

# MAY MUSEUM & PARK HISTORICAL NEWSLETTER

MAY MUSEUM, 3802 SOUTH MAIN ST., FARMVILLE, NC 27828  
POST OFFICE BOX 623  
ROGER KAMMERER, DIRECTOR 252-758-6882  
RKAMMERER@FARMVILLENC.GOV

**FALL 2023**



The May Museum and Park is dedicated to preserving and interpreting Farmville area history. Ms. Tabitha M. DeVisconti, bequeathed her 19th century home with its contents, the first house in Farmville, NC, to the Town of Farmville in 1983. The Town opened the facility in 1991 as the May Museum and Park. The museum's mission is preserving, interpreting, and sharing the history of the Farmville region to foster better understanding and appreciation of the people that built and contributed to Pitt County's rural heritage.



**This summer hundreds of zinnias bloomed around the cherub fountain, the centerpiece of the lovely Susan Howard Wyre Cable Memorial Garden at the May Museum.**



---

**H**ere it is the Fall! What an eventful year this has been. The Friends of the May Museum present this the fourth May Museum Historical Newsletter. We hope that all who read these newsletters enjoy the fascinating local history of the May Museum and the town of Farmville. Each issue of the newsletter will continue to have recent Museum events, Museum displays, history, old and new photos, biographies, and memorabilia all dealing with the appreciation of the May Museum and the Town of Farmville. You are always invited to become a member of The Friends of the May Museum which sponsors enjoyable social events in the Museum gardens throughout the year. Many thanks to those of you who have sponsored our Museum events! The following is a list of the upcoming end of year events sponsored by the Friends of the May Museum to put on your calendar...



## **2023 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**

- ❖ **Sunday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>--Annual Membership Oyster Roast ...  
4:30 pm-Until ... May Museum Garden ... RSVP (252) 758-6882  
or rkammerer@farmville.gov**
- ❖ **November -- Museum Tours available**
- ❖ **Saturday, December 9<sup>th</sup> -- Farmville Christmas Parade ...  
10:30 am ... Museum open**
- ❖ **Sunday, December 10<sup>th</sup> -- Christmas Candlelight Tea...  
3:00pm-5:00 pm ... May Museum Garden ... RSVP 252-758-6882**





**A fun new feature in the Museum Garden is a signpost showing the direction of interestingly named local communities and their distances from the Museum.**



## Random scenes from the Music in the Park



The band "I-42" put out some amazing entertainment for the crowd.



Frankie Moye, Todd Edwards, Dan Roberson & Luke Gardner





**J. B. Andrews & wife, Maria Marta, Poo Barnette, & Bob Newton**



**Lynne Cushing and her sister, Laurie Cushing Russo**





**Lisa and Newton Smith**





**Debbie Mozingo, Bob Newton, & Susan Smith**



# **The May Museum & Park and The Friends of the May Museum Would Like To Honor Our 2023 Sponsors!**

**EMI Heating & Air, UBE, Paleteria Deya Ice Cream Shop,  
Raymond James & Associates**

**Barnette Bees, Woodside Antiques, Physicians East, Doug Henry**

**Pierce Insurance Agency, Inc., Mestek Inc., Southern Bank,  
Farmville Hardware, Jack Lewis, Joe Anne Jones, Farrior & Sons,  
Davis Enterprises, Farm Bureau (Kevin Wainwright), Dapper Dan's**

**Mary Cooper Falls, Kearney & James Long, McDavid Associates,  
Inc., Farmville Furniture, Pharmville Drug, H & L Automotive, Bob  
Newton, Triple J Enterprises, Dixon & Associates, WarePack Self  
Storage, John & Charlotte Mewborn, Robert & Judy May, Walker  
Ventures, Inc. (Josh & Mariah Walker), Trish Cobb & Jack Taft,  
Joe Willoughby, Elizabeth Sparrow, Carolyn Erwin, Ann Beckman,  
Mark Richardson, Ben & Sue Moore, Ann P. & Jim Lanier, &  
Edith Warren, Pour Haus, & Audrey's Herbal Spa**

**With special donations by John & Kirby Tyson, Home & Lawn  
Garden Club (Frankie Moye), Dail Gay, & Kathleen Rafferty**

**We THANK YOU For Your Contributions and Continued  
Support!**





## BIOGRAPHY----Amy Adeline Gertrude May

---



**Adeline (Addie) May**



**Francis Marion Dupree**

**A**my Adeline (Addie) Gertrude May, was born Nov. 19, 1863 in what is now the May Museum, and died Nov. 19, 1901, the daughter of James Williams May and Tabitha Bynum. Addie May spent her whole life desperately longing for love and a successful marriage, but it is believed she was “bipolar,” which created havoc during her entire personal life. This biography was taken from letters and diaries found in the Tabitha Marie DeVisconti Papers, East Carolina Manuscript Collection, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University.

Addie appears to have had a good local education. She married on May 10, 1882, in her father's home (the Museum), at the age of eighteen, to her cousin, Francis Marion Dupree, b. Nov. 28, 1856, d. July 27, 1912 in Farmville, NC, the son of Thomas B. Dupree and Sallie A. May. They began having marriage problems their first year and Francis began drinking heavily. They soon had a boy they named Paul C. Dupree born on July 29, 1883.

On their second wedding anniversary, Francis came home intoxicated and began verbally abusing his wife, breaking furniture, and throwing it at his terrified spouse. Luckily for Addie, he didn't hit her with any of the pieces, and she grabbed the baby and fled the house, running to her mothers with Francis pursuing them “*with an unsheathed bowie knife in his hand, yelling I'm going to kill you, I'm going to kill you!*” They tried to work things out, but they eventually separated. Addie instituted an action against Francis for a divorce on account of cruelty. A decree in favor of her was granted at Fall term 1885 Pitt County Superior Court. In Feb. 1886, Mrs. Tabitha Bynum May paid Latham, Skinner & Blow, Greenville, NC lawyers, \$100 for their fees for her daughter Addie's divorce case.



Though divorced, they kept being involved with each other. When he could not deal with her anymore, he sought out other companionship. Addie then instituted a second divorce suit against Francis alleging adultery, which the Court granted in September term 1889 Pitt County Superior Court.

In the meantime, Addie had placed an advertisement looking for a governess position in *The Atlanta Constitution* newspaper in the June 2, 1889 issue stating “*A lady belonging to one of the first families of North Carolina wishes a situation in a family with her 5-year-old darling boy;*” and that her life has been ruined, etc.

This advertisement was later read by an eight-year-old girl in Pearsall, TX named Virginia DeVisconti. Her father, John Augustus Lorenzo DeVisconti read the advertisement and sent a letter to Adeline May Dupree in Farmville, NC telling her of his circumstances, being a teacher and farmer. Addie wrote to him saying she has a husband who wanted to kill her and were separated. She had sued him for a divorce and feared she wouldn’t get it since one witness was dead and another went insane. She asked DeVisconti if a divorce could be obtained in Texas and under what circumstances. In another letter Addie stated she had found other witnesses and could stand the divorce trial. It was later discovered that Addie got the divorce by “*false swearing and promising to marry each of the two witnesses after the divorce was final.*” In a letter she told DeVisconti that she wanted absolute right over her son; if she could not get it, she would flee with her son to be with DeVisconti. Addie asked him if he would take her son and be a father to him. If DeVisconti were to die Addie promised she would be a mother to Virginia. DeVisconti and his daughter fell in love with this poor woman through her nice and pitiful letters and eventually invited Addie to come to Texas and be a “*motherly friend*” to his daughter.

After Addie’s divorce was final in September 1889, arrangements were immediately made and on Thursday, Oct. 9, 1889, DeVisconti received a dispatch of her forthcoming arrival in Texas. He anxiously expected her on Saturday, but because of slow connections, she did not arrive until Sunday, Oct. 12, about midnight. DeVisconti met her and her effects at the Pearsall depot with “*a trembling heart.*”

He recognized the lady with a small boy as she got off the train, but she was in company with a notorious man named Alee, a local wealthy desperado and murderer. Addie later told DeVisconti that she became acquainted on the train with Alee and he wanted her to go to the hotel with him and later to his ranch. DeVisconti said if he had known of this there would have been “*a fearful fight right on the platform.*” DeVisconti was “*charmed and bewitched*” by her until the second day after her arrival when he discovered she was a “*snuff dipper and also drank whiskey.*” DeVisconti got on



**Adeline (Addie) May Dupree**



Addie for these bad habits hurting her delicate health. Addie promised she would abandon her snuff habit and he never saw her use it again; although he knew she continued.

DeVisconti and Addie appeared to have a good relationship for the next year and according to family diaries, Addie put the move on him, and they married on March 3, 1890 in Atacosa Co., TX. John Augustus Lorenzo DeVisconti, Italian born and twenty-seven years Addie's senior, was the only child of a Count from the House of Milan and a French noblewoman. Things were starting to go wrong in their marriage when Addie would be sweet one moment and mean the next. She started to be cruel to little Virginia and DeVisconti had to call her on it.

Addie soon found out she was pregnant and wanted an abortion to get rid of it. She sent for a doctor to give her an herbal powder to abort the baby, but DeVisconti learned of it and stopped her. On Dec. 20, 1890 in Atascosa Co., TX, Addie gave birth to a daughter, they named Tabitha Marie DeVisconti, named after Addie's mother.

On Jan. 28, 1891, Addie received a telegram that her mother, Mrs. Tabitha May, had died in Farmville, NC and it was necessary that they should go back to North Carolina to take possession of some property left Addie. At the time they didn't have money to travel to North Carolina. It wasn't until many months later that they got to New Orleans where on Sept. 21, 1891 that Addie, Paul, and Tabitha left by train for North Carolina. It took four days on the train to reach Farmville, NC. Addie promised to send money to Meridian, MS for a train ticket for DeVisconti and his daughter when she got to North Carolina. DeVisconti wandered and toiled



*John Augustus Lorenzo DeVisconti & daughter Virginia*

doing odd jobs to get to Meridian, MS. DeVisconti and his daughter finally reached Meridian, MS on Oct. 24, 1891 where he did find a letter from Addie, but no money inside to DeVisconti's chagrin. After many hardships and working, DeVisconti received \$20 dollars in a letter from Addie saying this is all she had. DeVisconti learned later she had a large sum of money and was "*living high.*" Addie had also taken in three women to board who promised to pay her later.

DeVisconti and his daughter got on a train in Birmingham, AL and arrived in Wilson, NC on Jan. 17, 1892. They came to Farmville, NC the next day by wagon at



about 3:00 in the afternoon in a rainstorm.

DeVisconti was vexed by what he found at Addie's home (the May Museum). Addie was living high and neglecting her farmland and properties. DeVisconti discovered the three women living with Addie were prostitutes and the house was always full of local married men. DeVisconti drove them out of the house and gained the respect of the Farmville populace. He commenced immediately working on the farm, dismissing the 4-5 black men working on the farm and doing everything he could to save the estate from ruin. He commented in his diary that when he would come in from work his wife *"instead of greeting him would first run into the house to cleanse her mouth from the stench of snuff."*

Less than two years into their marriage, however, DeVisconti concluded that their union was *"a humbug."* Being a Roman Catholic, DeVisconti concluded that since divorce was prohibited under Catholic doctrine his marriage to Addie, although legally binding, *"had no spiritual or moral validity."*



**Adeline (Addie) May DeVisconti**

Eventually, DeVisconti made his intention known he was going back to Texas. He bought land for Addie and stated he had left Addie *"with no debts, plenty of meat, the granary full of corn, the barn full of fodder, and the chicken house full of poultry."* DeVisconti said Addie's *"diabolical sister,"* Sue May Albritton convinced Addie to refuse to go back to Texas with him as she had promised. unless he promised to return to North Carolina in a few years and *"to let her have her own way in everything do whatever she commanded him to do."* DeVisconti *"refused to never condescend to give up his manhood."*

DeVisconti gave up on Addie, who was then pregnant with their second child and left Farmville, NC with his daughter Virginia, in November 1892.

On Jan. 14, 1893 in Farmville, NC, Addie gave birth to her second daughter, who she named Sue May DeVisconti. DeVisconti heartily disliked the name and said he would refuse to call her by that name and would only refer to her as the *"little one."*

He continued to write Addie letters and send her money for the children. In his letters he stated that as long as she indulged in snuff and would not join him as true wife ought to do, *"love was extinct in his heart,"* though he entertained some sympathy for her as the mother of his children. Though he made a snide remark in his diary stating... *"these children will never be an*



*ornament or a use for human society she not knowing how to train children, nor be willing to train them right."* DeVisconti said he was sorrowful but began to accept the situation.

A year later, Addie finally agreed to come back to him in Texas arriving with her children in Cuero, TX on Nov. 13, 1893. Things were not good from the very start, and he discovered how mean she was. After several months, Addie and her children returned to Farmville, NC.

Despite being separated, Addie and Lorenzo carried on a lengthy and fairly friendly correspondence over the next eight years.

In 1894, Addie managed a branch office of Victor Associates, Chemists, of South Bend, IN selling tonic and toiletries (1894-1896).

In Jan. 1895, Addie wrote DeVisconti that she had had *"no Christmas with no meat or corn, and starvation looking to stay at her place."* DeVisconti said he had sent her 5 or 6 deeds for one acre lots in Farmville worth tidy sums. Apparently, she had sold them and used up the money. In Feb. 1895, Addie confessed she *"was in a bad fix, had no ties in North Carolina anymore and that she was moving to Tampa Florida on her land she inherited there if she could get there."*

Addie wanted to know how Lorenzo would respond to a divorce suit and how they would divide their property. *"I have had enough of married life,"* she concluded one letter, *"and never intend to live the married life again, with any man on earth."* She wrote to him asking for a simple divorce if he would not contest it. DeVisconti had no more feelings for her. He wrote in his diary... *"How can a man still entertain feelings of heart, love for a wife, that is willful, obstinate, heartless, that lies, deceives, a wife who even would not shrink from murder, when it could be committed so that it could not come to light, a wife who cares not for matrimonial vows, who would yet divorce at any time, who would not shrink from any means to obtain what she wants, even hire false witnesses or have them hired as she has done in the case with her first husband—who is a free lover as she often had declared."*

In 1901, Addie filed for divorce from DeVisconti for abandonment and received it in April term 1901 Pitt County Superior Court.

Apparently, Addie's mental state had been a long-standing family problem. According to her sister in a later deposition, Addie was insane at the time of her second marriage.

By August 1901, the family hired F. G. James, a lawyer from Greenville, NC, to get Addie into Broadoaks Sanatorium in Morganton, NC for morphine addiction treatment, but they had no room.

On the morning of Aug. 27, 1901, at the Register of Deeds office in Snow Hill, NC, by J. T. Sugg, JP, Addie DeVisconti, age 37, remarried to her first husband, Francis Marion Dupree. He tried to get a marriage license in Pitt County, but the magistrate refused because he knew of Addie's insanity. Two days before her marriage, two physicians pronounced her insane upon her application for admission into Dorothea Dix Hospital. While waiting to get into Dorothea Dix Hospital, Addie died on Nov. 19, 1901 in Farmville, NC from an overdose of morphine.

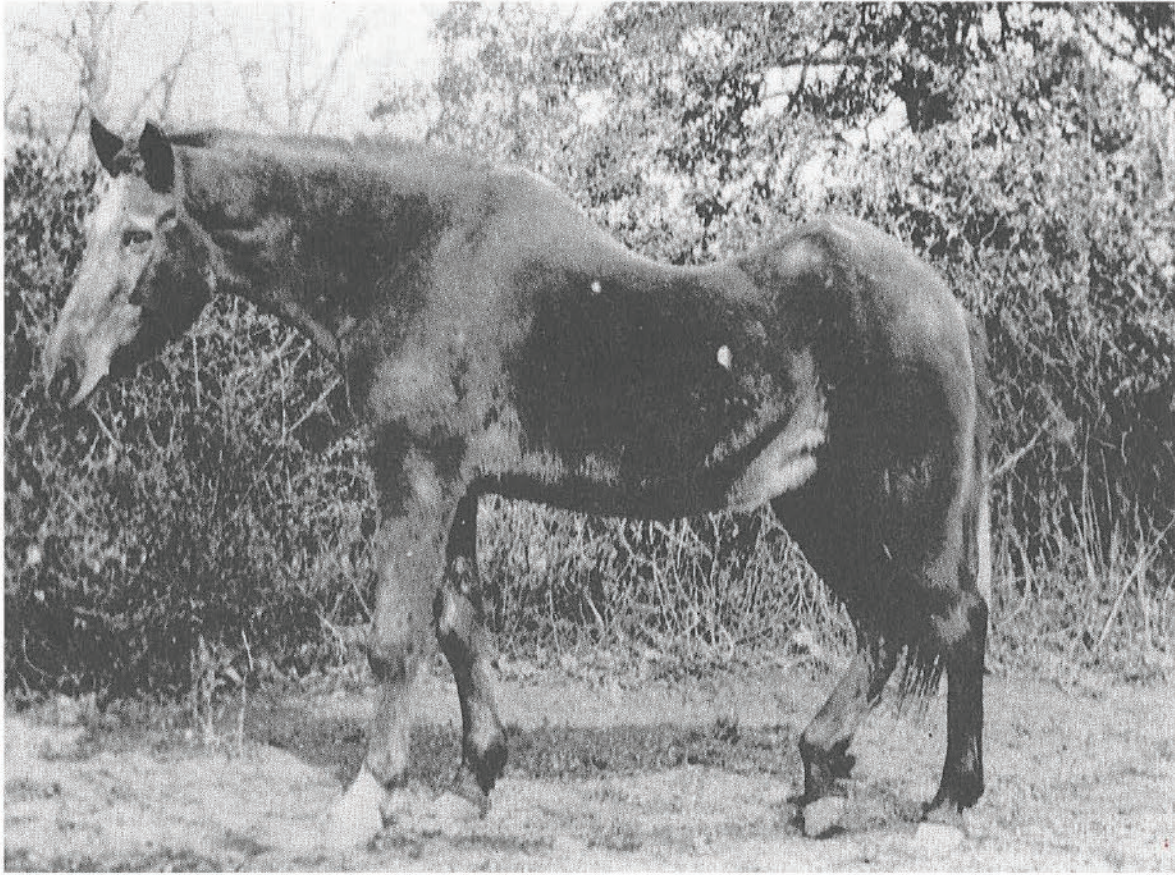
Adeline (Addie) May Dupree was buried in the family plot in Forest Hills Cemetery, Farmville, NC.

Sue May Albritton immediately sued Francis M. Dupree for custody of Addie's three children. On Nov. 29, 1901, she was granted custody by the Pitt County Court.



## **MUSEUM HISTORY----- Photograph**

---



**Ms. Tabitha DeVisconti once owned a horse she named "Baby." She inherited the horse from her mother, after her mother's death in 1901. Ms. Tabitha kept the horse until its death in 1930, at the age of 30 years. There is an iron horse head plaque on the Museum back porch honoring Baby. The horse was buried somewhere on the Museum property.**



## FARMVILLE---- Photograph

---



**This wonderful photograph from about 1920 is found in the photograph collection of the May Museum. Growing tobacco was once the major agricultural crop and shaped the region's distinctive sense of place and identity. All of the traditions associated with farms and farming, which were learned and passed on informally is called "Folk Life." Though tobacco farming has all but disappeared, many remember their folk life in tobacco and how it changed their lives forever.**



## LAST PHOTOGRAPH

---



**This captivating photograph captures the early morning sun shining through the front door side lights of the Museum, warming a chilly morning, as it has for over a hundred and seventy years.**