

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Hocutt-Ellington Memorial Library gratefully acknowledges the Priddy Foundation of Wichita Falls, Texas, and generous Clayton citizens for making it possible to share a sampling of the library's historical collections with online users. The Priddy Foundation, established in 1963 by Clayton native Swannanoa Horne Priddy and her husband Walter M. Priddy, has provided financial assistance to numerous worthy endeavors in Texas and Oklahoma, as well as in the founders' home states of Virginia and North Carolina.

Swannanoa Horne Priddy (1889-1981) grew up in the exuberant Horne mansion at the center of Clayton in a family known for its wealth, culture, and refinement. Her father, "Col." Ashley Horne, was Johnston County's leading businessman and well-known in state political circles. Her mother, Rena Beckwith Horne, came from a family of accomplished musicians and educators and was herself a graduate of the Boston Conservatory of Music, a piano teacher, and longtime organist at Clayton (First) Baptist Church. The most notable musician in the family was Rena's nephew Lamar Stringfield, founder of the North Carolina Symphony. "In the Christmas seasons," family member Melba McCullers recalled, "when the Beckwiths and the Stringfields were guests, quite a 'joyful noise' was made." McCullers fondly remembered "Alexander's Ragtime Band" as a favorite tune at the turn of the century. Swannanoa's "sweet voice" was also an important feature at family musical festivities. She attended Meredith College in Raleigh (founded by her uncle O. L. Stringfield) and later transferred to Hollins College in Roanoke, Virginia, where she graduated in 1911.



Swannanoa Horne,
early 1900s

Following her father's sudden death in October 1913, Swannanoa accompanied her mother Rena, sister-in-law Bessie, and nephew Ashley on a spring jaunt to Florida and Cuba. The next fall she and her mother toured Europe. While in Switzerland they were detained briefly at the outbreak of World War I but arrived back in Clayton just in time for Swannanoa's November 18 wedding to Walter Priddy. Still in mourning, the young bride-to-be was compelled to forego customary prenuptial parties. However,

according to a local paper, the week preceding the wedding was planned with “music, merriment, feasting, and the out-door sports of driving, motoring, and a grand Johnston County ‘possum hunt, led by Master Ashley Horne, with his partner, Lee Powell, and famous dog, Jack.” The wedding, held at the Horne home, was the social event of the season.

The Priddys settled in Wichita Falls, Texas, where Mr. Priddy was associated with a large flour milling company. He later made his fortune in oil and gas as founder



Priddy family in 1943
Front: Walter, Swannanoa, and Robert
Back: Charles and Ashley

and president of the Sabine Corporation in Tyler, Texas. The Priddys had four sons: Walter (who died as a child in an automobile accident), Robert, Charles, and Ashley. Mrs. Priddy’s mother Rena joined the household in the late 1920s after an agricultural depression wiped out most of the Horne family fortune. She died and was buried in Wichita Falls in 1932.



Rena B. Horne Hunter
with grandsons Robert
and Charles Priddy

Robert Priddy remembered his mother



Walter Horne Priddy,
c. 1918

Swannanoa in a 2006 interview as “a Southern belle to the nth degree.” He especially recalled how she sang and played the piano—a passion instilled, no doubt, as a child in the Horne family parlor. Both her memory and that of her childhood home were perpetuated in 2006 in the naming of Swannanoa Hall at Hollins University, renovated and adorned with the ornate front door and transoms from the Horne mansion (demolished in 1970).

Sources: Melba McCullers, “Concerning Mrs. Rena Beckwith Horne,” October 1967, Hocutt-Ellington Memorial Library; *Smithfield Herald* (Smithfield), Mar. 27, 1914; Nov. 10, 1914; Nov. 20, 1914; *Clayton News* (Clayton), Mar. 31, 1932; *Times Record News* (Wichita Falls, TX), Feb. 22, 1998, 7B; *Clayton News-Star* (Clayton), May 3, 2006.