

# MY TRIP ABROAD

Frank Bennett's  
Aunt Lucy  
Takes Him  
on a  
Grand Tour  
of Europe

August -  
September  
1930

A Journal by Frank I. Bennett, Age 16

Edited, Illustrated and Commented Upon by Michael Hall

**For  
Lisa,  
Patricia  
and Charlene**



**An  
In the Hall Way  
Project**



# MY TRIP ABROAD

## August/September 1930

### Cast of Characters

**Frank Ira Bennett**, our diarist. A young man with blond hair and blue-green eyes who just turned sixteen. Curious, clever, a member of the legendary Camp Family of Ocala, Florida.

**Leta Camp Bennett Davis**, Frank's beautiful, blonde mother, now forty, divorced from Ira Fuller Bennett of Chicago, re-married to insurance company owner Norton Davis of Ocala. She is the third daughter and sixth of seven children of William Nelson Camp, a prominent man from Suffolk, Virginia, who moved to Ocala, Florida, and mined phosphate in Dunnellon. Her mother was Texana Gay Camp of Isle of Wight County, Virginia.

**Norton Davis**, Frank's stepfather, somber, gentlemanly, upstanding owner of D. W. Davis Insurance Company, Ocala, Florida.

**Aunt Lucy Camp Armstrong Moltz**, his mother's older sister, widow of wealthy shipping magnate George Ferguson Armstrong of Savannah, Georgia, now married to Carl Moltz, wealthy timber tycoon of Lake Toxaway, North Carolina. She is a rich, strong-willed woman of forty-seven who accompanied her father many times to Europe as he sold his phosphate as fertilizer to Belgian and German farmers.

**Lucy Junior**, Aunt Lucy and George Armstrong's daughter from Savannah, Georgia, and Lake Toxaway, North Carolina.

**Aline Ward**, Aunt Lucy's friend, a mystery woman. We know little about her.

and

First Class passengers and staff members on "Saturnia," the Italian Cosulich Line, and First Class passengers and staff members on the "Ile de France," the French Line.

# On Stage and Off Stage Characters

## A Photo Album



**Frank Ira Bennett**

His passport photo  
He has just turned 16

**Leta Camp Bennett Davis**

Frank's Mother  
Seen here as a young woman of 20



**Frank and his Mother**

A formal photograph taken when Frank was a little boy and his mother was still married to Ira Fuller Bennett, circa 1917

**Ira Fuller Bennett**

Frank's biological Father  
An offstage character



**Norton P. Davis**

Frank's stepfather, an insurance broker in Ocala, Florida; the man Leta married after her divorce from Ira Bennett

**Aunt Lucy Camp Armstrong Moltz**

Frank's aunt who took him on the Grand Tour. Seven years older than her sister Leta. By 1930, Lucy has buried her first husband George Ferguson Armstrong, given their Armstrong House to the City of Savannah to create Armstrong Junior College, and is married to Carl Moltz of Lake Toxaway, North Carolina.



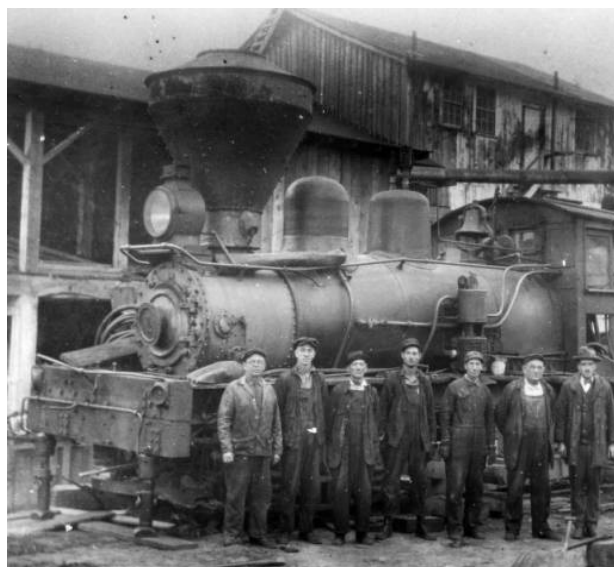


**Lucy Armstrong known as Lucy Junior** is shown here with her mother Aunt Lucy and stepfather Carl Moltz. Lucy Junior is slightly older than her cousin Frank. She will marry within a year.



### **Carl Moltz**

A photograph of Carl and Lucy Moltz long after Frank's Grand Tour. Carl Moltz made a fortune in timber and real estate in North Carolina. He was in New York in 1930 to meet the ocean liner that brought his wife, his stepdaughter Lucy Junior, the companion Aline Ward and sixteen year old Frank back to America.



A "timber tycoon" (a name also given to Camp Family members), Carl Moltz is shown here with his employees and the Moltz Lumber Company Shay Engine.

Moltz is at the far right with the group and in the enlarged (and fuzzy) crop.

Few photographs exist of Carl Moltz.

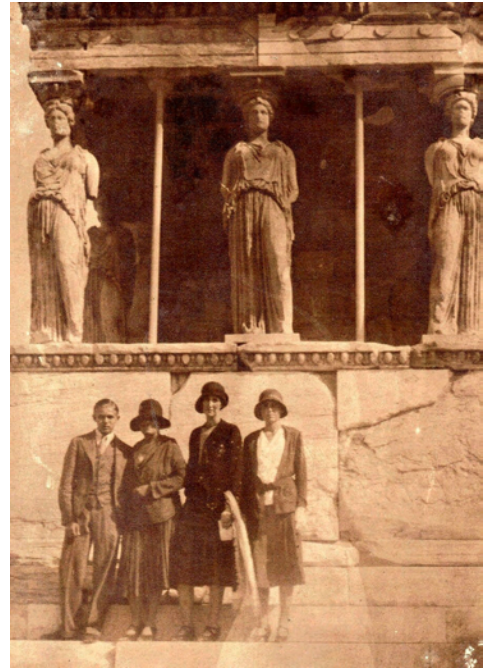


**George Ferguson Armstrong**, offstage character. Ferguson was Aunt Lucy's first husband, a man who earned his wealth from the Strachan (*pronounced "strawn"*) Shipping Company in Savannah. Their home, the Armstrong House, is on Forsyth Park at the corner of Bull and Gaston Streets.

Armstrong (1868-1924) is buried in Bonaventure Cemetery in Savannah in a vault with Aunt Lucy (1883-1970).

**Aline Ward.** This is the only photograph of his fellow travelers Frank included in his Grand Tour memorabilia. I can find no other photographs of or information about Aline. She's slim, tall and appears fashionable.

*Left to right:* Frank, Aunt Lucy, Aline Ward and Lucy Junior in front of the Caryatids in the Acropolis, Athens, Greece, 1930.



## Places Mentioned

### The Armstrong House, Savannah, Georgia



*Left:* The Armstrong House in Savannah was built for Aunt Lucy by her first husband George Ferguson Armstrong. After Armstrong died, Aunt Lucy and her daughter gave it to the City of Savannah to become a Junior College. When the College

grew too big, antiques dealer Jim Williams (who owned the Mercer House around the corner) bought it. He sold it to the law firm of Bouhan, Williams and Levy. It is from this office that firm member Frank (Sonny) Seiler represented Jim Williams in the famous murder trial that is chronicled in John Berendt's *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*.

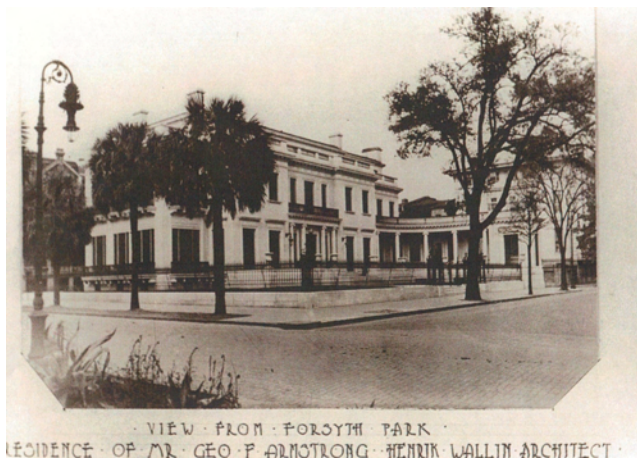
The Armstrong House is seen in the film version of *Midnight/Good and Evil* and in the Gregory Peck/Polly Bergen/Robert Mitchum version of *Cape Fear*.

Frank often spoke of visiting Aunt Lucy in the Armstrong House as a little boy. He said he sat in his pajamas on the stairs and peered down at fancy parties.

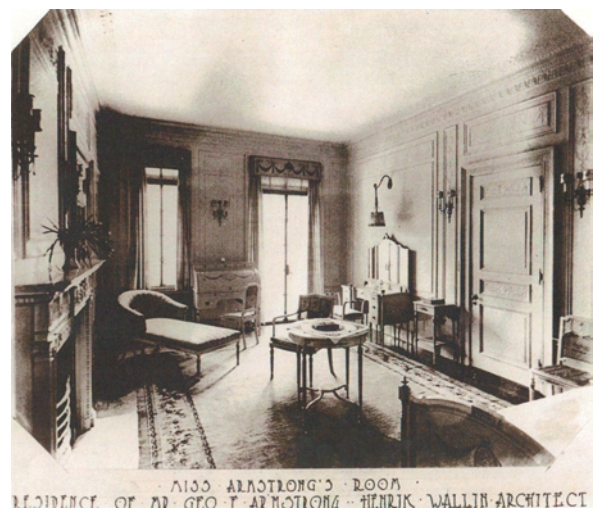
Here's what the house looks like today as legal offices. And here's the staircase Frank talked about.



\* There's more about the Armstrong House in the Epilogue.



View from Forsyth Park



Miss Lucy Junior's Room



Front Entrance, Colonnade and Dining Room



*Left:* This is what the “Living Hall” looked like soon after it was completed and initially furnished in 1917. Copies of these photographs were sent to me by F. W. “Sonny” Seiler, a senior partner in the firm of Bouhan, Williams & Levy, in appreciation for the copies of photographs of young Lucy and Leta Camp I sent him.



## Aunt Lucy's Hillmont, a chalet that became Greystone Inn, a B&B, Lake Toxaway, North Carolina

*Left:* Aunt Lucy's "Hillmont" as it looks today as the Greystone Inn. Again, Frank spent many summers visiting Aunt Lucy at Hillmont.

He was only two years old when a dam broke and the lake "went out." The lake disappeared and had to be returned after new configuration and construction.



At age sixteen Frank helped design the library at Hillmont. This "library" is now the most expensive suite in the Greystone Inn.

*Left:* The Library before a third renovation.

\* There's more about the Greystone Inn in the Epilogue.

## 910 East Fifth Street, Ocala, Florida



The William Nelson Camp House at 910 East Fifth Street, Ocala, is where Leta lived with Norton Davis and son Frank.

William Nelson and Texana Gay Camp had seven children. They were the prominent William Nelson Camp Family of Ocala, Florida.

Frank always referred to this house as "910."

*Right:* A young Leta Camp models a new dress while sitting on the front porch at "910." In October 2012, preservationists in Ocala are trying to save the house from demolition. At this writing, the future is uncertain.



## Michael's Introduction

A box of pamphlets, postcards, newspaper clippings and assorted travel documents lingered for nearly sixteen years in one of two closets in the entrance to the large room in my house that Pat Burdett's mother Adele named "The Ballroom."

This classic room with its spacious, before-you-enter-the-room closets is an add-on to the original house in Delray Beach that Frank and I purchased in 1994. Frank designed the addition, wanting to replicate the living room he designed in the early 1950's for his ranch-style home in Ocala, Florida.

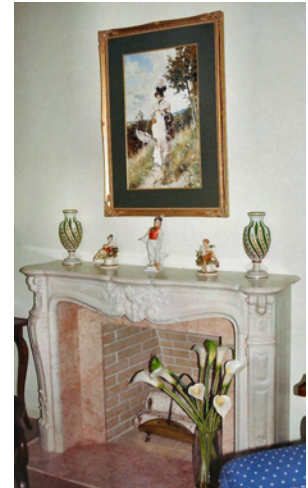
I found Roy M. Simon, a Delray Beach architect, who respected Frank's wishes and didn't argue with him about details or designs. Simon recommended a builder from Boynton Beach who cared about the project and delivered a first-class product.

Frank's mandates for the new room included a high ceiling, a place for a working fireplace, a marble mantelpiece, and massive shelves on each of the north and south walls. He insisted upon two sets of French doors on the west wall, allowing light to change throughout the morning, afternoon and early evening.

Taking a scouting expedition to Atlanta, we found a white faux-marble mantle which Frank bought and shipped to Delray. Our friend Nick Skoulaxenos helped Frank find a crystal chandelier at Quality Lighting, a commendable Delray Beach lighting store on South Federal Highway. I took Frank to an auction at Bill Hood and Sons, also in Delray Beach, where he found the perfect light blue, deep pink, yellowish-green and beige rug in an exquisite design.



Once the auction began, he appointed me as the one to raise the paddle. He said he'd nudge me when I should bid. Nervous, I followed his nudges. Only one person bid against me. The other bidder stopped at the fourth call. Frank and I got a bargain considering the size (12x20) and perfect quality of this amazing rug.



The shelves were meant to display his grandfather's purchase of a Dresden Lamm dinner service for twelve including enormous platters and tureens, a gift Frank inherited from his mother. He also wanted to display



his Meissen porcelains and Venetian glass treasures collected over years of travel and search, and said our combined collection of Herend Rothschild Bird dinner service, and my cobalt blue

*Above right:* Gravy boat of Dresden Lamm.

Wedgwood Jasperware biscuit jars, teapots, jugs and pitchers should live on these shelves. “No books,” he proclaimed. “You’ve got plenty of space for them elsewhere.” I cheat a little. I keep my four volumes of Roddy McDowall’s personally autographed *Double Exposure* books there, and my novels by Virginia Sorensen, but otherwise it’s book-free.

Frank only lived to see the “ballroom” under construction, watching it grow block by block as he sat in his white boxer drawers in the shade of the patio. Uncharacteristically, he was pleased with its daily progress. Sadly, he didn’t make it long enough to see the room finished or painted or decorated or furnished. He checked out on New Year’s Eve 1996, at age 83, and left the details to me. But he left happy, knowing the “addition” was going to be a great success.

If you knew Frank, the set designer who knew color and “period” better than most stage designers in America, you can understand my terror of choosing the right color of paint and finding new furniture to complement *his* furniture. Being Frank, he watched from afar to make certain I found the right shade of what he had described as “English grey green.” (I bought at least ten Sherwin-Williams paint samples at five dollars a can, painted splotches all over the walls, and went in to see what they looked like at all times of day.) I must have done a good job because he didn’t rattle the chandelier.

From his whereabouts he helped me place the 12x20 rug exactly and precisely in the middle of the 18x26 room.



*Above:* The “ballroom” as it looks October 2012. The flash on my camera washed out the intensity of the color on the walls. The actual wall color is more grey-green than aqua. The color of the shelves is accurate.

If only I had quizzed him about the letters, telegrams, programs, playbills, postcards and souvenirs from his Grand Tour with Aunt Lucy! When he moved from Ocala to Delray Beach, a staggeringly difficult move that was made possible by the sterling help of my cousin George Sproul and our friend Nick Skoulaxenos, he stuffed his boxes of memorabilia into the garage – at first – and then I moved them into one of those “ballroom” closets to protect them from heat and silverfish.

Frank and I never examined those boxes together, but he told me about his Grand Tour on many occasions. When he and I traveled to Europe, he took me to many places he had visited,

*My Trip Abroad* has many more pages. If you would like to read the entire story, please email me at [mphdirector@bellsouth.net](mailto:mphdirector@bellsouth.net) and I will send you the complete PDF.