

She Changed Her Name To Gustava When She Was Eighteen
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For more than twenty years, Mrs. Gustava Bell Maclin Vance was the minister's wife at First Baptist Church in Brownsville. She occupied this role from 1927 to her death in 1948. However, this strong willed determined woman, pictured in the accompanying photo, was so much more.

Gustava Maclin Vance was a licensed pharmacist having earned a pharmacy degree from Meharry Medical College in 1910. She came to Brownsville , possibly about 1912 or 1913 after operating a drug dispensary in conjunction with her brother Robert's medical practice in Birmingham, AL. During the 1910s she operated a pharmacy in Brownsville, possibly on the square. Mae Ruth Haith in [An American Family: Gustava's Story](#) reports that when the future Mrs. Vance tried to buy the building in which her pharmacy was located, she discovered it was not possible for an African American to own commercial property in the downtown section of town. These circumstances led to her buying a building in Humboldt and establishing a pharmacy there.

In Humboldt, Gustava resumed a relationship with Rev. Willis S. Vance. She had dated Rev. Vance when she was a student at Knoxville College around 1905 or 1906. Rev. Vance, newly widowed, had recently been called to a Humboldt church. He brought with him his young son, Willis Jr. Gustava, the enterprising young business woman, married the Giles County native in November 1920 in Jackson, TN. After the marriage, Rev. Vance continued to minister to his congregation and Mrs. Vance expanded her Humboldt business interests. Six years into the marriage, they had their only child, Bobbie Vance.

Gustava Bell Maclin, originally named Ida Bell Maclin, was a daughter of Edmund and Agnes Plummer Maclin of Keeling in old Haywood District 3. Her maternal grandparents were Wesley and Lucy Maclin Plummer. At age eighteen, Ida Bell Maclin changed her name to Gustava Bell Maclin.

It doesn't seem that the Vance's ever completely moved their residence from Humboldt to Brownsville. However, during the late 1930s and the first half of 1940, Gustava Maclin Vance worked in Brownsville as the pharmacist at the newly opened drug store of Ms. Maude Rawls.

The energetic innovative unconventional Gustava died in 1948. She is buried in the Greenleaf Cemetery near Keeling on Highway 70W.