

Mayme & Gilbert Shryock History

By Beth Brickell



Downtown Lawrenceburg today

Lewis Gilbert Shryock was born and raised in a small town, Lawrenceburg, in southwest Kentucky where his father was a contractor and carpenter. Mary Elizabeth Renneker was born in Brandsville in south-central Missouri where her father served as Constable and was a furniture maker.

When Mayme was a young girl, her family moved to Black Rock in north-central Arkansas. When she was in her teens, her family continued down the same highway to Memphis, Tennessee.

During Christmas vacation when she was in the eighth grade, Mayme got a part-time job clerking at Kress 5 & 10 on Main Street in the heart of downtown Memphis. When she told her father that her employer was so pleased with her work that he offered her a fulltime job, he made her drop out of school and take it, saying that girls didn't need an education.



Gilbert, called "Shy", had left Lawrenceburg and also gone to Memphis to work for the largest jewelry store in the city, Broadnax Jewelers, which was located a block and a half from Kresses.

Broadnax Jewelers

Kress 5 & 10

Typically Shy had lunch across the street from Kresses at Walgreen's lunch counter. This happened to be where Mayme had her lunch as well. Shy caught the pretty



girl's eye, they began talking to one another, then began having lunch together, taking their sandwiches around the corner to a city park to find a measure of privacy on a park bench. Then they began to date.



Walgreen's across from Kresse's

paycheck out of her purse and said there was no need to wait. They were married on May 14, 1906. She was 17, he was 20.

Historic Main Street Trolley in Memphis



City Park around corner from Walgreen's



As a young couple, they settled in a small town, Clarendon, in east Arkansas where Shy opened a jewelry store, Shryock's Jewelers, across the street from the courthouse. He also went back to school and got his license to practice optometry, becoming Dr. Shryock.

While Mayme raised their nine children, Shy was a leader in the community, serving as Grand Master of the Masonic Lodge. Then in 1927, a devastating flood broke through the

levee of the White River and covered downtown Clarendon, including Shryock's Jewelers. Shy salvaged what he could by going by boat through the transom over the front door and picking up trays of rings, bracelets and other merchandise floating in the water.

He moved his family 18 miles to higher ground in Brinkley where he opened a new Shryock's Jewelers. No sooner had he begun to recover his losses from the flood than in 1929, the Great Depression hit him and the rest of the nation. But with income from both his jewelry store and optometry practice, he was able to provide for his family and see all his children through high school. As Mayme always said of Shy, "He was a good provider".

In Brinkley, Shy was once again a leader in the community, serving on the Brinkley School Board. Mayme was a whiz at bridge and seemed to bring home a new ashtray after every bridge party.

Mayme and Shy lived in Brinkley until Shy retired in 1956. Then they moved to Tampa, Florida where one of their sons, L. G., lived. Shy bought an apartment complex and he and Mayme lived in Tampa for about a decade. Then they sold the apartment buildings and moved to Malvern, Arkansas

where Shy worked in his son Bub's jewelry store as a watchmaker. Five of Shy's six sons followed in his footsteps, either having their own Shryock's Jewelry Store (in Brinkley, Marianna, Forrest City and Malvern, Arkansas) or working as a watchmaker.

Shy lived into his 92nd year and Mayme into her 93rd.

At last count (May 21, 2000), this remarkable couple had 9 children, 21 grandchildren, 51 great-grandchildren, and 42 great-great-grandchildren – a total of 123 progeny not counting step children!

Mayme and Gilbert were and are powerful role models for their family, which they held together with love, respect and a tradition of annual family reunions.

On June 17, 2000, the Mayme & Gilbert Shryock Family continued this tradition.



Lewis Gilbert & (Mayme) Mary Elizabeth (Renneker) in Jewelry Store in Clarendon, Arkansas - Circa 1911

Lewis Gilbert Shryock - Brinkley Store

