

MRS. J. S. ROUTON, SR. PEARL SANDERS ROUTON

Born: July 24, 1882

Died: April 1965

Buried: Maplewood Cemetery

(FROM NEWSPAPER ARTICLE)

Florist, Artist, Musician, City Beautifier

‘MISS PEARL’ ROUTON, LADY OF MANY TALENTS,
DIES AT AGE 82

Mrs. S. J. Routon, Sr., known to hundreds of friends and admirers as “Miss Pearl”, died last night at Henry County General Hospital at the age of 82. Death came at six p.m., to the native Henry Countian whose talents, accomplishments, and contributions to her community were so numerous that it would take volumes to record them all.

Funeral services will be held at 11 o’clock Saturday morning at McEvoy, with the Rev. Carroll Owen officiating. Burial will be in Maplewood Cemetery, and the remains will be a McEvoy’s until time for the funeral.

Born July 24, 1882, in the Buchanan community of Henry County, Mrs. Routon was the daughter of the late William Sanders and Henrietta Walker Sanders. She was married December 19, 1901, to the late Stephen James Routon, who served as a Senator in the Tennessee Legislature representing Henry and Carroll Counties.

He preceded her in death in 1957.

Mrs. Routon was an accomplished pianist, artist, and writer and at one time operated the largest greenhouse and nursery business in West Tennessee.

The former homeplace on South Dunlap was purchased from Henry Lee Greer last year and remodeled into one of the show places of the community. The home was originally purchased by the Routons in 1916, and its dining room has hosted such outstanding personalities as

Oscar Lavant, Don Harlburg, Governor Frank Clement, and many others, and for many years the social life of the community was charmingly entertained in this home with typical Routon warmth and Southern hospitality.

The talented Mrs. Routon began to grow flowers in her yard soon after she and her husband acquired the home.

They built their first greenhouse during World War I, two more were added later and the peak of their florist business, Routon Florists, was serving Murray, Huntingdon, Milan, Dresden, Martin, and Fulton, and was the only greenhouse between Nashville and Memphis.

At the age of 14, Mrs. Routon entered Peabody College in Nashville under special permission due to her age. The late Governor James D. Porter was president of Peabody at that time. In later years, when her husband was serving in the State Senate, she re-entered Peabody to study art and was awarded the Stief Medal for a still life drawing, the highest art honor that Peabody College confers.

At the age of four, Mrs. Routon displayed an early talent for art by painting flowers on tin cans, and in later years she excelled in painting china. She once painted a set of Haviland China for the late Mrs. O. C. Barton using pure gold leaf, a set that is now owned by Mrs. J. H. McSwain and considered one of the finest sets of Haviland China to be found in Tennessee today.

In 1937 Mrs. Routon was named one of the ten most successful

business women in Tennessee.

She was a charter member of the Paris Garden Club and Matinee Music Club and was secretary of the Paris Woman's Club.

During World War I, she put on a number of fundraising projects and received a personal commendation from President Woodrow Wilson.

During World War II her sons served in the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps. She was a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

From 1912 to 1919 she served as chairman of the women's division of the Tennessee State Fair at Nashville, and during that time was instrumental in having the iris named as Tennessee's state flower.

At one time Mrs. Routon had one of the largest collections of fine iris to be found in the entire South and in the 1930's gave away 10,000 iris bulbs for the beautification of the city.

She was credited with leading the movement to tear down the old iron fence that once surrounded the court square yard, and planted shrubs and trees in the courthouse yard. Pearl Street was named in her honor, and Routon Street is named for the Routon family. She was responsible for planting the double row of trees that now line Grove Boulevard.

On December 16, 1956, Mrs. Routon was on nationwide television when she was selected for the "This Is Your Life" subject by Ralph Edwards.

She took up portrait painting in 1944 and had painted the portraits of three Tennessee governors, Frank G. Clement, Jim McCord and James D. Porter. She was named a "Colonel" on the staff of Governor Clement, one of the few women even to be accorded this honor.

Mrs. Routon's other talents included planning of weddings and wedding receptions including the catering and decoration of wedding cakes, and she handled many of these events, both in Paris and in other cities.