

TRUMAN BEN WHITE



Ruth Marie Moore White
c. 1962

**b. February 26, 1908,
Blythedale, Harrison County,
Missouri**

**m. April 4, 1928,
Blythedale, Harrison County,
Missouri**

**d. June 6, 1964,
Blythedale, Harrison County,
Missouri**

Truman Ben White
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**b. July 12, 1905,
Blythedale, Harrison County,
Missouri**

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**d. February 23, 1990
McAllen, Hidalgo County,
Texas**

TRUMAN BEN WHITE



**Truman Ben White
President, Citizens Bank
Blythedale, Missouri**

**Truman Ben White
saw the beginning of the:**

- Telephone**
- Rural Electricity**
- Automobile**
- Radio**
- Airplane**
- Basketball Game**
- Antibiotics**
- Television**
- Rockets**
- Interstate Highways**
- Space Exploration**
- Computers**



**Truman Ben White
c. 1962**

TRUMAN BEN WHITE

Truman Ben White was born July 12, 1905 in Blythedale, Harrison County, Missouri and died on February 23, 1990 in McAllen, Hildago County, Texas. He married Ruth Marie Moore on April 4, 1928. She was born on February 26, 1908 and died on June 6, 1964. He married Lois Bain Beets on February 12, 1967.

The children born to Truman Ben and Ruth Marie Moore White were:

Bedonna Jean White
Joy Ann White
Betty Ruth White
Jimmy Dale White

Frank White and Ollie Pryor White were the parents of Truman Ben White who was born in a farm house a few miles north of Blythedale, Missouri. In 1908 the family moved to Colorado in a covered wagon because of Ollie's poor health. Ollie's health did not improve and the family returned to Blythedale, Missouri where she died of tuberculosis in 1908. Dorrel B. White, brother of Truman White, was born on July 17, 1907 and died on April 8, 1908. Dorrel was said to have died of a tumor of the jaw. A photograph of Dorrel White taken during his first year shows an enlarged left jaw. It is possible that this tumor was tuberculosis of the jaw as bone involvement was more common in children. Tuberculosis also caused the death of his mother, Ollie Pryor. After his mother died, Truman lived in Blythedale, Missouri with his paternal grandparents, Elwood and Amelia Mock White, from 1908 until 1911.

Blythedale was the shipping center for Eagleville, Hatfield and the surrounding area in 1916 supporting many businesses including two banks, a hotel, drug store, garage, jeweler, lumber yard, movie house, axe handle factory, opera house, school, hardware store, barber shops, and a brick factory. ¹

Truman remembered that his first grade teacher, Blanche Kramer, was a very good teacher and she became a life long friend. Mrs. Kramer also was the high school English teacher of Bedonna Ruth White Gordon and Joy Ann White Lynch, daughters of Truman and Ruth Moore White. Mrs. Kramer later moved to St. Joseph, Missouri with her husband and lived there until her death.

The 1910 Missouri Census, Harrison County, Blythedale Village, dwelling 85, family 86, page 3824 lists the following:

		Age	Yrs. Married	Occupation
White, Elwood	Head	58	31	Farmer
White, Amelia A.	Wife	57	31	
White, Roy	Son	24		Handyman
White, Lena	Daughter	14		
White, Truman	Grandson	4		

At the time of the 1910 Census Frank White was living alone in Colfax Township, Harrison

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County, Missouri.² On December 2, 1909 Adra Clare White, daughter of Elwood and Amelia, married Clyde Poush.

Frank White moved with Truman in 1911 to New Mexico where Frank White had staked a claim. Truman reported that his aunt, Adra Clare White Poush, sister of Frank White, also staked a claim in New Mexico at the same time. There had been newly discovered oil near Capulin, New Mexico. In 1913 Frank White married Nora Alice Allman from Cainsville, Harrison County, Missouri who had also moved to New Mexico and staked a claim near the Frank White claim. Frank White and family moved back to Blythedale in 1915 but returned to New Mexico in 1917 on a train immigrant car with their household goods and mules. Truman attended the Donaby School during those two years that the family lived near Blythedale.

Frank White erected a windmill on his farm and explained to Truman how the pump worked and oiling was needed to keep it operating properly. While Frank was away, Truman climbed to the top of the windmill and oiled the machinery. Oil from the can fell into the water tank below and Frank thought oil had been discovered. Truman later admitted that he had been oiling the windmill. That was the only “oil discovery” on the farm.

Truman White lived with Frank White and Alice Allman White for a total of six years. These years were very difficult for Truman because he was abused by Nora Alice White. He was required to eat and sleep on the back porch of the house. The following lines are from a poem that Truman wrote in February 1965³ explaining his feelings:

*I lived with them here in the west,
Six years or more at the best.
If these few years I must tell,
It was just like living in HELL.*

*I probably was no Angel, see?
But she was no mother to me.
To me the things she said was frightening,
I'll not even put it down in writing.*

The 1920 New Mexico Census, Union County, Dedman Township, dwelling 82, household 85, page 6651 lists the following:

		Age	Occupation	Br.Pl.	Fr.Br.Pl.	Mo. Br.Pl.
White, Frank M.	Head	37	farmer	IA	IA	IA
White, Nora Alice	Wife	35		MO	MO	MO
White, Truman	Son	14		MO	IA	MO

Truman returned on the train to Blythedale, Missouri in 1920 with Clayton Smith, brother of Lowell Smith, who married Lena Marie White, sister of Truman’s father, Frank Marion White. He initially lived with his maternal grandparents, Horace Vernon and Sarah Odell Pryor, on their farm until Sarah Odell Pryor’s death in 1924. He describes living with his Grandparent’s Pryor

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as follows:

*Eventually I was moved away,
To Grandpa's Pryor I got to stay.
Here I was happy as could be,
Living with them was Heavenly.
This happy home was to be short lived,
Because before long Grandmother died.* ⁴

These were happier times for Truman until Sarah Odell Pryor died, after which Truman moved to Blythedale and again lived with his paternal grandparents, Elwood and Amelia Mock White.

Truman initially attended Blythedale Public High School but high school was only two years when Truman started as a freshman. Truman finished the first two years and worked one year. He then returned for his Junior year when the high school was expanded to four years. He also wanted to be in the same class as Ruth Marie Moore who would be his future wife. One day during the Spring of his Junior year some of the high school boys decided to skip school. Truman stayed home and assemble a radio this same day. All of the boys who skipped school, including Truman, were punished for their actions. The boys including Truman then decided to egg the principal's house, for which all of the boys were put in jail. The people of the town were upset when the young men were placed in jail but after a few hours the sheriff released them. Truman subsequently left Blythedale Public School to attend Ridgeway High School for the rest of his Junior year but returned to Blythedale Public High School for his senior year.⁵

In the fall of 1924 Sarah Odell Pryor died but Truman continued in school and graduated from Blythedale High School in the Spring of 1925. During their high school years Truman and Ruth dated and attended church youth meetings on Sunday evenings. They attended movies and frequently played card games. Truman commented in the same 1965 poem about this time in his life, stating:

*While going to school at Blythedale High,
I met the girl who took my eye.
We went here to this school together,
And did here learn to LOVE each other.
In the year of 1925 I guess,
We graduated from old BHS.*

*Now in the summer of this same year,
In the bank I commenced to work,I fear.
The next two years in school Ruth taught,
Riding a horse who sometimes balked.*

*On April 4th in 1928 the Wedding Bells did ring,
With great anticipation we had looked forward to this thing.
To this Happy union came,
Three daughters and one son.*

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*We loved them each dearly as they came,
And tried to treat them all the same.*

Truman was a very good athlete and was named the “All County Center” of the basketball team. He was good at track, competing in the discus, javelin, high jump and the half mile.

The classes that Truman took at Blythedale Public High School were as follows:

Freshman

- English
- European History
- General Science
- Algebra

Sophomore

- Economics
- English II
- Geometry
- Civics
- History

Junior (from Ridgeway High School)

- English
- Latin
- Civics
- Economics
- American History
- Advanced Algebra

Senior

- Physical Geography
- Hygiene
- Geometry
- Missouri History
- Caesar

His teachers at Blythedale High School included: B. Hinegar, B. Boulting, G.W. Wise, Velma Sheets, E. Buchner, Vesta Dunn, O.R. Hunt and Thelma Knecht.⁶

His first, car purchased in 1923, was a black, second-hand, Model T touring car with cloth side curtains that Truman overhauled in a neighbor’s garage. In 1925 he bought a new Ford Roadster, which required hand cranking, for \$375.00. He traded this Ford for a Touring car with balloon tires that was then traded for a used Star auto which he had when he married. Ruth Marie Moore learned to drive a stick-shift in this car. Truman had a life-long love affair with cars and often would trade and buy new cars. One year, while vacationing in Nebraska, the family had car trouble. Truman went to the local dealer in a small Nebraska town for car repairs and left with a new Buick, his favorite car model in later years. On another occasion he also bought a new car when returning from Topeka, Kansas where he had been buying safe deposit boxes for the bank.

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He stopped on the way home in St. Joseph, Missouri for car repairs and again left the dealership with a new, green 1954 Buick Special.⁷

After graduating from Blythedale High School in 1925 Truman went to work on a farm for Earl Stevens. In July of 1925, he was stopped on the street by Art Wright and asked if he wanted to work at the Citizens Bank, Blythedale, Missouri. His starting salary was \$30 per month. He was planning to quit in one month when his salary was raised to \$35 and later to \$37.50 per month. After two years, he moved to Amazonia, Missouri, north of St. Joseph, to work in a bank for \$60 per month with the possibility of being cashier. Truman missed Ruth Marie Moore and after two months he returned to Blythedale. Art Wright had apparently pulled a fake bank holdup of the Citizens Bank and left for Colorado. Truman was hired to return to the Citizens Bank for \$75 per month but he had to pay for the employees from his salary.⁸

Later Truman Ben White hired Creta Harper to work in the bank. She worked in the Citizens Bank for many years before moving to California. Tommy Laffoon was hired when Creta Harper left and later Wilma Gillespie Wilson who married Gerald Wilson, son of Otto Wilson. Otto Wilson built the home of Truman Ben and Ruth Marie Moore White. Tommy Laffoon left the bank when Jimmy Dale White, son of Truman, began working there.

Blythedale, Missouri⁹ was described by Winnie (Ms. Roy) Fitzgerald in 1927 in the following poem.

*We have a small town, most 500 you know,
But made up of people that sure are on the go.
We have a good school, and a professor that's fine.
Then comes the three stores, all in a line,
We have two cafes, four churches, and a bank.
One grocery, two garages, with a gasoline tank.
Two produce houses and a creamery, too
That hands out the tests that are fine honest and true.
Two barber shops and one picture show,
With the latest pictures and prices quite low.
We have a fine depot, the best on the Q
And an agent that serves you, the best he can do.
One drug store, and a hotel, modern and sedate,
The best you can find anywhere in the state.
Our post office is standard in every way,
With first class service all through the day.
One blacksmith shop and two grocery stores,
And the Odd Fellow hall with hardwood floors.
One lumber yard, the best in old Mizzou,
Our coal dealers, well, they number two.
Then another thing, we think quite nice,
That the town this size can manufacture ice.
Our telephone operator is right on the dot,
She answers so quick we say, Oh I forgot.
We are losing from our midst our Dr. and wife,*

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*We are deeply grieved, but seems he must go,
But hope an improvement in their health will show.
He's doctored the rich and He's doctored the poor,
He's gone when he knew his pay was not sure.
He's doctored the flu, gout, fever and colds,
And saved most of the patients both young and old.
Now what will we do, when he really is gone?
Not a doctor in town that we can depend on.
So now be careful about your aches and pains,
For some of the doctor's don't go when it rains.
Now Dr. and wife, when you tire of the west,
And feel that you want a much needed rest,
Just pack up your baggage and eastward sail,
Back to the good old town Blythedale.*

The following was the description of the wedding of Truman B. to Ruth Marie Moore on April 4, 1928.

Mr. Trueman (sic) White and Miss Ruth Moore were married April 4 at Cainsville by Rev. Babcock. They were accompanied by sisters of the bride, Miss Gladys and Edith Moore. The groom is the son of Frank White and the grandson of Mr. and Mrs. Elwood White and Horace Pryor. The bride is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Harley Moore and the granddaughter of John Moore. They lived here from babyhood and were both members of the graduating class of 1925. The groom is the cashier of the Citizens' bank. The bride is teaching the Canaday school. They are both excellent young people and the writer joins the other friends in wishing for them a long life of happiness and prosperity. They will go to housekeeping soon in their property in the west part of town, previously owned by John Phillips.¹⁰

The 1930 Missouri Census, Harrison County, Colfax Township, Blythedale, page 3, dwelling 88, family 88, lists the following:

	Age	Age at marriage	PerProp	Occupation	Place of Work	
Truman White	Head	24	22	2000	Cashier	Citizens Bank
Ruth White	Wife	22	20			
Bedonna	Dau	11/12				

Truman decided that he should have other interests in addition to the bank and he bought ten head of Hereford cattle in 1930. This venture was not too successful, so in 1936 he sold the Herfords and bought his first registered Angus heifers from Roy Craig and a bull from Earl Dale. In 1954 Truman bought a bull for \$3500 dollars that was the son of a Penny-James Angus bull worth \$100,000. (J.C. Penny, after whom this herd was named, was the founder and owner of the J.C. Penny Stores. He was the eighth grade and high school graduation speaker at the Blythedale Public School Graduation in 1948, the year Joy Ann White Lynch graduated from the eighth grade.) This new bull and five cows were soon struck by lightning and killed. Truman then bought a bull calf from the J. Garrett Tolan Farms in Illinois. This bull, called "Johnny", was a great addition to the herd.

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Truman expanded the purebred Angus cattle business in 1940, forming the Whiteway Farms of Blythedale, Missouri and maintained a superior herd for many decades. This herd was very good and bull calves were sold in many states including Kansas, Colorado, Arkansas, Iowa, Texas, and Idaho. One of the bull calves from his Angus herd was the Grand Champion of the Northwest Pacific Circuit Show. The Grand Champion Steer of the Northwest Missouri State Fair, shown by Betty Ruth White Baker, was also from this herd. He also raised Hampshire hogs.¹¹

Truman Ben White was engaged to Ruth Marie Moore in 1925 and they were married on April 4, 1928. Before they were married, Ruth Marie Moore White had saved \$800 and Horace Vernon Pryor, Truman's grandfather, gave them \$500. They bought a house for approximately 1000 dollars directly north of the site where they later built the family home. The home was furnished with a new dining table and six chairs, a bed room set from the catalogue of a Blythedale store, a hand washing machine, new linoleum, a Majestic radio, a hard wood floor in the living room, curtains from Paul Travis' dry goods store, dishes from the brides mother, Elzadia Florence Dale Moore, a davenport and chair, two rocking chairs, an oil stove, and a living room rug.

Truman started the Allis-Chalmers tractor business in 1938 and later switched to J. I. Case dealership in 1947 which he continued for several years. After selling the J.I. Case dealership Truman owned an automobile dealership with Freddie Eastin in Blythedale, Missouri. He loved cars and owned many but Buicks were his favorite.

In 1940 Truman and Ruth bought a house across the street from their first home which they tore down to build the new family house. Truman hauled sand from the farm for the concrete. The house was built by Otto Wilson.

Truman and Ruth moved from their original house to the John Fitzgerald house while building their new house. Their daughter, Betty, remembers riding her tricycle on the porch of this temporary home. While the house was being built a tornado struck and collapsed the scaffolding. The basement filled with water as the west wall of the house caved in and had to be rebuilt. The tornado also blew the roof off the Blythedale schoolhouse. Truman Ben and Ruth Marie Moore White moved into their new home on December 15, 1940.

Truman owned three farms, one of which was the Horace Vernon and Sarah Odell Pryor farm, located about four miles north of Blythedale. This farm was near the Donaby School and Church that was the social center of the area. The church was formed in 1872 on land that had been donated by Mr. and Mrs. Horace Varner Pryor, grandparents of Truman White. The Church was destroyed in the 1960's. Singing schools, eloquent debates on literary subjects, softball games, spelling bees and oyster and pie suppers were held at the center. An annual homecoming was held each summer in the tree filled church yard where the horses and wagons would be tied. A table was set beneath these same trees and after the morning services a large dinner was served. A Christmas program with Santa, candy, fruit, and gifts was held each year.¹²

Truman continued working in the Citizens Bank of Blythedale, Missouri.¹³ He later became president and principal stockholder of the bank and worked in the bank until his retirement. Voris Brown, a bank board member, organized a retirement party which was held at the

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Blythedale Christian Church and attended by many from the community and surrounding area. A surprise guest was Lee and Ava Pryor from Bakersfield, California. Lee was a cousin of Truman and a lifelong friend. The bank celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1960. He also sold insurance part-time while he was working at the bank.

Truman was very active in the Blythedale Christian Church where he was an Elder and Sunday School teacher for many years. Betty Ruth White Baker remembers a time when he was the teacher of the 4th and 5th grade class that was being noisy and inattentive. Truman told them that they could look for a new teacher for the next week as he would not return and he did not.

Truman was on the school board of the Blythedale Public School and later on the North Harrison Public School Board after the consolidation of the Blythedale, Hatfield, and Eagleville schools in 1952. Bedonna Jean White Gordon and Joy Ann White Lynch graduated from Blythedale High School. Betty White Baker began high school in 1952 in North Harrison High School and graduated with the first class to attend all four years.¹⁴

Truman organized and helped with the Blythedale Free Fair, which was held the first week in August on the old school grounds. The Fair included a ferris wheel, cars in a circle, a milk can toss and swings in a circle. Voris Brown operated a food stand selling hamburgers, sloppy joes, pop, and pie with ice cream. Betty Ruth White Baker and Joy Ann White Lynch played in this band. The Blackwood Brothers Gospel Quartet from Shenandoah, Iowa often performed at the Free Fair. Other evening programs at the Free Fair included horse shows and variety shows of local area talent. These shows were very popular with the area families because of the entertainment and the opportunity to visit with friends. This fair was still being held in 2002 and Jimmy Dale White, son of Truman and Ruth Marie Moore White, and his wife, Mary Lou Waters White, were in charge of the fair at that time.¹⁵

Vera Brown, his wife, directed the high school band, which played on every Saturday night during the summer. The bandstand was located in the intersection in front of the Citizens Bank. Area people would come to shop in Blythedale. The merchants gave each band member a candy bar or bottle of pop for the night of music. Betty Ruth White Baker and Joy Ann White Lynch played in this band. A free movie was organized by Truman White and sponsored by the merchants to be a part of this Saturday night entertainment.

Truman was the Blythedale Community 4-H leader and was active in the Farm Bureau of Harrison County, Missouri.

When responding to a good joke, Truman Ben White, who had a great sense of humor, would laugh and slap his knee in a distinctive manner. Because of his role as a community leader, his neighbors sought him for advice and direction. Often on weekends or evenings, bank customers would stop at the family home to ask Truman for advice or a bank loan. Truman knew all of the people and their families. Promissory note forms were available at his home and would be signed on the kitchen table if Truman judged the person to be credit-worthy.

Ruth Moore White died on June 6, 1964 after suffering recurring difficulty with her heart. A few years following the death of Ruth Moore White, Truman married Lois Bain Beets and they lived

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in Mission, Hildago County, Texas for many years.

Truman Ben White died in February 23, 1990 of a subarachnoid hemorrhage in McAllen, Hidalgo County, Texas. He is buried beside his wife, Ruth Marie Moore White, in the Cedar Hill Cemetery, Blythedale, Harrison County, Missouri.¹⁶

Sources:

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Mary Lou Waters White, family history and personal notes

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Lena Marie White Smith, family records

Anne Lee Feldman, personal notes

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Topeka, Kansas

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¹ History of Harrison and Mercer Counties, 1888

² 1910 Missouri Census, Harrison County, Colfax Township, page 9 A

³ Poem, Truman Ben White, 1965

⁴ Poem, Truman Ben White

⁵ Interview of Truman Ben White by Jimmy Dale White, family records

⁶ High School Records, in files of the author

⁷ Betty Ruth White Baker, family records

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ *The Old Town*, by Winnie Fitzgerald, Blythedale, Missouri, 1927

¹⁰ Bethany Republican, Bethany, Missouri, April 1928

¹¹ Betty Ruth White Baker, family records

¹² *History of the Donaby Church*, copy in the files of the author

¹³ Mary Lou Waters White, records Citizens Bank, Blythedale, Missouri

¹⁴ Bedonna Jean White Gordon and Joy Ann White Lynch, personal records

¹⁵ Betty Ruth White and Jimmy Dale White, family records

¹⁶ Death Certificate, Truman Ben White, Hidalgo County, Texas, 1990