

Clara Jane Cox Epperson
d/o Robert Alexander Cox & Nancy Joseph Draper Cox



Clara Jane Cox Epperson was born in 1869 in Gainesboro, TN. The daughter of Robert Alexander Cox and Nancy Joseph Draper. She was married to John Ananius Epperson who was born in 1867. The public library in Cookeville, TN was named the Clara Cox Epperson Library for this woman who worked so faithfully to found a library here. She was Poet Laureate of Tennessee's Federation of Women's Clubs. She was the author of numerous short stories, children's stories, screen dramas and Civil War memories of her mother. She also taught school.

Cora Cox Lucas, James Travis Anderson and Clara Jane Cox Epperson. Picture (right) taken about 1885. Courtesy of Dr. Eleanor Drake Mitchell, granddaughter of James Travis Anderson. Source: pg. 153 of the book, "Pictorial History of Putnam County Tennessee" by 1st American Bank.



Putnam County, Tennessee, 1850 – 1970 by Mary Jean DeLozier – pgs. 189-190.

Among a small number of Putnam County residents from 1890 to 1920 there was a remarkable interest in the arts. A few women deserve much of the credit. They did not serve on school, church, or corporation boards, vote, or hold political office; they worked instead through women's clubs (most of which were socially exclusive). By their enthusiasm, determination, intellectual curiosity, and boundless energy, they fostered appreciation for education and the arts. Graeme McGregor Smith and Clara Cox Epperson were only two of a number of such women.

Born in Gainesboro in 1869, Clara Cox received her B.A. degree from Nashville College for Young Ladies in 1887. Prior to her marriage to John A. Epperson of Gainesboro, she taught at Dixon Springs and Gainesboro. The Eppersons moved to Algood about 1894 and built their home, "Heartsease." The Putnam County Herald, Progressive Farmer, Southern Women's Magazine, and other periodicals published Clara Epperson's poems, children's stories, and book, movie, and drama reviews. A member of the Tennessee Woman's Press and Author's Club and the League of American Pen Women, Clara Epperson was named poet laureate of the Tennessee Federation of Women's Clubs and, for a short time, poet laureate of Tennessee. Active in local civic and literary organizations and the Church of Christ, she was also an organizing regent of the Old

Walton Road Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. In 1920's she was book chairman for the Book Lovers Club, which established the Putnam County Library in 1923 and named it in her honor.

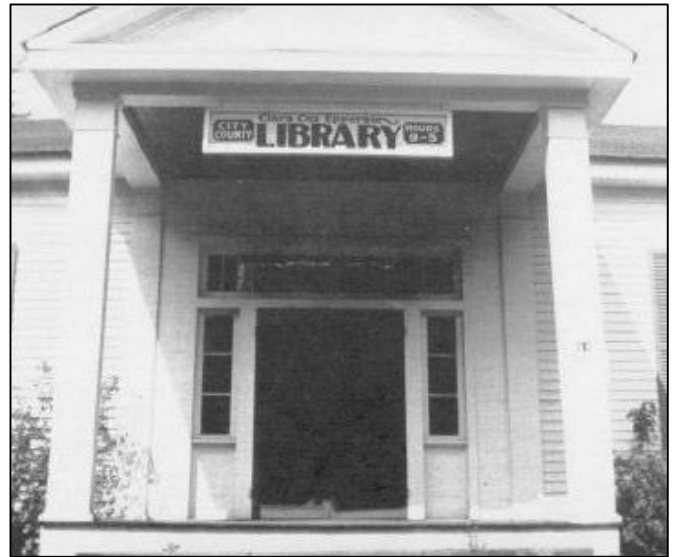
Her sentimental poems reflected her joy in the beauties of nature, domestic duties, and the Christian faith. A favorite of her readers and a typical work was "My Little Room."



L to R: Elise Epperson Howard & Cora Allison Bullington members of the Old Walton Road Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Putnam Co., TN.

"My Little Room"

I have a little room high up
beneath the roof,
A little room all white and
clean and sweet
Where I can go to rest,
And as I lie and look out on
the sky
And on the pale moon sailing
swift and high,
I hear the birds sing in the
summer night,
Glad heralds of the dawn's
first shaft of light,
And my soul goes wandering up,
away and far
Above the things of earth, its
grief and gloom,
And out there with the stars,
the moon, and you, Dear Heart,
Sometimes I fain would not com
back to my dear room
My little, still, white room
beneath the roof



The Clara Cox Epperson Library was located on North Dixie Avenue, Cookeville, TN

Draper Families in America – pgs. 142 – 144
(notes by Audrey J. Lambert in brackets)

Clara Jane Cox – born 4 May 1869, Gainesboro, TN (Residence: Cookeville, TN) md ca. 1892, Gainesboro, TN, **John Ananius Epperson**, born 16 March 1867 – d. 18 June 1919, Algood, TN (Lumber and Mill owner, Algood, TN). Both buried in the Cookeville City Cemetery, Putnam Co., TN.

Children:

Elise Draper Epperson – b. 19 July 1893, Algood, TN – (d. 17 October 1979), md 9 October 1912, Algood, TN, William Albert Howard, born 23 November 1887 (b. 1886), Livingston, TN (M.S. and Surgeon, Cookeville, TN) – (M.D. Capt. US Army). Their children were: William "Billie" Albert Howard Jr. & Clara Elizabeth Howard. (Elise Draper Epperson Howard, William Albert Howard Sr. & William Albert Howard Jr. all Buried: Cookeville City Cemetery, Cookeville, TN.)

Samuel Robert Epperson – born 3 February 1895 (b. 1896), Algood, TN (Agent Reynolds Tobacco Co., New York City), (Tenn Major Co. M 54 Inf WWI & II), – died 8

July 1964, Cookeville, TN – md 17 July 1927, New York City, Mary Ruth Thomson, (*b. 29 June 1903 – d. 25 January 1980*). (*both Buried: Cookeville City Cemetery, Cookeville, TN*).

(Connections to the Denny Family)

COX, NAN J.: **Mrs. Nan J. Cox** died at the home of **John A. Epperson** in Algood, on Friday May 15, 1908, aged 74 years. She was the widow of R. A. Cox, and three children survive her -- Mrs. Cora Lucas of Laurens, S.C., Mrs. J. A. Epperson of Algood, and J. N. Cox of Sparta. She was a sister of **Mrs. Penelope Ford** of this city who died about three months ago. Mrs. Cox was buried at Gainesboro. [Date 5/27/1908, Vol. VI, No. 17, Page 4] - Deaths Reported in the Putnam County Herald - 1908

Nan J. Cox (**Nancy Joseph Draper**) b. 15 December 1834, Flynn's Lick, Jackson Co., TN; d. 8 May 1908, Gainesboro, TN d/o James "Squire Jimmy" Draper & Jane Moore Fitzgerald – md June 1860, Robert Alexander Cox – b. 21 November 1832 – d. 18 June 1892 – Buried: Gainesboro, TN. Nancy was the sister of Henrietta Pheobe "Penelope" Draper Ford. R. A. Cox (Robert Alexander Cox); Cora Lucas (Cora Eliza Cox who md William Ernest Lucas); Mrs. J. A. Epperson (Clara Jane Cox who md John Ananius Epperson); J. N. Cox (James Nathaniel Cox who md Mary Emolyn Young). Draper Families in America by Mrs. Ethel Nichols Anderson and others. – pg. 142 & 143.

FORD, MRS. **H. P.**: The funeral of Mrs. H. P. Ford took place at her late residence on Saturday at ten o'clock, in the presence of many friends. The services were conducted by Mr. T. J. Gregory and Mr. Jere Whitson. The choir sang "Asleep in Jesus," after which Mr. Gregory read the 14th chapter of John and offered prayer. Mr. Whitson made some appropriate remarks, followed by the choir singing "Death is Only a Dream," closing the services at the house. Mrs. H. P. Ford was buried in the family burial lot, beside her husband, the late Chas. R. Ford. [Date 2/26/1908, Vol. VI, No. 4, Page 1] - Deaths Reported in the Putnam County Herald - 1908

H. P. Ford: **Henrietta Phoebe "Penelope" Draper** – b. 6 April 1833 – d. 20 February 1908, Cookeville, TN – d/o James "Squire Jimmy" Draper & Jane Moore Fitzgerald - md 24 January 1854, Flynn's Lick, **Charles Randolph Ford** – b. 26 August 1808 – d. 18 June 1901, Cookeville, TN. (His name originally spelled DeFord and he dropped the De). Both Buried: Cookeville City Cemetery, Cookeville, TN. Draper Families in America – pg. 142, 156 & 157.

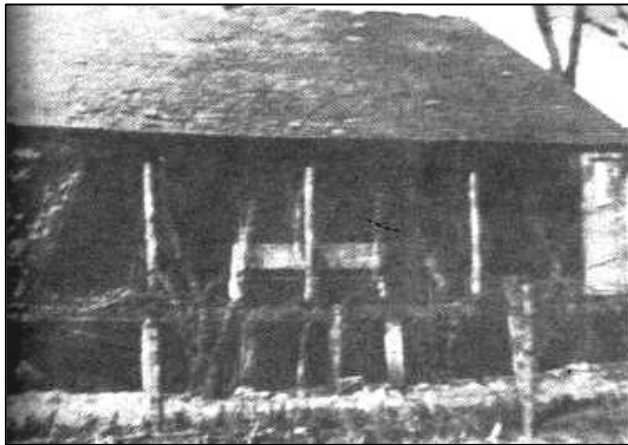
DENNY, FANNY: Mrs. **Fanny Denny**, wife of Mayor **T. L. Denny**, died at her home in this city on Saturday Sept. 12, 1908, (*tombstone states d. 1907*) aged about 53 years. While she had been in poor health for some time her friends did not realize her condition, and her death was a surprise. She was laid to rest in the city cemetery Sunday afternoon, many friends being present to pay respect to the loved departed one. Mrs. Denny had been for many years a devoted member of the Christian church, and died in the triumph of Christian faith. She was a daughter of the late Chas. R. and **Penelope Ford**, and sister of Messrs. T. D. Ford, Jas. F. Ford and Miss Cora Ford and Mrs. O. Ranchfuss of this city,

and Mrs. Sallie Watson of Pittsburgh, Pa. Five children survive Mrs. Denny -- Mrs. H. M. Jared, Mrs. O. K. Holladay, Mrs. W. M. McCluen, Miss Clara Denny, and Master Larimore Denny, all of this city. The sympathy of the entire community goes out to the family in their bereavement. [Date 9/16/1908, Vol. VI, No. 33, Page 1].

Deaths Reported in the Putnam County Herald – 1908

Frances “Fannie” Jane Ford - b. 21 October 1854 - d. 12 September 1907, Cookeville, TN – d/o Charles Randolph Ford & Henrietta Phoebe “Penelope” Draper - md December 1878, Thomas Luther Denny- b. 26 August 1851, Buffalo Valley, Putnam Co., TN- d. 12 September 1911 – s/o Jonothan & Agnes (Thompson) Denny. T. D. Ford (brother, Thomas Draper Ford who md Virginia Belle Birdwell); Jas. F Ford (James Fitzgerald Ford who md Nellie Wirt); Cora Ford (Cora Isabella Ford); Mrs. O. Ranchfuss (Nan Denton Ford who md Oscar Rauchfuss); Sallie Watson (Sarah Bullard Ford who md Herbert Watson). Mrs. H.M. Jared (Minnie Belle Denny who md Hasker Michael Jared); Mrs. O. K. Holladay (Marguerite “Maggie” Black Denny who md Oscar King Holladay); Mrs. W. M. McCluen (Cora Agnes Denny who md William D. McCluen); Clara Lucy Denny (md Dr. Elisha A. Conger); Master Larimore Denny (Theophalus Larimore “Larry” Denny who md 1st Ollie May Davis & 2nd Lily Robinson).

*See Chapter 5. – <http://www.ajlambert.com>



This is picture of the original Putnam County Library which was located in the old Laura Copeland home, just off the square behind Maddux and Proffitt Department Store, Cookeville, TN



Putnam County's new modern library, located on East Broad Street across from City Hall. Cookeville, TN

Lend an Ear

Heritage of the Tennessee Upper Cumberland

Edited by Calvin Dickinson, Larry Whiteaker,

Leo McGee, & Homer Kemp

Dear Hearts and Gentle People

The Cultural Heritage of the Upper Cumberland

By John W. Warren

Professor of English, Tennessee Tech University

Pgs. 113 & 114

In the twentieth century, the Upper Cumberland has produced several talented authors who have contributed richly to Tennessee's literary heritage. A beloved poet of Putnam County is Clara Cox Epperson (1869-1932). (*Clara Cox Epperson - b. 4 May 1869 - d. 10 June 1937 - buried: Cookeville City Cemetery, Cookeville, TN - (husband John Ananius Epperson - b. 16 March 1865 - d. 17 June 1919 - buried: next to Clara Cox, his wife in Cookeville City Cemetery, Cookeville, TN)*). Born in Gainesboro, Tennessee, Clara Cox Epperson was reared in a family that encouraged reading and an appreciation of the fine arts. Mrs. Epperson was graduated from the Nashville College for Young Ladies in 1887 and, following a four-year special study course under Dr. George W.F. Price, the President, she received the M.A. degree in 1891. Mrs. Epperson's writings appeared in numerous papers and journals. The Putnam County Herald, the Lookout, the Chattanooga and Nashville papers printed her poetry, short stories, stories for children, feature sketches, book reviews, and screen drama. In addition, her poetry was published in The Will Carleton Magazine, Life, Bob Taylor Magazine, International Poetry Magazine, Progressive Teacher, Southern Woman's Magazine, Tennessee Club Woman, Bridge World, and Christian Herald. She wrote a series of articles about the Civil War memories of her mother.

A well-known writer in her day, Mrs. Epperson knew several prominent people in the literary world. One close friend was Miss Will Allen Dromgoole of Murfreesboro, Tennessee. She also knew the Fugitives, and in their early years at Vanderbilt, according to her daughter Mrs. W. A. Howard, they sent their writings for her to criticize.

A carefully selected assortment of Mrs. Epperson's writings was edited and published by a close friend, Mrs. Lottie P. Farr of Cookeville in 1973, thirty-six years after the writer's death. For this memorable volume, *Scraps of Verse and Prose, From Heartsease*, Mrs. Farr chose the title from Mrs. Epperson's comments of her "dear home with its patchwork quilts and treasures of memories." For the cover, Mrs. Farr used the design of a patchwork quilt with light and dark patches. In a tiny black-and-white memorandum book, Mrs. Epperson wrote:

"Like bits of bright and dark-colored cloth that made up the old-fashioned quilts of the yesterdays, are the scraps of verse that make up this little book. Some may be smooth in texture and attractive in color: others of rough material And dark of hue, but the threads of love run thorough all - - love for the old Friends and the new - - the tried friends and the true, all the loved ones who have

Been the patches of inspiration for my old-fashioned quilt.”

The representative selections included in this work reflect a wide variety of interests and themes; personal feelings about her family and friends, biblical themes and images, and nature themes including flowers, sky, forests, birds, seasons, night, and day.

(Robert Alexander Cox – b. 21 November 1832, Jackson Co., TN – d. 18 June 1892, Gainesboro, TN, (Lawyer at Gainesboro, TN) md June 1860, nr. Flynn’s Lick, Jackson Co., TN, Nancy Joseph Draper – b. 15 December 1834 – d. 8 May 1908, Gainesboro, TN).

Children of Robert Alexander Cox and Nancy Joseph Draper:

- 1. Cora Eliza Cox, born October 26, 1866 near Gainesboro; died August 20, 1944; buried Spartanburg, SC beside her husband; married 1890, Nashville, TN; William Ernest Lucas (Cotton Manufacturer, Spartanburg, SC).*
- 2. Clara Cox Epperson - b. 4 May 1869 – d. 10 June 1937 – md 1892, Gainesboro, TN, John Ananius Epperson – b. 16 March 1865 – d. 17 June 1919 – (Lumber & Mill Owner) - Both Buried: Cookeville City Cemetery, Cookeville, TN.*
- 3. James Nathaniel Cox – b. 9 February 1876, Gainesboro, TN – d. 12 March 1953; (Telephone Manager, Cookeville, TN), md 7 April 1897, Sparta, TN, Mary Emolyn Young – b. 25 December 1876, Sparta, TN – d/o Charles C. Young, formerly merchant of Sparta, TN).*

Jackson County Tennessee by Moldon Jenkins Tayse 1989. Pg. 129

The late Mrs. Clara Cox Epperson, widely known Tennessee poet spent her early life in Gainesboro, TN. She was a descendant of David Cox who gave the land which was used to lay off the town of Gainesboro, TN.

Source: The following newspaper abstract was prepared by Kara Porter: <http://www.timbertrux.com/>

Jackson Co., TN - Website

JACKSON CHRONICLE: Micro-reproduction of original published: Gainesboro, Jackson Co., TN:

Walter S. McClain, 1898-1914, Nashville, TN: Filmed by the Tennessee State Library and Archives, 1959, on 4 microfilm reels: Family History Library, Film Nos. 173761-4.

23 May 1908: GAINESBORO SENTINEL

p. 2:4 (Mrs. Nancy J. Cox). "**Mrs. Nancy J. Cox** died at her home in Algood, May 15. Aged 73 years and 5 months. Her body was buried in the Gainesboro cemetery Saturday, by the side of her husband **Capt. R. A. Cox**, who died February 18, 1892.

Mrs. Cox was born and raised in Gainesboro, but for the past ten years has made her home at Algood with her daughter **Mrs. Epperson**. . . .

Mrs. Cox took sick in February 1907 and since that time had been in her bed most of the time until death relieved her of all suffering.

The remains were accompanied from Algood by, **Mr. and Mrs. Jno A. Epperson** and two children, **Mrs. Lucas, J. N. Cox, C. H. Breckman, T. D. Ford, Mrs. Nan Ford Ranchfuss, Mrs. Mattie Northen**, of Leabanon, and **Mr. and Mrs. Sam Powell**, of Nashville.

The honorary pallbearers were, **J. A. Williams, Dr. S. B. Fowler, W. M. Gailbreath, W. W. Draper, J. M. Morgan, Sr, and N. B. Young**; active pallbearers, **C. H. Breckman, S. A. Pewell, W. H. Settle, J. E. Stafford, B. L. Quarles, and H. R. Anderson**.

Mrs. Cox leaves three children, **Mrs. Cora Lucas, of Laurens S.C.; Mrs. Clara Epperson, Algood, and J. N. Cox, Sparta**.

A large number of Mrs. Cox's old friends from over the county attended the funeral services which were conducted by, **Eld. J. T. Draper at the Christian church. Among them were B. J. Franklin and wife, Mrs. Eliza Draper, Charles Hopkins, and Marlen Haile.**"

June 6, 1908: GAINESBORO SENTINEL

p. 2:3 (Mrs. Nan J. Cox). ". . . When the news came last Friday that the soul of **Mrs. Nan J. Cox** had taken its flight at dawn, . . . many sorrowing friends bowed their heads and mingled tears of sympathy with the loved ones left . . .

Mrs. Cox was a native of Jackson County, a daughter of **Esq. James Draper**, of Flynn's Lick; she was born in December 1834 and died last Friday at the home of her daughter, **Mrs. John A. Epperson**, in Algood.

She had been feeble for several months, but recently her health had improved and it was thought that she might be spared for many years. Just a week before death her strong constitution gave way under the severe physical suffering she endured . . .

Mrs. Cox was one of the pioneer women of this section of Tennessee, and had a part in its history. During the Civil war she was one of those true Southern souls who did much to encourage and aid those who wore the gray. Not only was she a sympathizer, but a heroic worker who went out and gathered up supplies, oftimes going up into Kentucky with an ox team, returning with rations and munitions. . . .

. . . She is one of first [sic] women the writer remembers, and her life and its examples are fresh in his memory.

Mrs. Cox is survived by **Mrs. Cora Lucas**, of Laurens, S.C., **Mrs. J. A. Epperson**, of Algood, and **Jas. N. Cox**, General Manager of the Gainesboro Telephone Co., of Sparta. Her husband, the late **R. A. Cox**, and the late **Capt. Walton Smith**, formed the first law partnership in Cookeville after the Civil War.

Her remains were taken to her old home in Gainesboro and there amid many flowers brought by loving friends laid to rest with husband and other kindred. . . ." **Rutledge and Graeme Smith**.

August 15, 1908: GAINESBORO SENTINEL

p. 4:5 (**Mrs. Nancy Joseph Cox** December 15, 1834 - May 15, 1908). "A year ago it was my great pleasure to give to my mother's friends and the public, a record of her heroism during the trials and struggles of the Civil War, and the bitter aftermath of the reconstruction period. Now it is my very sad pleasure to give to them her record of equal heroism during the fifteen long months of her affliction and suffering.

With like courage, and true soldier's courage, did she meet both wan and sickness, and the faith she pledged to her God years ago, when baptized into Christ by **Bro. Jesse Sewell**; . . ." **Clara Cox Epperson**. [Note: this memorial is an entire column long.]

Putnam County Newspaper, Cookeville, TN

SUTTON, W. H.: Elder W. H. Sutton dropped dead at Algood Sunday morning. He was preaching at Algood Sunday morning. He was preaching at Algood and stopping with **J. A. Epperson**. He went to the barn to see about his team, and after awhile was found dead. Elder Sutton was well known in this section, having been pastor of the Christian Church at Sparta and Cookeville for a number of years. His ministry was successful, and he was held in high esteem by all who knew him. His remains were taken to Sparta for burial, that being his home. [Date 7/12/1905, Vol. III, No. 23, Page 1]

Herald Citizen Newspaper:

(June 21, 1937) Cookeville's Clara Cox Epperson, Poet Laureate of Tennessee, has died at the home of her daughter, Mrs. W.A. Howard.

Source: Bulletin obtained from Gainesboro, Jackson Co., TN, Chamber of Commerce: Gainesboro's past reflects several notable citizens:

Clara Cox Epperson – was born in Gainesboro, Tennessee on May 4, 1869. She was the daughter of Robert Alexander Cox, a confederate captain and local attorney. She wrote poetry and verse, historical sketches, and a series of articles for newspapers and magazines. She was named Poet Laureate of Tennessee in 1934.

<http://www.ajlambert.com>



Robert Alexander Cox

Attorney in Gainesboro, Jackson Co., TN, 1852-92, Captain in "Morgan's Raiders" during the Civil War. Nephew of David Cox, founding father of Gainesboro, Jackson Co., TN.

Picture from the book: Jackson County Tennessee, 1801 - 2001, Bicentennial Pictorial History by the Jackson County Historical Society, pg. 86.



Seated: **Nancy Joseph (Draper) Cox**, postmaster of Gainesboro during the Civil War; wife of Robert A. Cox. Children: L to R: Cora Cox Lucas, concert pianist; James N. Cox, co-founder of Gainesboro Telephone Co. and Clara Cox Epperson, poet laureate for the state of Tennessee, 1890.

Picture from the book: Jackson County Tennessee 1801 – 2001, Bicentennial Pictorial History, Jackson County Historical Society, pg. 151.