knowing
something of their Plonk heritage.

By Nan P. Ormand

Edited by William M. Plonk, nephew of Nan Ormand

Editor's note: The contents of these Memoirs are the same as Nan wrote them. Phrases have been made sentences, missing dates have been found from other sources, dates have been updated from 1988 when Nan wrote this material to 1997, and other small changes have been made.

Edited by William Lee Anderson III, grand nephew of Nan Ormand

Editor's note: Conversion to HTML format for Web display. No word changed. A few punctuation and uppercase to lowercase changes. Corrected Thomas M. Plonk's birthday.

The Rufus Plonk Family

Rufus Sylvanus Plonk was born on June 12, 1866. He came from his home at #5 Township, Lincoln, to Kings Mountain in 1881 when he was 15 years old. He was the 4th Generation from Jacob Plonk, Jr., who was born in 1748 and died 1840. His wife was Christine Kiser Plonk who was born in 1755 and died in 1812. Jacob Plonk, Sr. and his brother, Peter (who married Elizabeth Kiser, sister to Christine) were immigrants from Holland and landed in Phil. Pa. on August 28, 1735, and went to Lancaster County.

Jacob Plonk, Jr. and his wife Christine had six children, one of which was Joseph who was born in 1788 and died on July 1, 1888. Joseph Plonk married Barbara Rudisell and they had 8 children - one of which was John Jonas Plonk who was born on March 8, 1823 and died in July 1907. John Jonas Plonk married Ann Ellen Oates who was born on July 24, 1831, and died on May 14, 1905. They were married on August 17, 1847. They had 13 or 14 children (1,2,3,8 and 9 died in infancy. The eight who survived to adulthood were:

1. Joseph Calvin Plonk who was born on December 9, 1852 and died on November 29, 1939. He married Laura Roberts who died on December 10, 1922. They had no children. On October 1, 1924, he married Maude Rienhardt who died on July 16, 1978. There were no children from this marriage. Calvin owned Cherokee Falls Cotton Mill and village which he sold for \$1,000,000.00 (One Million Dollars) about 1915 or 1916.
2. William Lafayette Plonk who had 8 or 9 children.
3. Michael L. Plonk who married Laura Love and had four children.
4. Martha (Mattie) Plonk who remained single
5. Rufus Sylvanus Plonk
6. Thomas Plonk who married Dasie Pruitt
7. Margaret Adams Plonk who married Lee Goode and had one child, Sara, who married a Hambright and lived in Grover, S.C.

Rufus Sylvanus Plonk came to Kings Mountain in 1881. He stayed with the Jacob Mauney family on Piedmont Avenue and worked part time as a clerk at Mauney Brothers Store. He attended Capt. Bell's Military Academy located near by. Their uniform was gray with stripes on the side of the pants. He soon became General Manager of the store and it soon became Mauney Brothers and Plonk Store (picture on hand). At age 23, on February 27, 1889 he married Mary E. Motley, better known as Mollie. Mollie who was 21 years old when she married, was born on January 1, 1868 at Lawsonville, Rockingham Co. N.C. It was said that Rufus met her on a train as he was traveling to a political convention in Asheville. Mollie was traveling on the same train with Uncle John Hall (who married Mollie's sister Lizzie) and Aunt Mattie.

After a short time (about 1889) they moved from the Mauney's into a house across the street which Rufus bought from Capt. Dilling. Captain Dilling had built a new home upper part of Piedmont Ave. There were only three houses in the block at that time. The other two were the Suggs' house on the corner which is now the John Plonk house, and the Barns house Mr. Ed Barns who lived with the Suggs and worked at Sugg's Drug Store, married and built a house next to the Rufus Plonk's home.

Rufus and Mollie Plonk lived there until six (6) children were born.

1. Thomas Motley - born 1-4-1890 - died 4-19-62
2. May E. - born 5-31-1891 -died 2-25-80
3. Ethel - born 9--27-1892 died 10-1-63
4. Rufus Slone born 1-12-1895 died 12-2-83
5. Arthur born 2-10-96 died in September 1897 (18 months) Meningitis
6. Joseph Calvin born 1-31-1898 died 6-16-1955

In the meantime, Mr. Ridenhour married a Mauney and came to work at the store, so Rufus soon left the store and went across the railroad to join William Plonk, I.A. and J.P. Kiser and W.A. & W. D. Ware store. I.A. Kiser left in 1903 and Rufus took over bookkeeping. Soon Rufus (1905) bought out J.P. Kiser for \$3,409.00 and the store became Plonk Bros. & Co. (William and Rufus Plonk) (Later store was sold to William L. Plonk and Son - January 1, 1907). It has remained in the Plonk family since. (1987)

Realizing the Delling home was too small for his family, Rufus decided, rather than build on, to build out in the country. He was suffering with asthma and wanted out of town. He sold the present home back to Capt. Delling who wanted it for his sister who was to be married soon to Dr. B. R. Hunter. (The Lawrence Mauneys did live there for a short time and Winnie Verd Mauney was born there) Rufus then bought the Harmon property right outside city limits on the Shelby road - one mile from town. At that time the road ran in front of the home which he built with a white picket fence around it. There were 12 large rooms with additional large wings, closets and pantry. The house was later remodeled when large columns were added.

Rufus Plonk and family moved into his father's house on Railroad Street for a short time since he had a given up the home to the new buyer, (here Herbert was born). There were over 125 acres of land on the Harmon property. The Harmons (only one lady, Ruanna) lived there. Rufus agreed to look after her as long as she lived which he did providing food until she died in the early 1920s - age in her 80s. She was a lovely, kind, old lady with whom the Plonk children would visit often. The home was very large with high ceilings and fire places in each room.

When Mollie's first child, Motley, was born, a white housekeeper come to live with them. She was Sara Huffstelter who lived in the home until she died about 1923. She ran the house, and the children would go to her room many nights and sit until bed time. She told them many Civil War stories and baked apples, potatoes and onions in her fireplace using the hot ashes. On special occasions, she would open up a little bottle of wine she had made and give each child a thimble full - a real treat!

Along with the house, there were three huge barns, a road way from house: a horse barn where there were mules for the tenants to farm with, riding horse for the boys, a special horse for Rufus Plonk's buggy which he used to travel back and forth to work, and later a beautiful white race horse, named Maude, for the girls. Maude has won a county race when Rufus bought the horse. Behind the main house was another two-room house where a colored man and a young colored boy lived. The man did chores and looked after horses, etc. and the boy brought in wood and built fires each day in the rooms. There was also a large cow barn and a feed barn. The house had its own water system which came from two springs near by - located down a hill from the house. These springs had a cement lining and wall around them where you could sit. Many Sundays, people would stop by and sit and chat there. It is said that one of the children fell in one of the springs so Rufus had covers made of tin to cover them. The covers could be removed if someone wanted water. A loud sounding ram pumped the water to the house and also to the spring house made of cement built in a hill. The spring house had two stories so you went down steps to second floor where a large trough held the milk and things you wished to keep cold. There was also a smoke house behind the home - this was later converted to a spring house so the milk, etc. would be nearer to kitchen.

There was no problem of maid service as there were tenant houses on the farm and they came to do laundry

and main cleaning of the house. There was a large garden fenced in and acres of orchard which grew early to late apples, pears, plums, grapes etc. Most of the farm land was used for corn and cotton.

Next to the Plonk farm was the Longstreet Goforth farm. They were special friends and the Plonks delighted in visiting with them. They grew watermelons, strawberries, etc. which the Plonks did not have and they shared with them. No one in the Plonk family was a farmer, so it was all left to the tenants to run the farm.

Going back to the beginning; the new home was finished in 1899 and moved into in 1900. The other children were:

7. Herbert born 12-4-1899 died
8. Elizabeth born 12-27-1901
9. Ruth born 3-31-1904
10. Ruby (Ruth's twin) lived several months.
11. Eva born 12-17-1905
12. Nan born 9-1-1908
13. France born 6-10-1910
14. Louise born 6-14-1912.

All the children were born at home. A special colored nurse was hired when child was young. Mollie was "Lady of the House" and rightly deserved it. She sewed for all the children - even made most of their clothes - coats, quilts and did lots of crocheting and some knitting (mostly for soldiers in World War I). No one in the Rufus Plonk family served in the war, tho' Herbert and Calvin were registered and would have had to go it war hadn't ended when it did in 1918.

Rufus Plonk's life was real interesting. During his life he was a very prominent citizen - served as city clerk - May 8, 1896 to May 6, 1898, Mayor of Kings Mountain, May 5, 1890 to May 3, 1891 and also from May 8, 1895 to May 8, 1896 - was Democrat campaign manager for E.Y Webb - Senator from Shelby - served on town board, Postmaster 1893, county commissioner for years. He was instrumental in securing jobs for several prominent positions for others. One was Mr. Phifer - Hardware Co. and Mr. Hunter Patterson (postmaster). These men lived with the Plonks for a short time. In 1900, Rufus Plonk and Mr. Booker, a printer, organized "The Democrat", Kings Mountain's newspaper, with Mr. H. P. Allison as editor. This paper later was consolidated with the "Kings Mountain Herald" which remains in print to this day.

After Rufus left the Mauney Plonk store before 1900, he took over the bookkeeping duties at the Plonk Kiser store on Railroad Ave., and at the end of 1905, he purchased the Kiser interest in the firm and changed the name to "Plonk Brothers" (William and Rufus). On January 1, 1907, W.L. Plonk and his son purchased the Rufus Plonk interest. At the death of W.L. Plonk in 1924, his children shared in ownership of the store. In 1988 the store was still owned by the W.L. Plonk family.

Rufus then became connected with the Phonic Mill along with his brother Calvin who had sold his Mill in Cherokee Falls, S.C. and moved to Hickory, N.C. to live. In Phonic Mill, J.C. Plonk, was president, R.S. Plonk was vice-president, B.A. Oates was Superintendent, and R. S. Roberts was treasurer.

Rufus also ran the mill store. He traveled each day in his horse and buggy to work - tho' he did purchase a big passenger car. His health continued to get worse and he had much difficult breathing. He retired in 1917 - and on Sunday, February 24, 1918, he died at 6 a.m. It was a terrible shock to all the family. There were only six children at home at that time as the older ones were off at college or out on their own.

Mollie and the children lived on there until 1933 when it was decided to build a smaller (8 room house) nearer town on West Gold Street where Mollie already owned a lot. So the older home was rented for a few years. In 1940 it was sold to the town for a Country Club Home. About 20 years later, it was destroyed by fire - a great loss to the town. A smaller clubhouse was rebuilt of brick.

Along with the sale of the house went many acres of land for golf. Then later the rest of the land was sold to Wilson Crawford (40 acres at \$1,000.00 per acre) which he divided into lots and formed the "Country Club Estates" In the meantime other plots were sold to different people. The hospital land was one plot - 8 acres which sold for \$4,000. Several additions to the hospital have been made since the original building and the Plonks have rooms furnished in memory of Mr. and Mrs. R. S. Plonk, Miss Ethel Plonk, Mrs. Rufus S.

Plonk(son of Rufus S. Plonk), Ruth and Hugh Ormand, and Miss May Plonk. The new lobby is given in memory of Herbert J. Plonk - a donation of \$200,000.00 by his wife Inez Dodd Plonk upon her death.

Nan remembers many happy hours and days were spent together as a big family, especially in the “Country Club House” where all children and their families came home for special occasions and Christmas. There was fun and always plenty of food. Christmas was especially a gay time. Nan wrote, “When Papa lived he had sleigh bells ringing from roof in the middle of the night to make us think Santa had come. There was a huge tree brought in from the farm on Christmas Eve, decorated with packages that night and the door locked until after breakfast Christmas day. Under the tree was a bag of goodies for everyone - plus many presents. These was always a 30 lb. turkey, dressing, and all fixings for dinner. The turkey had to be cooked in a huge iron wash pot in the yard the day before. After Papa died, tho’ we missed his pranks and hugs, but we kept up the holiday traditions. By losing Papa it brought and kept us in closer relationships and there became a family bond and interest in each other more all along.”

Nan wrote, “Another sadness came when we lost Mama in 1951. She had fallen a year earlier breaking her hip. She never walked after that. We had a white nurse who just looked after her, then a colored practical nurse along with the regular housemaid. The kept her always dressed pretty and comfortable. She died in June, 1951. In 1953 we lost Elizabeth who married Bill Saunders. She had gall bladder trouble which was not detected until too late. Motley died in 1962 of a heart attack. He married Louise McGuire and had four children. Ethel died 10-1-1963 of a heart attack. She was not married. Cloyd Hager died 6-23-63. He was Nan’s husband and had four children. Calvin died 6-16-55 of blood clots. He was not married. Herbert died 11-9-55 of a heart attack. He married Inez Swindell who died in 1981. Ruth died 1-?-71 of a heart attack. She married Hugh Ormand who died 6-15-76. They had no children. Frances died 3-9-83 of a heart attack. She married W. E. Alexander who died 11-9-87. They had one child. Bill Hite died 3-13-80. He was Louise’s husband and they had two children. May died 2-2- 83. She did not marry. Rufus died 12-2-83. he married Zoe Ormand who died 1-12-80. They had one child, Rufus. Jr. In 1988, this leaves only three of us left- Louise, Eva, and me. Eva is single, I married Cloyd A. Hager and had four children. Later I married Hugh Ormand in 1972.

This only touches on a very small part of the doings of the Plonk family which could go on, and on, and on, and on. One could say Stop!”

Nan also added a few remarks about her personal life which she thought would be of little interest to anyone outside the immediate family.

“Tho’ Papa owned a farm, there were no farmers in the family. Papa supervised the tenants, who came often to the house to account for the choices made in directing the farm. Papa carried the food and clothing accts of the tenants during certain seasons and they paid off when their cotton crops were sold. As mentioned before, Papa went to the mill and store which he ran each day and Mama went occasionally for special items, all sugar, flour, coffee (which was ground at home in coffee grinder in pantry) were all bought in large amounts and stored in the large pantry. There was a butler’s pantry between the kitchen and large dining room, tho’ we had no butler. The dining room containing a large 12 seated table, where all had a special place. We used to say that was how they knew when all were present. The first road was close in front of the house and a new highway (not paved) which was built several hundred feet away. We younger children would run up the long road to the public highway about the time Papa would come home, jump on back of his buggy and he would take a few pieces of candy or gum from his pocket for each of us. Papa was a tall handsome man with keen dark eyes. He was kind and loving to all of us, but he was strict in discipline. Just one look told us to never fight or argue (tho’ we did sometime without his knowledge). I never say Papa and Mama strike a child and Mama especially was always interested in our doings tho’ not in a bragging way. We were expected to do our best, look our best, and have good manners. We younger ones were corrected by the older members if we went amiss. Never did we say Ga! (sounded like God - I, Nan, was called down for this!) Belly was not a good word- it was tummy, and any other grammatical mistake we made, we were told that the Plonk name stood for honesty, kindness, scrupulous, industrious, and we were ever proud of our name. We were always told that tho’ we were lucky to have the farm products, fruits and a store for supplies, and that tho’ we never felt the depression of the war years as many did, yet we never considered ourselves any better off than others less fortunate. After Papa died, many, many people came to Mama and told how Papa

had helped them in time of need with out a cent repay.”

“Much canning and drying of fruit went on in the kitchen. Food was canned in ½ gal jars. Grape juice was made and served on Sunday.”

May writes (and related to Nan many times) that the older ones (Motley, Ethel, Rufus, and she) went to a private school the first two years - located across the street from their home on Piedmont - run by Gertie and Lilia Mauney. May had a scrapbook which she treasured because she had won it by having the most head marks in spelling.

Motley went to military school part of high school days and on to Roanoke College to finish. He was a mill superintendent for years and then the head of the Charlotte office of the Internal Revenue Service. May and Ethel went to Greensboro College and Lenoir-Rhyne. Ethel became a teacher and May stayed home to help with the younger ones.

Calvin went to Rutherford College and Lenoir-Rhyne. He did not like school so Papa put him to helping at the mill and home.

Herbert graduated at Roanoke College valedictorian of his class. He became a banker, head of the trust department, and finally one of the vice-presidents of Wachovia Bank. He lived in Raleigh, N.C.

Elizabeth went to Greensboro and became a teacher.

Ruth went to Flora McDonald College in Red Springs, N.C. She was a teacher also.

Eva took a business course in Greensboro and worked in banks, Queens College, Memorial Hospital. She was bookkeeper for Plonk (Fred) Oil Company. She retired and lived in Kings Mountain.

Nan went to Lenoir-Rhyne College and became a teacher. She retired at 72.

Frances went to Greensboro and Greenville, N.C. She was a teacher.

Louise took business at Lenoir-Rhyne College, worked in Robbins, N.C. under Bill Saunders (Elizabeth’s Husband) as an office clerk. She became a housewife and mother after marriage.

Nan wrote “Now tho’ I have still touched on so few of the may interesting things in this family, I’ll stop. These are some of the things my children have asked bout and maybe they will enjoy knowing from whence they came. A family tree located on separate sheet will give more background of their heritage.”

Jacob Plonk, Sr. - born in Germany and came to America on August 28, 1735. He settled in Penn. He had a brother named Peter Plonk.

Jacob Plonk, Jr. - Born in 1748 Died in 1840. Married Christina Kiser

Joseph Plonk - Born in 1788 Died in 1888. Married Barbara Rudisell - Born in 1795 Died in 1865.

John Jonas Plonk - Born 1823 Died 1908. Married Ann Ellen Oates - Born 1831 Died 1905.

Rufus S. Plonk - Born 6-2-1866 Died 2-24-1918. Married Mary E. Motley - Born 1-12-1869 Died 1-1-1951.

Nannie B. Plonk - Born 9-1-1908 Died 6-9-1988. Married Cloyd A. Hager - Born 11-23-1903 Died 7-23-1963.

Nan’s children are: Cloyd Jr., Mary Harriet, David P., and Thomas P.

Printed in the Reidsville Paper on March 4, 1889.

Lover’s Young Dream

On Wednesday evening the 27th (February 27th) a few of the nearest relatives and most intimate friends of the family met at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. T. J. Motley to witness the nuptials of their daughter, Miss Mollie, to Mr. R. S. Plonk of Kings Mountain, N.C. at 7 o’clock. The party sat down at a most sumptuous repast, and right heartily was the lunce. Man refreshed to all that heart and appetite could desire. One and three-quarter hour’s later at 8:45 o’clock, after all had assumed proper positions in the parlor, the bride and

groom were ordered in. Taking positions just in front the large recess of the bay-window, confronted the Rev. D. I. Craig, who at once, in his happy and animitable style, began the solemn duty of making them man and wife. This done, congratulations were in order, and hearty and earnest wishes were expressed time and again for a long life of happiness and prosperity. The bride was becomingly dressed in a traveling suit of brown plaid ladies' cloth which fit her exquisitely and made her look the very perfection of becoming womanhood. Mr. Plonk was accompanied from Kings Mountain by three of his gentlemen friends: Mr. Dixon, Lewis Neal, and Prof. Turman.

Of the numerous gifts to the bride, we noticed a lady's solid gold watch, inlaid with diamonds, a present from the groom; a silver butter dish from Mr. Dixon and lady, Gastonia, N.C.; set of silver napkin rings from Prof. Turmon, Gastonia; a silver cake basket from Mr. Lewis Neal, Kings Mountain; a silver butter dish from a friend of the groom; a set of silver knives and forks from Mr. Henry Motley; a very handsome silver waiter from Miss Mary Sue Motley; an elegant Saratoga trunk from J.R. and J.J. Motley; a five dollar note from Mr. Giles Motley; a five dollar note from Mr. George W. Johnson; a ten dollar note from Miss Nannie Motley, Wytheville, Va. The bride and groom left on the 9:40 train for the Inauguration at Washington and then to Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York, returning in ten or fifteen days to take up their residence at Kings Mountain. That this may be a long well spent time of peace and happiness.

Another write up - both taken from the old scrap book of Mollie Motley Plonk.

At the residence of T.J. Motley, Esq., last Wednesday evening, the marriage of his daughter, Miss Mollie to Mr. R.S.Plonk of Kings Mountain, N.C. was celebrated. Rev. D. I. Craig officiating. Many valuable bridal presents were bestowed by numerous friends, not least among them the little Nannie sister's gift of \$100 to her wedded sister. The happy couple have gone on a bridal trip of pleasure to Baltimore and other capital cities and returning will take in the Inauguration at Washington. Happiness attend them throughout life.