



In this portrait of Rebecca Ella Solomons Alexander as a mature woman, she wears the pearl arrow pin that her grandmother Rebecca Moses wore in her portrait (page xii). "Mrs. J.M.," as her grandson Henry Alexander affectionately called her, preserved many of the old family things that are shown in this document.

## Rebecca Ella Solomons Alexander (1854-1938): A Force to be Reckoned With

**B**orn on June 24, 1854, Rebecca Ella Solomons Alexander is an ancestor toward whom I must confess a tremendous ambivalence. On the one hand, I seem to have incorporated a deep resentment passed down to me by my mother (about which more in a moment). On the other hand, my great-grandmother was a woman of accomplishment: She founded the Atlanta chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women and she was president of the Needlework Guild of Atlanta, a section of Jewish Women. Moreover, she is also the ancestor most responsible for preserving so many of the old family things that I cherish.

Beginning on her 75th birthday, she wrote memoir letters that offer glimpses into her life (see pages 68-89). For example, we learn that shortly after she was born, her elder brother, Israel, died suddenly at the age of seven. Her parents had already lost three other children in infancy, so when Israel died, Rebecca's mother took great comfort in little Rebecca; she was a most cherished baby. We also learn that Yankee soldiers occupied the Solomons house during the Civil War and that the teenaged Rebecca idolized the famous 19th century actor Edwin Booth (older brother of John Wilkes Booth), spending her pocket

money to see his plays when the family lived for a time in New York.

Grandson Henry Alexander affectionately referred to his grandmother as "Mrs. J.M."—short for Mrs. J.M. Alexander; her husband's given name was Julius Mortimer. Called "Beck" by her cousin Hannah, she was a popular young woman and at least one beau called



Julius Mortimer Alexander and Rebecca Ella Solomons were first cousins; their mothers, Sarah Moses Alexander and Cecilia Moses Solomons, were sisters. Rebecca was 19 when they married; Julius was 10 years older.

### Mementos of Young Romance

The young Rebecca treasured keepsakes of her first romantic interests, holding on to photographs and letters even after her marriage to her cousin Julius Alexander.

One friend was George de Cordova of New York, who spent two winters in Savannah, where his father had come to lecture in art history. Rebecca saved his likeness and cards in a small kidskin bag (right). When George died in October 1872, his father wrote Rebecca's father with the news (letter, opposite). "My dear George spoke of you and yours almost to the last, and of how much kinder and more thoughtful you all were of him than even we were." Mr. de Cordova went on to describe his son's last days, during which the father was in Boston on business: "On Wednesday they should have telegraphed me but George would not allow them to do so . . . , On Thursday at noon, however, he became very much worse, and began to suffer fearfully. . . . All Thursday afternoon he suffered fearful agony, to so great an extent that he prayed the Physician to shoot him. Toward evening Morphine was injected into the arm, and from that time he not only was quite easy, but he declared that he was now ready for death & that it was 'the happiest day of his life' . . . He asked at what time father



George de Cordova, a young man from New York who met and became friends with Rebecca Solomons during the course of two winters he spent in Savannah, perhaps in an effort to relieve the symptoms of tuberculosis.

could arrive and upon being told 11 o'clock, he said, 'that would be too late.' His face at 17 minutes past ten was perfectly happy."

her "Miss Ella." She kept an autograph album—"Mental Photographs— an Album for Confessions of Tastes, Habits, and Convictions" (see pages 65-67)—that reveals the wit of her youthful friends and her own droll humor (she inscribed the book to "Miss R.E. Solomons, from her devoted Self, Savannah, June 15th, '71"). Especially amusing are entries—with

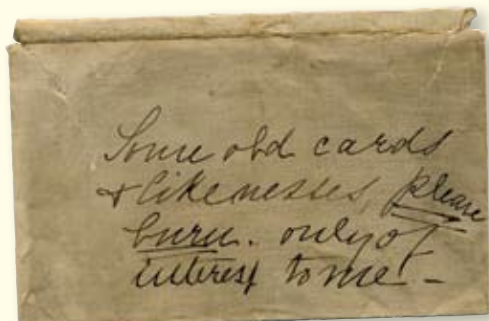
caricatures—from two of her cousins, Otto A. Moses and Edward S. Abrahams.

I do find myself more interested in the romances of young Miss Ella than in the accomplishments of Mrs. J.M. Alexander, because I believe these early events and experiences shaped her persona and her outlook. The popularity she enjoyed as a young woman must have given her a certain





The friends of Mr. DeCordova, the popular lecturer, and his son George, will be pained to learn of the death of the latter, in New York, on the 24th instant. The deceased passed two winters in this city, and made many friends during his sojourn.



Rebecca saved a letter to her father from George's father telling of the death of his son, and a death notice from a Savannah newspaper. A note in Rebecca's handwriting, found with these keepsakes, gave instructions to burn them, adding "Only of interest to me."

108 West Street, New York.  
21 Oct. 1872.

My dear Mr. Solomons,

Your kind letter is before me, and although I am much occupied with business, I feel that I must write you. My dear friends of you and yours almost to the last, and of how much kinder and more thoughtful you all were of him than I am. Most unfortunately for me, I was absent at his death - I left on the previous Saturday for Boston, and when I left home "God bye" that morning, I never thought he would have gone before Saturday. On the Sunday morning I received a letter saying that he was decidedly better. On the Wednesday morning, another saying that he was cheerful and chatty. On the Thursday morning, a third saying that he was, I mean. I stayed at home for my return and during the evening. On the Wednesday they showed him (although not but George) and not allow them to do so, saying that "it would only cause father to leave the house, he was engaged on, and he would be here Sunday morning." On Thursday at home, however, he became very much worse, and began to suffer fearfully, and it was only then that he allowed a telegram to be sent to him, and he was then in bed. All Thursday afternoon he suffered fearful agony, and he just an instant, indeed that he prayed the Physician to shoot him. Sunday morning the physician was impatient with the hour, and from that time he not only was quite calm, but he declared that he was ready for death. That it was the happiest day of his life, and he showed all his surrounding friends to "know that death would come quickly, he was so happy." He asked at what time father could arrive, and on being told 11 o'clock, he said, "that would be too late." His last at 17 minutes past 10, was perfectly happy. He gave the most minute instructions concerning his funeral, saying that he wished that a transient office he desired to be held in which he mentioned that he was really dead. He would like to have a short service in his hand. He spoke to a friend saying he wished to be dressed like a soldier for the grave, all of which instructions were carefully complied with.

He had previously invited several ladies to what he called a "bedroom party" on his chamber apartment, on his birthday. He was on that day that he lived here, and the ladies were all there. The services were most appropriately performed by Rev. Dr. Carter of the First Baptist and Trinity, and Rev. Dr. Carter of Trinity Church. Their presence of friends was large, and we saw the last of my dear friend at about 10 o'clock on Thursday night. It was handsome and with looking down more than my poor dear child was, as he lay in his coffin, I have never seen.

I cannot now write more, except to repeat how much I am to you, and how much I feel by your great kindness, between the two who have passed away. My dear friends, your very truly,  
de Cordova

confidence—even a self-centeredness—that plays itself out several decades later.

Married at 19 in October 1873, to her cousin Julius Alexander, she quietly saved mementos of two beaux. One was R.H. Moise, of Sumpter, a disappointed suitor who wrote a letter when he learned of her engagement. Miss Ella, as he addressed her, kept both the letter and his photograph.

The other beau was George de Cordova, who died at a young age. Mementos of this friend included a photograph, cards, and a poignant letter from his father to her father, telling of George's death. Rebecca could not bring herself to discard these items, but preserved them in an envelope on which she wrote, "Please burn. Only of interest to me."

### Mementos of Young Romance



Also among Rebecca's mementoes were a photograph and letter from R.H. Moise, a disappointed suitor who wrote after learning of her engagement. Moise clearly believed "Miss Ella" had once regarded him with affection and made a point of reminding her of this: "Although by your silence on the subject of your engagement, my congratulations may not be acceptable—I will send them, trusting in the old love—though the new has seemed to thrust the old one out."

Erstwhile suitor R.H. Moise, who addressed Rebecca as "Miss Ella."

The small packet stirs emotions of empathy for a young woman who did not want to destroy all keepsakes of early romances just because she was getting married. Another photo she saved (see page 78) shows Miss Ella at 15, at a summer family gathering in Saratoga Springs, New York, with a man on either side of her. This may be typical.

She apparently demanded the same sort of devotion from her sons that she had received from her beaux. Although she was much-beloved, at least according to letters, notes, and cards that she saved, my cousin Henry (her grandson) told me that Mrs. J.M. was not so beloved by her daughters-in-law because, in their view, her demands on her married sons were excessive.

Paul is away from home - or home - I know, add her love and congratulations to mine. I have just to write on a note as she has not been well lately, for several days. I hope this will find you well.

April 29<sup>th</sup> 1873

My Dear Ella

Although by your silence on the subject of your engagements, my congratulations may not be acceptable - I will send them, trusting in the old love - though the new has seemed to thrust the old one out. I have waited thus long in the hope of hearing from you - but it has not blessed. The pleasure that I feel, in your prospect of happiness, and I trust that both you and Mr. Alexander may realize to the fullest, your dearest wishes.



Rebecca became engaged to Julius Alexander in March 1873. R.H. Moise wrote her in late April, after waiting in vain to hear the news from her directly. Rebecca and Julius were married in October.

According to Henry (who learned most of this from his mother, Marion), Rebecca's younger son, Cecil, was "inappropriately close," placing his mother's needs and interests ahead of those of his wife. Mrs. J.M. apparently insisted that Cecil have dinner with her each night, rather than dining at home with his own wife, Julia Moses Alexander.

That son, Cecil Abraham Alexander (1877-1952), was my mother's father, my maternal grandfather. Cecil and his father owned a hardware store that was struggling during the Great Depression. "He often told me the store was a deep hole in which he shoveled money," my mother's younger brother, my uncle Cecil Jr., told me in 2009. "Of course there's



## OLD FAMILY THINGS: AN AFFECTIONATE LOOK BACK

no health insurance. For years he didn't buy any clothing for himself or go to the doctor or the dentist. He did, however, send me to Yale and pay for my clothing and transportation."

As is often the case, money—or the lack of it—can be a grinding source of tension in a household. Before marrying Cecil Alexander and moving to Atlanta, Julia Moses had been a school principal in Montgomery, Alabama, and an important source of income for her family. She was also independent and adventuresome, having traveled out West with her younger sister, Adeline, in the early 1900s. After marriage, however, she no longer had money to call her own. In early 1938, Julia Alexander went to Rich's department store in downtown Atlanta and bought a coat. But when she arrived home, her husband told her to return the coat immediately. Julia confided her distress at this edict to her sister-in-law, Marion, and said she had decided to divorce Cecil. As Marion told the story years later to her son Henry, the coat was "the straw that broke the camel's back." The two women made arrangements to get together later that day, but Julia didn't arrive as planned.

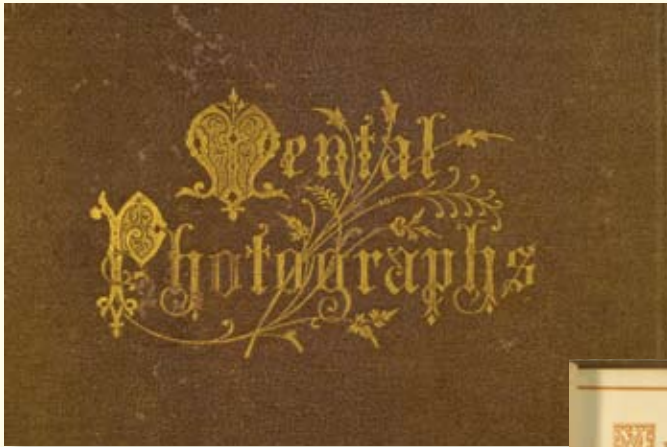
I imagine Julia's pent-up frustration—she gave up her independence and career only to find herself completely dependent

on a patriarchal man who not only was not providing for her but who was also more devoted to his mother than to his wife. It must have been more than her body could bear. When Marion called the house to speak with Julia she learned that Julia had died of a heart attack that afternoon. She was 55.

Hearing this from Cousin Henry led me to look back with new eyes at some of the dynamics in my family. According to Henry, my mother, Charlotte, harbored considerable resentment of her father, a resentment fueled by his neglect of her mother, by the tensions arising from the family's straitened financial situation, and by the circumstances around Julia's death. She had witnessed firsthand the nightly humiliation and suppressed anger of Julia's keeping Cecil's supper warm on the stove only to have it refused when he got home.

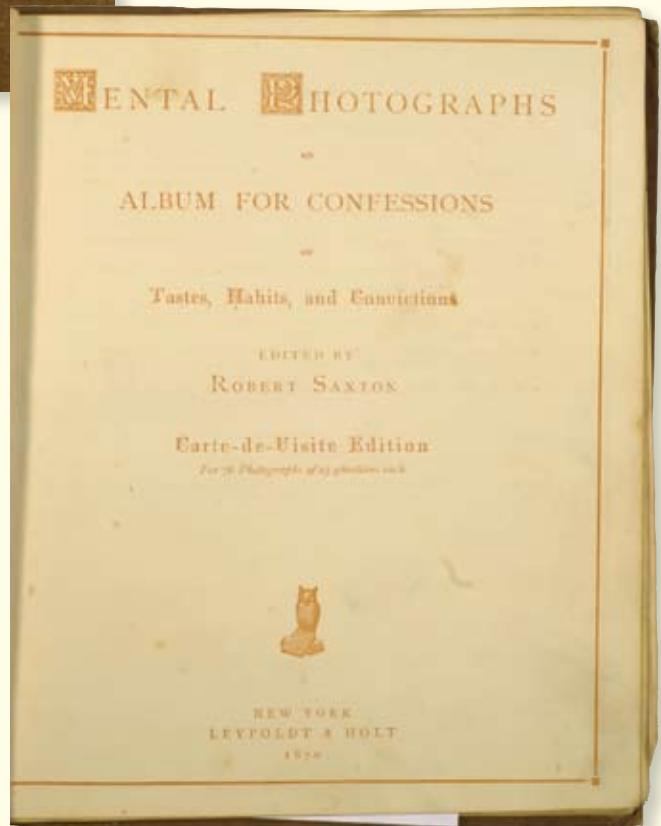
When Charlotte married Roman Weil and went to live in Montgomery, where he had grown up, I think she must have been adamant that her husband would not repeat her father's pattern: There would be no stopping off to see his mother every night before dinner. Instead, Roman's mother, Esther Roman Weil, had a chauffeur bring her to his house to visit almost every week night, and the length of the visits was generally no more than half an hour.

## An Album of Mental Photographs



Published by Leyfoldt & Holt in 1870, Rebecca's copy of the Album of Mental Photographs was the "Carte de Visite Edition."

The so-called confession album, popular in the late 19th century, involved having one's friends fill in answers to a preprinted list of questions meant to elicit clues to the friend's character. Examples from Rebecca's album (shown on the next two pages) suggest that few respondents took the questions terribly seriously, instead using the opportunity to show off their wit.





## OLD FAMILY THINGS: AN AFFECTIONATE LOOK BACK

Mr. Otto A. Moses July 1871

1. Your favorite color? The standard color, Red and White and Blue. That never ran though faded from our view.

2. Flower? The Jessamine, the Zulu or sweet Violet. Winters' self-renewing or Hears self-renewing?

3. Tree? A tree of knowledge but not Adams tree. I think I rather like best a chemistry.

4. Hour in the day? Of all the hours circling around my head, I'd least have leave the last I passed by.

5. Season of the year? Thompson's, though some are as favorable to the Fruit of the year.

6. Names, male? Mattie, Fattie, Mollie, Follie! and female? Every other easy flowing name.

7. Poets? What two more gliding can the world produce than classic Shakespeare and sweet Milton.

8. Prose authors? Of great Americans Henry Crosby is the greatest.

9. Character in Romance? Paul himself.

10. . . . . in History? Not Butler for he has no character.

11. What book (not religious) would you part with last? Watts on the Mind (they are difficult to get rid of).

12. Where would you best like to live? I don't know but that my own den is as good as any other place.

13. Your favorite occupation? Not poking fun at a 'Hornet's Nest'.

14. The trait of character you most admire in man? Content - fast that produced by the command 'Eat and be satisfied'.

15. . . . . in woman? Her selfishness (when she has been made one with you).

16. The trait you most detest in each? To be traitorous.

17. If not yourself, who would you rather be? The 'demon in the Moon', because they find fault with him when he comes down too soon.

18. Your idea of happiness? It's all in my eye, dear.

19. . . . . of misery? Want - in either sense.

20. The sublimest passion of which human nature is capable? Catherine's 'Sonata Appassionata'.

21. The sweetest words in the world? 'How I lay me down to sleep'.

22. The saddest? 'If I should die before I wake'.

23. Your motto? I would if I could - but if I couldn't, how could I?

PLACE FOR PHOTOGRAPH.

TAKE AN ALBUMEN PHOTOGRAPH AND PASTE IT IN THE SPACE PROVIDED FOR THE PHOTOGRAPH. THE PHOTOGRAPH ON WHICH THE PHOTOGRAPH IS PASTED, WILL GO OFF FROM THE CARD WITHOUT BEING TORN. THE PHOTOGRAPH SHOULD BE PASTED IN THE SPACE PROVIDED FOR THE PHOTOGRAPH, AND SHOULD BE PASTED IN THE SPACE PROVIDED FOR THE PHOTOGRAPH. THE PHOTOGRAPH SHOULD BE PASTED IN THE SPACE PROVIDED FOR THE PHOTOGRAPH.


APPLICATION HAS BEEN MADE FOR A PATENT

FOR AN ALBUMEN PHOTOGRAPH FOR THE DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTER WITH PHOTOGRAPH.

Cousin Otto A. Moses, who drew his self-portrait directly over some pre-printed text, responded with wry humor to the question about his favorite occupation: "Not poking fun at a hornet's nest." He declared his motto to be "I would if I could, but if I couldn't, how could I?"

*Edw. D. Abrahams July 27<sup>th</sup> 1871.*

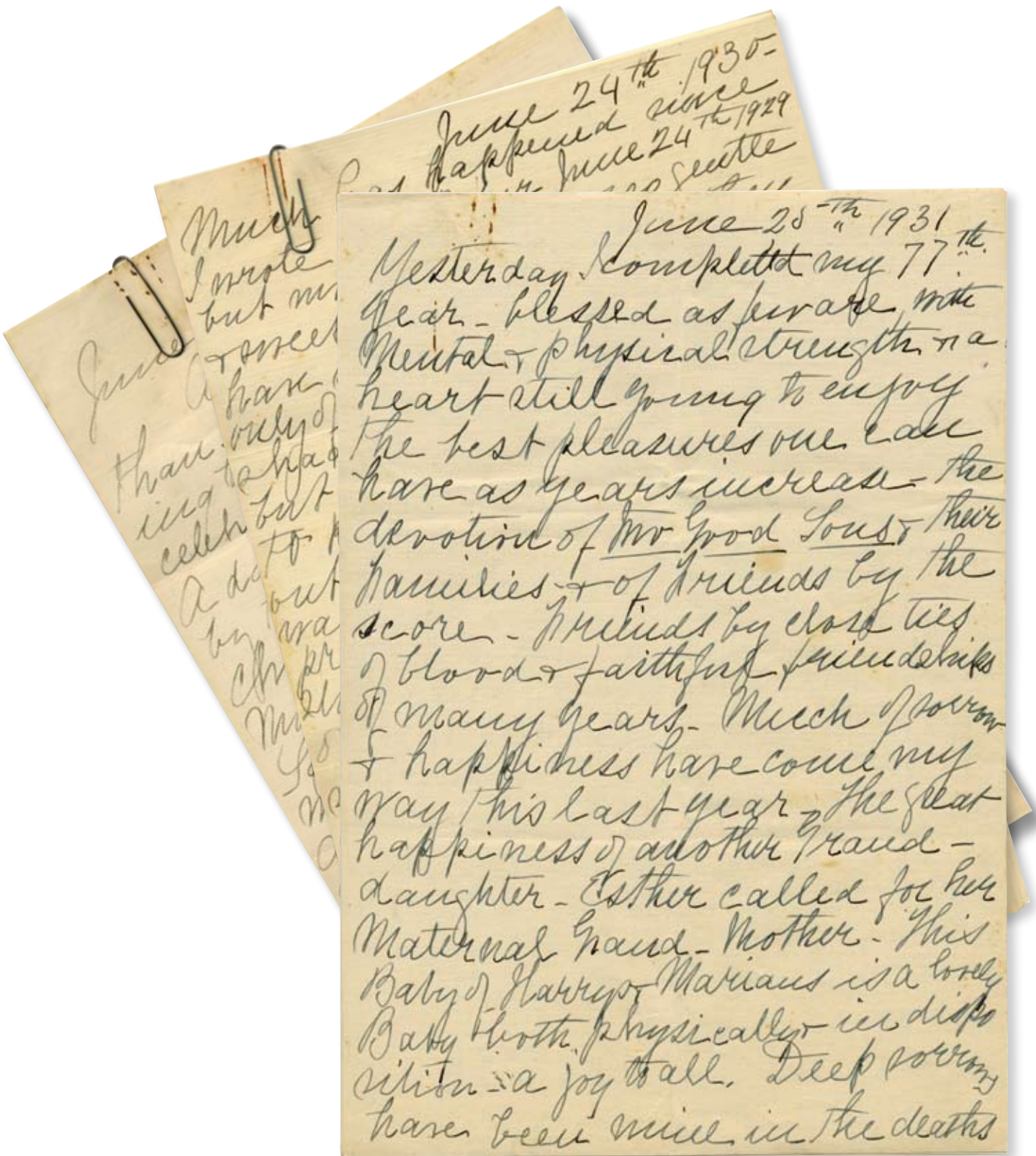
1. Your favorite Color? *Blue.*
2. Flower? *Heart's ease.*
3. Tree? *Maple young.*
4. Hour in the day? *Eight in the evening.*
5. Season of the year? *Fall.*
6. Names, male and female? *Edmund & Felicia.*
7. Poets? *Shakespeare, Chaucer, Keats.*
8. Prose authors? *Melville (Miss Melville).*
9. Character in Romance? *Miss Melville.*
10. .... in History? *Solomon (s).*
11. What book (not religious) would you part with last? *Pocket.*
12. Where would you best like to live? *Where duty calls.*
13. Your favorite occupation? *Writing.*
14. The trait of character you most admire in man? *Seriousness mingled with gentleness.*
15. .... in woman? *Gentleness minus the seriousness.*
16. The trait you most detest in each? *Mischief making.*
17. If not yourself, who would you rather be? *The fellow that looks like me.*
18. Your idea of happiness? *Writing those you love.*
19. .... of misery? *Parting with those you love.*
20. The sublimest passion of which human nature is capable? *Laying one's respect to the Creator.*
21. The meekest words in the world? *Yes, too.*
22. The saddest? *My job is delapidated.*
23. Your motto? *God, Death, Dust and no more.*



Cousin Edward Abrahams drew himself smoking a pipe, with a quill pen tucked behind one ear and a bright blue tie. He also showed a certain droll humor. In answer to the question "What book (not religious) would you part with last?" he wrote "Pocket."



OLD FAMILY THINGS: AN AFFECTIONATE LOOK BACK



June 24<sup>th</sup> 1930-  
happened since 1929  
June 24<sup>th</sup> 1929  
Seattle

June 25<sup>th</sup> 1931  
Yesterday I completed my 77<sup>th</sup>  
year - blessed as ever with  
Mental & physical strength & a  
heart still young to enjoy  
the best pleasures one can  
have as years increase - the  
devotion of Mr Good Sons & their  
families & of friends by the  
score - friends by close ties  
of blood & faithful friendships  
of many years. Much sorrow  
& happiness have come my  
way this last year - the great  
happiness of another Grand-  
daughter - Esther called for her  
Maternal Grand - Mother - This  
Baby of Harry & Marians is a lovely  
Baby both physically in dispo-  
sition - a joy to all. Deep sorrows  
have been mine in the deaths

## **Memoir Letters written by Rebecca E. Alexander**

On the occasion of her 75th birthday, Rebecca Ella Solomons Alexander began writing her memoirs in a series of letters, usually coinciding with her birthday. Over the years she made handwritten copies of some of the letters (opposite) and occasionally told slightly different versions of the same event. Her last letter (page 89), written the day after her 77th birthday, mentions the graduation of her granddaughter Charlotte (my mother) from high school “with highest honors, ‘Cum Laude’” and expresses pride in all her grandchildren.

Atlanta, Georgia  
721 Juniper Street, N. E.  
June 24th 1929

Today I celebrate my seventy-fifth birthday — I shall try to comply with an often expressed wish of my two dear, devoted sons to put down in writing some memories of my life — an uneventful one, one best to be desired, where events mean love from every angle. For instance, the day began with visits from my dear children and grand-children bringing me loving greetings and lovely gifts — a visit too, from Mable Loebb who is a busy woman — then came her mother and Lucile and then my good friend Mrs. Montag. The day is to be celebrated by a dinner at beautiful “Mimosa Hall” in Roswell — given by Cecil, Harry, Julia and Marian. Besides their families, our party will include my old and only living school friend Bessie Waller — Warren Alexander, Mattie Slaton, Miss Cook and Isaiah, Jr., who is here on Business for the day — by him my Savannah family will be represented. We will go out occupying Harry’s, Cecil’s, Warren’s and Rae Neely’s (she is one of our guests) cars. We leave at five so that we can enjoy the beautiful gardens before dinner and will return in time for Isaiah’s train which leaves at 9:40. We will take out with us the beautiful birthday cake made for me by my dear Sarah. Sallie Alexander was to have gone with us, but was not feeling well enough — so Julia took me to see her and my dear “Miss Issie” (Mrs. W. R. Boyd), who also will be kept away by sickness. As my dear children are bringing sunshine into this day, so they have brought it to me all their lives. No woman was ever more blessed. The clouds rest on me too, for my dear and only brother left me this

Mch. the 14th and always I miss and long for my sister but I try to make my clouds show forth bright ... too. I try not to sadden the lives I should make to rejoice. God has blessed me with the strength to wear the smile always. Sorrows have touched me often but never the tragedies of so many other lives and so I am grateful with a great love for my Heavenly Father and belief in His wisdom and goodness.

*It is like a benediction to me to recall, even at my advanced age, how my mother so often told me I had been a comfort to her from my infancy up.*

I was born in Charleston, S.C. in the same house and bed on St. Phillips Street in which my mother was born, where her parents lived. At that time my parents lived in Savannah, Georgia. 1854 was the year of the terrible yellow fever epidemic in Savannah and Charleston and my father, because of his calling as the leading druggist in Savannah and his connection with the Savannah Benevolent Association could not leave Savannah. When I was four months old, the greatest sorrow of their lives came to my parents in the death of their eldest son Israel from yellow fever — a loving, charming, beautiful boy of seven — the first child they had reared beyond infancy, having lost their eldest at birth (a daughter) and another daughter Gertrude and a son Abraham A. Jr., when infants. It is like a benediction to me to recall, even



## OLD FAMILY THINGS: AN AFFECTIONATE LOOK BACK

Rebecca's brother, Israel Solomons, shown here at about age four, died when he was seven and Rebecca only four months old.



at my advanced age, how my mother so often told me I had been a comfort to her from my infancy up. Those were the days of slow travel and only by boat from Savannah to Charleston, so that my father

*In all my life I never heard my father call his name and my mother said that even to her he could not speak of his loss.*

reached his boy, who he idolized to find him dead! In all my life I never heard my father call his name and my mother said that even to her he could not speak of his loss which would have comforted her very much. So when my younger sisters (Israella and Louise) and my brother Isaiah grew to an early age she spoke so constantly and so brightly (never with tears for us) of our "brother Israel" that he always seemed part of our living circle and to read his books

and play with his marbles and shot-gun (the kind with a cork) was a delightful privilege when we were "real good". I still have those quaint books and toys.

My father was Abraham Alexander Solomons, son of Eleanor Joseph and Israel Solomons, born in Georgetown, S.C., May 2nd 1816 – died in Savannah, Georgia August 8th 1899. My mother was Cecilia Moses, daughter of Isaiah Moses and Rebekah Phillips Moses born in Charleston, S.C. July 18th 1815 (making her a few months older than my father) died in Savannah, Georgia April 27th 1882.

They were married in Charleston, S.C. Dec. 6th 18\_ by the Rev. Jacob Rosenfeld, who also performed the marriage ceremony for my marriage to Julius Mortimer Alexander (the son of Sarah Moses — my mother's sister) and Aaron Alexander, the son of Abraham and Hannah Aarons Alexander, on Oct. 8th 1873. My mother's father went to Cheraw, S.C. to live, after their marriage, where he was associated with his brother Mordecai Solomons in the cotton business — not being successful — my father having an opportunity to enter the drug business for which he had been educated, moved to Savannah and entered business

*Rebecca Ella Solomons Alexander (1854-1938): A Force to be Reckoned With*



Rebecca and her younger sister, Israella, were inseparable. In this image, Rebecca wears a red dress made for her role in a Civil War era tableau in which she represented the state of Alabama.

with Mr. William Mackey and Dr. Phillip Mimms — the first two withdrawing and then my father established his own business A.A. Solomons & Co. in 1845, which business is now carried on by his three grand-sons, Abraham A., Isaiah A., and Joseph M., they having succeeded their father Isaiah A. Solomons. When my father established his business, he sent for his younger brother Joseph M., who succeeded my father on his death as head of the business and upon his death, my brother became head. My earliest recollections go back to when we lived in the house where my brother was born on Gordon St. between Bull & Drayton and which is still a very nice looking house. It faced the Synagogue we all attended — but built long after we left that house. And the Square in which is the beautiful Pulaski Monument. Well do I recall squeezing in between the iron fence rods and playing around that monument just at the base. Now there is a wire to keep out intruders.

I recall that my father's health failed about that time and my Mother went with us to Bellows Falls, Vt., for the water-cure treatment. I recall my father taking me to Echo Lake and telling me to say "Echo, you're

a fool" — how indignant I felt when "Echo" called me the same. I visited there a very few years ago and all came back to me so vividly tho I was little more than four years old at the time. We then went to New York where first we lived with my uncle and aunt Mordecai and Abbey Solomons on 16th Street where my youngest sister Louise was born. For a while we lived, too, with my uncle and aunt, Mr. & Mrs. Adolph Brady, my aunt Adeline being my mother's youngest sister. That was on 34th St. and considered

*It was while we lived with the Ritterbands that I had my first great venture, every detail I still recall.*

very fashionable. It was there at that time there lived Julius M. Alexander, who I married, and of whom then, I have my first memories — a great big boy but always kind to the children. We then boarded with a

## OLD FAMILY THINGS: AN AFFECTIONATE LOOK BACK

Mr. & Mrs. Ritterband on Broadway, near the junction of Fifth Avenue. Boarding there at the same time were my aunt and uncle Mr. & Mrs. Lizar Solomons and their very beloved adopted daughter Cecilia – her daughter afterwards married the grandson of Mr. & Mrs. Ritterband — Dr. Walter Brickner —

*When we reached home everybody was out hunting for me with the aid of the police.*

It was while we lived with the Ritterbands that I had my first great venture, every detail I still recall. To keep me entertained, much as children go to Kindergartens now, I was sent to the 12th St. public school, always taken to and called for by my nurse Bridget. One day school was dismissed earlier than usual, and with a child's lack of appreciation of time, I concluded my nurse had forgotten me and so accepted the offer of an equally small girl to show me the way home. My only guide being "a big marble house" (the old Fifth Ave.) near which we lived. She knew nothing about directions nor the "big marble house" so instead of walking up, we walked down Broadway and being around Xmas time we had much to entertain us. When it began to grow dark and she was nearing her street she told me she must go home to her own house and right then and there she left me on Broadway. I walked a while and when I saw the shipping from a side street, I knew I was lost. The gentleman I spoke to attracted me because he looked like Mr. Isaac Davega of whom all children were fond, Mr. Davega had married the widow of my mother's brother, Mr. Jacob I. Moses, the grandfather of Albert, Moultrie Mont (Capt.) Stanford and Lionel Moses. I stopped this kind looking person and told him I was lost. He asked my father's name, took me with him into a drug store, looked in what I afterward told my father was a "dictionary" and then took me by the hand and carried me to my father's office on Dye Street, which happened to be just around the corner and on the same street from which I had seen the shipping. It was up a long flight of stairs and as my father opened the door he handed me in saying "your little girl was long on Broadway" and turned and left before my grateful father could even thank

him. I recall so well how hurriedly my father gathered up and put away papers and hurried to get the Fifth Ave. Stage, for he realized the distress of my mother. When we reached home everybody was out hunting for me with the aid of the police. The only one left at our house was a dear old lady who always petted me and had my dinner on her heater keeping it warm for me. I recall how as each one returned I was petted and welcomed and how important I felt telling how the gentleman "looked in the 'Dictionary' and found where Papa's office is". I recall so well a young lad who always petted me and made wax figures for me gave me an extra supply that day. When we went to New York after the Civil War that same lad, a grown young man then came to see me, how embarrassed (I was then thirteen) I was when he asked me if I still used the "Dictionary" to find my friends.

This has been a long story of a lost little girl of about five in big New York. At that time War was on everyone's mind and even as a little child I recall how it alarmed me. Then came the Blockade of vessels going South and coming North. We left for Savannah on the last boat before the final Blockade. I think it was the memory of that voyage, so full of sea-sickness and one I made later, to Charleston by water, which has filled me with dread of mal-de-mer. I see my dear father now, he was always so gentle and patient with all children, as he went from one to the other — for my mother was as sick as we- and helped and comforted us. The trip was a long one then. I recall going to our home on Charlton St. which my father had built and in which we had never lived before — everything in it was so beautiful and fine (the bed I occupy now was in our nursery) and to cap the climax when we opened the drawers to the beautiful bureau in my mother's room and which my brother inherited there were loads and loads of all kinds of lovely small cakes and a great large one with "Welcome" on it — all made and put there by a devoted old servant who had nursed my brother but who could not go North when we did because of the slave question — her name was Hettie Gary and she had established herself as a leading cateress. I recall her giving us a lovely party on one of my brother's birthdays at her (what we call now) tea room on Broughton Street. All talk was of War and as if it were yesterday I remember being told the war had started — 12 April when Anderson was fired upon at Fort Sumter. It was Saturday and my nurse was putting the finishing touches to my toilet for Synagogue and I was waiting for my cousin Nellie, Uncle Joe's daughter

*Rebecca Ella Solomons Alexander (1854-1938): A Force to be Reckoned With*



Among the many papers I received from my mother's cousin Henry Alexander were letters and postcards written to him by his grandmother, Rebecca Ella Solomons Alexander. Henry's father, Harry, saved everything, so the notes eventually made their way to Henry—and then to me. This card, for example, shows sugar cane grinding on a southern plantation.

and my boon companion who always came for me and we went to services together (even such little girls in those days) as she came in eight I called to her "Nellie the war has begun" upon which she called up to me "then I am going straight back home", and she flew and I felt as if war must be just around the corner. I did not want to run into danger either, but my gentle mother re-assured me, and together she and I went to pray "that the South would win" and that I added to my childish prayers every night. The next thing I recall was the fall of Fort Pulaski which we felt meant the fall of Savannah. So all who could, left the city, our family amongst the refugees. I recall the rush and confusion and also the delight of going away, all children feel, especially as my mother was taking with her my little friend Caro Palin, whose mother was a close friend of our family and who all of us children called "Aunt Lucy". She was of an old French family from Martinique and was a first cousin of the Empress Josephine and as long as the Bonapartes were in power she received an amenity from the French government. She was an ardent Catholic, but that meant nothing to us. We refugeeed to Columbus, Georgia, where my mother's sister, Sarah Alexander lived with her family — also she had two brothers there, Isaac Moses who lived across the river and Ezra Moses her youngest and dearly loved brother. My Aunt Sarah Alexander, after, became my mother-in-law and no mother could have been more loving and devoted. My Uncle Isaac had married Hannah Moses, the eldest daughter of Major Raphael J. Moses. She had met a most tragic death from burns and left two children, Rebecca Hannah and Isaiah who were then living with my Aunt Sarah. My Uncle Ezra married Sarah Levy, the daughter of David C. Levy

of Philadelphia and they had one child — Isaiah E. Moses. After the war they lived in Savannah and to the last of their residence there lived in our house and our relations were always the closest and most affectionate. My father and my uncle were most devoted friends, too, and my aunt always devoted to us all and Isaiah was like one of us.

*My gentle mother re-assured me,  
and together she and I went to pray  
"that the South would win" and  
that I added to my childish prayers  
every night.*

We remained in Columbus for about six months, spending some of the time we were away from Savannah in Montgomery with my mother's brother's (Abram Moses) family and then we visited LaGrange where my mother's brother Mr. Aaron Moses lived. We also visited Atlanta, where my mother's sister Adeline Brady lived in the fine old house which was torn down to make way for "The Grand Theatre". We also visited my father's sister, Mrs. L\_\_\_\_\_ Cohen in Dalton or rather on a farm near Dalton, where I think I had the best time of all. The summer we were away from Savannah we spent at Warm Springs near Columbus, going there in a carriage. Somehow, we children did not like Columbus and were homesick for Savannah, but we liked Atlanta where there were plenty of children.



## OLD FAMILY THINGS: AN AFFECTIONATE LOOK BACK

Rebecca sent her grandson Henry a photo of cotton shipping in Savannah, asking "How would you like to take a trip on one of these big boats?"



The best memories to me of Columbus were connected with Miss Minnie Dessau, after Mrs. Adolph Leins and all my life I loved her. Our friendship grew as I grew and when she died at 80 and I was the grandmother of two children our love had never wavered. She was one of the grandest characters I ever knew. During the time we were in Columbus, everyone was making for the confederate cause and Miss Minnie, like all the young ladies, did her share — amongst the things she did was having "Tableaux" and one representing the Secession of the State, in which I took the part of Alabama. The red dress I wore trimmed with cotton for the occasion, I wore in one of the daguerreotypes taken with my sister. It has black velvet bands on it.

*I recall that my father went to Wilmington, N.C. where it was known that a steamer had run the blockade and he brought back pieces of dress goods and shoes of all sizes so that the whole family, aunts and cousins were dressed alike.*

On my aunt's farm we had the best time for it was so novel — we dug potatoes, peanuts — would help our aunt gather vegetables — we hunted for maypops — we rode on the wagons piled high with hay, we watched the press bring forth syrup from sugar cane

— we went to a corn shucking the Negroes had and enjoyed it as much as they for most of my aunt's negro hands were old family servants who had belonged to my Grandmother Solomons and they made great pets of us. We had a play house under a beautiful oak tree. Another joy we had there was the presence of my aunt & uncle — Mr. & Mrs. Mordecai Solomons, who had come South when the war began and her sister Rose Emanuel. All devoted to us, specially cousin Rose, who was really no relation except that love made her so. She was always doing something for our pleasure and all our lives we loved her. She it was who bored my ears for earrings, a thing which was regularly done in those days.

In spite of the good times we were all glad to go home, which we did when all danger of Savannah being taken had passed. I have some very vivid recollections of the war, that is of events at home. Of the burial of Gen. Bartow whose home was across the Square from ours, of the funeral of the two Habershams who were killed in the same battle. Of going with my mother to take such delicacies as could be had to the sick soldiers at the Wayside Home, the old Chatham Academy, which had been turned into the hospital for wounded Confed. Soldiers. My mother had brought with her from New York many things which could not be had, after the blockade, such as loaf sugar, gelatine, etc., all such was kept for the sick soldiers — for not only would we not eat anything which we felt would help them, but during the war my mother never wore the handsome silk dresses she had brought with her from New York. Calicoes and homespun dresses we all wore. I recall that my father went to Wilmington, N.C. where it was known that a steamer had run the

blockade and he brought back pieces of dress goods and shoes of all sizes so that the whole family, aunts and cousins were dressed alike.

I recall when a shoe maker came to Savannah and my father paid \$75.00 a pair to have shoes made for us. I recall my father taking us to Isle of Hope to see the Water Witch, a boat captured from the Northern Navy and how we went aboard and the sailors gave us some hard tack, and too, how we went into the fortifications, earthworks which had been constructed there. I recall a big exchange of prisoners, and everyone went out to the Park Extension and carried food to the men, so many sick and hungry. The officers were entertained in private homes and I recall two being in our home, tho I can only recall the name of one, Major Scales of N.C. I recall my father taking us down to see the pontoon bridge across the Savannah river and how he let my brother walk across it, much to our discomfort — my sister's and mine. It was about that time I might say, I had my first real acquaintance with my cousin Julius, who after became my husband, tho I recall some things about him in Columbus.

With his brother, Jacob Clarence, he was stationed a few miles from Savannah and they would have leave occasionally to come to Savannah and would be at our house. He often told me he fell in love with me then and I was such a little girl!

I might say the first dreadful experience of my life came the night before Savannah was taken by Sherman. When the Confederate troops vacated Savannah they set fire to the arsenal and all night that horrible noise of explosions and the screams of women were heard. No one went to bed and I was filled with terror as were all. Towards morning everything quieted down, then the housewoman came screaming with fear to tell us the "Yankees are here and will kill us all". She was a new servant my father had bought from a family whose home in Florida had been burned by the Yankees and she could not forget. She used to tell how they had hidden in the woods for nights. But the Army came in so quietly we would not have known it if we had not seen the blue uniforms. Soon demands were made for homes for U.S. Officers — by that time the Square in front of our home was filled with tents and we had two officers and a war correspondent "Doesticks" was his nom-de-plume in our top floor rooms and except for "Doesticks" all were very gentlemanly and he became such a nuisance I recall

that my father requested his removal. I recall one day how the soldiers poured into our basement taking what food they could find, even that which was cooking, for they were a hungry crowd of men and how my mother went down and ordered them out. When she reported it to headquarters a special guard was sent for our home.

*I might say the first dreadful experience of my life came the night before Savannah was taken by Sherman. When the Confederate troops vacated Savannah they set fire to the arsenal and all night that horrible noise of explosions and the screams of women were heard.*

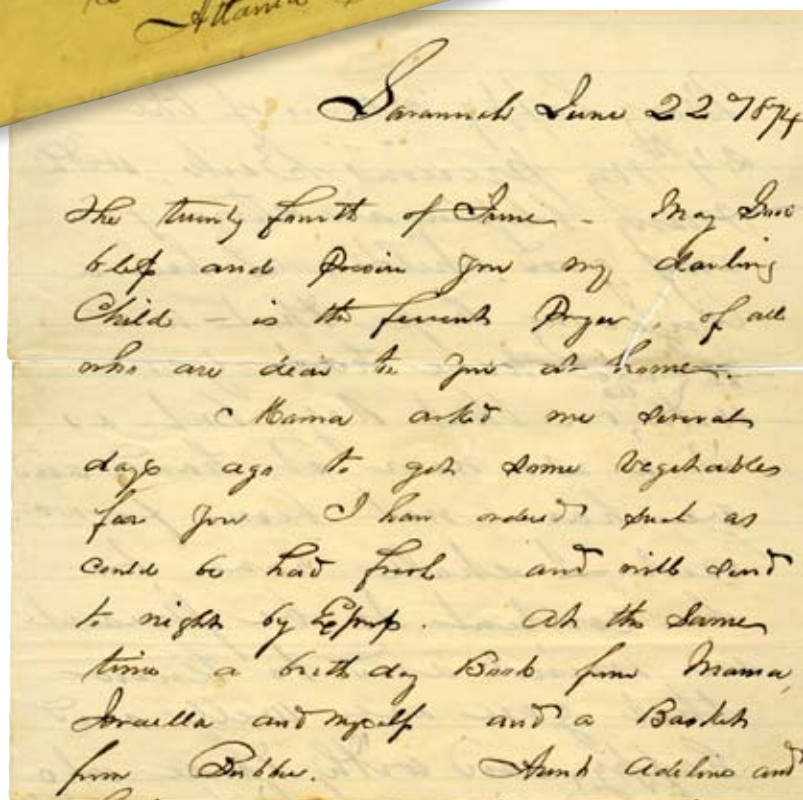
We children regarded with awe that "Yankee" marching around our house. Another time, when my mother had made ginger cake to sell to the soldiers, as every housekeeper was doing for we had no money except our worthless confed. money and all were glad enough to get the "Yankee green-backs". Everything went on quietly until a few soldiers started looting places of business and they were soon joined by an Irish mob. I recall my father telling so bitterly how strychnine had been emptied into sugar and seeing him printing the fact and having these signs posted over the city. He told how the mob would run their arms behind 28 jars and bottles on shelves dashing them to the ground thus wasting precious drugs. All know what a mob is, but no one can realize one .... I recall seeing drunken women and men passing through the street by our home bent double with their loads of stolen goods. Everyone was alarmed but before long Sherman had put a stop to it by putting the leaders in prison.

My father, whose credit was good with the men of the North, with whom he had business, soon began his business all over and I've been told by so many how as soon as he was able, he paid all his pre-war debts. Mr. Riley, our old ... neighbor, who

## OLD FAMILY THINGS: AN AFFECTIONATE LOOK BACK



Rebecca's father, Abraham Alexander Solomons, sent her birthday greetings in a letter dated June 22, 1874. Under his tutelage, Rebecca had learned the art of letter writing. "He encouraged us to keep in touch that way with our home friends and cousins," she remembered decades later. "He never allowed us to write copies for letters," she recalled, "just off hand and as he said write as if you were speaking."



knew my father then, used to tell me about it with great admiration. My father's calling kept him exempt from active service in the field but he was a captain of the Home Guard — which meant a lot in many nights without sleep, in those troublous times and with no regular police.

Soon after the war, my sister, brother and I went to a small private school kept by a Mrs. Fudge, the attraction being that it was very near, just around the corner on Jones St. Like a pert child, I recall when I was asked if I liked my school, I'd say "Oh Fudge" and someone telling my mother as being smart caused

my removal to a small school kept by Miss Kate McKleskey, whose niece was the mother of Hollins Randolph. After that school I went to Mr. Crosby's school, in the building which is now the Louisa Porter Home and health centre. Mrs. Burrough (nee Law) taught me. I recall some of the children who went there — Mr. George Baldwin, the Ferst children, Ida Bell, Susie Wade, Sarah DeWitt and many of the nicest children. We played in the vacant lot where the YMCA now stands and incredible as it seems now, I was one of the fast runners and was always chosen when we played base.

*Rebecca Ella Solomons Alexander (1854-1938): A Force to be Reckoned With*

I was about fourteen years old. We were living in New York. Mr. Dan Ottolengui was devoted to me and was very anxious for me to go to the opening of the Edwin Booth Theater. Tickets sold for \$25.00 and up. Mr. Ottolengui could not afford to pay that. Joe Booth was a very good friend of his and was his brother, Edwin Booth's manager. Mr. Ottolengui went to ask the price of the tickets and Joe Booth knowing that he, Mr. Ottolengui, could not afford to buy tickets gave him two choice ones, and he took me.

My mother was very careful about letting me go out. I was over-grown, but she knew it would mean so much to me, and agreed to let me go if "you will go as you are now." (I was dressed in a brown merino) I was delighted to agree.

Rebecca was such a fan of the actor Edwin Booth that she described seeing his plays in several versions of her memoir letters. This undated page of typescript was prepared by Hermi Weil Alexander, wife of Rebecca's grandson Cecil.

A tragic incident came to me then over which I've had many a laugh. My mother who always encouraged independence, had allowed me to select for myself what I considered a very beautiful hat and so enraptured was I with my choice that I had my likeness taken in it and it is still extant and then I must wear it to school to "show off". That recess, when the running began I put my hat on the branch of a tree and forgot it when recess was over. So someone, who liked the hat as well as I, walked off with it. I went home broken hearted and all that I had left of my beautiful hat was the likeness. But it taught me a

lesson, for my mother had advised me not to wear it.

Then I went to a big girl's school kept by a Mr. Lancaster. I recall some of the girls besides my friend Maria Mims — Sarah Mills, after Mrs. \_; Caro Lanear, after Mrs. DuBignon; Loulie Gilmer, after Mrs. [?] Mimms; and some others, very vaguely. My mother had not been very well, so my father bought a home at Isle of Hope for a summer residence a most unfortunate thing for we all became victims of malaria and then we went north by our dear old Dr. Read's advice. As long as we were well, we had a happy time at Isle of Hope. We had our Governess,



## OLD FAMILY THINGS: AN AFFECTIONATE LOOK BACK

In the summer of 1869, Rebecca's father took the family to Saratoga Springs in upstate New York. They were joined by assorted relatives and friends. All the Solomons women—except 15-year-old Rebecca—wore identical dresses in this photograph taken in front of what may be the Grand Union Hotel. "I've always had a romantic wish to go back to Saratoga," Rebecca wrote many years later, "but as everyone connected with our stay there has passed away, I fear to go.



Mrs. Freel, with us and I fear we did not make her time very happy my cousin Nellie Solomons was with us and a veritable mischief she was and a true leader of such and we all obeyed her. My music teacher, Mr. Lessing, came twice a week to give me lessons. There was no way of getting to Isle of Hope then except by horse and carriage – my father had two horses and buggies and used them alternately. All supplies, even ice were brought out that way. Our regular

*It was during that summer that I had my first real training in letter writing under my father who knew the art so well.*

family numbered 13, for my Uncle Ezra's family, Nellie and our cousin Edmund Abrahams were with us (Oh, those days of family hospitality) and a constant stream of City visitors at any time and all times. No wonder my mother did not get well, tho' she had plenty good servants.

It was then we went to New York and lived with my mother's brother's (Mr. Levy Moses) family at

108 W 47th Street. My father sharing the expenses. We had a Governess, Miss Louise Gerard for French, German and music but my sister and I went to the 24th St. public school for girls and my brothers to the 13th St. school for boys. We went to New York in November and the following summer, we went to Schooley's Mt. N.J., and had a very happy time. My Uncle Ezra's family and his wife's sister, Mrs. Collis formed our party. It was at Schooley's Mt. my sister and I learned to crochet, our Aunt Sarah teaching us and oh! the wonderful "Tidies" and other useless things we made! But were then considered very beautiful. It was during that summer that I had my first real training in letter writing under my father who knew the art so well. He encouraged us to keep in touch that way with our home friends and cousins. He never allowed us to write copies for letters, just off hand and as he said write as if you were speaking.

When we returned to New York we boarded with a Mrs. Elliot from S.C. The house was on 24th St. between 6th and 5th Avenues, so again we were neighbors of the old Fifth Avenue Hotel. In the house with us were Mr. & Mrs. Jefferson Moise and their two children Dulce and Carrie, Mr. Harby Moses, a brother of Mrs. Moise, my cousins Moultrie and Nina Moses and their first child Albert, who was born in Switzerland and cousins Mont & Rosa Moses.

*Rebecca Ella Solomons Alexander (1854-1938): A Force to be Reckoned With*



Rebecca's son Harry kept this postcard showing the residential section of Peachtree Street in Atlanta, location of the old Alexander family home. All of Rebecca's children were born there, and she and her family continued to live there until two years after the death of her mother-in-law.

I had met cousin Rosa (Jonas) when we were in Montgomery at my Uncle Abraham Moses' during the war she was his wife's sister, where I fell in love with her and she with me. Though I was a little girl and all our lives we were devoted to each other. Her daughters are Belle and Eva Moses. My sister and I went to the 24th St. school again, going to our former teacher who had married, and lived on Tenth Street for French, German and Music.

Every day we passed the old St. Mark's church and too Dean's candy store, which we seldom just passed. Our brother went again to the 13th St. school. It was then his dear chum and cousin Abraham came to visit them and the quaint likeness of them together was taken.

It was during that period of my life I first knew my dear old friend Mr. Dan Ottolengui who introduced to the charms of Dickens & Thackery. Tho' his love was Dickens it was then I began to read Shakespeare for I had the wonderful opportunity of seeing Edwin Booth in his best roles. I first saw him at the ... Theatre cor. Sixth Ave. - 23rd St. Mr. Ottolengui took me to the opening night to see Booth, Miss McVickers in "Romeo & Juliet" and thence after that, all my pocket money went to seeing Booth in no matter what he played — he was my idol and even my little sister Loulie not yet ten, had the fever and could recite whole scenes from such plays as she saw — what child of ten, now a days would waste time on Shakespeare! The summer of that year we went to Saratoga Springs and with us the Moise family, cousin Mont's and we had a most happy time. My Uncle Mordecai and his wife were old habitués of the Springs and their

presence gave us pleasure, too. I saw my first horse race then my father taking us.

I recall that one of the pleasant episodes was our getting to know a sister-in-law of Caleb Cushings and how much we all liked her. I've always had a romantic wish to go back to Saratoga, but as everyone connected with our stay there has passed away, I fear to go.

We went to a Ball given to the children at the Union Hotel, to meet Gen. Grant and I recall how my little sister refused to shake hands with "that Yankee". Having been born in New York was a great distress to her and she was uncompromising in her attitude as a "Southern little girl" as she always called herself.

Our family returned to Mrs. Elliot's for the time before we were to return to Savannah. The Moise family went to another boarding house, where soon Mr. M. died. It was a great sorrow to my father for he & Mr. Moise had been friends from boyhood. Cousin Mont & Rosa went to housekeeper and not very long after, they lost their poor little afflicted son, Montrose, after whom their second son was called.

We returned to our old home on Charlton Street in Nov. and it was in the following April 1870 that my precious little Sister Loulie died of typhoid fever — the first tragic grief of my life. I used to mother her always and one of my sweetest memories was the gift of a gold jewelry set from my mother and father "in appreciation, not a reward", they said, of my taking such good care of Loulie in Saratoga, looking after her clothes, curling her beautiful hair ( a joy to me it was) etc. You can imagine the comfort it was to me to look back upon, when she was taken.

## OLD FAMILY THINGS: AN AFFECTIONATE LOOK BACK

Upon the death of their father in 1899, Israella came to live with her older sister and her husband, Julius. When Julius died in May 1917, the sisters continued to share a home, moving together to a new house when circumstances forced them to give up the old Alexander family place in about 1923. Israella died August 4, 1924, pre-deceasing her older sister by about 14 years.



So into each one of the families who were together in Saratoga death came. Soon after her return to Sumter, S.C., Mrs. Moise lost her little Carrie.

*It was just about that period of my life that I met and had the honor of shaking hands with Gen. Robert E. Lee. He was visiting Savannah for his health and was walking in the Park with Maria M. and she called me up and introduced me to the great man.*

My sister and brother and I had private teachers. Mme. Chastanet for French and first a Mr. Rosignol for English, etc. He had a school and was the brother of our old friend Mrs. Pal and Mr. Lessing again taught me music. Mr. R. could not teach German, which we had begun in N.Y. so another teacher, Mr. Baugi — a Lutheran minister taught us, or tried to, but as neither pupils nor teacher made any head way and we had decided we did not care to keep up the German, we were fortunate in having Mr. Mallon, then principal of the Girls High School, to give us private lessons.

My brother went to a private school Mr. Tallieferro and when his school closed, he went to

the Boys High School. Everything was progressing beautifully for us, for not only we liked our teacher but as outsiders there were Maria Mims, Tillie Josephs from Montreal, Can., and Nellie Solomons giving jest to it all. Tillie was the niece of Mrs. Solomon Cohen (nee Gratz, nee Moses) and in Savannah for her health and was a dear friend until her death, after she married and had a daughter. Maria Mims is still my dear faithful friend. Nellie died at the birth of her first child just two days before Harry was born. She married Edward S. Abrahams, who after Nellie's death, married Fannie Josephs.

It was just about that period of my life that I met and had the honor of shaking hands with Gen. Robert E. Lee. He was visiting Savannah for his health and was walking in the Park with Maria M. and she called me up and introduced me to the great man. General Lee and my father resembled so much, they have been taken for each other.

When everything seemed working beautifully, Mr. Mallon's health failed and he had to give up his private classes. Thus to still be under Mr. Mallon's tuition he persuaded my parents to send us to the Girls High School where he was Superintendent and taught the graduating class. It was in the old Chatham Academy which has since been rebuilt. The trouble we met was not having studied Latin, so we had to go into the class next to the graduating class, taught by Miss Fanny Dorsett, who taught there until just a few years ago, when she was pensioned and later died. Before we entered the Grad. class, Mr. Mallon was called to Atlanta to

*Rebecca Ella Solomons Alexander (1854-1938): A Force to be Reckoned With*



Rebecca Ella Solomons Alexander shown with her frail-looking younger sister Israella Solomons; her eldest grandchild, Charlotte Alexander; and Charlotte's father, Cecil Alexander. Charlotte looks to be about 9 or 10, which would date the photo to about 1923 or 1924.

become Superintendent of the then new system of Public Schools in Atlanta — his leaving was a great disappointment but we were well compensated in having Mr. W. L. Bogart for a teacher and we graduated under him. Mr. B. was an old and well ... teacher and besides his Public School work, he had a large class of Boys as private pupils, among them being Judge Alex King and General James B. Er and others who became prominent in different walks of life. That last was the happiest year of my school life. Mr. Bogart was so delightful and sympathetic and in the class were so many girls I know and who all my life were friends. My sister and Bessie Austin Waller were the two brightest tho the youngest in our class. My sister and I had always been in the same class, tho she was younger — her mind excelled mine and too, she had the gift of application but that fact she never would admit she was so modest and too she always treated me as "the god of her idolatry". I remained that unworthy god until death parted us.

We had such good times with the girls and then the wonderful pic-nics, to which Mr. Bogart would invite his "Boys". My favorite places were "Lovers Lane" (now a built-up street where Noeff's green houses are) and the Hermitage now almost a wreck. We would pile into a large wagon and the more pumps we had the more fun! Another pic-nic I recall was to Beaulieu and my escort was Robert Bullock, a correlation of the Bullocks of Roswell, Georgia. Another wonderful pic-nic was given

by the Johnston Light Infantry, a company of "Iss" commanded by Capt. Yates Levy himself, a member of one of our best families. My escort was Randolph Phillips an Uncle of Mrs. Isaac Mims. We went in a boat as far as the "Hermitage", dancing going and coming.

We graduated at the old Chatham Artillery Hall (now torn down) and I recall we wore white organdie dresses, my sister having wide ... and I blue velvet "streamers" they were called — they went around the throat and fell in long bows and ends down the back and were thought very beautiful. I read a paper on Dickens, which I loved because I loved his books and my heart was very full, for it was soon after his death. Mine was the only paper except the Salutatory and the Valedictory — I am sure I do not know why.

During the time we went to school, we had private lessons from Mme. Chastanet, and I had music from Mr. Lessing and attended a class in Literature conducted by Mrs. Louis Young — a sister-in-law of Bessie Waller — she was a Waller. We became great friends and always loved each other.

It was during our last year at school my sister and I visited Charleston and Atlanta and in Atlanta I had my first young lady fun tho I broke my mother's rule as to my going out with young men, I was so over grown and was always taken for much older than I was. One of my most attentive Beaux was Ben Hill and I had several of his age. It was at that time I first met Judge Newman, then a single, struggling young



## OLD FAMILY THINGS: AN AFFECTIONATE LOOK BACK

lawyer and after I came to Atlanta to live, his wife was one of my first friends and remained one as long as she lived.

After we graduated, my sister went to the Mary Baldwin School in Staunton, Va. — my parents thinking that being away among strangers would help her to overcome her timidity — which never left her. I elected to remain at home because I was afraid of being homesick, a trouble I had up to the time my father's home was broken up. Human nature is so inconsistent that I proceeded to become engaged the following March and was married the following October, thus insuring a long spell of homesickness, which I had to the fullest, tho my marriage was most happy. I had the good sense never to let my good husband know what a very homesick wife he had. Every year I paid two visits home, in December and then in May for my father's birthday. I sometimes think my husband guessed more than I thought for the visits extending from one to two months were always his suggestion and very often he would come to Savannah while we were there.

*And so we live on, whether for good  
or evil depends upon ourselves backed  
by faith in God.*

Just one year after my marriage, my first son Henry Aaron was born in the old Alexander home on Peachtree Street. In November of that year my brother-in-law, Joseph Albert, married Sallie Solomons and they came to live in the old home where their three eldest children, Lucile, Hortense and Warren were born. They after moved to the corner of Peachtree and Linden where Alan and May Belle were born. My children — Harry, Cecil, and Julius — were born in the old home, where we continued to live until two years after the death of my Mother-in-law, when we built our first real home on Forest Avenue and never was a prouder, happier woman than I. I spent my days visiting myself and realizing as I went from room to room that that was all really my own.

We moved in on Saturday — I went to services as usual and then came back to tell my good neighbors good-bye, among them the Hammonds, the Hugh Inmans, the Lanskes, the Bridges, and dearest of all, the Hills.

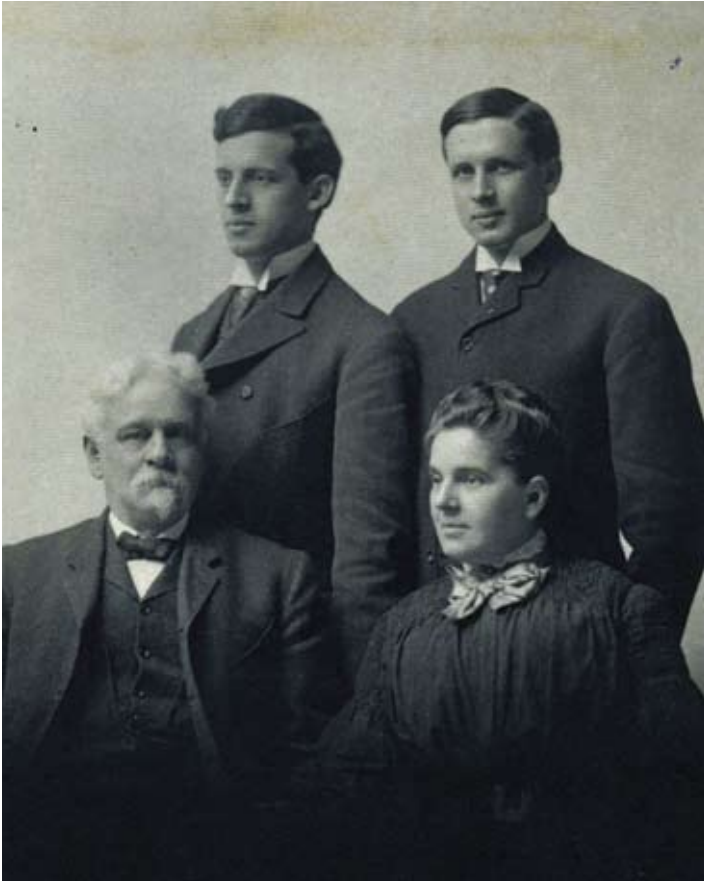
Then I hurried to my new home to meet my dear Aunt Adeline Brady who was our first guest. When I reached the home there stood my poor cook Isabel in despair: I had not given her the keys of the house! But she being one of the quick, smart kind soon had the dinner on the way and not very late. That was June 2nd 1894. That summer my happiness was complete with my father and sister as my guests and occasional visits from others I loved. Harry was in Va. at the University taking a law course, Cecil at the Tech. Tho in that I may be mistaken, it may have been the year before.

That was a precious happy home, tho there, the great sorrow of my life was with me — the long ill health of my husband and his death. Too, I lost my father and others near and dear. No sorrows come but that God sends healing for them.

It was after my father's death that my sister made her home with us, a veritable spirit of love and peace she always was, dearly beloved by my children and their wives and the grandchildren. She lived for us and never life gave greater blessing. Cecil and his family lived with me for six years and what he was to me and his father only my Heavenly Father knows — God bless him! Harry lived with me just one year after his marriage, when surrounding conditions forced me to give up the home so dearly associated with my life. When he and Marian went to living in an apt. on Ponce de Leon Ave. and my sister and I came to this home. We were loathe to leave the dear old home, made so very sacred in our memories, not by any means all sad, but we realized impossible conditions in surroundings. We were indeed fortunate in securing this home, so well adapted to our needs and so pleasantly situated and here we lived for happy years, for even when her health failed she was such a bright spirit. That she would not admit dark forebodings tho they filled my heart daily. But one cannot meet such courage and brightness as hers with gloom and so I was sustained and I've tried to be as she would have me and even when this year, another great blow struck me, I was upheld by her spirit and example.

And so we live on, whether for good or evil depends upon ourselves backed by faith in God. After my sister's death Miss M. Pearl Cook came to live with me. She had been Harry's stenographer for several years. When Harry entered the Army in the World War she entered the Red Cross service in France. Upon her return, looking for a home and Harry, bearing her

*Rebecca Ella Solomons Alexander (1854-1938): A Force to be Reckoned With*



In this formal family portrait, Julius Alexander and Rebecca Ella Solomons Alexander are seated in front of their sons, Harry and Cecil. Both sons started their families late. Harry did not marry until he was 48. Cecil, three years younger, married first. Cecil and his wife lived with his parents for the first six years of their married life, during which they had two children. Even after moving out, Cecil would stop to see his mother after work and dine with her before returning to his own wife and children.

fine qualities in mind, advised me to write her here to occupy the vacant room, which she has ever since, paying me \$25.00 pr. month and I think we both feel that we have done well for ourselves tho she can be very independent with her ability.

And now I must retrace my steps. My advent to my new home was very happy for I did not have to strive to ... the love of my husband's family — it was already mine. Even my new sister-in-law, brother Jake's wife (she was Rebecca E. Levy of New York) gave me her warmest love all her life and even after she moved from Atlanta. She had two children at the time — Arthur & Joe, and later two more born in Atlanta, Louise and Aaron, both dying very young. Their youngest child George was born in N.Y. The Alexanders had many friends who called and welcomed me and some I hold even now, tho conditions and circumstances, with the passing away of many, have reduced the number greatly. Among my first and dearest friends was Mrs. Robert Atkinson — she was Cordelia Dessau — a

sister of my dear Mrs. Louis and of a great friend of my husband's — Amelia Dessau. Their mother was a friend of my mother, Mrs. Dessau of Macon and all her life I loved and admired her.

The family has remained very dear to me and as I believe I am to them to the third generation.

Another of my dearest and closest friends was Mrs. Rhode Hill; she was a Miss Nance and had known the Alexanders in Columbus, Ga. She took and kept me to her heart and now I have as my friends her dear child Mrs. Payne and her children.

I've just lost a friend of the long ago — Mrs. Henry Peebles who was a bright little girl Lillie Walker, whose parents were friends of the Alexanders and who passed her love on to my children and grandchildren.

Another among my very first friends was Mrs. Black (Nellie Peters) and her mother, Mrs. Richard Peters, both I loved and they loved me all their lives and I still have the interest of the children of Mrs. Black and the daughter (Mrs. H. M. Atkinson) of Mrs. Peters.

## OLD FAMILY THINGS: AN AFFECTIONATE LOOK BACK

A doting grandmother, Rebecca is shown here in a tinted black and white photograph with her eldest grandchildren, nine-year-old Charlotte Alexander and five-year-old Cecil Alexander, Jr., with his broken left arm in a sling. The left-handed youngster was not only having to learn to write with his other hand, he was also getting used to a new name. The boy was originally named Henry, Jr., for his uncle Harry, who had not yet married. When Harry had his own son, Cecil's name was changed so that Harry's son could be named for him.



Another two friends of the long ago are Mrs. Edward S. Gay and Mrs. Samuel Stocking. I have many inherited friends among the younger generation even unto their children. Mrs. Lillian Orme Block, her daughter Mrs. Marx and Mrs. Gosmerfield, the daughters of Mrs. Rosenfeld, Mrs. Ed Werner, the daughter of Mrs. Belle Cook and the daughters of Mrs. DeGraffenried — Mrs. Kate Culberson and others who have kept the youth in my heart. I hope never to leave it.

After Harry's birth nothing seemed wanting to complete my happiness especially then, when my mother, father, sister and brother were with me. It was surely a case where Sorrow stood around the corner from Joy, for as soon as it was thought wise, I was told of the death of my dearest friend and cousin

Nellie Abrahams, Uncle Joe's daughter, just two days before Harry was born. She died at the birth of her first child. I've often thought of the agony of mind my dear mother suffered, as well as her great grief and of how nobly she hid it all from me! She was a woman of wonderful character and poise and all my life the lessons of life she taught me have stayed by me under all conditions. Her physical charm equaled her spiritual.

Harry had for his nurse a good old time Nanny, Susan Wilkins. She nursed me through my confinement and then stayed on and nursed Cecil until he was three years old. My children were most fortunate in having such a good nurse of unusually fine character. She had been a slave of the Talmadge family and after the war nursed in the Peebles family and came to me from them and after nursing for

*Rebecca Ella Solomons Alexander (1854-1938): A Force to be Reckoned With*

me, she retired to her little home in Griffin bought through her own thrift. When she died Harry went to pay her the last honor he could and saw that she had a "beautiful funeral". After she went to Griffin we saw her on our regular trips to Savannah and she would come regularly to see her boys who always kissed her until she told them they had grown too big for that. When Harry was studying law at the U. of Va., she would send him messages "to be sure to stay at the head of his class" never doubting that he was there. Harry has an excellent likeness of her.

Harry was always an earnest, good child and Mama Susie used to call him "as solemn as a Judge". He had a very bright mind and by the God-given gift of patient application — so he did wonderful well at school. He was first given a fine foundation by his Grandmother Alexander who was devoted to him. His Grandfather Alexander adored him, tho Harry was only eighteen months old when he died. He would sit for the longest with Harry in his arms and sing all the old-time tunes and had a most entertained audience, tho so young. In our visits to Savannah Harry had another devoted person in his Grandfather Solomons and "Uncle". Harry never gave his father or me any trouble. He graduated at the age of 14 from the high school — 2nd honor — studied at home for a year under his own guidance and then entered the sophomore class at the U. of Ga. and there sustained his high standing in every way. He won a fellowship in French and German and stayed on for a post graduate course and then went to the U. of Va. Law School taking lectures under Mr. Minor — a 2 year course in one!!! And again graduated with high honors. He came home to practice and was very successful. Ran for and was elected to the Legislature. Ran a second time and was defeated on a question of principle with him, which made his father and me very proud of him. He wrote a book on the Lien Laws of the Southern States which is considered very fine. When the U.S. entered the World War he volunteered, tho much past the required age. He met with a very serious accident while in training, which prevented his going to the front but he served his country well at home, as the Gov. has shown. At the age of forty-eight he married Marian Kleinert — has two lovely children and if it were not for the delicate health of his wife would be very happy, but as love makes happiness, he has it anyhow.

Three years after Harry came, here came my second joy, Cecil Abraham, sweet and lovely from

the minute he was born, rejoicing the hearts of all, especially his big brother Harry, who would sit and look and look at this new treasure, finding something wonderful every minute. Where Harry was as "solid as a Judge", Cecil was as lively as a cricket, into all manner of mischief, making hair-breadth escapes and keeping everyone, especially Harry, on the jump all the time. Studying with his grandmother did not give him "time to breathe" so he started school without Harry's advantages, as to the previous instructions and too, he had terrible luck with teachers, but for all that he made good progress and graduated at 15 from the high school with second honor — his father used to say his brain is as good as Harry's — he lacks Harry's application. He would not go to the U. of Ga. because he did not want to leave his father and me alone. So he went to the Tech for a year finding no calling in that direction. So he went to work with his father and was a help and blessing to him always and I rejoiced that one of his sons was with him.

*When the Spanish-American war began Cecil wanted very much to go, but yielded to his father's wishes not to enter the ranks and if he wished to serve to go into training as an officer. The war ended before there was a need. He nearly broke his heart over not going into the World War.*

When the Spanish-American war began Cecil wanted very much to go, but yielded to his father's wishes not to enter the ranks and if he wished to serve to go into training as an officer. The war ended before there was a need. He nearly broke his heart over not going into the World War. He was beyond the age and Harry begged him to let him represent the family as he (Cecil) had a wife and children and he had neither and then too, I needed him as his father was gone. "He serves who stands and waits" and so the government thought for he has a beautiful testimonial for services at home from the government. He married Julia Moses his third cousin,



## OLD FAMILY THINGS: AN AFFECTIONATE LOOK BACK

and has a lovely daughter and son and is as happy in his marriage as Harry is in his, so I am a wonderfully blessed mother.

My third son, Julius M. Alexander Jr., was born in the old Alexander home on Peachtree Street June 17, 1882. After I had lost my beautiful mother in April he came, a veritable comforter to us all, especially to my sister and me. He was one of the brightest and most loving little creatures I ever knew. When he was sixteen months he left us and all seemed black again.

*Abraham was born soon after and brought "healing on his wings" and all his life he has been a dear comfort and joy to us all.*

Just then my brother became engaged to the choice of all our hearts, Sarah ..., his third cousin, the granddaughter of my mother's sister Hannah and never was a union more truly "made in Heaven". The thoughts and interest following that event lifted us out of the deep sorrow for my lovely baby for even to my ... sons "Uncle's" marriage was an all important event, especially as "Uncle" had invited them to be his groomsmen. My sister and I were naturally busy having our dresses made (white Albatross) and then I had Mr. Eisinau, who is still in business here, order beautiful broadcloth suits for Harry and Cecil and when I went to New York I bought all the finishing touches from Bests. My father bought each a jersey suit, then something very new and had never been seen here. So they went to New York looking quite "New Yorkish". My husband could not go so the two little boys and I met my father and sister in Washington, where we had a most wonderful visit and what the boys saw there prepared them for the wonders of New York.

My father, Harry, Cecil and I were the guests of my Aunt and Uncle Brady and I look back now with nostalgia at the noble hospitality of those days. My sister was Sarah's guest. The wedding was one of the red letter events in our family—such lavish, wonderful entertainment I had never dreamed of.

The whole event, the wedding, entertaining and the sights of New York, made an event in our lives never to be forgotten. Harry had for his bridesmaid

Ray Jordan who afterward married Eddie Brady and Cecil's bridesmaid was Gussie Moses who married Mr. Rust Wray. I went home to Savannah with my sister and father to make ready for the bride and groom and remained about three weeks. Sarah's perfect happiness was soon clouded over by the death of her beloved mother — a sorrow for us all, for we all loved "Cousin Henrietta".

Abraham was born soon after and brought "healing on his wings" and all his life he has been a dear comfort and joy to us all.

My brother and Sarah's family came rapidly — six in all — and when their second boy Henri Cecil was 17 and a student at home from the VMI for his holiday he was stricken and died at the Isle of Hope in a few minutes almost — a terrible blow to his adoring parents and us all. Their remaining children, Abraham, Cecilia, Isaiah, Joseph M. and Sarah Jr., have blessed the lives of their parents and now that my dear brother is gone, after years of brave fighting against ill health, Sarah's children are a blessed comfort to her. She also lost her only sister, her father and three brothers all under most trying conditions, but she has been like a brave soldier, all because of her unselfishness and perfect faith in God.

My fourth child, a little girl, died at birth, in fact even before, and so a great disappointment came to my good husband who adored little girls. As for my feelings: nothing could be better, sweeter or more satisfying than my sons. I love boys and no girls could have been better.

When my cousin Nellie married, it was in the old synagogue on Whitaker and Liberty Streets. I was

This card, with a hand-drawn banner announcing "Rebecca E. Solomons," was among several found in the kidskin bag shown on page 60.



*Rebecca Ella Solomons Alexander (1854-1938): A Force to be Reckoned With*

her first bridesmaid and Sallie Solomons her second. My future husband stood with me and I think, a Mr. Ezekiel (a cousin of the sculptor) with Sallie.

It was then we became engaged, with the full approval of the parents of both. Tho I think all had some feeling about first cousins marrying. We certainly proved that the theory against it is wrong for we were happy, because tho cousins, our natures and tastes were different, which is good for the married pair and their children.

My mother had lost her mother that year, so my wedding was very quiet, only the family and a few close friends being present. But I was dressed like a real bride, orange blossoms, veil, white silk and all. We went to New York on our bridal trip, dropping in Philadelphia where my friend Maria Mims was visiting and we had a lovely time together in spite of there being a groom.

In New York we went first to the Fifth Avenue Hotel, tho later we boarded with a Mrs. O'Neil whom my husband had boarded with. It was one of those elegant private boarding houses kept by a South Carolina lady.

My first experience in New York enough to have made my good Julius fall out of love with me was losing my three diamond rings — my engagement ring being one of them. I discovered my loss after we were in the hotel and immediately Julie announced he would search for them somewhere on or near the Jersey Ferry — the last place safe for a stranger after midnight, but go he would, in spite of my pleadings and after three hours returned with them — he and a dock hand finding them on the gangway over which hundreds had passed. They were not together either — it was like a miracle. New Yorkers were frank in doubting, but there was no doubt when told by Julie who never played with the truth. I wonder he did not divorce me then and there, he not only did not, but never reproached me in any way.

Our honeymoon, begun so inauspiciously, passed most happily, being entertained by friends, going to the theatres, shopping, etc. I recall that we stayed over two days specially to see Lester Wallack in his own theatre in "The School for Scandal". My husband was a devotee to the old English plays and never missed one.

A great joy to me was having my brother with me. On account of his examinations at Poughkeepsie Business School, he was not at my wedding, which was heart breaking to me, but I

believe I had more real pleasure having him in New York.

He returned to Atlanta with me and remained quite a while seeking a place here to work, but finally went home and found it. His being here kept me from being quite so homesick. He was such a dear companion, going with me, even to return first calls when Julie could not go. I had such a gay time that first Winter — Julie was one of the Society Beaux and belonged to all the social clubs, and too, the Alexanders had many friends among the Army people and we were always invited everywhere. We both loved to dance and were young. Even after Harry was born we went out a great deal until the death of my dear father-in-law. After that Julie never seemed to care so much, but in due time I went out principally to women's parties, which was not so very nice to me, tho every now and then Julie would go to people he thought worthwhile and cared for.

*. . .so gradually I slipped out of what folks call society and am very content with the few dear friends I have. I could not live without the love of friends.*

After my mother and father's death, I never cared so much again, so gradually I slipped out of what folks call society and am very content with the few dear friends I have. I could not live without the love of friends.

During the world war, like all women who loved their country, I felt that every effort must be for the men who were serving for us, so I did what ever I could which came to my hand in connection with Red Cross work. My sister and I did all our work at home in order to release machines at Headquarters. We knitted sweaters, scarfs, etc., buying the wool ourselves for two reasons, first to help the cause, second not to be hurried as was the case where government material was used. I worked Canteen work until I became sick and had to take to my bed for a while. Then my sister and I went to Signal Mountain for a change and to be near Harry who was at Chikamauga in training. He could come to the hotel each weekend.

While we were there Cecil and Charlotte surprised us with a delightful weekend visit. She was such a

## OLD FAMILY THINGS: AN AFFECTIONATE LOOK BACK

beautiful child and so deeply interested in everything. I felt very proud as I walked into the dining room with my fine sons and granddaughter.

I returned to Chikamauga later on a trying mission when Harry was so badly hurt. Cecil and I went to him and later my sister and I went together.

I recall the work I did during the Spanish-American war as so many did, making pajamas for the sick and convalescent at Fort McPherson. That was hard work as I recall the material used. I felt sorry for the poor men who had to use them — so hard and hot.

*Then came Henry, my adoring lover,  
who promises to be a worthy son of his  
father.*

My dear sister and I had some lovely trips together: first to North Carolina, then to Oden, Michigan to visit our dear Magnus cousins. Then we made a wonderful three months California trip. Then we spent a month in Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington. It was during December and November and we thoroughly enjoyed it. We visited Canada, going up the Saguenay River, the Thousand Islands, Lakes George and Champlain. We visited, too, Niagara Falls. We also spent six weeks in Atlantic City. There were many places we visited in our many trips and the memory of it all is a benediction to me now that I have not her with me.

I've made a wonderful trip to the Canadian Rockies with my dear Ida DeLeon and I've had some delightful ones with Cecil and Charlotte, with Cecil and Julia and one visit to the White Mountains (Bethlehem) with Sarah, Jr. Together we visited New York, Washington and Philadelphia. I've always

enjoyed my trips, because I catch all the good and let the unpleasant slip away, as I am a good traveler.

Now, the 25th of July, 1929, I am getting ready to go on an auto trip with Cecil & Julia to the camp where Cecil, Jr., is. No blessing I have is greater than my dear grandchildren's love. Harry's little Henry loves me so that it is almost pathetic, but I would not have it less and I hope I'll always merit it in his eyes. The good opinion of a little child is almost like a blessing from God — so sacred.

In spite of the sorrow of this year, the death of my brother, this has been one of the happiest years of my life, made so by my dear sons and they know how it was made so — God bless them!

Of the many blessings which have crowned my life, none have excelled my four fine grandchildren. First came Charlotte, not only bringing joy to her grandfather who was in poor health, but to each and all of us she was truly my blessing when I most needed comfort and now she gives promise of a fine womanhood and as a scholar is a source of pride to us all. Then Cecil, Jr., who first was Henry Jr., and as fine a boy as one could wish, with a heart of gold and by no means behind when it comes to brains. Cecil was first called for his Uncle "Harry" but when Harry was blessed with a son of his own, Cecil thought it only right that his own son should carry on a name so worthy and so the change was made.

Then came Henry, my adoring lover, who promises to be a worthy son of his father. Then came my baby granddaughter — my namesake — so attractive and dear, and she and her brother promise much for the future and I am sure my grandsons will be worthy of their fathers, as my granddaughters will be of their mothers, two fine women.

Rebecca Ella Solomons Alexander

*Rebecca Ella Solomons Alexander (1854-1938): A Force to be Reckoned With*

June 24th, 1930

Much has happened since I started this paper — June 24th, 1929 — and mostly events of so gentle and sweet a nature, that they have scarcely left an impression, only those of content. There have been shadows with the sunshine, but only such as one needs to keep worthwhile. The outstanding event to us all has been the confirmation of our precious Charlotte, who has stood so well during the years of her religious training, that she was given one of the outstanding honors — the recitation of the “Flower Prayer” which she did with such dearest sweetness. I am sure the influence of the event will ever stay by her as a Jewess — God bless and keep her in His tender care!

This day began with telegraphic greetings from my dear friends in California (Mrs. Pettigrew, Mrs. Harrison and Mrs. Webb), followed by much all day from loved ones near and far. I’ve had the great happiness of having my dear Sarah with me. She stands for so very much to me. To the beautiful dinner given me at the Biltmore, served out on the charming Terrace, a loving tribute from Harry, Cecil, Marian and Julia. I had the great joy of Cecilia’s and Sarah, Jr.’s dear presence. They came over from Athens in the morning and remained overnight, kind Miss Cook giving up her room to them. We adjourned to my home for ice cream and cake, etc., to which other members of the family and my dear friends Irene and David Lopez came. Such a happy time for us all and to none more than my dear, lovely grandchildren, who with my dear children paid me an early call, bringing their love offerings, all their own work and purchased with their own money, making them dear beyond words to me. Such a shower of lovely, useful gifts are mine — all I know freighted with true love.

Another year faces me. May God bless those I love and keep me as worthy as they, in their dear loving prejudice, think I am.

P.S. This year sees Charlotte entering her senior year, Cecil, Jr., the Marist College, Henry, his third year in the grammar school — all so fine and promising.

R.E.A.

June 25th, 1931

Yesterday I completed my 77th year — blessed as few are with mental and physical health and a heart still young to enjoy the best pleasures one can have as years increase. The devotion of two good sons and their families, of friends by the score. Friends by close ties of blood and faithful friendship of many years. Much of happiness and sorrow have come my way, during the year. The great happiness of another daughter to Harry & Marian, called Esther for her maternal grandmother. She is a lovely baby both physically and in disposition, a joy to all.

*Life always holds compensations for a sorrow, I find as I grow older.*

Deep sorrows have been mine in the deaths of Charley Atkinson, Warren Alexander and Bessie Waller. The two first fine men, grown to manhood and dear to me all their lives. The last, the only contemporary of my girlhood living here — friends almost all our lives. She, my sister Israella and I graduated at the same time. The tie was very close and dear.

Life always holds compensations for a sorrow, I find as I grow older. My precious granddaughter Charlotte graduated with highest honors “Cum Laude”, and is now preparing to enter college in the fall. Cecil, Jr., has done well in his new school — the Marist College, and made us quite proud of him. Henry and Rebecca have done well too and all five are as fine and lovable as children can be, so while I may miss compensations of youth, I find those of old age equally good. My year’s course has been serene enough with the joys in my own home and those I found in the two visits to my dear brother’s family in my dear old home, not the same without him, but very dear anyhow. Cecilia’s son Max, Jr., has done so well too and we all feel very proud of him.

My birthday opened as it always does with loving greetings from children, kin and friends here and from afar, even as far as California from my dear friends Mrs. Pettigrew, Mrs. Harrison and Mrs. Webb.

All day messages, letters and gifts poured in upon me, making me very happy for I believe all were backed by love, lasting through many years. After much persuasion my good sons consented to my giving myself my own party, which I did, by



## OLD FAMILY THINGS: AN AFFECTIONATE LOOK BACK

having all my immediate family, except Charlotte who is spending the week in camp — a most needed relaxation after the severe mental strain of examinations for entrance to college and my dear sister Sarah who came from Athens, where she is visiting, and my dear nieces Sarah Jr. and Cecilia, Sallie Alexander and Clara Solomons. During the afternoon other relatives and friends called and I had light refreshments. It was a gala day for me and I tried not to let any time of sorrow mar it for me and mine.

*. . .as long as I have health and strength for my years and my dear children are spared to me, I feel that God's blessings rest upon me daily and I am content.*

My dear Cecilia and Sarah, Jr., left this morning in their car for Athens and Sarah will remain with me a few days longer.

Henry made us very proud by winning a gold medal for music. He is my devoted Cavalier. I hope he will continue as such. And now my 78th year begins with all the future hidden. I pray it brings happiness to all I hold dear.

Rebecca E. Alexander

June, 1932

Another year longer than I am entitled to according to "Holy Writ", for I have celebrated my 78th birthday — a day made most happy by the loving devotion of my children, relatives and friends. My dear sister Sarah came from Savannah to celebrate with me. My dear Cecilia came from Athens and stayed over Friday night. Sarah came on the 23rd and early in the morning of the 24th she and I went to my sacred spot in Oakland and placed flowers upon the resting places of my dear husband and little son. Soon after we returned home, came my dear children bringing loving greetings and gifts. Soon Cecilia arrived and such a pleasant time we had. At Twelve O'clock Sarah, Cecilia and I went to have lunch with my dear old friend Mrs. W.R. Boyd. She is too feeble now to go about and not to have had lunch with her would have made my day incomplete. For years, she, Israella, Miss Mary Jones, Bessie Waller and I spent our birthdays together and now she and I are the only ones left. My dear Bessie passed away this year.

After Cecilia, Sarah and I left Mrs. Boyd's we went to the Fox Theatre where Sarah had never been: it is one of our largest, handsomest places of amusement and was to close the next day because of the financial conditions of the day, a condition which is affecting individuals in every walk of life.

We are all feeling it — I am more fortunate thus far than many, tho my income is greatly reduced and I must be careful, but as long as I have health and strength for my years and my dear children are spared to me, I feel that God's blessings rest upon me daily and I am content.

I had a six o'clock dinner, to which all my children, except Marian, came and was unexpectedly detained by a sudden spell of illness for little Esther, who soon recovered and is her bright sweet self again. Sallie Alexander was here too, and the only cloud to mar our sunshine was the absence of dear Cousin Lottie who has been ill since May and is still quite sick, but we hope is recovering.

After dinner I had calls from Sarah Ella, Thomas Tobias, Stella and her daughters who were here earlier in the day when I was out. Rachel Neely — her

*Rebecca Ella Solomons Alexander (1854-1938): A Force to be Reckoned With*

mother and father were away, Irene and Mr. Lopez, Mr. and Mrs. Boehner.

Right here, tho my gifts were many and with many loving stitches in some, I must pour out my heart in appreciation of the beautiful work, a silk gown, made for me by my dear daughter Julia — that, too, when her heart, mind and time were so filled with care and anxiety for her mother. I never had a gift to touch me more and it is so beautiful as if it were for a young girl instead of this old lady of 78. I hope my wearing it will do it full honor and justice, but I am not worthy.

I had ice cream and cake for my guests and we passed some happy hours. The day closed, finding me ok! So grateful to our Heavenly Father for His goodness to me and mine. Mattie Slaton, Lillie Block and Carrie Nicolson came in the morning. Mattie was laden with a great birthday cake and lovely roses from her brother's, our dear former Governor John M. Slaton's garden. The last year has held heart aches as well as much happiness for me and the big events are the birth of my fourth granddaughter, Harry's third daughter — named Judith, and the going to college of my precious oldest granddaughter Charlotte. She is home for her summer vacation after a happy year at Wellesley, as beautiful as ever and I know doing much to brighten the home where her grandmother is ill. Another event, important to me — Henry, Harry's boy has gone to camp, his first venture from home and I feel it will benefit him very much. Cecil, Jr., has gone too, but he is a veteran camper, this being his fourth year. They both are such fine boys — my two lovely grandsons. My faithful friend, Miss Cook, still lives with me. Too, I still have my good and faithful friends and servants Rosa and Cash. So many have had to give up just such, I hope I can retain them, but no one knows. This I do know, I am a very happy contented old lady and am busy on a piece of tapestry for my youngest granddaughter and have finished an afghan for my good friend Mr. Lopez.

So I close this P.S. with grateful love and thanks for the thousands of blessings I have from God.

Rebecca E. Alexander

August 18th, 1935

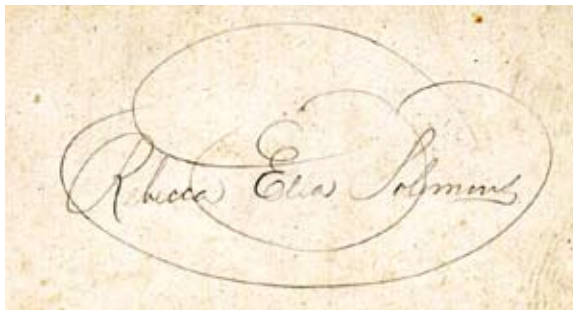
It is almost two months since I celebrated my 81st birthday most happily, with all my children, grandchildren, Sarahs Sr. & Jr., Cecilia, Max and their children and Abraham who came specially to honor me. My good friends Dr. & Mrs. Marx, Mattie Slaton, Carrie and Carolyn Nicolson having dinner with me, and too Stella and Sarah Ella.

Friends and kin came during the day to wish me joy, all bringing tokens of love, the tokens so unnecessary, for I feel so sure of their love. I am indeed blessed in my friends and each day I realize how precious they are to me and how much they mean in my life. The greatest thing for us all is seeing Julia regaining her health. The big events the graduation of Charlotte from Wellesley College and the graduation of Cecil, Jr., from the Boys High School and the graduation of Max Michael Jr., from the Georgia University where he won many honors and will go to Harvard Medical School, and Cecil will enter Georgia Tech. I've had visits from my dear Sarahs and every now and then from Cecilia. I am now anticipating a visit from Mont's wife Lillian and daughter Adele. Henry is preparing for his Bar Mitzvah in the old Portuguese Synagogue in New York which one of our Ancestors was one of the Founders. It is the wish of his father, who loves the old traditions. That old ceremony is not observed in our Synagogue here.

My life goes on so calmly, so happily, there is not much to record and so it should be in old age. I am blessed with excellent health and so many dear friends, old and young, who come to me and keep my days bright and happy.

I love to read too, and have my good eyesight, so what more could I wish and I am very grateful to God for his blessings.

Rebecca E. Alexander





## AFTERWORD

With completion of the chapter on my great-grandmother, Rebecca Ella Solomons Alexander—the person most responsible for preserving the material legacy of my mother’s family—my “affectionate look back” ends in the early part of the 20th century.

Although I didn’t begin this project originally with the intention of bringing the family history up to the present day, some of my readers are asking that I take that logical next step. Additional chapters, therefore, will eventually bring the story

forward to include my own children and grandchildren.

I also plan to include a chapter on “Fancy Work,” showcasing embroidery and other needlework by the women in my family down through the years. Readers have had a preview of this fancy work already—namely, Chapter 3, the quilt made for Eleanor Solomons.

My thanks to all who have read and responded to this work in progress.

Judith Weil Shanks  
February 17, 2010