Collecting Connections - Singer Manufacturing and the "Century of Progress" World Fair Our Collection - Singer 221 Featherweights Pam & J.C. Elliott

When looking at a display similar to a movie, I like to see a fuller picture. We know that Dorothy, Toto, and her farmhouse got blown into OZ and unfortunately landed on *Evanora* the *Wicked Witch of the East*, but the story just wouldn't be as interesting if her older sister *Theodora* the *Wicked Witch of the West* hadn't had a total melt-down! For that reason we like to add some artifacts to our machine displays, to give a more complete show.

On the subject of the *Chicago World's Fair* we defer to Nova Montgomery. She presents a compelling lecture regarding the *Chicago World's Fair* everyone should attend! Her knowledge of the Fair and the *Sears Roebuck Quilt Contest* is endless.....and yes she has a "*Holy Grail*" Featherweight 221 or two!

When we added a "Century of Progress – Chicago World's Fair 1934" 221 to our collection we knew we had an opportunity to build an entire display around it. There are literally hundreds of pieces of memorabilia commemorating the Fair so we tried to be selective in adding to our machines story. Our focus would be related to sewing, quilting, blankets, fabric, rugs, and hats! Yes, I have a hat thing.

The first piece I ran across was fortunately Singer related. When visiting Singer's exhibit in the *Electrical Building* in 1933 or 1934, in addition to seeing their newest irons, vacuums, and sewing machines, you would be offered a *Certificate* giving the holder a choice of items ie, free instruction in making dresses, draperies, or other home furnishing, children's clothing or a Singercraft Guide. It's a handy tool that allows the homemaker to make rugs with her sewing machine. The Singercraft Guide came in a dated Commemorative box with instructions and a pattern of the World's Fair symbol. There are two distinct Guides/ Boxes, one for each year of the Fair. The holder was asked to redeem the Certificate at their local *Singer Store*, sign it and be awarded their prize. In our collection are *Certificates* from both the *1933 & 1934 Chicago Worlds Fairs* & along with their accompanying Singercraft Guides.

Beyond this however I was intrigued by the names of the redeemers. Our 1933 Certificate was signed Mrs. Katherine (Ernzen) Leiving of Batavia, II. a suburb of Chicago. Katherine's husband Jesse had worked for Diamond International Co. a foundry and maker of fine Jewelry for over 25 years.

The 1934 Certificate was redeemed by Miss A.E. (Annette Elaine) Church of Memphis, Tennessee. Finding Annette Elaine Church and her history was an amateur genealogists "Gold Mine" addition to our display! Her father, Robert Reed Church Jr. was America's first black millionaire, son of a riverboat captain and a slave. The Church family has a long, successful, and storied history in Memphis and American politics to include original members of the Memphis Chapter of the NAACP, Philanthropy, Republican Party connections, and baseball (Chicago Cubs and the Pittsburgh Pirates being their families favorite teams)

Monday Oct. 1st, 1934 Annette redeemed her Singer Certificate. The day prior, the Chicago Cubs her favorite team, played a losing Double-Header against the Pittsburgh Pirates, her families favorite team at Wrigley Ball Park! She undoubtedly traveled to Chicago from Memphis early to see the new Singer "Featherweight" & when time allowed, to see the games. Fortunately following the loss, to boost her spirits, she would visit the local Singer Store and redeem her Certificate for a Singercraft Guide?

(see "Official Game Score card" below)

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We hope to feature other favorite collectibles from *Exhibitions, Expositions*, and *World Fairs* in future articles ie, book banks, tapestries, rugs, wagons, hats, canes, literature, pillows, catalogs, maps, etc.... stay tuned!



(Left) 1933 Century of Progress Singer Certificate - redeemed by Katherine Ernzen of Batavia, Ill. Singer 1933 "Bonded Representative pinback" & "Century of Progress - Chicago 1933 Singercraft Guide-(Right) 1934 Century of Progress Singer Certificate - redeemed by Annette Elaine Church of Memphis Singer 1934 "Bonded Representative pin" & "Century of Progress - Chicago 1934 Singercraft Guide



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(Left to right) Sarah Roberta Church - daughter of Robert Reed Church Jr. (Annette's Niece and author) Mary Elizabeth *Church* Terrell (seated) wife of Judge Robert Heberton Terrell of Washington D.C. (Right Standing) Annette Elaine Church

* all three original members of the Memphis Chapter of the NAACP



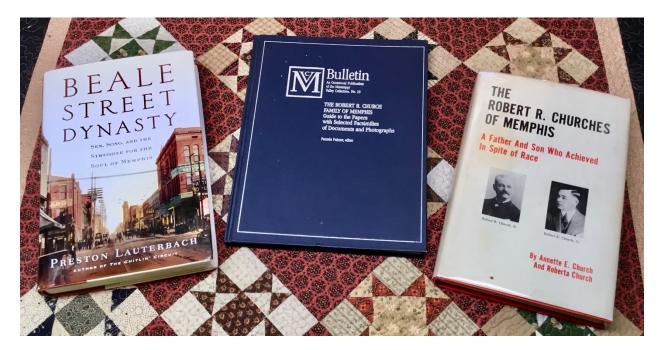
Annette Elaine



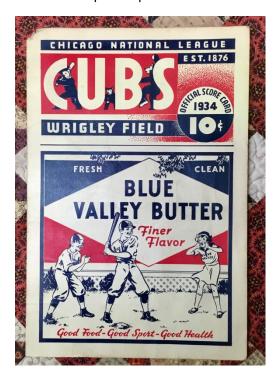
Mary Elizabeth (left) Annette Elaine (right)

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The following books are invaluable in telling the story of the "Robert R. Church" family of Memphis.



Here's a "Special" piece from our collection. Yes, an actual Cubs vs Pittsburgh Score Card from 1934!





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