

Evelyn Virginia Hall - A Genealogical Study of a Brumbaugh Baby

By Tina Barton
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Foreword

Until recently, all the members of the Elkridge Heritage Society (EHS) that I have met have been white. I did not grow up in Elkridge, but I have lived most of my life here, and I know that Elkridge is a diverse town. When I joined the Elkridge Heritage Society, I asked about the embarrassing whiteness of the society, and was told that all the people from our historically black communities had moved away and there was no one left to join us. The EHS members had some stories, some uplifting, and some tragic, but they were all given from a white person's point of view. I was told that Dr. Brumbaugh did not discriminate, and he had clients from all walks of life. But we didn't have any stories that I knew of, directly from these people. I was curious, and wanting to be an ally to our citizens of color, I wanted to hear their stories from themselves. But how to start? I didn't know any people of color who were more than first generation Elkridgean.



Evelyn at 6 weeks old with her mother, Laura Hawkins Hall Simms

During the 1970s or 1980s, EHS put out a call to all "Brumbaugh Babies" - those people delivered by Dr. Brumbaugh, asking for photos and names. These were collected in a photo album. I looked through the album and there was a page of beautiful pictures of Evelyn Virginia Hall which she sent to us, along with her birth date and her parents' names. This was enough to at least allow me to do some searches on ancestry.com. I very quickly found Evelyn and her mother in the census records, and from there, my story grew. It is still my story. But my hope is that someone that is a member of the families I will describe below will read what I wrote, and we can get some more stories that way. So without further ado, let's dig in.



Evelyn at 6 months

Evelyn Hall's Biography

Evelyn Hall was born June 16, 1929. She was one of the many African American babies Dr. Brumbaugh delivered. She was the daughter of Laura A. Hawkins Hall Simms, and Richard A. Hall. One census record lists him as William Hall, but Evelyn told us her father was Richard and so that is the source we trust! We

don't know much about Richard, nor why they listed his name as William in the 1940 census. The family lived somewhere on Washington Boulevard in Elkridge and most of the people on the same page were white. In paging around the census records, I saw that there were clusters of black families on Washington Boulevard in 1940. The Halls were all born in Maryland. "William" was a gardener, and just above their entry is another black family by name of Payne, and Benjamin Payne is also shown to be a gardener.

By 1950, Laura was the head of household and listed as "separated". A lodger with her there was Wilson Simms who was a trackman, presumably for the B&O railroad. They lived on Railroad Avenue in the 2nd unit of a duplex, shared with Laura's mother Martha Hawkins. By now, Evelyn was 21 and was listed as being employed in "child practical nursing." Interestingly, they were all listed as white in 1950.



Evelyn at 18 years old



Photo from Evelyn's Obituary

In Evelyn's obituary, it states that she did child care through high school, but according to the census she was still doing this in 1950. She attended the "Elkridge School" until 7th grade, and then had to commute to Cooksville High School until she graduated in 1947. In her adult life, she was a cashier. She worked in Upper Deck Deli at Camden Yards for the first 10 years of its opening. She died February 5, 2017. She was interred at Meadowridge Cemetery, but died in Baltimore. She was married twice, to Collins Talley Jr, and Stanford Watts, both deceased, and had children with both husbands. At this point, I want to respect the privacy of living persons by not naming any names, but again, we

would love to meet her descendants and learn more about this lovely lady!

According to the obituary, Evelyn considered Wilson Simms' daughters as her sisters, though presumably there is no DNA connection. Searches on ancestry.com found that her sisters were the daughters of Wilson Simms and Evelyn Williams, who were separated by 1950. The children lived with their mother, according to the 1950 census. Evelyn Williams Simms was a clothes cleaner in Baltimore, on Madison Avenue which is near Druid Park. She was a lodger with Johnson Clark who worked in the freight industry. In the 1930 census before her marriage to Wilson Simms, she was also shown on Madison Avenue with her mother, grandmother and stepfather Charles Robinson, so it appears that she went back to her old neighborhood after she and Wilson separated. She is reported on ancestry.com to have died in Elkridge in 1967 but

I can't confirm that yet. The close connection with Evelyn Hall and her stepsisters implies to me that there was much coming and going between the families in Baltimore and Elkridge.

Biography of Laura Augusta Hawkins, Mother of Evelyn Hall

We don't know much about Evelyn's father Richard Hall, but we do know that her mother was Laura A. Hawkins, which Evelyn told us herself. With that information, it was easy to search census records and find that Laura's mother was Martha Mars, and her grandparents were Ida Ella and Alexander Mars. But in addition to the census records that confirm most of the following names and dates, we are fortunate to have oral testimony from Evelyn's mother Laura Simms from 1990 in our Elkridge Heritage Society archives. Laura says she married Corrie Hawkins who died around 1919. He was the son of James Hawkins and Rachel Cager. Rachel had a lot of children by her first husband, Richard Cager. Indeed, Laura said her father had a stepbrother named Walter Cager, who was a farmer in Elkridge in 1940. According to his WWII draft card, he lived at the intersection of Landing Road and Montgomery. Corrie Hawkins was listed as Carl Hawkins in the 1910 census, married to Martha, with no children. According to Laura, her sister Ella Mae Hawkins Sharbs was born in 1910 (but apparently after the census was taken). They had another sister Jenny who was born in 1917 and died when she was just four years old of heart problems. Laura said she herself was born Laura Augusta Hawkins in 1912. Laura told us her father Corrie Hawkins died when she was five years old, which was right about when Jenny was born. When her father died, her mother moved her and her sisters back to Elkridge where Martha's mother lived, which was at 7170 Montgomery Road. Martha went into housekeeping. Laura said her mother was married in the house in 1910, when her grandmother (Ida Ella Mars) rented it from a lady living on Druid Hill Avenue. She said the rent was \$4 a month.

For the curious, here are some details about the house, which was under 1000 square feet on a little less than an acre of land. Laura Simms, who said the house was 130 years old in 1990, deeded the house to her daughter Evelyn in 1991 (deed 2369/429). Martha Hawkins had granted it to Laura and her husband Wilson in 1964 (deed 414/654). Martha inherited it from her mother Ida Ella Mars and her aunt Laura V. Mars in 1963. Ida Ella Mars and Laura Mars had purchased the house from Elizabeth and Jane Smith in 1933 (deed 141/191). Evelyn and her family sold it in 2016 to a developer (deed 16923/344). The house is no longer standing, but it was between Gaines AME Chapel and Unity Baptist Church. I remember the house as being very close to the road. I wish I had a picture of it.

Laura said that originally, the kitchen, dining room and living room were all one room. There were three bedrooms with two beds per room, and no bathroom. There was a porch which her grandfather closed in. When Laura got it in 1964, she added electricity, gas and plumbing. She moved the kitchen to where the porch was. She reminisced about the days when families all lived together. At one point there were both her grandparents, her aunt Laura and three uncles, her mother Laura and the three girls. She longed for those days because there are a lot of old people who are so lonely now. She said she was glad she was born in 1912 because she had seen a lot of changes!

Laura did not mention her husbands in her testimony. Wilson Simms had died 13 years earlier and she was mostly focused on the house. This may be because the ElkrIDGE Heritage Society was mainly asking her about the house.

Further research showed that Laura's grandfather died in 1951, and at that time, according to the 1950 census, there was just her Aunt Laura, her Aunt Mary, and her grandfather in the house. The house almost burned down in a fire, which is mentioned in the Mars Family section below.

The Simms Family

The more I dug into the Simms family, the more I was intrigued. Wilson Simms (whose middle name was "Romance", which I love) had a tragic past. His father was James Simms and his mother was Julia Bumbrey Simms. James was believed to be born in DC, but his father was an oysterman in Calvert County Maryland. In 1920, the census indicates that the family lived in Washington, DC. But the account of James' death as written by a relative, which I found on ancestry.com, is confusing and needs corroboration. According to the relative, he apparently died in Baltimore. He was holding a "Rent Party" in order to raise money to stay in his home, but a fight broke out. He went upstairs to get his gun, and when his wife tried to intervene, he accidentally shot her. The account goes on to say that James, though not convicted, was so brokenhearted that he didn't feel like he could raise his three children. He asked his brother Pinkney Simms, who lived in ElkrIDGE, to raise them, to which Pinkney agreed. James Simms did not long survive his wife. So this is how Wilson Romance Simms came to live in ElkrIDGE, work for the railroad, and fall in love with Laura Hawkins Hall, the mother of Evelyn Hall.



Pinkney And Mattie Simms, from the Unity Baptist Church Website

But Pinkney, it turns out, was a pillar of the community. At only 17, he was a deacon at First Baptist Church. Five years later, he, his wife Matilda (or Mattie), and some others at the church decided to start a new church off Race Road in ElkrIDGE, called Unity Baptist Church. The church thrived, and they were about to expand when Hurricane Agnes flooded it to the roof. The parish started to rebuild, experienced another flood, and the county

condemned the area as a flood zone. This church was on Church Avenue off of Race Road. The church was rebuilt on Montgomery Road, where it still stands today, a beautiful brick edifice. Even when parishioners removed from ElkrIDGE, they still came back for services at Unity Baptist Church.

Pinkney Simms was born in 1882 in Calvert County, MD. His father apparently died by 1900 as his mother Matilda was the head of the household with all the children, in Baltimore. Her maiden name was Harkins. In 1900, she had no occupation, but she had boarders, and some of her children had work. A nephew also lived with her. Most of the children were in school. In 1920, Pinkney lived on Washington Road in Baltimore Election District 13. He was a laborer in a foundry as well as deacon in his church. His wife (also named Matilda, but called Mattie) was a deaconess. By 1930 he lived on Race Road. You can see in the 1930 census that there was a whole black community on Furnace Avenue and Race Road. Some of their homes were destroyed by Agnes.

As of 1950, Pinkney was still in Elkridge, but he died in Baltimore. Here is an excerpt from the obituary from one of his descendants.



Catherine Adams, Descendant
of Pinkney and Mattie Simms

“Catherine Rene Adams went home to be with the Lord on Wednesday, June 15th, 2016 at 6 o’clock a.m. She was born on February 13th, 1931 in Elkridge, Maryland, to the late Deacon Harrison Joseph Butler and the late Mary Elizabeth Simms Butler. She was the second child in the birth order of five siblings, they were Rachel, Catherine, Clarence, Mildred and Etta Butler. She was the granddaughter of four of the founders of Unity Baptist Church, Deacon Pinkney and Deaconess Mattie Simms, and Deacon Herbert Elijah and Deaconess Liuvinia Brogden. She had been a lifelong member here at Unity.

“She began her early schooling in the one room school house on Race Road in Elkridge, Maryland. She finished her education in the Baltimore City Public Schools.

“On September the 1st, 1953, she was united in holy matrimony to the late Deacon Layfield Adams. They were a perfect couple, from this union they were blessed with four sons, Clarence Lamont, James Warren (Jimmy), Rodney Layfield and (one son who passed in infancy). James Warren (Jimmy) also preceded her in death.”

It is a wonderful obituary full of tidbits about her life and humor-filled and generous personality. Even after she moved to Baltimore, she continued to attend Unity Baptist in Elkridge. Her life was not easy. Her husband became disabled and she had to be the breadwinner. She had already moved to Baltimore but she found a job as a cook at Will’s Diner on Route 1 in Elkridge, to which she took a bus until she could afford a car. Eventually she found her calling working in the food service for Baltimore City Schools. She worked there for over 30 years and won numerous awards. She did pretty well for herself and bought her own home and several cars along the way. She was a deaconess at Unity and did much service for the people in that position.

Another Simms Family



Our archives contain a transcript of an interview done of some more Simms relatives by an American Folklorist, Alison Kahn, on May 14, 1999, coordinated by Friends of The Patapsco Valley and Heritage Greenway. I have been unable to connect this Simms family with Pinkney Simm's family, but it seems likely that they were related. Pinkney's mother ended up getting work in Elkridge on a farm, which drew her here, and it seems too coincidental that there would already be a prominent Simms family here. However, while Pinkney founded Unity Baptist Church, this family stayed with First Baptist Church. Daniel Simms of this family assisted the first Pastor of First Baptist Church, Zachary Taylor, to welcome newly

freed slaves to the parish back in the 1860s.

The two people interviewed were Reverend Monroe Seawood Simms (a descendant of Daniel Simms), who at the time had been pastor of First Baptist Church of Elkridge for 40 years, and his aunt Dorothy Taylor Richardson. Reverend Simms' mother was Dorothy's sister, with maiden name Taylor. From this interview, we got some insights into racial unrest that had not appeared in my other research on Evelyn, but which I knew had to be there. I mean, we know Evelyn had to travel 37 miles to get to the highschool in Cooksville! How did she even get there? How unfair is that?

The Kahn interview, as far as it relates to First Baptist Church, was summarized in a Baltimore Sun article that can be found at www.elkridgeheritage.org, in our Elkridge Heritage Knowledge Base under the category of Churches. It describes how the church was set on fire by a racist arsonist in 1965, who was caught and served time. The Reverend counseled his parishioners not to get violent during the time of the trial. The full interview, however, gives even more insight into the lives of the Race Road Community, and some insight into even our beloved Dr. Brumbaugh. To see all we have of the interview, go to www.elkridgeheritage.org Elkridge Heritage Knowledge Base and look under the "Families" section.

It was the opinion of white people I have talked to that there were some white clients who objected to sharing a waiting room with the black patients. There was some speculation that he set up a waiting room in the back enclosed porch for black patients because of this pressure. However, in an interview we have with Harry and Nelda Ring, they disclaimed the idea of segregated waiting rooms. They were adamant that he treated everyone the same. Harry and Nelda were a white Elkridge family, born in the 1920s, according to Find-a-Grave.

Reverend Simms disagreed that Dr. Brumbaugh treated everyone exactly the same. One thing he noticed was that on the prescriptions for white people, he would put their name on the paper as "Mr. So-and-So or Mrs. So-and-So", but on the prescriptions for black people, he simply put their name such as "Monroe Simms." Another thing was that Dr. Brumbaugh preferred that he drive to the black clients' homes instead of them coming to the office, implying that he did not want to have racial conflict in his waiting room. He never turned anyone away at the office, however.

Reverend Simms also recollected that Dr. Brumbaugh was very particular about how his shirts were washed and ironed, and the Reverend's mother was the one who did it best. Dr. Brumbaugh did not want anyone to touch his shirts except his mother. He would drop off his clothes with her and pick them up, or have his wife pick them up, a few days later. He wanted them specially hand washed because he said they lasted longer that way.

These little anecdotes show that when we have one-sided history, the truth can be morphed. None of this means that Dr. Brumbaugh was a bad doctor, or that it is not worth celebrating his service to the community. It does remind us, however, that a double-standard is disrespectful and causes pain, no one is perfect, and we must all strive to be better.

Reverend Simms talked about the Race Road community in Elkridge. He said that while it was more diverse now (1999), back in the day it was primarily African American. There were two areas, one on Church Road, and one up the hill on Race Road. When the Church Road homes were destroyed by Hurricane Agnes in 1972, the people who lived there were relocated to Columbia or Baltimore, except one family. However, that family lost their home and a white family moved in.

He and his Aunt Dorothy also described prejudice among the black families. The families, like the Taylors (Dorothy's family) were more focused on schooling, and they had a car. Also, Dorothy had long hair, and she said that people complained, "She thinks she's cute" and called the Taylors the "Cute Family that Lived on the Hill." "They think they are more important than everyone else," her nephew interjected, agreeing with her assessment of the neighbors.

Reverend Simms did talk about Dorothy's father. He worked for the railroad, and a barber on weekends, but said he was also a big time politician and got everyone to vote Republican. He was considered the "Mayor of Race Road." He got the county to pave Race Road and install

street lights, and those perks convinced everyone that the Republican Party was the way to go. When the Reverend changed his affiliation to Democrat later on, he could never admit this to Dorothy's father!

Dorothy described having to walk from Race Road to the schoolhouse at Gaines Chapel. Then she said she "stole" her highschool education. She used relative's Baltimore address in order to attend junior high and Douglass High School. She took a train there every day. Reverend Simms talked about how the books were old, and he thought they were hand-me-downs from white schools. He said the teachers had different pay grades, and black teachers were paid less. He said that he was one of the target students who was asked to go into white schools and try to get them to understand black culture and dialect. He was "borrowed from" Prince George's County to help "develop human relations of how to deal with ... blacks."

What we have of the interview is very interesting and worth a read. Related or not, both of these Simms family clearly valued faith, education and hard work.

The Mars Family

As said above, Evelyn's maternal grandmother was Martha Mars. The Mars line has been researched and lots of interesting news articles are available on ancestry.com in addition to the all-important census records. The family goes pretty far back in Elkridge. I will start with the farthest generation we could find and work our way forwards.

The oldest Mars ancestor I could find was Polly Mars, born around 1775. She is listed in the 1850 Census (the first one to list family members separately) with two sons or possibly grandsons named Alexander and Edward. The record, which is for the Howard District of Anne Arundel County, also said she was born in Maryland. Just above this family group in the census record is the family of James G. Mars, who was a farmer. He is shown with a lot of children. A descendant posted the below manumission record for Alexander, indicating he was free born.

NAME	Mars, Alexander		
HEIGHT	4'10"	AGE c 14 in 1832	COMPLEXION brown
	scar on forehead over left eye		
FREED	Freeborn		
Recorded	5/30/1832		
COUNTY	A.A.		
REFERENCE	Certificate of Freedom, 1831-45, p. 167 # 947		

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Index of Manumission Papers for Alexandar Mars, dated 1832 when he was 14 years old.

In 1860 James is shown as a farmer in Elkridge, and in the 1870 census, he was in Savage. I do not know if they moved to different farms, or if the district lines changed over time. I presume, as do others in ancestry.com, that James is Alexander and Edward's brother.

Now let's focus on Alexander, because Evelyn Hall was his direct descendant. In the 1880 census, Alexander lived in District 1 of Howard County (Elkridge), with his wife Sophia. He was about 60 years old. He had a son, also named Alexander, along with some other children. The 1870 census is a little confusing because it gives his name as James. This makes me wonder if his name is James Alexander, and that he is actually James G. Mars' son - there is enough age difference to make this possible. They were not in the same house in 1850 (though next door), but Alexander was an adult by then. So other than some possible telescoping of generations, we have the gist of the situation. Alexander lived nearby with his mother or grandmother in 1850, and by 1870, he had struck out on his own with his wife Sophia. He is listed as a laborer. He could have been a farm laborer. We don't know for sure.

Alexander, son of Alexander (or James Alexander as the case may be) was Evelyn's great grandfather. He married Ella Mars, sometimes called Ida E. Mars. They had several children including Martha (Evelyn's grandmother), Laura, and Mary. In 1940, they were living, it appears, on Washington Blvd in Elkridge. By 1950, Ella must have died, and Alexander was old. Laura was also single, and she and her sister Mary (now with the married name Thomas) were domestic servants taking care of their father. They lived on Montgomery Road near Gaines Church. In a newspaper article about a fire in the area when he was 86, he said he lived near

Gaines Church all his life. On his death certificate, Dr. Brumbaugh certified his death and Laura reported it. He died May 25, 1951.

At Age 14, Martha Mars was a student in Elkridge, according to the 1900 census. Martha married a man with last name Hawkins, and they produced three children: Laura, Ella M., and Genive Hawkins. By 1920, Martha was a widow living with her mother Ella, some of her brothers and her children. She was a washwoman. They lived in Elkridge, west of center of Washington Pike. By 1930, Martha lived on Dorsey Road with Laura, a baby named Elwen Hawkins, and Ella M. Her mother had probably passed away by then. Evelyn was born in 1929, so Elwen is the census taker's misspelling of Evelyn. It appears she was born out of wedlock.

This brings us back to the 1940 census, when Laura had married William Hall and lived with Evelyn. Since Evelyn herself told EHS that her father was Richard A. Hall, it appears that Evelyn may have married his brother. That's pure speculation on my part. Stranger things have happened.

I went through this exercise to show that the Mars family had a long and storied history in Elkridge, and were free persons of color before the Civil War. I just wish we knew more of the stories!

Ella Mae Sharbs

Ella Mae Sharbs sent EHS pictures of her two daughters and two grandchildren who were Brumbaugh Babies, to be added to our photo album. Her daughters were named Martha and Sharon. Because Ella Mae Sharbs was about the same age as Ella M. Hawkins, and because Ella Mae named her daughter Martha which was the name of Ella M. Hawkins' mother, and because they both lived in Elkridge, I presumed that Ella Mae Sharbs is the married name of Ella M. Hawkins. I presumed correctly, because I found written testimony in our own archives wherein Laura said they were sisters.



According to an ancestry.com member, this is Ella Mae Sharbs



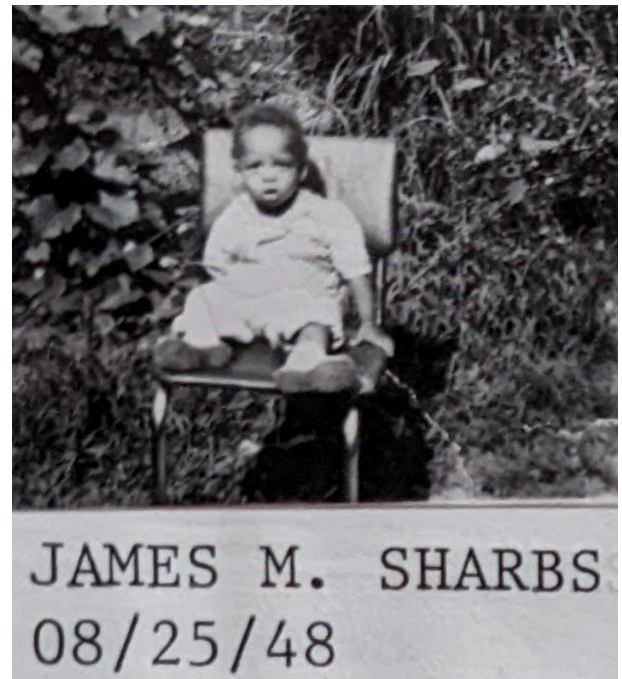
Martha's name was given to EHS as "Beanie", but she was listed as Martha, and was 8 years old in the 1940 census. Martha died in 1993.



Martha's sister Sharon was not born until 1949, and so she was about the same age as her niece and nephew.

James was born on August 25, 1948, but sadly, he died on October 1, 1968.

His sister Gloria was born in 1950 and as far as we know, she is still alive today.



Ella Mae Sharbs sent this note with the photos of her children and grandchildren:

Dear Friend

I am glad to be a part, in what you all are doing

These are my Dr Brumbaugh Babys (2) daughters + (2) grandchildren, as ever

Ella Mae Shaab

Researching the Sharbs family tree has been challenging. Every census record spells their name differently, or the transcription does. I've seen Shaab, Shaah, Sharps and Sharbs. However, Ella Mae's husband was named James and he was born in Maryland around 1905 to Albert and Edith Sharbs. They lived in Elkridge, at least since 1900. In 1950, James and Ella Mae lived on Hanover Road. I have been unable to find earlier census records for Albert and Edith. Albert and Edith were born after the Civil War, but we do not know if their parents were free born or slaves, or if they were born in Elkridge.

Final Thoughts

We are so pleased that Ella and Evelyn chose to be part of our project! This has been a very interesting journey for me, and I hope others enjoy it and help to augment it! There is much more that could be done. For example, I didn't tap into Maryland Land Records for this project, nor did I go to the courthouse or Maryland Archives to find more birth, marriage and death records. What I really want, though, are stories from the descendants of the people presented herein. Dates and places are all well and good, but what really brings people to life are their stories. Stories depend on memory and may not be as accurate as vital records at the courthouse, but they mean so much more!