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*Mary Tappan Garrison and one of her five “stray” cats, Gray Lady. Mary inherited her love of strays from her mother, who had a pet chicken that followed her everywhere. The chicken would sit on the back of the porch swing while Mary’s mother painted its toenails. Mary jokes that the poultry gene skipped her and now inhabits her daughter, who once had a chicken of her own, along with a goose named Jacques Cousteau.*

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*by Mary Helen Moses  
photos by Tim Brown*

**I**f you enter Sweet Mama’s some morning and notice a lovely white-haired lady reading a book or chatting with folks, stop, look and listen. You may have stumbled upon Mary Garrison, a woman with many wonderful stories to tell.

Born Mary Tappan, she grew up in Greensboro, about halfway between Atlanta and Augusta, but Mary’s earliest memories are of the antebellum house in the small town of White Plains that belonged to her father’s family. After the Civil War, Mary’s grandfather hired a teacher for his children, set up a school in his own home, and invited the other children in town to be educated. Mary herself reveled in the stories of the teacher, “Aunt Burma,” and loved to play in the old schoolroom with its double desks. Her love for learning and her gift for teaching may have had their roots in that old schoolroom.

Mary’s teaching career began in Atlanta in the 1950s and ended with her retirement a few years ago from the Glynn County School System. She was a beloved figure at Altama and Goodyear

# *A* Life Well-Lived, *AND* Well-Told