

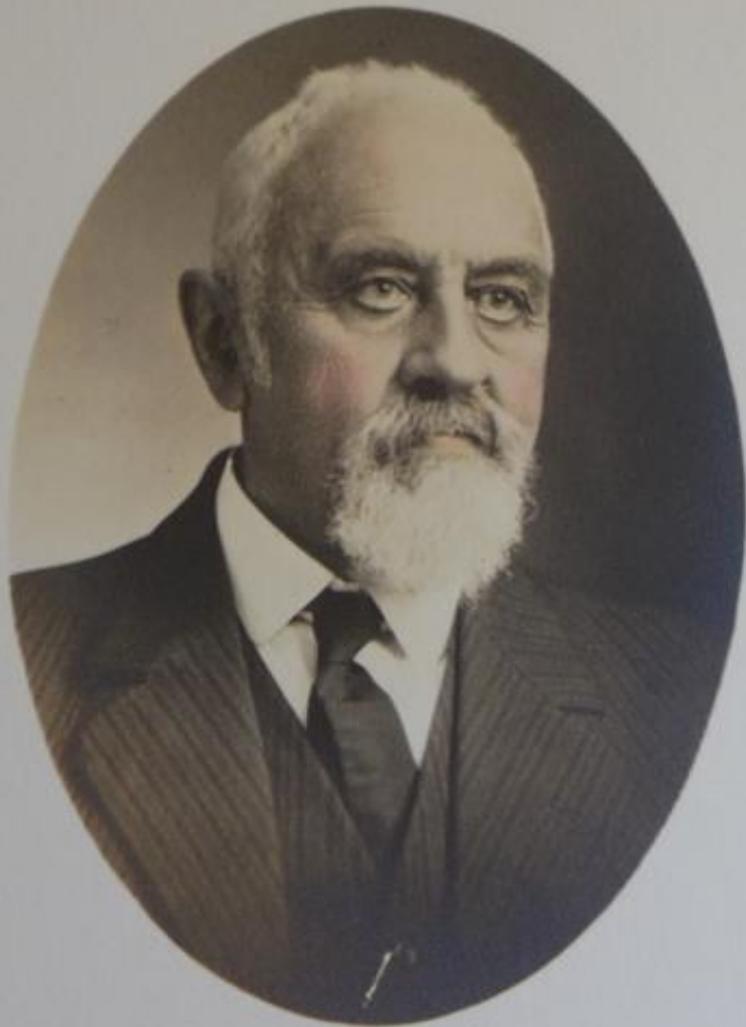
# Memories of Marianna Fischer Black



All photos except those otherwise noted are courtesy of Stanley Black III

Brief notes on the slides are found on slides 17-18. Personal recollections discussed at the FBCC meeting on August 16 are found on slides 19-20.

# Both parents were of German heritage



Louis F.  
1839-1918

Fischer



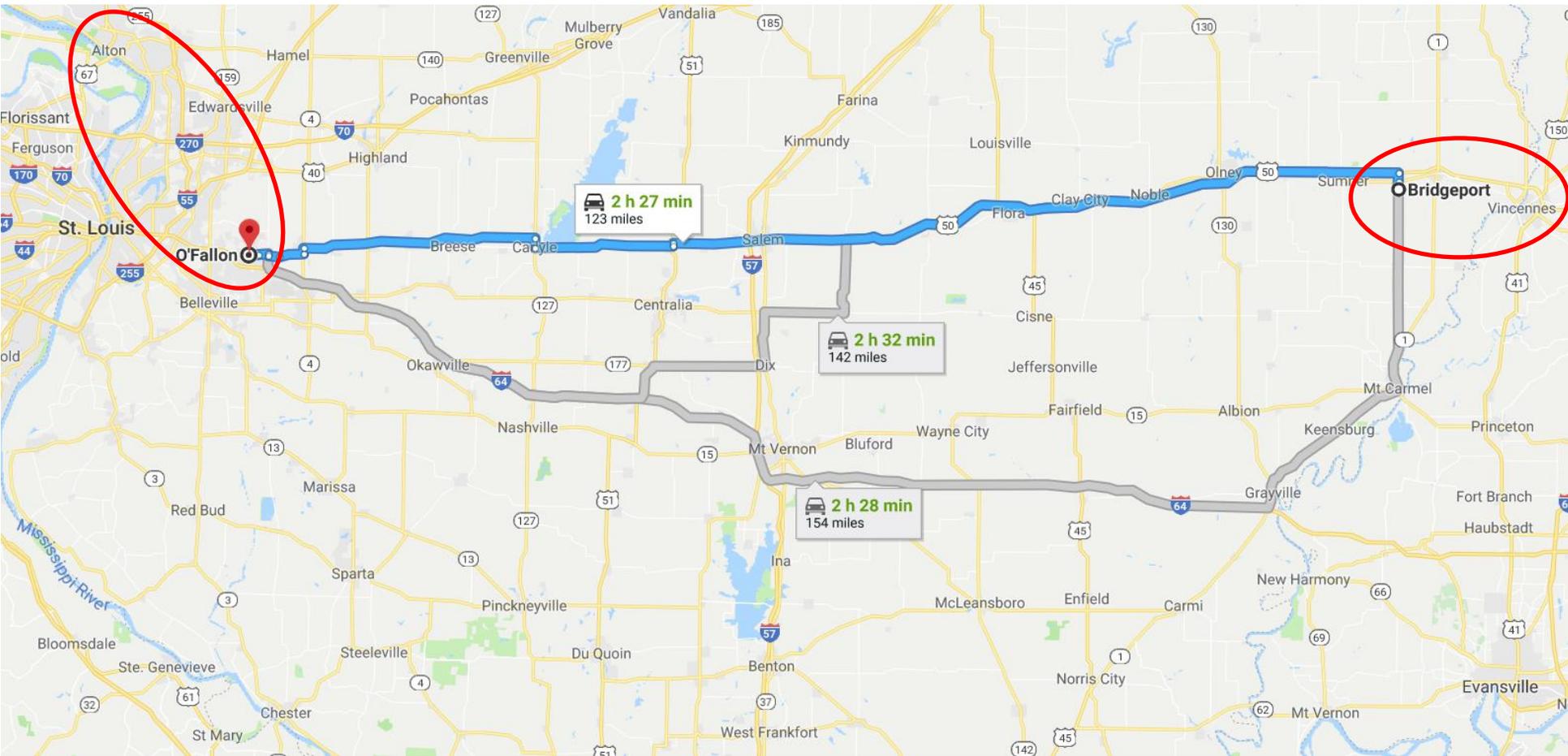
Josephine (Engelmann)  
1841-1926

## Young Louis and Marianna Fischer, early 1880s

Marianna was born October  
28, 1874; Louis was born  
August 30, 1876.



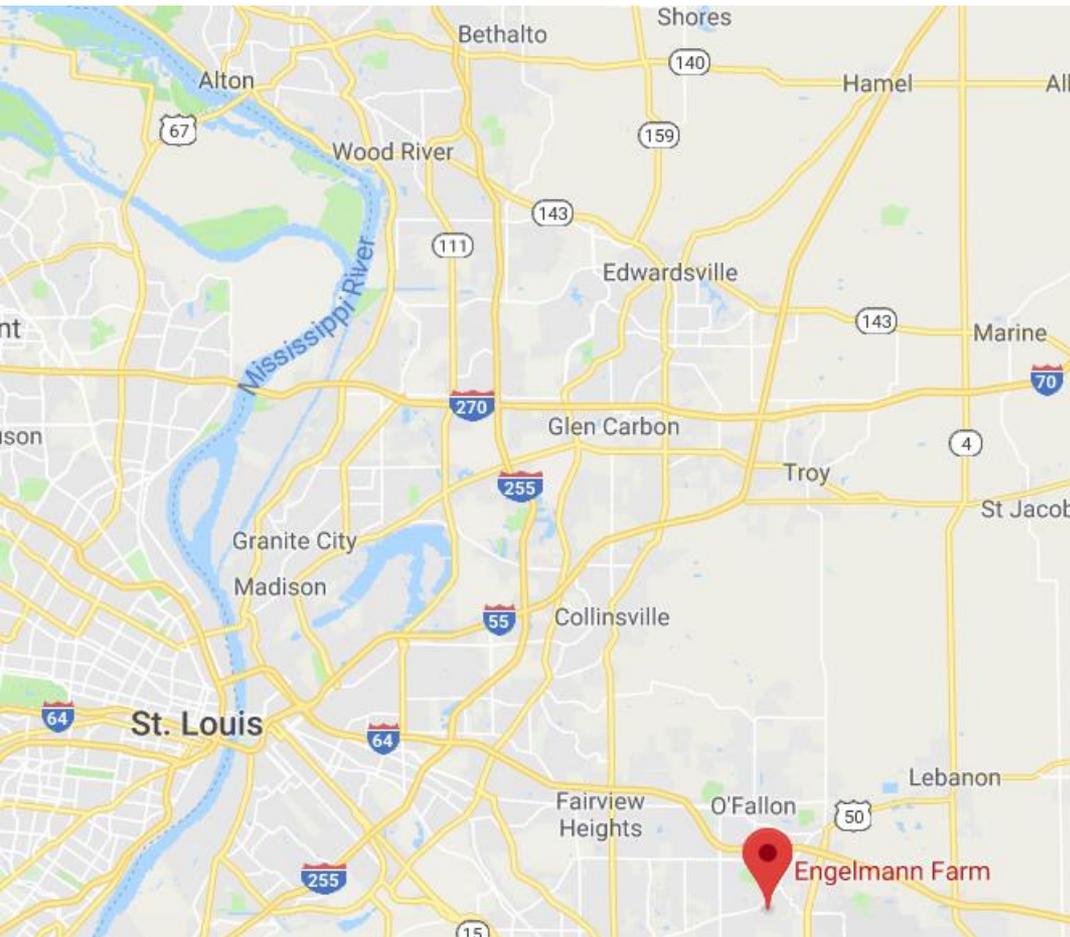
# Some geographical perspectives



Marianna Fischer was born and raised in O'Fallon, IL and attended Shurtleff College in Upper Alton – both on the outskirts of St. Louis. Her future husband Stanley Black was born and raised on the family farm in Bridgeport, IL, and attended college at Vincennes.

Map source: Google maps

# The Engelmann farm was a few miles south of the center of O'Fallon.



Map source: Google maps

The Engelmann Farm, which includes the Engelmann Cemetery where Louis and Josephine take their rest. The marker for Louis' grave reads: "Beneath this tree he lies asleep, its spreading boughs a vigil keep."



Engelmann Cemetery photo from a St. Louis Post-Dispatch [article](#) on the preservation of the historic Engelmann Farm.

## Meeting, Marriage and Beginnings of Marianna and Stanley

- Stanley's sister, Amy, was married to Thad Bryson, Jr
- On a visit to see Amy, Bryson encouraged Stanley to study law under his tutelage. He did, and was licensed to practice law in 1897.
- In the spring of 1898, Marianna paid a visit to Amy, who had been her classmate at Shurtleff College, and on that visit, she and Stanley met.
- They were married at O'Fallon on March 6, 1901, and returned to Bryson City where they rented a house for \$4/month that was part of the "Bryson Addition on the Hill" subdivision. His income was less than \$500/year.
- They purchased the home in 1903 and subsequently made several additions and renovations.

# The Black home, 1950's and beyond



# The John and Rita Mattox home, 2018



Photo: DAC

Marianna with Ellen,  
Stanley, Jr and Louise,  
early 1909





Back row: George Lienesch, Charles Fischer, Emeline Fischer, Chester Fischer, Mae McCord Fischer, Louis Fischer,  
Middle row: Louise Fischer Lienesch with Freddie, George Lienesch, Josephine Englemann Fischer, Louis Friedrich Fischer,  
Virginia Fischer, Marianna Black with Louise, Stanley Black, Jr., Stanley Black  
Front row: Josephine Lienesch, Helen Fischer, Gertrude Lienesch, Ellen Black  
(Photo taken in 1908)

# The Blacks, circa 1915



L-R: Fischer (1911-1999), Louise (1907-1984), Stanley (1876-1965), Marianna (1874-1960), Ellen (1903-1984), Stanley, Jr (1905-1958)

The Blacks joined the Presbyterian Church on Feb 22, 1904.  
Also joining that day were Helen, Marie, and Nell Shank.



## Three (of many) aspects of community life which Marianna embraced

- Organized the Parent-Teacher Association (~1920)
- Leading force in organization of the Woman's Club; served as its first president and later was district president
- Starting with a collection of forty books owned by herself and friends, she began a lending library which “may be the nation's only library that was originally housed in two battered old suitcases” (John Wikle, 1966).

# The Marianna Black Library

- Its beginnings were in 1928, when Mrs. Black and others (through the Bryson City Woman's Club) loaded forty books into a pair of suitcases which were turned over to Miss Belva Sanders with the school system. They were made available to schools throughout the county.
- Miss Sanders' replacement (1929) did not continue the practice, so in 1930, with the original 40 books and 260 books borrowed from the NC Library Commission, a lending library in the grand jury room of the courthouse was opened two days a week (at first), beginning on June 2, 1930.
- From Asheville Citizen, Sept 2, 1930 article on the Bryson City Woman's Club: "The reading room, which has been in charge of Mrs. Black and others, who have aided in the room the two days each week that it has been open. Many hundreds of books have been issued."

Asheville Citizen, March 3, 1932:

### **LIBRARY REPORT**

**BRYSON CITY, March 2. (Special)**

The report of the Marianna Black library for the month of February, is that 928 books were loaned and forty new ones donated. The largest donor was Mrs. Margaret Gooch, of Lexington, N. C. All the work done in this library is voluntary and nearly all the books are voluntarily given.

July 13, 1944: 5,720 books with an annual circulation of 19,114

**BRYSON CITY**—The Marianna Black library, which serves not only Bryson City but a large rural section, especially the youths who attend Swain high from the rural area, closed its calendar year June 30 with an increase in circulation.

This year 19,114 books were circulated, an increase over the preceding year of 3,765 books. The borrowers of these books numbered 1,564 during the 1943-1944 period. In the year before, there were 1,112 borrowers.

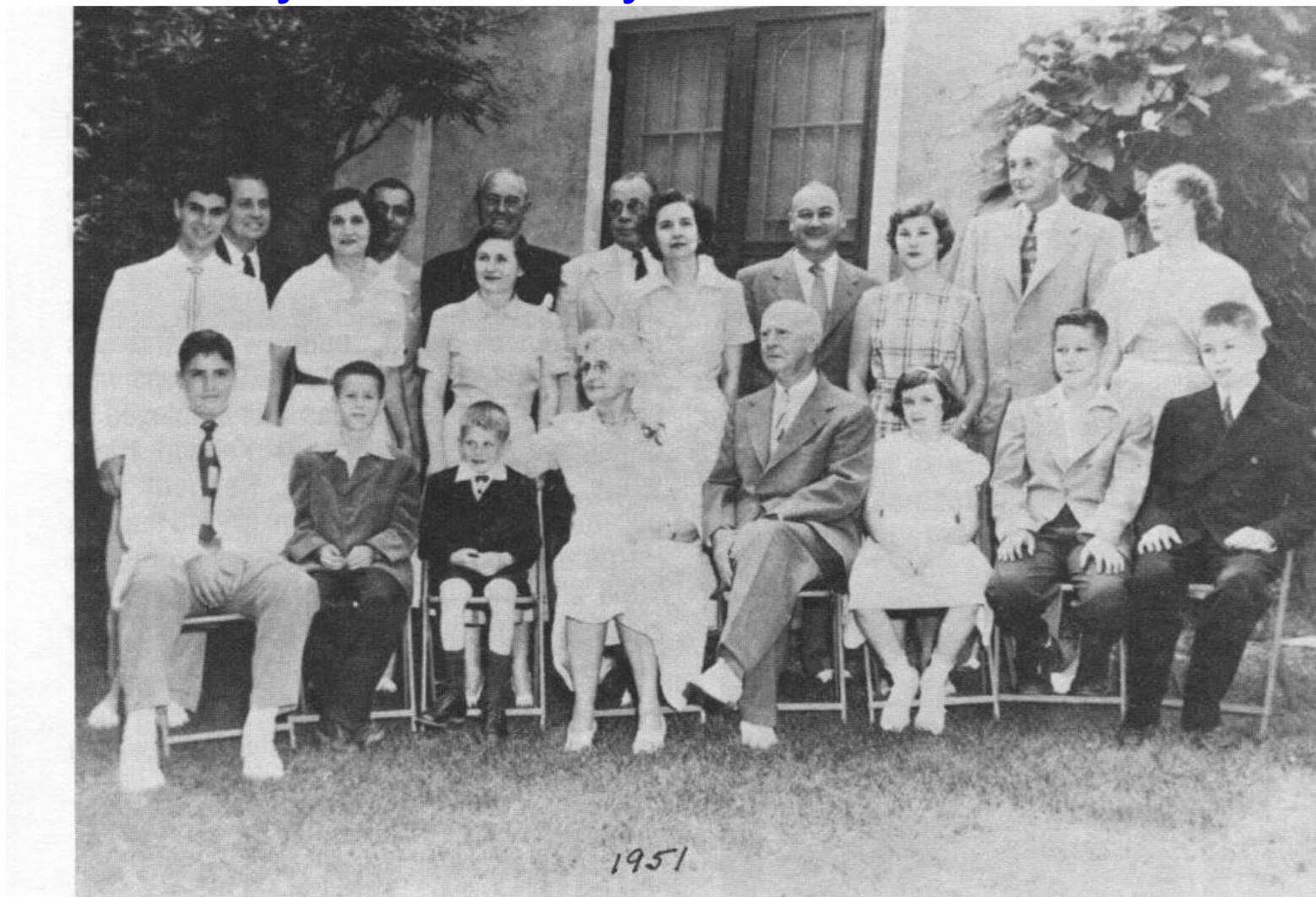
Asheville Citizen, February 23, 1947:  
7,500 books, monthly circulation of 2,030

## **7,500 VOLUMES ON SHELVES OF SWAIN LIBRARY**

**BRYSON CITY** — The Marianna Black library now has catalogued on its shelves, 7,500 volumes. The books circulated in January this year were 2,030. Twenty-eight new books were added in January and 130 in December. This month a hundred more will be added.

The librarian, Mrs. Breedlove, stated that there are 1,266 regular borrowers. Last Saturday she checked out 205 volumes, which was a record day. This library is open each day of the week and is located in the community house on the town square.

# “By their fruits ye shall know them”



Front Row: L. to R.: The Family. Peter Cox, Wilkes Black, Louis Black, Marianna Black, Stanley Black Sr., Blakeney Black, Stanley Black III., Fisher Black Jr. Second Row: Warren Cox, Louise Cox, Elizabeth Black, Ellen Winston, Julia M. Black, Julia Black. Back Row: Fischer Black, Oscar Cox, Chester Fischer, Louis Fischer, Richard Winston, Stanley Black Jr.

Source: Heritage of Swain County; accompanied an article by Fischer Black

## Slide notes, comments

Slide 1: Marianna Fischer, young teenager, and a more mature Marianna Fischer Black, who is well remembered.

Slide 2: Louis Friedrich Fischer immigrated to the U.S. in 1859. Josephine was the daughter of immigrants. Both families came from Bavaria.

Slide 3: Marianna and Louis Engelmann Fischer were children of Louis F. and Josephine Engelmann Fischer. They had a half-brother Charles Owen Fischer and half-sister Louise Mary Fischer, born to Louis F.'s first wife, Laura Owen. Louis Englemann Fischer would be an exceptionally successful engineer. By effectively injecting cash into the Bryson City Bank during the Great Depression, he would keep the bank afloat. He was also a major contributor to the library named for his older sister.

Slide 4: Marianna was born in O'Fallon, Illinois, and was raised there and on the Engelmann Farm a few miles south of town (see slide 5). She attended Shurtleff College in Upper Alton. Stanley was born on the opposite side of the state, in Bridgeport, Illinois, and attended Vincennes College (across the border in Indiana). Ironically, Stanley's father, John Edwin Black, had attended Shurtleff College more than a quarter century before his future daughter-in-law.

Slide 5: At some point during her childhood, Marianna's family moved from O'Fallon a few miles south to the Engelmann Farm. The Engelmanns were among the earliest settlers. The farm, which includes the Engelmann Cemetery where Louis and Josephine are buried, has been set aside for preservation by St. Clair County.

Slide 6: After being licensed to practice law, Stanley moved to Mississippi – where his father had relocated – for a short while. He was there when the 1900 census was taken. The property and the home which they first rented and then purchased had originally been owned by H.A. Hodge, who was editor and publisher of the Swain County Herald. The core of the home, now owned by John and Rita Mattox, was completed in 1890.

Slide 7: Mr. Black had several grape vines, including the one on the southeast corner of the house. He also maintained a sizable flower and vegetable garden, a small part of which is visible at the right of the photo.

Slide 8: Only minor changes (guttering, vegetation, trim color) have been made in the last half century plus.

Slide 9: Their first child, born at the Fischer home in Illinois, died at, or shortly after, childbirth. The rest of the children were born in the home in Bryson City: Ellen in 1903, Stanley, Jr in 1905, Louise in 1907, and Fischer (not shown) in 1911.

## Slide notes, comments (continued)

Slide 10: This is the extended family of Louis Fredriech and Josephine Fischer.

Slide 11: The Stanley and Marianna Black family at their home on Stanley Black Hill. The brick pillars remain (today), but the brick sections in between were replaced by the Blacks with wooden railing sections which allowed for better porch ventilation. This is the side of the home facing town.

Slide 12: The Presbyterian Church is one of the oldest structures in downtown Bryson City. The manse, at the left of the photo, was gone by the late 1950s. Today, the educational building erected by the Black family in honor of Marianna stands in this location. The Black home is on Black Hill, hidden by the trees in the center of the photo. The Shank and Black families both settled in Bryson City just after the turn of the 20th century. The families were very close; in correspondence with Nell Shank Leatherwood, Ellen Black Winston addressed letters with "Dear Aunt Nell,"

Slide 13: Although she had many interests, a principal force in the life of Marianna Black was her desire to promote education, both within and outside of the school educational structures.

Slide 14: It was through her leadership of the Bryson City Woman's Club that Marianna began the town and county lending library.

Slide 15: The library's collection and circulation grew quickly. Around 1940, the library moved to the upstairs of the newly constructed Community Building. It remained there until 1970, when the now almost half-century old building was finished.  
Fischer

Slide 16: This photo, taken in 1951 at the Black home, includes Marianna and Stanley, their four children, grandchildren and Marianna's brothers Chester and Louis Fischer. The family was one of incredibly accomplished lives. Ellen was arguably the most accomplished individual to have come from Swain County, and was the first United States Commissioner of Welfare. Stanley, Jr. became Executive Vice President before his untimely death of cancer in 1958. Louise became chief buyer for a prominent New York department store and married Oscar Cox, an attorney who practiced international law. Fischer studied engineering and was the Editor and Publisher of Electrical World, an engineering trade magazine published by McGraw-Hill, then went on to become Vice-Chairman of the Board of Tampa Electric Company. The grandchildren likewise have had exceptionally successful careers.

Below are memories of Mrs. (and Mr.) Black which were shared during the August 16, 2018 meeting of Friends of the Bryson City Cemetery

1. A neighbor who lived just out the road from the Blacks, recalled walking down the street with her son when he was a toddler. Mrs. Black saw them and asked them to come down. Mr. Black was at the house as well. As they were leaving, the young lad reached down and plucked a daffodil that was in bloom, and Mr. Black said something along the line of "Now son, you should leave the flowers alone." Mrs. Black said "Oh, Stanley, let him enjoy the flower."
2. There was a recollection of when Mrs. Black hosted a tea party for a group of young folks and served cucumber sandwiches. The cucumber had been cut like normal - into a circular shape - and then sandwiched in between circles of bread. The lady who remembered this thought they were a special treat.
3. Mrs. Black was Sunday School teacher for girls in high school. She suggested to the mothers of the girls that they all come to the Black house for breakfast one Saturday morning. She served the ladies coffee and the girls got a cup of water. Then she brought out, for each of them, a small sliver of watermelon in the shape of a piece of pie. That was the beginning and ending of breakfast.
4. It was recalled that Mrs. Black played piano before Sunday School. She would really bang out the tunes, but her use of foot pedals was sparing.
5. As Mrs. Black ended each of their Sunday School classes, she'd tell the girls to have a good week, and remember "God will be watching you."

Several collective Casada family memories were shared. Jim, Annette and Don Casada were raised by their parents, Commodore and Anna Lou next door to the Blacks.

1. The Blacks were quite frugal with themselves at meals; Jim and Annette recalled that when some of grandchildren who were about their ages came to visit, they would have supper at the Black home, then come next door to the Casada house to get something to eat..
2. Mrs. Black had regularly scheduled phone conversations with Nell Leatherwood and Ruby DeHart. When weather permitted, she would sit on the screened in porch which faced the Casada house. Mrs. Black's half of the conversation could be heard in our yard. The family considered the Shanks (Nell's maiden name) as part of the family; in letters to Nell, Ellen addressed them as: "Dear Aunt Nell,".
3. None of us recall ever seeing Mrs. Black driving a car.
4. Jim once stepped on a locust thorn (barefoot) and came home screaming like a banshee. Mrs. Black thought he was getting a severe whipping and came over to intervene; she ended up helping remove the thorn.
5. Jim shut the car door on Mrs. Black's finger as they were leaving church. Mrs. Black was quite calm, but Mr. Black fell to pieces; she ended up tending to him instead of vice-versa.

6. Mrs. Black had a unique way of calling out to the Casada parents, Commodore and Anna Lou Casada, when they were outside. It was “Ohhhhhh, COM-mo-dore” or “Ohhhhhh, AN-na Lou” in what was something between a tune and a yodel (emphasis on upper case letters).
7. Mrs. Black requested that Commodore put a net on the basketball goal in our yard. She liked to watch the pickup ball games, and without a net, couldn't tell if the ball had gone through the hoop.
8. Annette recalled that Mrs. Black had a large impact on Commodore's young and later life: When he was a boy, she invited him to come to a birthday party for Fischer, but he was too embarrassed to go because he didn't have nice clothes and his family wasn't in the same social circle as the Blacks. She both chewed Commodore out and at the same time encouraged him on his worthiness. Once they were neighbors (1941 onward), she frequently would tell Mr. Black – in Commodore's hearing – how Commodore's garden was better than that of Mr. Black.
9. The Blacks loved to watch the Lawrence Welk show; perhaps that was in part because Welk, like the Fischers, had German-speaking ancestors. Each year, the Casada family was invited over for the Christmas special. It was made abundantly clear to us children that we WOULD enjoy the show and make sure that the Blacks knew of our enjoyment.
10. Mrs. Black showed great patience with her neighbor's children. There was a small (perhaps 5-ft diameter and a couple of feet deep) goldfish pond between the house and the tennis court. Don, in particular, was drawn to that pond, and fell in many times lunging in an attempt to catch goldfish with his hands. Mrs. Black never said a word to discourage the practice – she would just send Lillie out to haul him out and escort him back next door.

Although our focus was on Mrs. Black, there were a few stories inserted in the discussion about Mr. Black.

1. Mr. Black would come down to Bennett's Drug Store, a couple of buildings down from the bank, once a week to get a coke. He'd walk back to the back and get the bottle out of the cooler, then come up front and pay the 7 cents - always metered out exactly - never needing change (that was also true on everything he purchased there, according to a man who worked for the Bennetts for years). At some point they raised the price for a coke to a dime. Mr. Black said he guessed he'd have to do without, and went six months without one, but finally broke down and spent the dime.
2. At his parking spot behind the bank, Mr. Black didn't look when he backed up – he backed up by feel. He backed up slowly until he bumped into the water fountain, then proceeded forward.
3. Mr. Black backed very slowly out of his garage; he took it for granted that anyone happened to be coming down the road, they'd see him and stop. Apparently they always did, because we don't remember any accidents.
4. One winter, there was a lot of snow in the early part of January, and quite a few days of school were called off. At that time, the teachers didn't get paid until they had worked 20 days, and so quite a few were getting needful of cash. Mr. Black offered to loan the teachers \$100 each, with the provision that they pay it back a month later, with \$4 interest.
5. Two different individuals recalled that Mr. Black loaned money to their families based primarily upon his own personal knowledge of the borrower rather than a strictly business-based decision process.