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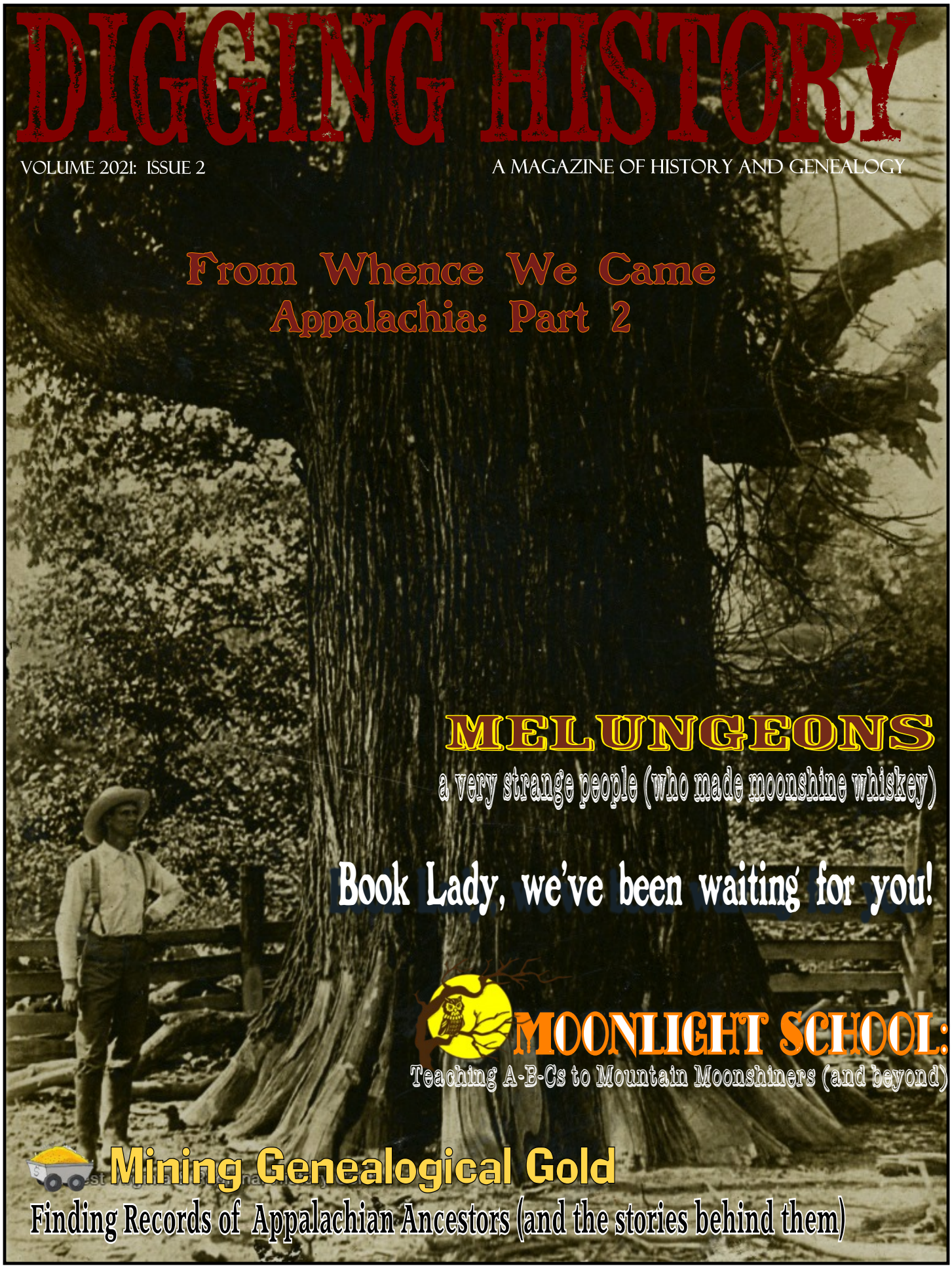

From Whence We Came
Appalachia: Part 2

MELUNGEONS
a very strange people (who made moonshine whiskey)

Book Lady, we've been waiting for you!

MOONLIGHT SCHOOL:
Teaching A-B-Cs to Mountain Moonshiners (and beyond)

Mining Genealogical Gold
Finding Records of Appalachian Ancestors (and the stories behind them)

DIGGING HISTORY

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IN THIS ISSUE

but first, a word from the editor, researcher, writer, graphic designer and publisher . . .

Dear Reader,

This issue, part of the special double-issue, features Part 2 of "From Whence We Came: Appalachia". When I started this series, little did I know what I was in for!

I have thoroughly enjoyed researching this series – and I'm not done yet! Part 3 immediately follows this issue. And then . . . the next issue will wind it all up with Part 4. Because I spent so much time researching Georgia and Alabama for the "Mining Genealogical Gold: Part 3", I didn't have time to give adequate coverage for Mississippi. So, Part 4 will FINISH the series (fingers crossed!).

The articles in this issue cover a range of historical events unique to the Appalachian region – the Pack Horse Librarians of eastern Kentucky, followed by what I consider to be a companion story about teaching illiterate eastern Kentucky mountaineers how to read and write. The last major article relates the history of probably the most misunderstood people group in America, the Melungeons.

I hope you enjoy this issue. As always, I am grateful for my faithful subscribers. You are a blessing to me!

Sharon Hall, Publisher and Editor

Mining Genealogical Gold

Finding Records of Appalachian Ancestors (and the stories behind them)

by Sharon Hall

Part 2

The Appalachian Region

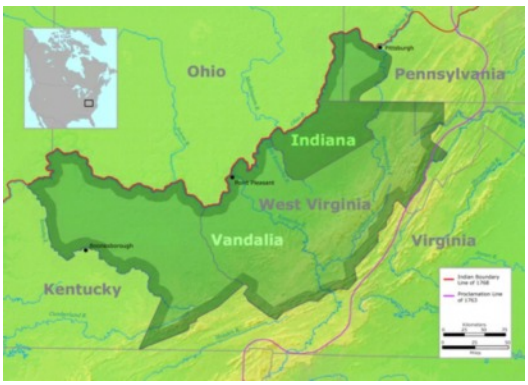
Source: Appalachian Regional Commission

The last issue covered a large portion of southern Appalachia with a look at North and South Carolina, Tennessee and Kentucky. While this article focuses on just two states, Virginia and West Virginia, the latter has the distinction of being entirely situated in Appalachia.

Of course, West Virginia was once part of Virginia, as was Kentucky – which can make finding ancestor records a little tricky if one doesn't know the history. A good place to start is to first look at "the split". One might call it a "mini-civil war" of sorts as citizens of the western, mountainous regions of Virginia didn't agree with the state's defiant decision to secede from the United States. Instead, they seceded from Virginia following its secession from the United States – eventually. West Virginia would be one of two states formed during the Civil War (Nevada came into the Union in 1864). However, was that the actual reason, or had sentiment been building for decades?

Vandalia and Westsylvania

I'm always discovering things never taught in our history books. This is definitely one of them. More often than not history text books gloss over the reasons why West Virginia came into existence – it was about slavery. Not really. In fact, it wasn't even the first time a new state carved out of Virginia was proposed.



In the 1750s America consisted not of states and state governments, but a number of colonies governed by the British Crown. In the mid-eighteenth century British land speculators were already looking westward, anxious to settle the Ohio Valley. While a petition was granted to the Ohio Company for 200,000 acres in 1748, their plans were thwarted by the French and Indian War, followed close on its heels by Pontiac's Rebellion. Following Pontiac's Rebellion the Indiana Company was formed, but by December 1769 had merged with the Ohio Company to form the Grand Ohio Company.

Another significant land grant was petitioned in 1772 with plans to name the new colony "Pittsylvania" in honor of William Pitt, later superseded by plans to name the colony "Vandalia" in honor of Queen Charlotte's claim of descending from a Germanic tribe known as Vandals.

Once the colonies made their stand for separation all deals were off as far as the Crown was concerned. However, this didn't prevent settlers long established in the region from petitioning the Continental Congress in the summer of 1776, not long after the Declaration of Independence, "asking independent statehood as a 'sister colony and fourteenth province of the American confederacy,' under the name of Westsylvania"[1] – and looking much like what is today known as West Virginia.

Meanwhile, Pennsylvania and Virginia had their own squabbles to deal with when it came to borders. Once their border dispute was settled (after Virginia had created new counties), renewed fervor for Westsylvania increased after some "Virginians" discovered they were now "Pennsylvanians". Much of their renewed fervor was, of course, occurring whilst the thirteen colonies were engaged in serious warfare with England. Still, these "backwoods" settlers believed their interests weren't being served in terms of protection from increasing Indian incursions. Essentially, it was all about the mountains:

It seemed clear to the hopeful founding fathers of the state of Westsylvania, from the Revolutionary principles ringing loudly in their ears that "no country or people can be either rich, flourishing, happy or free . . . whilst annexed to or dependent on any province, whose seat of government is . . . four or five hundred miles distant, and separated by a vast, extensive and almost impassible tract of mountains, by nature itself formed and pointed out as a boundary between this country and those below it. [2]

Their demands were ignored, and finally squashed – at least for the time being – when Judge Hugh Henry Brackenridge, a Pittsburgh lawyer, lobbied the Pennsylvania Assembly to make demands for a new state an act of treason, punishable by death. The issue, however, would not go away so easily.

The so-called Whiskey Rebellion of the early 1790s (1791-1794) was ostensibly about thevnewly-minted federal government's first tax levied on a domestic product, spirits of all varieties. Pennsylvania backwoodsmen (one source refers to them as "frontier tax protesters") weren't unlike the patriots protesting onerous taxes, rules and regulations imposed upon the colonists in the years leading up to the Revolutionary War.

The difference between the Boston Tea Party and the Whiskey Rebellion is President George Washington's military intervention, requiring 13,000 militiamen, to quell the backwoods uprising – and set a precedent for law and order. Thomas P. Slaughter, author of *The Whiskey Rebellion*, subtitled his book "Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution". Washington eventually pardoned the "frontier tax protesters", saving them from treason prosecutions, but his justification for intervention was clear:

If the laws are to be trampled on with impunity, and a minority (a small one too) is to dictate to the majority, there is an end put, at one stroke, to republican government. [3]

It was a fine line he walked by sending militiamen from the surrounding states of New Jersey, Maryland and Virginia (as well as parts of Pennsylvania), attempting to avoid the appearance he was using troops from other states to invade another. In the end the display of strong militia might sent "frontiersmen grudgingly . . . back to their homes", Washington having "established for posterity a definition of the preeminence of the national government." [4]

Seventy years later Abraham Lincoln had George Washington's example to follow when it came to the South's secession. As decades passed it became increasingly more apparent that social conditions in western Virginia were entirely different than those in the eastern portion of the state. Physical geography also continued to divide the state, as there was simply no way for the rugged terrain of western Virginia to sustain the types of farming operations of the eastern part of the state. Therefore, slavery was neither profitable or particularly important to western Virginians, with at least one notable exception.

By 1860 there were fewer than fifteen thousand slaves living in the forty-eight counties of western Virginia, compared to over a half million living and working in the cotton and tobacco fields east of the Blue Ridge Mountains. A significant portion of western Virginia's slave population was situated in Kanawha County, home to one of largest salt deposits in the nation. The 1860 census counted 2,184 slaves belonging to 241 owners in Kanawha.

The salt business made a certain number of the county's citizenry wealthy and politically influential. While a significant number of whites, free blacks and mulattos worked in the industry, there tended to be a perpetual shortage of "free labor" which forced salt producers to utilize slave labor. Most county slaveholders owned less than twenty slaves and would lease their slaves to work for salt producers. Lawyer and politician George W. Summers would rather his slaves work in the salt business versus coal mines due to inherent dangers.

Most Kanawhans appeared to have little or no moral qualms about the practice. In fact, salt producers preferred slave labor. As was common throughout the South, wealthy slaveholders controlled local politics. The same was true of Kanawha County as only twenty men (slaveholders all) held the county's elective offices between 1830 and 1860. County slaveholders held a large rally in December 1859 following John Brown's raid at Harper's Ferry, resolving their readiness "at all times to perform our part in carrying into effect any measures that Virginia and her sister Southern States may deem proper and expedient to adopt for the purpose of protecting and defending the Rights, Persons, Property and Honor of Slave-holding States." [5]

Some of the more prosperous slave owners formed militias. One in particular made its pro-slavery attitude clear as its members "denounced the treasonous attempts by 'a band of fanatics of the North of this Union' to attack Virginia 'with an avowed purpose to incite our Negroes to insurrection and to rebellion, and thereby to involve the citizens of this Commonwealth in all the horrors of servile war." If the North invaded, the Coal River Rifles of Kanawha County were ready to defend slavery. [6]

Given the county's political climate, it wasn't surprising that not one Republican appeared on 1860 ballot. After Abraham Lincoln won the presidency, most everyone expected the Union would split in two. In early 1861 the nation was in crisis as Southern states began to mull their options – Union or Disunion? Kanawha County held a "Great Union-Disunion Meeting" in Charleston (county seat) on January 7, requesting a convention to discuss the great question and adopting a number of resolutions:

That whilst Virginia, in all her acts and conduct has made more sacrifices and contributed more than any other State to form the Constitution of the United States, and to maintain the Union, she will not and cannot yield her just rights, nor sacrifice her honor, even for its preservation. That we are in favor of the preservation of the Union, if it can be done consistently with the rights and honor of the South, under the Constitution, but if it cannot be maintained, then, that "the Union of the South is the safety of the South." That we are sternly opposed to and reprobate the use of force by the General Government to compel or coerce a seceding State, and in view of the appalling calamities, which might flow from such a beginning, we hold it to be the highest duty of each party most scrupulously to avoid any and every occasion of outbreak or collision. [7]

Seven states had already seceded before a convention was held in February to gauge statewide sentiment. Surprisingly, Virginia's Unionists prevailed and a convention held on April 4 voted against secession. What a difference a few days would make, however. In response to South Carolina militia attacking Fort Sumter, Lincoln called for Federal troops to quell the rebellion. In a 180-degree reversal the Virginia convention voted to secede on April 17.

Kanawhan secessionists held rallies to mobilize more supporters, despite their own convention having firmly rejected disunion. Unionists continued to resist secession, even as Virginia was officially admitted into the Confederacy and its capital was moved from Montgomery, Alabama to Richmond, Virginia. Confederate Colonel Christopher Tompkins issued a clarion call, appealing for Kanawha County volunteers, warning "the enemy has invaded your soil and threatens to overrun your country under the pretext of protection. You cannot serve two masters. You have not the right to repudiate allegiance to your own State." [8]

Union troops arrived in western Virginia in July and by September Rebel troops had retreated to Greenbrier County. In late July the Union occupation of Kanawha County began as Union troops entered Charleston with great fanfare:

The main army proceeded on directly through the town of Charleston, with color flying, and all stepping to martial music. Great cheering and excitement was manifested by the citizens while the column was passing. And all being done without the slaughtering of its women and children (who, by the way, did not appear to be in much bodily fear of those "Northern vandals", the name with which they have been branded). [9]

Once Virginia seceded Kanawha became a battleground county as secessionists joined the Confederate Army and Unionists joined the Federal Union Army. Not surprising, Kanawha Confederates tended to be more wealthy, owning more slaves than their Union counterparts. While slavery wouldn't be the primary issue western Virginia decided to "secede" from Virginia, it was clearly an issue when it came to choosing sides, especially in Kanawha County.

Had the region's citizens given up on a "Westsylvania"? It would seem not entirely. By the 1850s the epicenter for a growing hostility toward eastern Virginia was situated in the so-called "Pan-handle" of Virginia. The movement's mouthpiece was the *Wellsburg Herald*, purchased by John G. Jacobs in 1850. Jacobs' own contempt for eastern Virginia's contempt of anti-slavery advocates and politicians was clearly on display as he took a non-partisan stand, declaring himself "under no obligation to any party". [10]

In a way Jacobs assaulted just about everyone, including blacks, with his anti-slavery (but not abolitionist) viewpoint, calling Virginia's slavery laws the "greatest folly and foolishness".

Jacobs connected every political move to slavery. In early 1860 a proposed tax hike raised the hackles of northwestern Virginians. Wool production, a major commodity in northwest Virginia would be taxed while the eastern Virginia commodities of corn, tobacco and wheat would remain untaxed. These were, of course, commodities which employed the majority of Virginia's slave labor.

The *Herald* decried the proposed tax policy as unfair, a move which "sought to 'encourage and foster slavery'". The Republican Party was founded in 1854, but by 1860 there emerged a clear difference between eastern and western Virginia Republicans. Northwestern Republicans were deeply suspicious of eastern Republicans, perhaps a bit too "wishy-washy" when it came to taking a firm stance in defending the party's platform.

By the late 1850s a strong Republican presence had been established in northwestern Virginia, despite opposition and outright repressive measures. By 1860 "one could become a Republican 'without the least fear of decapitation.'"

Northwestern Republicans faced the constant threat of harassment, mob violence, and ostracism. It was said that Virginia Republicans usually wrote out their wills before voting. In the winter of 1860, Republicans, now prominent in the northwestern counties, began to organize at the grass roots. But the political context was complicated: western Virginians remained solidly Jacksonian and Democratic, and in the presidential election of 1860 the Northwest voted a majority for Southern rights Democrat John C. Breckinridge. The election of 1860 and the secession convention that followed it crystallize differences between eastern and western Virginia. . . . Because eastern Virginians treated westerners as their "vassals," said the [Wheeling] Intelligencer in late 1860, they had become a "separate people." There was now no true affinity between East and West, and the most important distinguishing characteristic was slavery. The Intelligencer predicted the division of the state as a likely outcome. [11]

Following Lincoln's election to the Presidency, calls for a state convention to consider secession came from eastern Virginia. Northwest Virginia Republicans saw Lincoln's election as the "surest way of carrying out the views they had long entertained in regard to slavery and of settling forever that vexed question which has so long disturbed the harmony of this Union."[12] Primarily, they viewed Lincoln's election as a repudiation of Virginia slaveholders' political dominance, creating an opening for the eventual split.

Once the subject of a state convention to address secession arose, western Virginians began asserting their absolute devotion to the Union. A prominent western Virginia politician, Waitman T. Willey, addressed a long-standing "thorn-in-the-side" for western Virginia – a tax issue (related to slavery). The Virginia constitution stipulated that slaves under the age of twelve were exempt from taxation as property, while adults (no matter their actual "worth") were taxed no more than $300 in value.

Willey hit a rather "sore spot", proposing a change which would make taxation more equitable throughout the entire state. By the time Willey's resolution had been thoroughly debated, the differences between eastern and western Virginia sentiments were increasingly clear. Once the vote to secede was decided, the *Herald* asserted a new spirit of independence had arisen, as "the breach between east and west became profound." [13] Forty-seven delegates represented western Virginia and a clear majority (32) voted against secession. Delegates opposing

secession were expelled and immediately made plans to conduct their own convention in Wheeling "toward the organization of a Union government."

The *Richmond Enquirer* objected, "drawing a line in the sand", while calling a proposed new state a "bastard New Virginia":

What is your duty in the present crisis? – You must decide this question quickly. You owe allegiance either to Virginia or to Lincoln. You must decide between them. You cannot remain neutral, if you would. If you prefer the government of Lincoln, he now calls on you to betray your State to incur the penalties of treason against our Commonwealth, by setting up an usurped authority in her borders. — Be assured that if you incur these penalties, they will certainly be visited upon on you. – Virginia will triumph, and she will punish every traitor on her soil, who strikes against her sovereignty and her integrity.

If you acknowledge your allegiance to our grand old Commonwealth, you cannot remain neutral; for she calls upon you with the mingled tones of entreaty and authority, to rally to the defence of her soil, against the blackest despotism that ever threatened the liberties of a free people.

You have now the opportunity to redeem your past errors . . . We are rejoiced to believe that you will . . . Virginians who love the good old State, who recall with pride the names of Washington, and Henry, and Jefferson, and Lewis, and other revolutionary patriots, who laid broad and deep the foundations of Virginia's sovereignty and glory, think and blush with shame when you do think of the charlatans who are contriving treason at Wheeling . . . Are you prepared to forget your brethren of all the rest of Virginia, who, by an unparalleled vote, unanimously severed their connection with a Government which seeks their subjugation? Can you forget the protecting care and fostering hand of your own good old Virginia for this bastard New Virginia, the offspring of such abandoned and worthless wretches as those now skulking from their homes and seeking to sell you to their abolition master? . . .

Virginians of the West, the eyes of the world are upon you. Let your motto be: "One Virginia, East and West; we will stand or fall together." [14]

Despite the *Enquirer's* invective, the stage was being set for western Virginians to begin the process of seceding from the now-seceded state of Virginia. Once a short-lived Confederate campaign ended, Union forces began an occupation of the region, all but guaranteeing the forty-eight counties of western Virginia would eventually become West Virginia. Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Warren Keifer led Union forces in western Virginia and later recorded the following capsulized account:

The campaign season ended with the Union forces practically in possession of the forty-eight counties, soon to become the State of West Virginia.

A convention held at Wheeling, June 11, 1861, declared the State offices of Virginia vacant by reason of the treason of those who had been chosen to fill them, and it then proceeded to form a regular state government for Virginia, with Francis H. Pierpont for its Governor, maintaining that the people loyal to the Union should speak for the whole State. The Pierpont government was recognized by Congress. This organization, on August 20, 1861, adopted an ordinance "for the formation of a new State out of a portion of the territory of this State" This ordinance was approved by a vote of the people, and, November 26, 1861, a convention

assembled in Wheeling and framed a constitution for the proposed new State. This also was ratified, April, 1862, by the people, 18,862 voting for and 514 against it. The recognized Legislature of Virginia in order to comply with the Constitution of the United States, May 13, 1862, consented to the creation of a new State out of territory hitherto included in the State of Virginia. The people of the forty-eight counties having thus made the necessary preparation, Congress, December 31, 1862, passed an act for the admission of West Virginia into the Union, annexing, however, a condition that her people should first ratify a substitute for the Seventh Section, Article Eleven of her Constitution, providing that children of slaves born in her limits after July 4 1863, should be free; that slaves who at that time were under ten years of age should be free at the age of twenty-one; and all slaves over ten and under twenty-one years of age should be free at the age of twenty-five; and no slave should be permitted to come into the State for permanent residence.

March 26, 1863, the slavery emancipation clause was almost unanimously ratified by a vote of the people, and, April 20, 1863, President Lincoln issued a proclamation declaring that West Virginia had complied with all required conditions and was therefore a State in the Union.

The anomalous creation and admission of this new State was justified only by the rebellious times and in aid of the loyal cause. It is the only State carved out of another or other States. It remains a singular fact that the day preceding the final Emancipation Proclamation of Lincoln, he approved a law of Congress admitting West Virginia as a slave State (with gradual emancipation) into the Union. The proclamation excepted the counties commonly then called West Virginia, from its application.

The fruit of the successful occupancy of Western Virginia in 1861 by the Union Army and the consequent failures there in the same year of the Confederate leaders, Lee, Floyd Wise and others, was the formation of a new State, thenceforth loyal to the flag and the Constitution. [15]

Which Side Did Your Ancestors Choose?

As one might imagine, West Virginia Civil War records may present a bit of a research challenge. Just because the state of Virginia was itself rent in two, one for the Confederacy and one ostensibly for the Union, didn't mean more than a few newly-minted West Virginians would choose to defend the Confederacy.

West Virginians found themselves in the most unique of circumstances, something no other American state experienced:

In many of the counties there was presented the remarkable scene of men enlisting, and companies forming, at the same time, some for the Federal service and others for the Confederate service. The inhabitants of the counties of Central Northwestern Virginia, those bordering on western Maryland and Pennsylvania, those in the Northern Panhandle and thence stretching along the Ohio River to the mouth of Big Sandy River, were largely in favor of the maintenance of the Union; and it was in these that by far the largest number of soldiers for the Federal Army were enlisted. In the counties of the upper New River region, in the Greenbrier Valley, the Valley of the South Branch of the Potomac, and in the lower Shenandoah Valley – now in the Eastern Panhandle – the majority of the people favored

secession; and it was from these that far the greater number of West Virginians entered the Confederate service. [16]

This is rather generalized, however, since many counties split between Federal and Confederate service. For instance, Mason County registered more than a thousand men serving the Union while only one small company (61) signed up for Confederate service. Hampshire County was the exact opposite, sending over a thousand to the Confederate Army and only one company (73) to the Union Army.

Another example is a record of Federal enlistment for the months of October and November 1863 in the West Virginia counties of Taylor, Barbour, Upshur, Webster, Randolph and Tucker indicating a few instances of men already enlisted – in the Rebel Army. Thus, it's possible to come across a Rebel ancestor with Federal records.

Marshall Murphy of Taylor County had already joined the Confederate Army on May 1, 1863, a private in the 25th Infantry. Additional records at Ancestry indicate he was hospitalized on April 17, 1864 with a fever, imprisoned at Spotsylvania Court House on May 12 and died as a prisoner of war in Elmira, New York of disease on October 3.

Civil War draft registration records like this one may provide other ancestor clues as well, not just military service. In the case of Nicholas Mick of Upshur you might be able to approximate a window when his first wife, Frances, died. Ancestry records indicate Nicholas married Frances Campbell in Lewis County on October 7, 1849. The young couple was enumerated in the same county in 1850. In 1860 they were enumerated in Upshur County with three young children (ages 6, 4 and 2). That is the last record found for Frances at Ancestry. However, the notation made with Nicholas' draft registration record indicates he was a widower ("Father of motherless children").

Records indicate Nicholas married his second wife, Jane Queen, on March 30, 1864 in Upshur County. The 1870 census indicates Nicholas and Jane had two children of their union, ages 5 and 3. A son, Silas Jefferson Mick, was born on May 28, 1861, the last child of Nicholas and Frances' union. Since widowers with motherless children didn't tend to remain single very long, it can be inferred that Frances had died sometime in 1863.

You might find a deserter amongst these West Virginia registrants. A number of men had already served in the Rebel Army and deserted. While a number of records at Fold3 indicate George W. Mix served in the Confederate Army beginning in 1861, none mention desertion. This draft registration recorded in October-November 1863 provides a clue.

When it comes to locating Civil War pension records it will be important to know that West Virginians who served in the Union Army were eligible for Federal pensions. Some southern states provided pensions for Confederate service, but West Virginia refused to acknowledge Confederate service. Ex-Confederates couldn't claim a pension from Virginia either since they weren't residents of that state.

An excellent resource, *The Soldiery of West Virginia*, is found at Ancestry.com. While depicting Federal service in regards to regimental organization, it was difficult to provide the same accuracy with Confederate service, at best a rough estimate. The author, however, provided a rounded estimate of twenty-eight thousand Federal soldiers and seven thousand in the Confederate Army, which meant approximately ten percent of West Virginia's population served during the war – and perhaps the highest percentage of any other state. This resource can be found at: https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/48631/.

Another book available at Ancestry provides an in-depth analysis of Union loyalists and Confederate sympathizers in Barbour County. As author John W. Shaffer points out, West Virginia owes its very existence to the Civil War, and due to divided loyalties the state fought its own civil war in the midst of the Civil War (and beyond). Here you most certainly will find instances where the war divided families (and so much more):

POST, George W.

Enl. Co. D, 20th Va. Cav. 7-1-63; prom. to sgt. 7-1-63; POW Highland Co., Va. 12-12-63; released on oath Camp Chase, Ohio 1-16-65; brother Stephen and brother-in-law Albinius Marple served in same company; brother-in-law Stewart Queen Unionist. Farmer; $9,500/2,750 (parents); b. Upshur Co., W. Va. 1840; came to Barbour during war; m. Mary A. Woodford 1860; living Barbour 1880. Son of Daniel and Mary (Hevener) Post; grandson of Abraham and Christina Post; parents and grandparents b. Va. [17]

From this brief entry you learn the names of George Post's parents and grandparents and that all were born in Virginia. George entered service in the Confederate Army as a sergeant and five months later was captured and remained a prisoner of war until early 1865. Brother Stephen and brother-in-law Albinius Marple served in the same company, while another brother-in-law served in the Union Army. George was born in Upshur County in 1840 and migrated to Barbour County during the war after his marriage to Mary Woodford in 1860.

Another example includes yet another place to locate family records:

TRIMBLE, Andrew

Sympathizer, home burned 2-8-63; drafted 3-65; never inducted; brother William Unionist. Farmer; $0/0; b. Pendleton Co., W. Va. 1823; Methodist-Episcopal Church; came to Barbour 1830s; m. Barbara Marple 1842; d. Barbour 1882. Son of John and Sarah (Waybright) Trimble. Cf. Unionists. [18]

Andrew Trimble was a Confederate sympathizer who likely was "drafted" at gunpoint even though it appears his family were Unionists. He was a member of the Methodist-Episcopal Church, another research clue. Despite the brevity of these entries one can certainly glean quite a bit of information, and perhaps for family members not living in Barbour County.

As one might imagine a number of records are available for Virginia and the Civil War. It was, after all, the epicenter where more battles were fought than any other state, from the First Battle of Bull Run to the Battle of Little Sailor's Creek and the fall of Richmond and surrender at the Appomattox Courthouse. Since this article concerns the area of Virginia situated in the Appalachian region (twenty-five counties), the best source for Civil War records is the Alabama, Texas and Virginia Confederate Pension database available at Ancestry.

Virginia took care of its Confederate veterans via three pension acts (1888, 1900 and 1902). Following Reconstruction, the Commonwealth of Virginia began the process of providing assistance to its Confederate veterans long before the state legislature acted. Many widows, like Abbie Jewett Chatwell of Wythe County, applied for relief beginning in 1888. Her young husband, Jacob Chatwell, enlisted in Virginia's 4th Regiment, Company A, as a sergeant (Fold3). He was shot at Sharpsburg on September 27, 1862 and died at Winchester on October 4. Jacob was unmarried in 1860 so they had likely not been married long.

The best way to locate records for Virginia Appalachian ancestors is to provide the county where they lived. One section of the Alabama, Texas and Virginia database is dedicated to one specific county, Giles. One thing I did note about Virginia records – they are sometimes, for whatever reason, difficult to read (unlike Alabama and Texas records).

One more Civil War resource is the Southern Claims Commission, consisting of three databases at Ancestry: Master Index, Allowed Claims and Disallowed/Barred Claims. Note: Allowed Claims cover the states of Alabama, Georgia, Virginia and West Virginia only. However, you may find records for other states (Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas) either in the Master Index or Disallowed/Barred Claims.

According to the National Archives, the Southern Claims Commission was created by Congress on March 3, 1871 to address compensation claims filed by Southern Unionists. The Federal Government, however, wasn't about to hand out money to each and every claimant. Instead, through a careful process of evaluating a claim as to actual property value and Union loyalty, only about one-third of claims filed (22,298) were validated (7,092).

Some claims were rather exorbitant. In Alexandria, Virginia, Henry and Lorenzo Thomas were seeking $52,899; Gilbert Vanderverken of the same county, $90,166.53; Albert Aiken of Henrico County, $54,188; Henry Fitzhugh of Spottsylvania County, $71,955; and the most exorbitant claim, Mrs. Anna M. Fitzhugh of Fairfax County, $375,000! [19] The question for Anna Fitzhugh was whether she could prove Union loyalty. She inhabited Ravensworth, the largest colonial land grant in Fairfax County history – over 24,000 acres which over the years had been operated as a tobacco plantation. To General Robert E. Lee she was "Cousin Anna" (Lee and her husband were distant cousins). She was Virginian and "old money" through and through.

Her husband, William Henry Fitzhugh, died in 1830. In his will he made provisions for his Negro slaves to be manumitted: "After the year 1850, I leave all my negroes unconditionally free . . ." [20] By early 1851 sixty-one slaves had registered to receive their "inheritance" of freedom. Some may have remained at Ravensworth as paid workers. At least three were known to have remained with Anna as servants – Jim and Violet Burke and William Burke (son?) – and acknowledged in her own will.

William had also made provisions to the manumitted slaves, setting aside funds for "the expences of their removal to whatever places of residence they may select." [21] He also offered $50 to any former slave who wished to relocate to Liberia. William was keenly interested in the work of the American Colonial Society, founded in 1821.

The history of the Fitzhugh family in Virginia was impressive, "[occupying] the highest rank in the Colonial and State Councils . . . universally esteemed for their talent, probity, and high morality." [22] Anna's claim was filed in May 1872 by her attorney, demanding:

$375,000 for wool and timber taken for supplying the United States army during the war, from the large estate of Mrs. Fitzhugh, in Fairfax county, known as "Ravensworth." Among the papers is a safeguard in the writing of General Winfield Scott, dated June 14, 1861, which read as follows: "Mrs. A.M. Fitzhugh, of Ravensworth, a lady of great excellence, connected with the family of The Father of the Country, is, with her family servants, house and property, placed under the safeguard of the army." [23]

It seems that Anna Fitzhugh was a Unionist, given that General Winfield Scott and his army were sworn to protect her property and servants. Fairfax County was a "no-man's land" of sorts with Unionists on one side (situated near Washington, D.C.) and Confederates on the other. Its proximity to Washington with Union troops marching in and out, meant the "presence of warring armies greatly disrupted Fairfax County residents' lives with soldiers plundering their produce, livestock and other possessions such as furniture." [24]

While many left the county, Anna Fitzhugh remained, and despite assured protection during the war she was filing a claim against the Federal government who had vowed to protect her. In mid-October 1872 her case was finally heard before the Commission in Washington, a number of witnesses testifying on her behalf.

The first witness sworn was Daniel W. Lewis, of Danville, Va., aged 65. He had known the claimant all his life; some years before the war her husband died and left a will emancipating all his slaves, and leaving them money to go to Liberia; he knew that Mrs. Fitzhugh was loyal, and that after the war she had taken the oath of allegiance.

Other witnesses testified that the amount of $375,000 for 125,000 cords of wood was not exorbitant. The final witness of the day was one of her loyal servants, William Burke:

William H. Burke was sworn, and testified: I am fifty seven years of age, and a native of Fairfax; have lived all my life with the family. I am one of the slaves emancipated by Mr. Fitzhugh. I lived on the property of Mrs. Fitzhugh in Alexandria during the war. I have often heard Mrs. Fitzhugh speak against pulling down the old flag. She wanted to die under the flag she had lived under. I was a family servant, and never heard her utter a disloyal sentiment in her life. The Sunday before General Lee tendered his resignation I heard her say to him, "I hope you are not going to leave your position in the army and go South." He replied, "I have no idea of such a thing." On the next Tuesday, I think it was, General Lee passed the house, and asked me if Mrs. Fitzhugh was up. I told him no. He left word that he was going to Richmond. She said, after I told her what General Lee said, that she feared that he had tendered his resignation. She told me to get her the [Baltimore] Sun. I did so, and there she saw that he had tendered and his resignation and gone South. She then said,

"He has ruined himself forever." I know her general reputation, and she was regarded as loyal. [25]

Given William Burke's testimony, it appeared Anna Fitzhugh's loyalty was to the Union. However, a witness was waiting in the wings "to rebut the evidence of Wm. Burke by showing that there was another side of the picture, and Confederate generals enjoyed high hospitality at Mrs. Fitzhugh's mansion." Still, the commission regarded the charge of $3 per cord of wood as rather exorbitant; the highest price ever allowed by the Commission was $1 per cord.

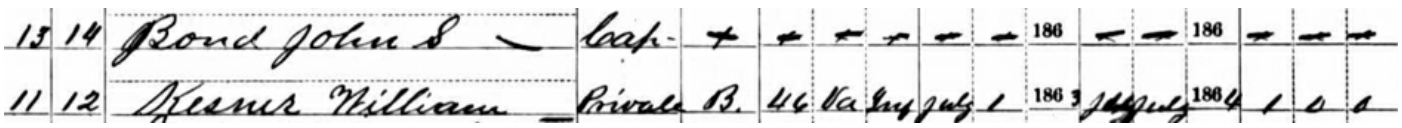
In early January 1873 Commission members visited Ravensworth as Anna was ill and unable to travel to Washington. Curiously, that appears to be the last mention of her claims, although records indicate they were eventually disallowed. The only "receipt" I could find was one paid to her estate in 1877 for what appears to be $12.00 for 3,000 pounds of hay. The Master Index indicates her claims (and those of her estate) were disallowed in 1875.

Anna Fitzhugh died on April 17, 1874 at the age of 77. While she generously provided for the Burke family, her loyal servants, the bulk of her estate was bestowed upon the children of the late General Robert E. Lee who died in 1870. At the time of her death "she was worth two hundred thousand dollars in bonds, stocks and money, in addition to her large landed estates."[26]

John S. Bond, a prominent and prosperous farmer of Pendleton County, West Virginia filed a claim with the Commission. His claims were paltry compared to Anna Fitzhugh's. While he estimated his losses at $1,383 (sheep, horses, fence rails, corn, hay and one beef steer), the Commission allowed him $1,035. The Commission found no reason to doubt John Bond's loyalty, and their remarks offer a glimpse of his life during the Civil War years:

The loyalty of the claimant is abundantly proved. He was twice arrested and imprisoned by the rebels – was obliged to be out in the woods and in a rock cave to avoid conscription. Had a great deal of property taken from him by Confederate seizure. Finally by authority of the Governor of West Virginia he organized a company of independent scouts, was made Captain and served for 18 months in the Union service until the close of the war. [27]

The mention of organizing a company of scouts is an important clue since you won't find any service records, other than the 1890 Veterans Schedule. The entry is reflective of his "unofficial status", listing no regiment, date of enlistment, discharge date, and so on.



A few more examples from the Southern Claims Commission:

Hannah J. Spangler, Floyd County, Virginia: *The claimant is a widow. Her husband died three or four years before the war leaving her with seven young children all of whom, but one or two, were minors at the close of the war. One, a son, went into the rebel army against the wishes and opposition of his mother and died while in the service. . . . Mrs. Spangler claims to have been a sincere Union woman throughout the war, and two of her near neighbors testify decidedly to her loyalty. She "begged men not to go into the war", and*

harbored and fed refugees and deserters. That was about all that a poor widow like her could do. We find her loyal. [28]

Elijah W. Hylton, Floyd County, Virginia: *The claimant had a farm of 600 acres. He was a Dunkard. He was threatened and molested by the rebels and had some property taken from him . . . harbored rebel deserters and gave information to the Union forces. Two persons testify to his loyalty. . . The property was taken in April 1865 by Stoneman's troops.* [29]

What I found most interesting about these short remarks was how Elijah Hylton was treated, not only because he was a Unionist, but also because of his faith. I don't think I've ever heard any story quite like it in regards to the Civil War. Naturally, I had to do a bit more digging! I found what I was looking in single document, a 2018 master thesis entitled "Traitors in the Service of the Lord: The Role of Church and Clergy in Appalachia's Civil War", with a sole focus on Floyd County.

Elijah Hylton wasn't the only Dunkard harassed by Rebels, but he was fortunate to only have lost some property. Elder John Kline documented the cloud of threats he lived under as he went about his ministry on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line:

I am threatened, they may take my life: but I do not fear them; they can only kill my body." – Elder John Kline, June 1, 1864 [30]

Two weeks later he was returning to his home after having his horse newly-shod. He was ambushed and killed not far from his Winchester, Virginia home. Kline wouldn't have had the means to defend himself even if he had the chance – he never carried a weapon and opposed war. In Floyd County the Dunkard congregation (Church of the Brethren) was under constant threat of attack. Apparently, the Dunkards' pacifism, as a tenet of their faith, made them a target. If you'd like to read more, see the link in the footnotes.

County-Specific Records

Although county history books are often approached with caution by genealogists, you can find a number of these types of books either at Ancestry (or Family Search). At Ancestry go to the card catalog and search for "Virginia" in the title field and the county name as a keyword to locate these types of books and, perhaps, other county-specific records.

For instance, several years ago, as a way to become better acquainted with my sister-in-law Sara, I offered to research her family history (it worked – I did get to know her better!). One resource I've discovered is a book, *Pioneer Settlers of Grayson County*, which prominently features some of Sara's family surnames, Nuckolls (her mother's maiden name) and Swift, as well as a number of collateral lines. These types of books are potential gold mines if backed up with sources. This one, although well-written, doesn't appear to be adequately documented via traditional genealogical citations.

Nuckolls family tradition holds that three brothers – John, James and William of York, England – immigrated as merchants to the coast of Virginia in 1607. That appears to be a bit of an exaggeration as their names don't appear on the list of 1607 immigrants led by Captain John Smith. However, the second group of settlers, referred to as "The First Supply" arrived in 1608, among them a gentleman by the name of John Nickoles.

A great deal of research would be in order to determine if John Nickoles was the progenitor of all American Nuckolls (or Nuckols, Nuckles, and so on) families. The author of this book made the assumption that John Nuckolls of Louisa County must have descended from one of the three brothers. John Nuckolls is the last ancestor (fourth great grandfather) I've been able to trace with a reasonable degree of certainty. The author was, however, in possession of Mary (Garland) Nuckolls' Episcopal prayer book, handed down through the generations – always a good starting point.

Collateral lines of the Nuckolls family include the surnames Swift, Dickey, Garland and Cooley. Flower Swift and Matthew Dickey (fourth great-grandfathers) are notable as "founding fathers" of Grayson County, which was carved out of Wythe County in 1792. Early settlers had selected land "along New River and its tributary creeks" in Wythe County. However, the county seat was so far away that Flower Swift, a magistrate of the Wythe court, spearheaded an effort to have another county formed out of Wythe. His proposal was "met with violent opposition." [31]

The issue was later successfully lobbied in the state legislature by William Bourne and the first court of Grayson County was held in his barn in 1793. Flower Swift was appointed a magistrate of Grayson County and a member of the first court, alongside Matthew Dickey (and others). Flower Swift and Charles Nuckolls donated land for the first county courthouse.

Flower's daughter, Margaret, married Captain Robert Garland Nuckolls, son of John Nuckolls and Mary Garland in 1805. The author, Benjamin Floyd Nuckolls, included the following anecdote:

Capt. Robert G. Nuckolls and Margaret Swift were married in 1805. Court record by William Carrico, Sr., a Methodist minister, who was also an early settler here, on west side of New River. Rev. Carrico came to the house of Col. Swift to perform the ceremony. He found Col. Swift busy working in his blacksmith shop. Mr. Carrico went into the shop and asked if he had any objection to the marriage. He said, "No, but Bob Nuckolls will carry off my best spinner." She was a good spinner; she spun wool and flax until her old days and died at the age of ninety-one, honored and respected by all. [32]

They later opened up the county's first hotel or "ordinary" at the new county court house.

One of Sara's most interesting ancestors was Benjamin Cooley, who married Jane Dickey, daughter of Matthew and Rebecca (Wiley) Dickey. See "The Dash" column featuring Benjamin Cooley, master clockmaker.

County History

Ancestry has a number of county histories, including (a few examples):

- *Early Southwest Virginia Families*
- *Resources of Southwest Virginia*
- *Annals of Bath County, Virginia*
- *Alleghany County, Virginia, its resource and industries*
- *Historical Sketch of Alleghany County, Virginia*

- *A Centennial History of Alleghany County, Virginia*
- *A Brief History of Bath County, Virginia*
- *Annals of Southwest Virginia, 1769-1800*
- *Related Families of Botetourt County, Virginia*
- *History of Patrick and Henry Counties, Virginia*

To find more county histories specific to the Appalachian region of Virginia, search the Card Catalog at Ancestry by typing "Virginia" in the Title field and the county in the Keyword field.

Published Genealogies

There are, of course, a number of published family genealogies available either at Ancestry or Family Search. One source found at Ancestry, *Genealogies of West Virginia Families*, is a compilation of genealogies initially published in the *West Virginia Historical Magazine Quarterly*, a journal published by the West Virginia Historical and Antiquarian Society from 1901 to 1905. If you don't have an Ancestry subscription, you may be able to find what you're looking for at Hathi Trust:

https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/009008922

Historical Societies

Virginia has many resources and some of the best may be county historical societies. The Library of Virginia has assembled a list: https://www.lva.virginia.gov/public/societies.asp.

West Virginia resources: http://www.wvculture.org/history/archivesindex.aspx

Maps

Given these two states' unique history, you'll need maps for Virginia and West Virginia research. The Library of Congress web site is one of the best places to find them, especially early Virginia maps: https://www.loc.gov/maps/?fa=subject:virginia&st=grid

I've been using this resource recently as I work on family history chart projects. As I uncover stories, I find I need to "see" the places mentioned – places you may not be able to find on twenty-first century maps. You'll find some of those kind of stories in a new column I've created, entitled "Oh, the Stories I Find!".

Digital Library of Appalachia

One more source related to the Appalachian region. According to the web site: "The Digital Library of Appalachia provides online access to archival and historical materials related to the culture of the southern and central Appalachian region. The contents of the DLA are drawn from special collections of Appalachian College Association member libraries." Collections include: Cultural Environment, Daily Life and Customs, Education, Literature, Music, Natural Environment, Politics and Government, Religion and Beliefs, Visual Arts and Handcrafts, Work and occupations.

https://dla.acaweb.org/digital/

by Sharon Hall

> *"The Book Woman's a-comin' up the creek." Small children run at her horse's heels as she guides him over the stones in the creek-bed and up the slope to the school, church or home that serves as circulation center for the W.P.A. Pack Horse Library in that Kentucky community.* [1]

It must have been a familiar greeting up there in the hills and hollows of eastern Kentucky. "Book Lady, we've been waiting for you!" Mountain folks lived in an isolated world without newspapers, telephones, radio or paved roads. The book lady, aka, the "pack horse librarian" was a welcome sight, a member of the local community. These were her people.

It wasn't the only place in America with an isolated rural population, but few were as inaccessible as eastern Kentucky. Getting from one place to another meant following creeks and navigating mountain paths on mule, horse, or on foot. Tiny one-room schools scattered up in the hills, isolated as they were, had little too offer except the most basic education. There were few textbooks, let alone a library.

Franklin Roosevelt began establishing a series of Depression-era "New Deal" programs immediately following his inauguration in March 1933 to get people back to work. Agencies such as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Works Progress Administration, later known as the Works Project Administration (WPA), created what today we would call "infrastructure" projects, essentially "men's work".

A number of women had taken important leadership posts assisting in the nation's recovery. Many of them met with WPA administrator Harry Hopkins and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt at the White House on November 20, 1933 to discuss work-relief for women. Having just committed to putting four million men to work before winter, he set a goal of putting a quarter million women to work in the next thirty days.

In the coming months women would find domestic work such as sewing projects which helped clothe the poor of America. Some would be paid to garden and can food or teach, while others found work in archaeology and historic preservation. County libraries across the nation had been especially hard-hit, but help was on the way as women were employed to index, file and

repair books. Library extension services were also initiated across the nation, although it wasn't exactly a new concept.


LIBRARY WAGON
Traveling distributor of literature in Washington county.

Mobile libraries, called book wagons or bookmobiles, had been around since the early 1900s in one form or another. The idea has been attributed to Mary Lemist Titcomb, a Washington County, Maryland librarian, who in the early 1900s posited, "Would not a Library Wagon, the outward and visible signs of the service for which the Library stood, do much more in cementing friendship?" [2] Miss Titcomb, a devoted public servant, had in mind a means to make "books accessible to the people of every corner of the county . . . [she was] anxious for a "library wagon" to carry books, which could be left at houses along the route." [3]

While a number of library branches and sub-stations had been established throughout the county, those living in rural districts were often poor families with no means to travel to the outlying stations. By the summer of 1905 they looked forward to library wagon visits with great delight.

The library wagon had been specially constructed, fitted with book shelves on either side with doors opening out. The Hagerstown Library believed their library-on-wheels was the first of its kind in the United States. Initiated in April 1905, the "traveling distributor of literature in Washington County" was making regular trips, "driving through the farmhouse lanes directly to the door, allowing patrons to select as they wish from the shelves." [4]

Library extension services were implemented throughout the nation. A number of them were implemented across Kentucky, and by July 1937 thirty-three counties had implemented programs, managed by county school superintendents. These services "met a real need and have provided profit and pleasure to the school children in these counties", as reported in the biennial report of Kentucky's Library Extension Division. As successful as those programs had been, it was the so-called pack horse libraries which had become "one of the most interest as well as most helpful of the W.P.A. Projects." [5]

The idea wasn't entire novel for eastern Kentucky, however. In 1913 Miss May Stafford raised funds to purchase books which were to be delivered on horseback, but the project ended after one year. Berea College sent a book wagon up into the mountains in the late teens and early 1920s. Miss Stafford later served as supervisor of the Johnson County Pack Horse Library, based in Paintsville, the county seat. While the WPA paid their salaries, she was still desperately in need of books and supplies.

The first WPA-Pack Horse Library was initiated in Leslie County in 1934. While organized in a similar manner this program was unique, supervised from the main library in the county seat with centers scattered around the county. Book women (and maybe a few "book men") traveled regular routes, carrying books, magazines and free pamphlets.

An Australian newspaper referred to them as "Uncle Sam's Libraries", and with a little tongue-in-cheek humor described the program to its readers:

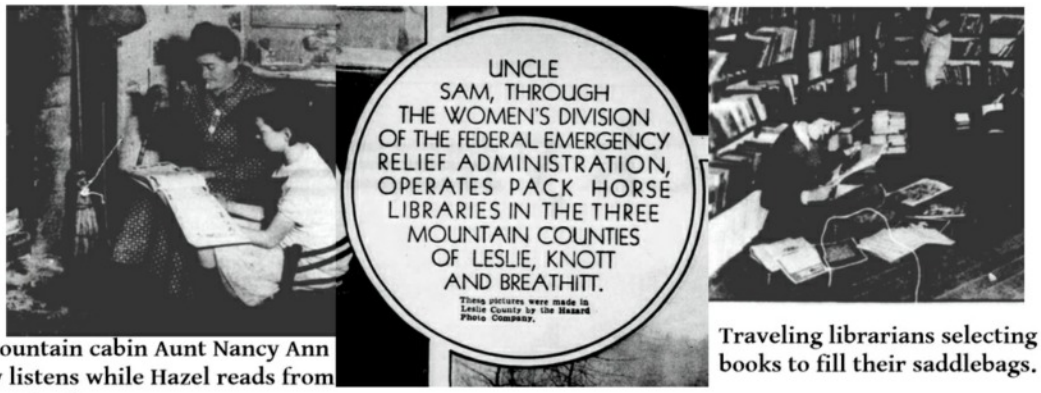
Down in Leslie County, Ky., where the rugged, harsh-ribbed mountains laugh at modern methods of transportation, it is a hard job to spread "book larning'."

The people want it "bad," though, and the Kentucky Relief Administration has put women on horseback to supply it. Books are heavy. Elsewhere, they are usually transported in quantity by truck or car, but not in Leslie County. The folks who want them down there live back in the mountains and they use the creek beds for travel. There are no roads to their places.

So the work relief projects on which women are given the opportunity to earn their relief in that part of the State include a pack horse library. It is the only travelling library transported in saddlebags. . . .

In Leslie County, the board of education and interested citizens have sponsored the collection of some 500 books for circulation throughout the county. On horseback, women workers carry the books packed in stout leather handbags that hang on either side of the saddles. Splashing up the creek beds winding along the ravines, they carry the books to isolated rural schools and community centres. Often as not, a one-room log building serves double duty as school and community centre.

One route for the pack horse library goes up "Hell-For-Sartin" Creek. It is a tortuous, twisting stream with a rocky bed and brush-tangled banks. At Devil's Jump Branch the four women riders separate, each going up a different tributary. They cover 57 mountain schools and communities, picking up and replenishing the book stocks so that the entire 500 books constantly circulate throughout the county. **6**



In a mountain cabin Aunt Nancy Ann Begley listens while Hazel reads from a library book.

Traveling librarians selecting books to fill their saddlebags.

The Courier-Journal, January 27, 1935

For a newspaper halfway around the world, that was a pretty fair description of how Leslie County's pack horse library operated, although their readers may have wondered what and where in the world was "Hell-For-Sartin" Creek. Hell-for-Sartin, according to legend, got its name after a couple of prospectors came upon the Leslie County stream. One man exclaimed, "This is Hell!", while the other man agreed, "Hell for Sart'in"! One of the county's residents, Sergeant Willie Sandlin, received the Congressional Medal of Honor for his service in World War I. He gave "Devil's Jump Branch on Hell-For-Sartin Creek, Leslie County, Kentucky" as his residential address.

Kentuckians had a knack for assigning place names – Lick, Skillet, Burning Fork, Tin Can, Rough and Tough, Rock House, Arthumable, Frozen, Tip Top and Troublesome. An aptly named place up in the mountains was "Sit-and-Wait", "so named because one can sit and fish as long as one wishes and never catch anything." [8]

Eastern Kentucky had "the whole country 'skinned a mile'" when it came to peculiar names. Hell-For-Sartin was only one of many throughout the region. Letcher County had Uz, Hot Spot, Kingdom Come and Ice. Hell-for-Sartin was by no means the only uniquely named creek – Cut Shin (or Cutshin), Beefhide, Troublesome and Quicksand, just to name a few. [9]

Daniel Boone may well have started the tradition of assigning unique place names in Kentucky. After caching supplies of "jerked meat, bear's oil, buffalo tallow, [and] dried buffalo tongues" near the mouth of Red River, he called the place "Lulbegrud", a (mis-spelled) reference to "Lorbrulgrud" from *Gulliver's Travels*. [10]

When May Stafford organized Kentucky's first "pack horse library" in 1913, she relied on private donations, especially from John C.C. Mayo, a wealthy Johnson County coal mine owner. In 1934 Kentucky's director of women's and professional projects revived Miss Stafford's program as the WPA pack horse project. Presbyterian minister Benton Deaton made the project possible when he offered Wooton Community Center as Leslie County's central library where carriers could meet to select and then disseminate books throughout the county via pack horses.

The community of Wooton was founded after the War of 1812 when brothers Bill, Hiram, Charles and Davis Wooton came from North Carolina to find land to settle. In the 1930s it consisted of about 25 houses, a post office, two filling stations, a couple of general stores and two cafes. It was also home to the Wooton Presbyterian Community School.

Roderick McIntosh, an early settler, made friends with the Indians. Nearby was a creek originally known as Cane Creek, and when McIntosh was ready to build a log home he convinced another white man to help. As the story goes, while helping to build the house the man cut his shin. He then asked McIntosh to re-name the creek "Cutshin". Another unique name explained!

The pack horse library program was an immediate success and soon surrounding counties were clamoring to establish their own pack horse library. PTA members began writing to inquire how they might begin their own pack horse library. In Allais (Perry County) there wasn't a complete library in their school, leaving their children with an inadequate amount of reading material. Anxious to begin, the Allais PTA had voted to establish a pack horse library before writing to request more information.

A number of pack horse libraries were subsequently established, administered by the county board of education – Harlan, Clay, Whitley, Jackson, Perry, Owsley, Lee, Breathitt and Knott counties. By the end of 1937 twenty-two more counties had pack horse libraries, and by December 1938 the program had surpassed "the stage where its service is a drop of water in an ocean." [11] Twenty-nine counties with 274 carriers were riding hundreds of miles while serving hundreds of rural mountain folks.

While carriers and supervisors were paid by WPA, books were acquired through donations. Many were purchased through the Penny Fund, but a number of used and worn books were donated to local libraries. No matter, they were greatly appreciated even though a great

percentage were worthless cast-offs. Still, pack horse librarians found ways to use even the most dilapidated texts (books, magazines, newspapers) by painstakingly cutting them up to create scrapbooks and children's picture books.

While libraries received a variety of reading materials, some, like romance or detective magazines, weren't considered suitable. Supervisors "encouraged books and short stories that embraced art, music, religion, biography, invention, cooking, gardening, health and child care." Appropriate magazines included *Reader's Digest*, *National Geographic*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *Good Housekeeping* and so on. [12]

While the rest of the world may have looked down on them as a bunch of "Kentucky hillbillies", mountain folks were very much interested in the world outside theirs. The women, in particular, looked forward to receiving *Good Housekeeping* and *Ladies Home Journal*, or anything on the topic of child care, health, nutrition or food. They even took to creating their own scrapbooks of favorite recipes and quilt patterns to share with others.

The pack horse library became a de facto educational program, especially in terms of health and hygiene, providing "information that helped dispel such old wives' tales as those which held that rubbing warm rabbit's brains on a baby's gums would help cut teeth, or blowing tobacco smoke onto a teaspoon of breast milk would remedy colic." [13]

Obviously, the program was enormously successful, largely due to the tenacity and dedication of those who trekked up and down the winding mountain trails. One woman walked her eighteen-mile route after her mule died. A typical day might go like this:

It's early, four thirty A.M., and the air in the dark barn is cold and crisp. In the dim light of the coal-oil lamp, the book woman can see gray puffs of steam float from the horse's nostrils. She shivers. At the age of twenty-two, and having grown up in these hills, she knows how bitterly cold a January day here can get.

As she brushes the gelding's black coat, she wishes she could stay home, close to her two young children still asleep in the tiny wood-frame house nestled on the side of the hill. Her mother will keep an eye on them for her, but she will miss her babes and worry about them nonetheless.

She checks her saddlebags. They're filled with tattered books and magazines, a few bulletins from the WPA, some reference materials, and a couple of homemade scrapbooks, one she made herself and one sent by a Girl Scout troop all the way from Cincinnati. She pats the horse's neck, then leads him to the gate, where she tightens he girth on the saddle and pulls herself onto his back. . .

She leases the horse from her neighbor for fifty cents a week a plus feed. Surefooted and gentle, this is a horse she can rely upon to get her across he rocky mountain slopes they will travel today. The two of them are partners in the truest sense.

She leaves the yard and heads out on the lonely trail, urging her companion up and down the rocky hillsides. If the trail grew steep she would dismount and lead him.

The people she will meet that day are neighbors and friends. She drops off books and magazines, taking care not to linger – it will be a long day. Along the route will be at least one one-room schoolhouse.

Before she gets to the stoop, the door bursts open and a tall blond boy with sparkling eyes and a chipped front tooth grins at her.

"We been a-waitin' for you, book lady," he says. "We done read every one of the books you left last time."

There are never enough books, but she carefully selects one she thinks the children will enjoy. She has time to read one chapter to them before hurrying on her way.

Mrs. Stuart lives nine miles off the route, and despite the cold weather she doesn't miss today's rendezvous. Rain has turned to sleet and it's hard to see ahead, but her horse knows the way. One more stop and then she'll be on her way home.

As she rides down the last hill that leads toward the creek, the rain finally slows down. Her wet coat is stiff with ice. Once home, she will have to hang it on a peg near the stove, but it will take a couple of days for it to completely dry out. With the ceasing of the rain, quietness fills the air…

The quiet is interrupted with a new sound, a roar. There's a catch in her throat. Only one thing makes that sound – the creek when it's full. Normally, Cut Shin Creek is only a few inches deep, and she and the horse splash across it in just a few paces. But as she comes down the hill, she can see that it is over its banks, lapping over the bottom of the maple trees along its side.

She pulls the horse up and takes it all in. Her house is only a mile or so beyond this creek. The only other way to get home would be to retrace the route, all twenty miles. . . .

"Let's get on home," she tells the horse. The horse seems to agree, and without hesitating, he slips into the rushing creek. It's not as deep as she thought, the water only up to the horse's belly. . . A minute later, they're across.

The horse knows they are close to home, and he picks up the pace. The trail from the creek is worn and familiar. They head up the hill and then down again. It is five P.M. and almost completely dark.

She dismounts and tends to her horse before hurrying into the "into the arms of her little ones and her own mother. The book woman is home at last. Her job is done."

Tomorrow is another day and she will ride into town, as will the other pack horse librarians, to delivery their weekly reports. "She will not have anything unusual to report. She is, after all, an ordinary woman, doing what she can to make life a little better for herself and her family." [14]

Challenging routes, long days and book shortages aside, the program was highly successful as hundreds of mountain families benefited until 1943 when much of Roosevelt's New Deal was de-funded. For the program's duration people received the books "with an almost child-like gratitude. . . . For many these books offer[ed] an only means of contact with the outer world, a delving into the realm of make-believe, a blissful escape from every-day surroundings, but most important of all – a step toward the education of Kentucky mountaineer people." [15]

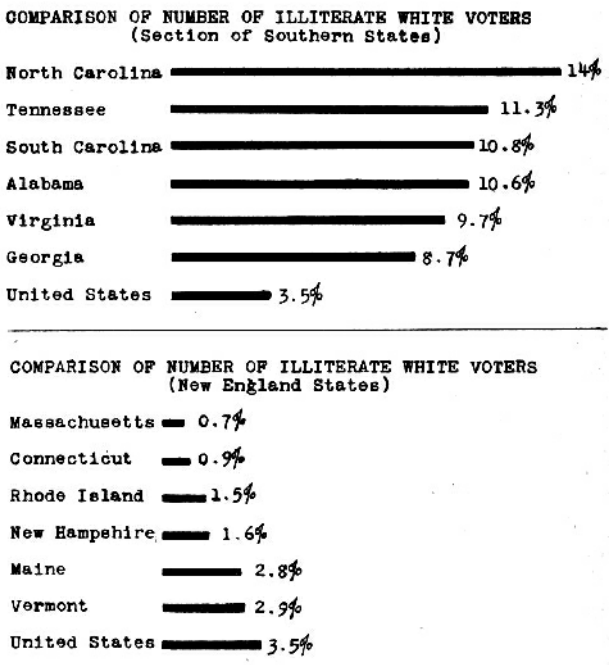
I'd like to think the pack horse library project's success was at least, in part, owing to another unique program instituted by a tenacious Rowan County, Kentucky school superintendent in September 1911. Cora Wilson Stewart called them moonlight schools. Read on.

MOONLIGHT SCHOOL:

Teaching A-B-Cs to Mountain Moonshiners (and beyond)

By Sharon Hall

Rowan County, Kentucky must have seemed an unlikely locale to mount a campaign against illiteracy in the early twenty century. Major American cities were grappling with an unprecedented wave of immigration as almost fifteen million immigrants flooded our shores between 1880 and 1910. Most arrived from southern and eastern Europe, Russia, Greece, Poland, Hungary and Austria, a veritable melting pot manifested in a vast array of ethnic, cultural, religious and language differences. Illiteracy was just one impediment to their assimilation into American culture.



However, America had grappled with its own native illiteracy for quite some time. In Appalachia, home to "hillbillies and hollers", it was especially high. For instance, North Carolina estimated its mountain region (aka, Appalachia) illiteracy rate at 17 percent, compared to an overall U.S. rate of 3.5 percent. In 1915 the Office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction called it "an unanswerable argument for moonlight schools in North Carolina." [1]

By 1915 quite a bit had been written about so-called "moonlight schools", an education movement dedicated to the reduction of illiteracy across the nation. The movement began in Rowan County, Kentucky, a place where a quarter century earlier a feud rivaling that of the Hatfields and McCoys resulted in a number of deaths, gun battles and lawlessness. Cora Wilson, credited with instituting moonlight schools, spent her formative years during that volatile period of Rowan County history.

Cora was born in Montgomery County, Kentucky on January 17, 1875. Her parents, Jeremiah and Anne (Halley) Wilson, had a large family and Cora was their third child. Jeremiah ("Jerry") Wilson, born on June 30, 1852, was the son of Isaac and Sara Jane Wilson who in the 1840s migrated to Morgan County, Kentucky from Leesburg (Loudon County), Virginia. Jeremiah was the first of twelve children.

Anne Halley Wilson was also one of twelve children of parents Uriah and Sarah (Davis) Halley. Like the Wilson family, the Halleys had migrated to Kentucky from Virginia. John Halley arrived in Montgomery County in 1838 with his family. When he died soon after their arrival his wife Nancy decided to continue her journey westward to Missouri. Uriah, their oldest

child, decided to remain in Kentucky and build a life with Sarah. Anne Elizabeth, their second child, was born on February 12, 1849.

Anne, like her parents, had deep religious convictions. From an early age she was exposed not only to Bible stories, but classical literature, which developed into her romanticized view of the world.

As the second oldest child of a large family Anne developed a keen sense of responsibility. Her father died when she was eighteen years old and she attended his business interests and settled his estate (and inherited the farm).

Having received a public school education she took a teaching position in neighboring Powell County where she met fellow teacher Jeremiah Wilson, three years her junior. They married on December 11, 1870 and settled on the farm.

Rural life, of course, had its challenges and Anne supplemented the family income by teaching as Jeremiah operated a tavern and general store. Described as a "bright, intelligent young man with an inquiring mind", Jeremiah also began studying medicine with a well-known Montgomery County doctor, Dr. Bunyan Spratt. He and Anne would later name one of their sons in honor of his mentor. [2]

Jeremiah and Anne began their family – which would include two sets of twins – with Everett, a son born on October 29, 1871, and a daughter, Viola, born on June 1, 1873. Sadly, both died at young ages (as did three other children) – Viola at the age of five in 1878 and Everett at the age of twenty in 1892. The circumstances of his death were especially tragic.

Everett appears to have lived a troubled life, as evidenced by this 1890 headline, not long after the Rowan County Martin-Tolliver feud ended:

ROWAN ROWDY AGAIN

Morehead the Scene of Another Battle in the Crowded Streets

George White Attempts to Elope with Dr. Wilson's Fifteen-Year-Old Daughter

He Is Unsuccessful In His Designs and Friends Take Sides In the Conflict

A Great Deal of Shooting Results in Nothing But a Display of Very Poor Marksmanship [3]

Note: I should point out that I have read a great deal about Cora Wilson in preparation for writing this article. I have yet to come across any reference to this particular incident. The fifteen-year-old daughter of Dr. Wilson is most certainly Cora.

A "little quarrel" had begun on Main Street in Morehead (Rowan county seat) on September 1, 1890. One thing led to another and just before 5:00 p.m. the "little rumpus dilated into a regular pitched battle." Everett, along with his friends Leo and Willie Tolliver (of the Rowan County feuding family), were on the sidewalk when William Parker came along.

Apparently there was "bad blood" between them, as the Louisville *Courier-Journal* declined to repeat what was actually said. Parker told Everett and his friends, "don't follow me", whereupon Everett "ran after him, firing his revolver. Parker turned and gave Wilson a warm welcome."

A number of friends gathered around, including the Tolliver boys, "relatives of the famous Craig, who for a great number of years . . . was the so-called 'terror' of this neck of the woods."

Dr. Jeremiah Wilson, a recent graduate of the Kentucky School of Medicine in Louisville, was also present. While he had

been practicing medicine for some time, having treated more than a few casualties of the late feud, a new state requirement made a formal diploma in medicine mandatory to continue practicing.

A number of young men, including George White, were also present. It was also "court day" for Rowan County which meant there were more people than usual in town. Everett had fired about several shots in a two-minute span, causing women and children to cry and run in every direction.

The town was already in an uproar over a recent incident:

The town is all in uproar, and the wildest excitement prevails. All of the trouble grew out of an episode which happened a few days ago near Hoggtown, when Geo. White undertook to elope with Dr. Wilson's daughter, fifteen years old. The doctor naturally objected to the match, as he thought his daughter too young to marry, not saying anything about White, whom he knew to be a worthless man and unfit to be her husband. The elopement .... was to be well planned, and it would not have taken long to execute, but a friend informed him. The doctor was ten miles away from home, at this place, and in the company with William Saulsberry, immediately moved in the direction of the eloping pair. After a hard ride of twenty miles over rough roads they overtook the couple in the woods and captured the young girl, but not until after a few shots had been passed. White is said to have been wounded in the fight. Ten friends of both parties have been here all day, and the skirmish which took place this afternoon was not unexpected. [4]

While none of the Wilson party had been hurt in the fray, it seemed unlikely the conflict was entirely over. More evidence of a troubled life in an 1892 headline:

Woman, Baby, Whisky, Bullet

At Morehead, Rowan county, on the night of the 4th inst., Everett Wilson, son of Dr. J.J. Wilson, a prominent physician of that place, committed suicide by shooting himself through the right lung. A young woman to whom he had been paying attention for some time past returned from Ashland on the 3d inst., the mother of a very young babe, of which Wilson was the supposed father. This, together with drink, is the supposed cause of the suicide. He had made several unsuccessful attempts to end his life prior to this. [5]

Cora weighed only four pounds at birth, but when Viola died in 1878 she became the oldest daughter. After Everett's death she became the oldest child, but had always been described as responsible and serious as Anne entrusted her with the care of her younger siblings. Being adept at organizing and giving orders, her nickname was "The General".

Jeremiah had given her that pet name when she was but five or six years old. Her younger brothers would tease her, saying she was born "with her mind made up." [6] Cora had declared at a very young age her intention to become a teacher one day. After all, her parents "expected each of their children to 'be somebody'." [7]

In the meantime she spent her early years much like other mountain children, attending a one-room school which was in session only three months out of the year. Despite her family's modest finances, her parents encouraged her love of learning and reading, ensuring she always had books and magazines to read.

The family moved several times in the early 1880s as Jeremiah's medical practice grew. The family continued to grow and Anne would take a variety of jobs – teacher, postmistress, even running a country store. Country doctors, of course, rarely received

cash payments for their services. In barter for the care of his patients, Jeremiah would receive home-grown produce, livestock and land. Cora often accompanied her father and witnessed poverty and illiteracy firsthand, giving her special insight which she would later use to build her own legacy.

Jeremiah moved his family to Morehead in 1890, where Cora began her teaching career just before turning sixteen. It was common practice for young women with only a common school diploma to pursue one of the only respectable careers available to women at the time. As was often the case, Cora was only a year older than the one-room school's oldest student.

While teaching she simultaneously attended classes at Morehead Normal School. By the age of seventeen she had earned her teaching certificate, while teaching and living at home and helping with her young siblings. Between sessions of the Morehead school Cora also attended the National Normal University in 1892 and 1893.

Just as she was maturing into young womanhood a movement was sweeping the nation. The so-called Progressive Era began around 1896 and continued into the 1920s. With it came calls for social and cultural change and political reform. Some of the most prominent participants were Christian ministers and middle-class society women. Women's suffrage and temperance were favorite causes, all for the betterment of society.

There would be a place for ambitious young women in the field of public education. However, at the time, young women like Cora were still thought to have been better suited for life as a wife and mother. By 1895 Cora wasn't exactly sure what she wanted to do with her life. Her father had encouraged her to follow in his footsteps.

Cora instead married a young man, Ulysses Grant Carey, on June 4, 1895, and continued to teach in Rowan County where she would become intimately acquainted with the mountain folks, boarding in their homes.

Married life, such as it was, didn't suit Cora well and she filed for a separation in November 1896. On June 9, 1898 their case came to court where the marriage was "canceled and set aside and held for naught."[8] Cora took back her maiden name and continued to contemplate the best pathway forward in terms of a career.

Thinking perhaps she might be suited for a business career she attended a business college in Lexington. Still uncertain of her way forward, Cora continued to teach at the business school.

Anne became quite ill in 1900 and Cora was called home. Within a week of her arrival, her beloved mother Anne died on September 10, 1900. In order to help fund her siblings' education, Cora took a clerical job in Huntington, West Virginia, only to discover she still wanted to teach. Meanwhile, as she contemplated a way to return to Morehead and teach, her brother, Bunyan Spratt Wilson, had been elected as Morehead's first mayor in 1900. When he encouraged his big sister to run for Rowan County school superintendent, little did she know her life was about to change forever.

When she was nominated on May 11, 1901 to be the Democratic candidate for the position, her chances of succeeding weren't assured despite the fact she had spent the last ten years in and around the area and was well known to mountaineers. Traditionally, Rowan was a Republican county – and her opponent was a man. If elected she would the first woman to hold such a position in the county. Normally the womenfolk were expected to marry and raise a family, leaving such things as public education administration to the men.

The situation was made even more prickly as Cora's opponent, Emmett Martt, was dating her sister, Stella. Still, she was up for the challenge and began knocking on doors, introducing herself as "the children's friend". She began garnering glowing newspaper endorsements. The *Mt. Sterling Advocate* (Montgomery County) was especially effusive, calling her "a very pleasant young woman, bright, quite thoroughly imbued with the interests of the public schools." Furthermore:

She wants to see Rowan county schools the best and her knowledge of the work, her fitness for the place, her determination, courage and progressiveness coupled with the fact that a Kentuckian born, reared and cultured she will be thoroughly practical, bringing about the very best results without any kind of a jar. [9]

In November they have a Superintendent of Common Schools to elect and the voters are going to give their support to the woman candidate, Miss Cora Wilson, who is modest, untiring, determined and one of the best qualified women for this position to which she aspires, it has been our good fortune to meet. Rowan county voters are doing the right thing when they rise to their privilege and power and name the woman of their own raising and educating to this position. . . . There are few women with such varied opportunities and experiences and of course Rowan county will do the elegant by naming her their Superintendent of Public Schools. With Miss Wilson at the head, thus fitted and naturally endowed, we may expect much from Rowan county. [10]

Cora handily won on November 5, 1901, although a number of challenges awaited, not the least of which was how society, and rural Kentuckians in particular, viewed the role of women, especially those who chose to work outside the home. Cora Wilson was not about to be stereotyped, however.

As one biographer pointed out, at the time the only thing required of a school superintendent was the political skills to get elected. With several years of teaching experience she was ready to prove her abilities as a school administrator. The position wouldn't be ceremonial either, as she opened the superintendent's office to the public on a daily basis.

Given that her role models were social reformer Jane Addams and Ida Tarbell, an investigative journalist (muckraker) who found her voice in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, it's not surprising how Cora would make her mark in Rowan County and beyond. She threw herself into the position – giving speeches, meeting with one-room school trustees throughout the county, writing articles for area newspapers, joining civic groups and more.

Apparently she found time for a personal life, however, as she married Alexander Turney "A.T." Stewart on September 24, 1902, less than a year following her election as superintendent. Like Cora, A.T. was an educator, three years her junior. They settled in Morehead, but the marriage got off to a rocky start. A.T. was a traditionalist who expected Cora would leave behind her career and bear him a large family.

Cora wasn't about to give up her duties, nor her civic involvement, which meant she would frequently be away from the home. There were other "prickly issues" as well – Cora, as school superintendent, was her husband's superior, and their political views differed. His family were staunch Republicans and she ran as a Democrat.

The marriage didn't last long as Cora realized it was a mistake. She sued for a divorce which was granted on March 7, 1904. In a strange twist, however, they remarried on June 22, 1904. What transpired in those three months is unclear,

but Cora decided against running for school superintendent again.

While she continued with her civic activities outside the home, A.T. may have hoped she would eventually settle into a more traditional role as wife and mother. However, she continued to carry on with her interests, which in turn brought a lot of tension into their fragile union. Not much changed even after Cora gave birth to a son on August 20, 1907.

In 1907 Kentucky's superintendent of public instruction began a campaign to garner attention for the need of better schools, a cause for which Cora cared deeply. She participated by giving speeches to schools throughout Eastern Kentucky. It's unlikely she traveled with her infant son.

Tragically, William died on June 7, 1908. No doubt some in the community questioned whether she had neglected the care of her infant son. Nevertheless, Cora continued her busy schedule, leaving A.T. to deal with his grief and the glaring truth that he would never have a large family, at least not with Cora. He turned to alcohol, refused to work and began publicly berating his wife every chance he got.

Cora seemed oblivious, however, and made the decision to run again for school superintendent in 1909. This time she was running against another woman, Lyda Messer, a former protégée. Her victory over Lyda was resounding, but its effects on her marriage were disastrous. As was typical for her, she immersed herself in work, while A.T. continued to seethe.

His breaking point came on March 21, 1910 when he came home at midnight in a drunken rage, threatening to kill his wife. Cora's sister Stella was spending the night. While A.T. was searching for a gun she sent Stella to get help.

A.T. pointed the gun at Cora while she pleaded for her life as he continued to threaten her. It was later discovered that the gun had misfired at least once. The police arrived and took A.T. away and Cora filed a restraining order against him. She subsequently filed for a divorce which was granted on June 8, 1910. This time there would be no reconciliation.

A.T. eventually stopped drinking, became an attorney, remarried and had the large family he always wanted. In the wake of her third divorce, Cora had reached a critical and traumatic point in her life. What did that mean for her future? Her career?

While she continued to be referred to in newspapers as Mrs. Cora Wilson Stewart, she was nevertheless free to continue her grueling schedule of writing, speeches and school administration. In addition to her busy schedule, Cora also found the time to act "as voluntary secretary to several illiterate folk" of Rowan County. She later referred to it as "a mistaken kindness – I ought to have been teaching them to read and write." [11]

For whatever reason it had never occurred to Cora that her precious mountain folk could learn just like their children. She finally realized the possibilities after three separate incidents.

One woman had a number of children who, like herself, never learned to read or write. One daughter, however, went to Chicago where she attended night school, eventually improving her lot in life enough to engage in a small business. Jane would write letters to her mother, who would often walk seven miles to have Cora read it for her and write another back to her daughter.

After an unexplained absence of several weeks, the woman returned to Cora's office, letter in hand. Cora, of course, anticipated she would be reading and answering the letter for her mountain friend. To Cora's

astonishment, she replied, "No, I kin answer hit fer myself. I've larned to read and write!" [12]

Who had taught her to read? The woman explained:

"Well, sometimes I jist couldn't git over here to see you," she explained, "an' the cricks would be up 'twixt me an' the neighbors, or the neighbors would be away from home an' I couldn't git a letter answered fer three or four days; an' anyway hit jist seemed like thar was a wall 'twixt Jane an' me all the time, an' I wanted to read with my own eyes what she had writ with her own hand. So, I sent to the store an' bought me a speller, an' I sot up at night 'til midnight an' sometimes 'til daylight, an' I larned to read an' write." [13]

To prove her newly-acquired skills, the woman spelled out the words of the letter, and under Cora's direction, wrote out and answered her very first letter.

A few days later a middle-aged man came into her office. By all appearances he appeared to be stalwart and intelligent. While waiting to speak with Cora, she handed him two books which he leafed through before setting them down with a sigh. Cora wondered if she might loan him the books since he might not have many available in his neck of the woods. Tears came into his eyes as he replied, "I can't read or write. I would give twenty years of my life if I could." [14]

Not long afterward Cora was attending an event at one of the district's schools. A young man sang a beautiful ballad he had composed. Cora insisted he must publish it and asked if he would write out a copy for her. He would – if he could write. These three incidents would become the spark which led to the legacy by which Cora Wilson would be remembered.

Cora would later record the background behind moonlight schools and her experiences in a book entitled, *Moonlight Schools for the Emancipation of Adult Illiterates*, published in 1922. In the first chapter, "The People Who Gave the Moonlight Schools to the World", she sounded much like Theodore Roosevelt in his treatise, *The Winning of the West*, as she eloquently described *her* people:

In the mountains of Kentucky there has been buried a treasure of citizenship richer far than all its vast fields of coal, its oil, its timber or mineral wealth. Here lives a people so individual that authors have chosen them as their theme and artists as their subjects to interpret to the world a people with a character distinctive, sturdy, independent and rugged. This is a stock in which great movements can have their origins. No inferior people, no degenerate stock can embrace and demonstrate with enthusiasm new truths. These people are descended from the best ancestry – Virginia and North Carolina – that traces back to England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales. Theirs was, in the main, an educated ancestry; some of their forefathers read Latin, and some of them Greek. Here and there in the mountain cabin and farm-house may be found an ancient copy of Caesar, Virgil, Chaucer and other rare old books, useless to the possessors save as relics of the past. They are a people of arrested civilization, who sing the ballads sung in England three hundred years ago and forgotten there now, and who use expressions that belong to the centuries past. Not all by any means, but some of them live lives such as were lived in rural England and in the hills of Scotland two hundred years ago. They have the blood and bearing of a noble people; they are a noble people. Possessed of a high degree of intelligence, they have not degenerated even though deprived for years of educational opportunities, but

have preserved the sturdy traits of their Scotch-Irish, English and Welsh ancestors.

Their capacity for learning has always been immense and their desire for it has been equally so. Of all the authors who have chosen them as their theme and the artists who have recently begun to present them as a type, none have seemed to catch, or, at least, all have failed to portray, the dominant thing in mountain life, the strongest urge of the mountaineer's soul – his eager, hungry, insatiable desire for knowledge. [15]

Those three incidents were all Cora needed to see the possibilities for success. As she contemplated how to initiate and organize her quest to "emancipate from illiteracy all those enslaved in its bondage", she knew that day schools were for children, not adults, who worked during the daytime hours. Night schools would work better for adults, but there were drawbacks.

Rowan had not so long ago been a feud county and folks didn't venture out much at night. In addition, the mountain landscape with its gullies and streams would present challenges after dark. Thus, it was decided school would be held on moonlit nights to make it easier to navigate – and would come to be known as "moonlight schools".

Cora rallied county teachers to the cause, asking them to volunteer to teach after having taught all day. Volunteering, of course, meant no extra pay, but to a person no one made excuses or expressed any doubts in Cora's leadership.

The first order of business was to let folks know about the schools. On September 4, 1911, Labor Day, teachers canvassed throughout the county, knocking on doors and inviting the educated and uneducated to attend. They estimated an average of three adults would attend each school, perhaps as many as one hundred and fifty attendees throughout the county.

No one was quite sure how many would attend, but were shocked when "they came singly or hurrying in groups, they came walking for miles, they came carrying babes in arms, they came bent with age and leaning on canes, they came twelve hundred strong!" [16] Who were these people?

. . . overgrown boys who had dropped out of school at an early age and had been ashamed to re-enter the day school and be classified with the tiny tots. . . . There were maidens who had been deprived of education, through isolation. . . . There were women who had married in childhood, practically, as is so much the wont of mountain girls – but who all their lives had craved that which they knew to be their inherent right – their mental development. By their sides were their husbands, men who had been humiliated when they made their mark in the presence of the educated and when forced to ask the election officers to cast a vote for them for the candidate of their choice . . . There were women whose children had all grown up and vanished from the home, some of them into the far West, and when the spoken word and the hand-clasp had ceased there could be no heart-to-heart communication. [17]

They wanted to learn to write their children and read their letters. They wanted to be able to read their Bibles. The youngest student was eighteen and the oldest eighty-six. Some learned to write their name that first evening, "so intoxicated with joy that they wrote their names in frenzied delight on trees, fences, barns, barrel staves and every available scrap of paper". No more making my mark!

Since there were no readers for adults, a weekly newspaper was published, consisting of simple words, repetition and relatable content. For instance, the first lesson referred to a contest between the moonlight schools throughout the county, thus making it a challenge.

Can we win?
Can we win what?
Can we win the prize?
Yes, we can win.
See us try.
And see us win!

The concept was brilliant as the little newspaper "enabl[ed] adults to learn to read without the humiliation of reading from a child's primer with its lessons on kittens, dolls and toys; to give them a sense of dignity in being, from their very first lesson, readers of a newspaper; to stimulate their curiosity through news of their neighbor's movements and community occurrences and compel them to complete in quick success the sentences that followed; to arouse them through news of educational and civic improvements in other districts to make like progress on their own." [18]

Basic news items like "Bill Smith is building a new barn" challenged them to go the next sentence to see what another neighbor might be up to. Beyond basic "A-B-Cs" a student might not be able to master American history in one session. Instead, emphasis was placed on learning just a few facts every American citizen should know.

Elective courses included history, "civics, English, health and sanitation, geography, home economics, agriculture, horticulture and good roads." English was popular, with emphasis on proper pronunciation, especially the letter "g", which mountain folks tended to drop off. Proper words were taught – "saw" instead of "seed"; "creek" for "crick"; "cover" for "kiver"; "scared" for "skeered." [19]

The first session was a resounding success. Clearly there was a need and people clamored for more. Before the second session opened, a moonlight school institute was held for teachers, where they discussed methods and the challenges of educating adults.

The second session surpassed the first in a number of ways. Sixteen hundred students were enrolled, a man of eighty-seven being the oldest. Over three hundred were taught to read and write.

One student, foreign born, worked in a lumber camp for $1.50 per day. He came to the moonlight school, studied math and at session's end was promoted, receiving a substantial pay raise. While it was an honor for a man to serve in a civic position such as school trustee, some were themselves illiterate. One man attended moonlight school and later went to day school, studying alongside his twelve-year-old son.

Two postmasters were taught to read and write. To skirt the qualifications, they had relied on their daughters to perform the services for which they were paid. Four Baptist preachers were taught to read and write. Unable to read the scriptures they had relied on others to read the Bible to them. Cora related an amusing anecdote:

A reader of this type, attempting to read to an illiterate minister one day, read the sentence,"Paul was an austere man," like this, "Paul was an oyster man." The preacher declared to his congregation the next Sabbath that Peter was a fisherman and Paul was an oyster man, thus giving his congregation an unusual conception of Paul. Another heard the sentence, "Jacob made booths for his cattle," read, "Jacob made boots for his cattle," and discoursed from the pulpit on "Jacob, that humane man, would not even permit his cattle to go barefooted, but made boots for them to protect their tender feet as they walked over the stones." [20]

Children played a role in the success of moonlight schools. Their teachers would remind them at day's end to send their parents to school that evening.

It didn't take long for word to get around about the successes achieved by Cora and her volunteer army of teachers. The Louisville *Courier-Journal* declared, "In all the history of education progress in America there has been no effort attacking illiteracy in neglected territory more unique and picturesque than the establishment of the 'moonlight schools' in Rowan County." The schools were hailed as the first of their kind to be established in America. [21]

By the end of 1912 a number of eastern Kentucky counties were also conducting or actively planning moonlight schools. Their slogan would become "One for Every One". Miss Jeanette Bell, a stenographer by occupation, caught the spirit by looking around her community to see if there was anyone she could help. In the hotel where she lived was a chambermaid named Cordie Wilson.

Cordie had lost much of her sight at a young age and couldn't attend school with other children. She was by then fifteen but didn't want to attend school with younger children. Cordie made Jeanette's acquaintance and at night after her work day was done she would go to Jeanette with her books and a pencil and pad in hand. In six nights she was able to write her name and learned how to begin joining letters into words. As one news story observed, "every vital human movement easily becomes both religious and contagious and the moonlight school seems to prove the rule." [22] Perhaps the entire state of Kentucky would follow suit!

Outside Kentucky "strange impressions prevailed" as some thought perhaps moonlight schools were for the education of moonshiners, "instructed in the best method of extracting the juice from the corn, and, at the same time, one so secretive as to prevent government interference." [23] The *Tacoma Times* provided an exaggerated account:

Teaching "A-B-C'S" Mountain Moonshiners One Woman's Job

MRS. CORA WILSON STEWART

Rowan County is a little mountain section in eastern Kentucky, for years much given to shoots and booze; where most of the leading citizens distilled illegal corn juice for a living and shot federal sleuths and feudal enemies.

Some years ago Mrs. Cora Wilson Stewart was given charge of educational matters in Rowan county. A little trip through the mountains convinced the new superintendent that liberal doses of the A, B, C's would do more toward taking shoots and booze out of the county than all the officers combined and at the same place boots and shoes on the feet of the little children who came to her school.

She started her moonlight school. At first she had to go out in the woods and drag the men and women to school, which she held at night when the children were not using the building and when the parents were not working. . . .

Soon the moonlight school began to draw men away from the moonshine distillery product and other schools were started in Rowan county. . . [24]

Of course, nothing could have been further from the truth. Cora's moonlight schools were being regularly featured (and lauded) in education journals. Kentucky set a goal with a slogan: "third from the top in 1920 in place of third from the bottom in 1910". The state legislature created the Kentucky Illiteracy Commission and made Cora its first chairperson.

In 1914 North Carolina's Department of Education was urging the establishment of its own moonlight schools. Kentucky moonlight schools were no longer

"experimental" – they were producing actual results. Using the same template, North Carolina undertook its own "movement for the reduction and final elimination of adult illiteracy in North Carolina".

Dr. Joyner, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, published initial results the following year. He had determined it "our duty to the State and to these illiterates who are bone of our bones and flesh of our flesh, and who are not responsible for their illiteracy, to seek and find a way to reach and teach them without further delay." [25]

North Carolina's conducted eighty-two moonlight schools in the first year across twenty-nine counties, enrolling more than 1,600 adults with an average age of 45. Those results were produced with little planning or organization, except to follow Kentucky's example.

In retrospect, one aspect of the moonlight school movement was concerning – they were meant to reduce white illiteracy only. However, that didn't preclude Negroes in one North Carolina township from establishing their own. By the end of 1914 more than twenty had been attending their own moonlight school, and would soon be removed from the illiterate list of Person County. [26]

By 1915 other states were organizing their own moonlight school programs. In Blocton, Alabama the first moonlight school enrolled 30 pupils – free for all "adults from 21 to 100 years of age who cannot read or write at all or only to a limited extent." It was Bibb County's first moonlight school.[27]

Another Alabama county soon followed suit as "the people of Calhoun County have determined that illiteracy must go."[28] Escambia County rallied to the cause after Alabama's governor set aside June 7, 1915 as Illiteracy Day throughout the state. Committees were organized and a moonlight school was soon underway. Moonlight schools continued to open – it really was contagious and with state government involvement it became patriotic.

While a number of rural mountain (Appalachian) states had instituted moonlight schools, others began to spring up outside the region. Harmon County, Oklahoma opened its first school in early 1915 with "15 pupils, ages from 17 to 52 enrolled for study. Reading, Writing, Spelling, Arithmetic, and special stress on Home Economics and Agriculture will be given." [29]

New Mexico had only been a state for three years, but was already contemplating a law requiring compulsory school attendance for adults in order to reduce illiteracy. Cora Wilson Stewart addressed the state's educational convention in November 1915, a few months after Santa Fe County's school superintendent adopted her "Country Life Reader" to be utilized in their own newly minted moonlight schools. A number of moonlight schools, some taught in English and Spanish, continued to roll out in counties across the state – Grant, Eddy, Luna.

The movement eventually stretched across the country all the way to the Pacific Ocean as California crafted its own program by passing a "home teacher" law which allowed teachers to go from house to house to instruct illiterates.

By 1922, the year Cora published her book, *Moonlight Schools for the Emancipation of Adult Illiterates*, the movement had spread across the nation:

Massachusetts and the other New England states, New Hampshire, Connecticut and Rhode Island, have extended the opportunity to their adult illiterates under certain ages and conditions.

Virginia has had moonlight schools in her remote sections, West Virginia in her coves, Texas on her ranches, Louisiana in her parishes, Michigan in her lumber camps and the Dakotas on their plains. Moonlight schools have ministered to illiterate fisherman on the coast of Maryland, illiterate immigrants on the coast of California, illiterate Swedes in Minnesota, illiterate Indians in Oklahoma, illiterate Mexicans in New Mexico and illiterate white and colored people through the mountains and valleys of the South.

With the slogans, "Illiteracy in Alabama – Let's remove it," "No illiteracy in New York State," "Pennsylvania a literate state in ten years," "No illiteracy in North Dakota in 1924," "Let South Carolina secede from illiteracy," "Let's sweep illiteracy out of Arkansas," "Illiteracy in Mississippi – Blot it out," "Illiteracy in New Mexico must go," the states have sounded a battle-cry which means the death-knell of illiteracy in the Nation. [30]

Cora Wilson Stewart had quickly risen as the nation's leader in the fight against illiteracy. In 1919 she was appointed chairperson of the Illiteracy Commission of the National Education Association and traveled around the nation conducting regional conferences.

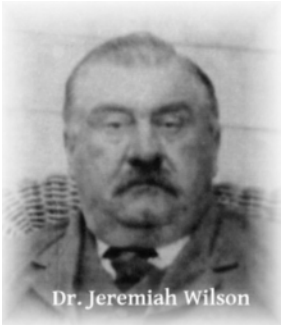
Her horizons expanded in 1923 when she was appointed to chair the World Illiteracy Commission. As the nation continued to embrace her original vision, Cora led the National Illiteracy Crusade in 1926. In 1929 President Hoover elevated her to head the National Illiteracy Commission.

Her vision and enthusiasm was contagious as she traveled throughout America addressing conventions, state legislatures and testifying before Congressional committees. Over the years she garnered a number of prizes and awards, including the Ella Flagg Young medal for distinguished service in education and the Clara Barton medal for humanitarian service.

In 1920 she played a significant role at the Democratic National Convention when she served as a Kentucky delegate. In 1999 she was named one of Kentucky's most influential people of the 20th century, alongside Harlan David Sanders, aka "Colonel Sanders" of Kentucky Fried Chicken fame.

Her private life was nowhere as successful as her public career. She had her detractors along the way but she kept plowing ahead. Sadly, however, she spent the last thirty years of her life in Tryon, North Carolina, where she barely had the resources to live. She died on December 2, 1958 at the age of 83, fondly remembered by her fellow Kentuckians as "a good angel". [31]


Cora Wilson


Dr. Jeremiah Wilson


Front: Bunyan, Cora and Burwell
Back: Stella, Glenmore, Homer, Flora

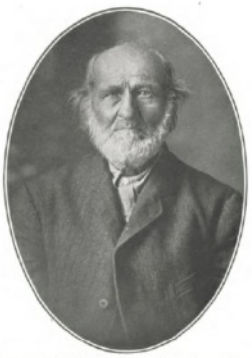
Triplet Ky.
Aug 27, 1913
Mrs. Cora Wilson Stewart,
Morehead, Ky.

Dear Mrs. Stewart: I want to thank you you and the teachers of Rowan County for starting this Home Department movement. I live about three miles from the school house and can not attend night school.

Miss Lottie sends a copy for me. every evening by them children. I copy them and send them back next morning. I am 44 years old and this is my first letter. So I believe "We are never too old to learn. I have three children enrolled in the Adams day school and one in the night school We are having a fine school.

I want to thank you in advance for the beautiful Bible which I am to receive.

Yours respectfully,
Martha J. Kinder



A man aged 87 entered and put to shame the record of the proud school girl of 86 of the year before.

They came carrying babes in arms.

ESSENTIAL TOOLS FOR THE SUCCESSFUL FAMILY RESEARCHER

by Sharon Hall

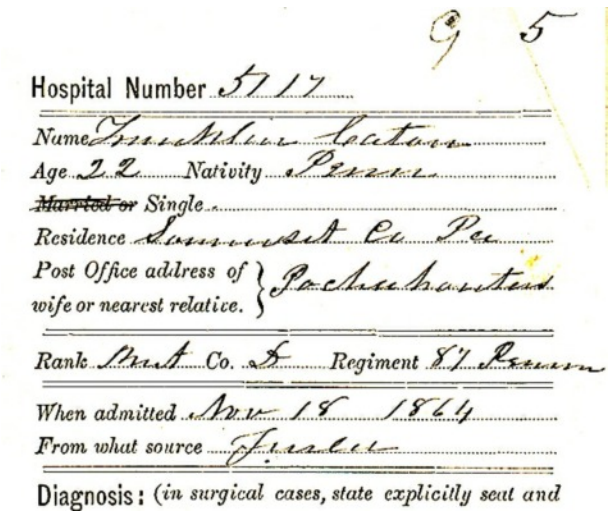
More From DPLA (Digital Public Library of America)

In the September-October 2020 issue I highlighted the Family Bible collection at DPLA. While researching a client's ancestor, I came upon an even more extensive collection, one that might save you a few bucks – and make for some of the most amazing finds. You may browse DPLA in various ways, but doing so by partner may help narrow your focus since there are literally millions of records:

https://dp.la/browse-by-partner

The number of records by partner ranges from almost 16,000,000 (National Archives and Records Administration [NARA]) to 3,392 (Texas Digital Library). Since this issue and the last (and the next issue) focus on the Southern Appalachian region it's important to know you can find collections which may provide unique information. How unique?

Click the "Digital Virginias" link. This particular collection includes, as the name implies, both Virginia and West Virginia. You can search this particular collection (see box at top of page) to narrow your results with a name of keyword. For instance, the West Virginia county of Pocahontas. While I only received four search results, one record in particular intrigued me – the patient record of Franklin Caton. It was a record I don't think I've ever seen anywhere (Ancestry, Fold3, etc.).



Hospital Number 5717

Name Franklin Caton

Age 22 Nativity Penna

~~Married or~~ Single

Residence Somerset Co Pa

Post Office address of wife or nearest relative. Pocahontas

Rank Sergt Co. D Regiment 87 Penna

When admitted Nov 18 1864

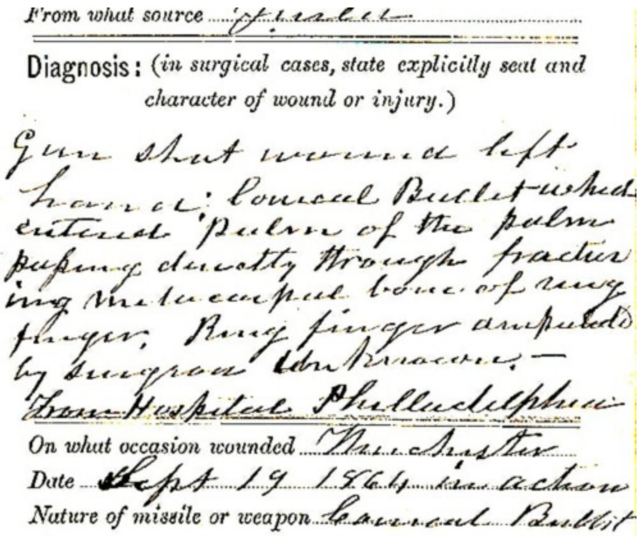
From what source Frankford

Diagnosis: (in surgical cases, state explicitly seat and

First of all, this particular record resides in this collection because Franklin Caton, a Union soldier from Somerset County, Pennsylvania, was wounded at the Third Battle of Winchester (Virginia), aka, the Battle of Opequon Creek. Fought on September 19, 1864, it was the largest and most costly battle waged in the Shenandoah Valley with over 5,000 Union casualties.

Frank Caton was a private in Company D of the 87th Pennsylvania Regiment, admitted to Hospital Number 5717 on November 18, 1864, two months following the bloody campaign. He was 22 years old, single and a native of Pennsylvania.

He was transferred to Clarysville Hospital (Clarysville, Maryland) after treatment at a Philadelphia hospital. Because his diagnosis involved surgery, an explicit description of his injury was included.



From what source [illegible]

Diagnosis: (*in surgical cases, state explicitly seat and character of wound or injury.*)

Gun shot wound left hand; Conical Bullet which entered palm of the palm passing directly through fracturing metacarpal bone of ring finger; Ring finger amputated by surgeon Unknown –
From Hospital Philadelphia

On what occasion wounded Winchester

Date Sept 19 1864 in action

Nature of missile or weapon Conical Bullet

"Gun shot wound left hand. Conical bullet entered palm of the palm passing directly through fracturing metacarpal bone of ring finger. Ring finger amputated by surgeon unknown - From Hospital, Philadelphia. Location Wounded: In action Winchester, Va. Date Wounded: 1864/09/19. Nature of Wound: Conical bullet."

While there are records for Caton at Ancestry and Fold3, none are as explicit as to his wounds. For instance, indexed records at Fold3 indicate he later qualified for a pension. A death record at Ancestry contains a summary of his service, including his muster-out from Clarysville on June 9, 1865. However, the record only briefly summarizes his wound and the amputation. While these records are certainly valuable when researching an ancestor's Civil War service, this one provides more detail – and it's free!

Settling Pennsylvania

The first recorded German settlement in the English colonies (Germantown) occurred in 1683. A number of Quakers and Mennonites, persecuted for their religious faith, were actively recruited by William Penn. Over the next twenty-five years German immigration gradually ticked upwards. According to The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, approximately 65,000 German immigrants landed on America's shores between 1727 and 1775, with the greatest wave occurring between 1749 and 1754.

Concurrently, a wave of Swiss immigrants settled in Penn's colony. Add to that a number of Dutch and French immigrants and Pennsylvania became a true melting pot of settlers beginning their American journey as later generations migrated westward. Researchers might find it challenging to locate immigrations records for their early German, Swiss, Dutch or French ancestors. I recently came across some important resources which may be helpful.

In 1876, *A Collection of Upwards of Thirty Thousand Names of German, Swiss, Dutch, French and Other Immigrants in Pennsylvania from 1727 to 1776* was published. Also included are ship names, departing port, date of arrival in Philadelphia (chronologically arranged) and a number of historical notes (some of which is published in German with parts translated into English).

Typically, the enumeration would include the heads of families, followed by a list of those who signed an oath of allegiance and those (heads of families) who had died in passage. For instance, on October 16, 1727, "Forty-six Palatines with their families, about two hundred persons, imported in the ship Friendship, of Bristol, John Davies, Master, from Rotterdam, last from Cowes, whence the ship sailed June 20th." Of the families listed, fourteen heads of families signed the oath of allegiance. This important resource can be found at Internet Archive: https://archive.org/details/collectionofupwa00ruppuoft/mode/2up

A companion resource, *Names of Foreigners Who Took the Oath of Allegiance to the Province and State of Pennsylvania, 1727-1775, With the Foreign Arrivals, 1786-1808*, can also be found at Internet Archive: https://archive.org/details/namesofforeigner00eglew/mode/2up.

In addition to covering the aforementioned period of 1727-1775, this book also includes the period 1786-1808. In like manner, this text includes a brief note regarding ship name, ship's captain and departing port (see page 274):

List of Foreigners Imported in the Ship Patience. Capt. Hugh Steel, From Rotterdam, Last From Cowes, Qualified Sept. 9, 1751.

One additional resource may help you "decipher" German surnames of Pennsylvania ancestors, Studies in Pennsylvania German Family Names. One chapter, entitled "Studies in Pennsylvania German Family Names" provides insight as to name origins. Some of the same principles set forth may have relevance to Swiss surnames as well:

In general we can give the period of the formation of German names the years 1050 to 1250; but for centuries to follow names were easily changed, and it was not until comparatively recent times that they became fixed.

There are three general groups of German family names: first, those derived from personal names, second, those derived from trade or profession; and third, those derived from places where the individuals lived, whence they came, and from personal peculiarities, physical or mental.

Some surnames became rather cumbersome, leading to diminutive variations and nicknames. Of course, many of these surnames were later "Americanized" – "Schumacher" became "Shoemaker"; "Schmidt" became Smith; and so on. In like manner, Swiss surnames like "Johansson" became "Johnson".

This text is also available at Internet Archive:

https://archive.org/details/studiespagerman04kuhnrich/mode/2up

World's Largest Genealogical Library

Most genealogists are aware of the Family History Library (FHL) in Salt Lake City, the largest genealogical library in the world. For genealogists, a trip to FHL is like a pilgrimage to Mecca. While not everyone will get a chance to visit FHL, the library is also actively digitizing its vast collection. This, of course, means family researchers across the world are able to access valuable texts via the Family Search web site.

In 2018 a RootsWeb Wiki page for FHL reported the library's collection numbered over 285,000 physical books, augmented by thousands of microfiche and literally millions of rolls of microfilm. Whether or not everything is ever fully digitized and widely available remains to be seen.

However, Family Search has created a resource where you can search through FHL collections as well as those of partner institutions:

- Allen County Public Library Genealogy Center
- Arizona State Library
- Birmingham Public Library
- BYU Family History Library

- Houston Public Library
- Dallas Public Library
- Historical Society of Pennsylvania
- Midwest Genealogy Center
- Onondaga County Public Library
- Ontario Ancestors (The Ontario Genealogical Society)
- St. Louis County Library
- University of Florida George A. Smathers Libraries

Begin your search here: https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/

Oral Histories Made Easy

I recently came across an interesting Reddit genealogy forum post which informally introduced readers to a new online software platform under development. Charlie Green described how his mother had been diagnosed with lung cancer three years ago and how he and his sister sat down with her to record a series of oral history interviews.

The process had such a profound effect on Green and his family that he has made it his personal mission to encourage others to do the same – before it's too late. Upon graduating in May 2021, instead of heading into the corporate world he has decided to launch a new venture he will call "Heirloom".

Heirloom will be fully launched in the coming months, described by Green:

Heirloom is a software platform designed to help more of us capture, preserve, and carry forward the stories of our loved ones. We'll provide a list of amazing sample questions, the technology to host a video recorded interview (either in person or virtually), and a gallery to organize and share the recordings. Plus, invited family and friends will be able to add their own digital content to any recording, like photographs, letters, newspaper articles, maps, and more.

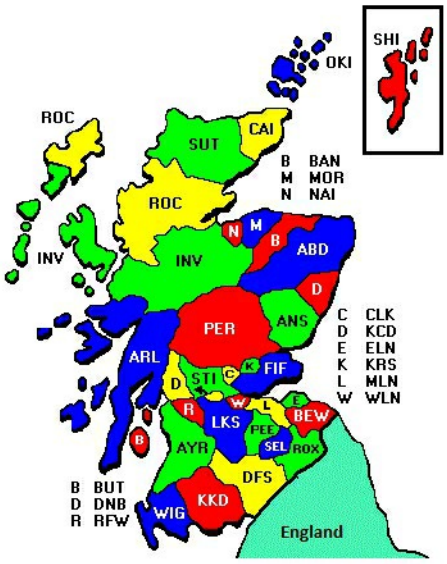
If you're interested, he has created a basic landing page for now with a link to sign up for early access:

https://www.tryheirloom.com/

UK and Ireland Genealogy

American researchers sometimes experience challenges with finding records of their British or Irish ancestors. GENUKI (UK and Ireland Genealogy) is a non-commercial (free!) virtual reference library maintained by volunteers and a charitable trust.

Click one of the Regional Page Links on the home page and you will begin your own adventure in research. For instance, select "Scotland". You will see a click-able map of Scotland and its counties (shires), surrounded by several links down the left and right-hand sides of the page – everything from Almanacs to Yearbooks.



Click "Probate Records" and you will be directed to another link to take you to a searchable index of Scottish wills and testaments dated from 1500 to 1901, over 500,000 names. The index is available at ScotlandsPeople. Find an index record and you should be able to request the record from the National Archives.

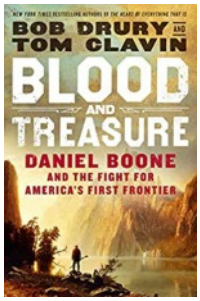
Click on any county and it will open up to a page with some of the same links as the main Scotland page, except focused on one particular county.

While not every link will point you to an online source, you should be able to gather enough information about which entity to contact for more information:

https://www.genuki.org.uk/

May I Recommend . . .

Blood and Treasure



This new book by Bob Drury and Tom Clavin, *Blood and Treasure: Daniel Boone and the Fight for America's First Frontier* (due out April 20), turned out to be quite an eye-opener. While I had read a "young reader" version of the life of Daniel Boone years ago, I've never cracked open a book to delve into the life of one of early America's most interesting characters.

Thus, I have no other book to compare this one to. We've all heard the stories and folks of a certain age remember the NBC television show, starring Fess Parker as Daniel Boone. While I can't say I remember a single episode of the series, it shaped an important part of American history in the minds of viewers.

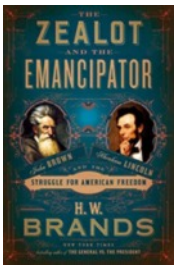
Daniel Boone is often (and rightly so) linked to early Kentucky history, after blazing a trail across the Cumberland Gap (Boone's Trace). It's amazing to read just how far and wide his influence reached, however, as his hunting forays took him into what would eventually become Ohio.

Given that he was often away on extended hunting and exploration trips, it's amazing that he and his wife Rebecca (née Morgan) managed to have such a large family. Drury and Clavin portray Daniel Boone as a man more at ease away from his family home, despite the dangers and challenges of "western" frontier life.

I must say, however, that I thoroughly enjoyed this microscopic look at the life of Daniel Boone as he blazed a trail (literally) across an unknown frontier. His bravery and determination are something we don't often enough see in the twenty-first century. Thank God for the frontiersman of that era who blazed a path across our land. We owe them a debt of gratitude for all they endured to make a path for us.

An excellent book chock-full of early American history (and its many challenges).

The Zealot and the Emancipator



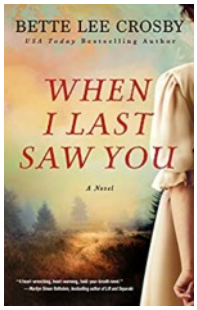
Like some of favorite authors (Erik Larson, Howard Blum, Simon Winchester and Bill Bryson), University of Texas History Professor H.W. Brands is a born story-teller. You can be certain when he sits down to write a book it will be an expansive, meticulously researched, one. This one did not disappoint.

So many books have been written about Abraham Lincoln, sixteenth President of the United States, one might assume no more could be gleaned from the life of a man who shepherded the most volatile era of American history. However, this book portrays a unique twist by juxtaposing Lincoln (emancipator) with John Brown (zealot).

One book reviewer called them "two perfectly imperfect heroes" who both inspire and disappoint us. John Brown was an impatient abolitionist (another reviewer called him the "hare"), while Abraham Lincoln approached the nation's problems in a carefully deliberate way (the "tortoise").

As with all of Brands' books, this one has been carefully researched and expertly written. A must read for Civil War buffs.

When Last I Saw You



Although the book concludes with a predictable ending, the journey is a fascinating one as recently-widowed Margaret McCutcheon struggles with how to move on after her husband Albert's untimely death.

For her entire married life Albert had taken care of her, but they never had any children. When he died the void was palpable. While going through Albert's desk she found a folder with receipts paid to a private investigator a quarter-century earlier.

She finally summons to courage to investigate why her husband had hired a private investigator – and then stuck the files in the bottom of a drawer, never mentioning them to her. No, Albert didn't have a secret lover. He had attempted to find her family.

The circumstances revolving around Margaret's early life were traumatic, especially when her mother had been forced to send her nine children away. The story unfolds by alternating between the present (1968) back to the past (early 1900s).

She finds the private investigator, who had since retired, and convinces him to take up the case again. Together, they make a trip back to where she grew up and gradually unravel the clues.

Based on a true story, this is a genealogical "mystery" with many twists and turns before it is "predictably" resolved. It's not that it's predictability doesn't make it a good read – you just sort of know how it will play out in the end.

It can be "checked out" via Kindle Unlimited if you subscribe to that service.

On and Off the Shelf

Here are some recent books which have been read, are being read, or planned future reads scheduled for reviews in future issues of the magazine (you might want to check them out as well):

The Blue Cotton Gown: A Midwife's Memoir, by Patricia Harman

Sensational: The Hidden History of America's Girl Stunt Reporters, by Kim Todd

We Gather Together, by Denise Kiernan

The Kidnapping Club, by Jonathan Daniel Wells

Murder at the Mission, by Blaine Harden

The Agitators, by Dorothy Wickenden

The Crooked Path to Abolition, by James Oakes

The Life and Times of Rowan Daly, by Rex Owens

Our First Civil War: Patriots and Loyalists in the American Revolution, by H.W. Brands

The Lost Family: How DNA Testing Is Upending Who We Are, by Libby Copeland

Salvation on Sand Mountain: Snake Handling and Redemption in Southern Appalachia, by Dennis Covington

Seedtime on the Cumberland, by Harriet Simpson Arnow

Crooked Path to Abolition, by James Oakes

The Wright Sister, by Patty Dann


A TYPICAL MALUNGEON.
(Drawn from a photograph taken by Will Allen Dromgoole.)

MELUNGEONS

a very strange people (who made moonshine whiskey)

by Sharon Hall

According to the Melungeon Heritage Association (MHA) there are upwards of 200 distinct (and different) ethnic groups of mixed-race ancestry residing in the eastern and southern regions of the United States. All of these groups, including people identifying as Melungeon, share one thing in common – no one is entirely certain of their origins and all have been misunderstood, stigmatized and derided at one time or another. Some of those groups include a small community in West Virginia known as Chestnut Ridge people and the Creoles and "Redbones" scattered across the South (South Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas).

The origin of the term "Melungeon", or "Molungeon" as it was spelled in newspapers of the 1850s, isn't certain either. Traditionally, the term is said to have been derived from the French word, mélange, which means a mixture or medley. [1]

In the mid-nineteenth century the term was used to refer to people believed to be "tri-racial", a mixture of European, Native American and African ancestry. All were derogatory in nature during the anti-bellum era leading up to the Civil War, referring to them as either "Molungeon" or "Ebo Shin". In this example a supposed court case was cited where "evidence of a witness of doubtful race" led to this exchange after the Judge referred to the witness as "Mulatto" (WARNING: contains racially-insensitive language):

Steel: I do not so call him, but I call him a "Molungeon!"

Counsel: "And, pray sir, what in the name of God is a molungeon?"

Steele, poising himself slowly, as if precisely to define the name and the thing to be described, replied:

"A 'mulatto' is the cross of the young gentleman on the house-maid; but the witness here is a cross of the yankee on the corn-field nigger." He says, therefore, Molungeon is the name.[2]

As the much-maligned era known as Reconstruction was beginning, a gathering in Philadelphia of Northerners and abolitionists was called a "Grand Mass Meeting", a "Large and Orderly Gathering" by *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and a "Molungeon Convention" in a Virginia newspaper. Speakers included Frederick Douglass, W.G. Brownlow, newly-minted Governor of Tennessee, and Union General Benjamin "Beast" Butler. The convention's chairman gave a "very violent speech, favoring negro suffrage and negro equality to the fullest extent." [3]

These incidences of coarse, stereotypic language emanated from Southern newspapers, but northeastern Tennessee was actually home to this peculiar ethnic group. However, that didn't stop the region's newspapers from deriding them as "yaller-legged Molungeons" prone to the illicit practice of making their own "crooked whisky". [4] Their "headquarters" was Newman's

Ridge and Vardy Valley in Hancock County. Vardy Valley was named for early settler Vardemon "Vardy" Collins. Other Melungeon communities were located in the neighboring counties of Hawkins (Tennessee), Lee and Scott (Virginia).

Many of Melungeon descent were primarily identified by family surname – Collins, Gibson, Mullins, Goins, Bunch, Bowlin, and Denham – although other surnames have since been identified. As might be expected, given their reputation for "crooked whisky", some ran afoul of the revenue law from time to time.

In early 1889 a story published in the Washington, D.C. *Evening Star* heightened interest in "The Strange People in Tennessee who Make Moonlight Whisky" following a lecture by medical doctor and amateur anthropologist Swan M. Burnett. His talk before the Anthropological Society was entitled "A note on the Melungeons", a "rather unpromising title of an extremely interesting paper."

Burnett, a successful ophthalmologist, was born in eastern Tennessee in 1847. His father, Dr. John M. Burnett, traveled by mule to treat his (mostly) poor patients. Swan Burnett well remembered the "legends of the Melungeons", taught to him at his father's knee in the hills of eastern Tennessee. To a child the very name "Melungeon" evoked images of "giants and ogres of the wonder tales I listened to in the winter evenings before the crackling logs". Those stories had been unsettling for young Swan:

And when I chanced to waken in the night and the fire had died down on the hearth, and the wind swept with demoniac shriek and terrifying roar around and through the house, rattling the windows and the loose clapboards on the roof, I shrank under the bedclothes trembling with a fear that was almost an expectation that one of these huge creatures would come down the chimney with a rush, seize me with his dragon-like arms, and carry me off to his cave in the mountains, there to devour me piecemeal. [5]

He outgrew those childish notions and by the late 1880s fancied himself somewhat of an expert on the people who he then believed were much like most people, but with a difference. His theories had evolved over a number of years of amateur anthropological research and interviewing residents of the area.

In the course of time, however, I came to learn that these creatures with the awe-inspiring name were people somewhat like ourselves, but with a difference. I learned, too, that they were not only different from us, the white, but also from the negroes – slave or free – and from the Indian. They were something set apart from anything I had seen or heard of. . . There was evidently a caste distinction as there was between the white and negro, and there was also a difference between them and the free negroes. No one seemed to know positively that they or their antecedents had ever been in slavery, and they did not themselves claim to belong to any tribe of Indians in that part of the country. They represented the appellation Melungeon, given to them by common consent by the whites, and proudly called themselves Portuguese. The current belief was that they were a mixture of the white, Indian and negro. . . the very name Melungeon would seem to indicate the idea of a mixed people. . . [6]

As best as he could determine, Melungeons had migrated to East Tennessee from North Carolina, most settling in Hawkins County, of which Hancock was partially formed from in

1848. The Collins family was among the first to migrate, one man, "Old Colonel Collins" (Vardy), claiming his father had fought in the Revolutionary War.

The Collinses and their ilk had not intermarried with whites, and to Burnett's knowledge they had neither intermarried with Negroes or Indians. Still, those of the white race shunned them, supposing them inferior if perchance they had but one drop of Negro blood.

Before the Civil War a number of Melungeons had their voting rights called into question. They went to court and the matter was settled upon examination of their feet. Apparently, being flat-footed was enough to deny the right to vote. While four or five "passed" the test and were allowed to vote, one man was too flat-footed, suspected of having Negro blood.

However, as Burnett noted, though they were dark-skinned it was a "different hue to the ordinary mulatto, with either straight or wavy hair and some have cheek bones almost as high as the Indians." Men were usually "straight, large and fine looking" while an old woman looked rather "hag-like". [7]

Looks and ethnicity aside, their primary characteristic behavior appears to have been skirting revenue laws by engaging in "illicit distilling". Thus, the headline "The Strange People in Tennessee Who Make Moonlight Whisky".

The *Evening Star* article was picked up and published throughout the nation, appearing to precipitate a decades-long fascination with Melungeons. The following year, Miss Will Allen Dromgoole, a poet and journalist for the Nashville *Daily American*, set out for the Cumberland Mountains to research and write a series of articles.

As she headed to "one of the most inaccessible quarters of Tennessee", many questioned her sanity, coolly informing her she was "going on a wild-goose chase", betting "their ears" she would never never see a Melungeon. One older lady advised she take out an insurance policy before heading to the mountains – and take a loaded pistol! Her father didn't approve either, but she managed to slip away one day while he was off fishing. Pinned to his pillow was a note, "Dear Daddy – I have gone to hunt the Melungeons." [8]

Will Allen had read of this mysterious race of people in a New York newspaper a few years earlier and now was curious as to whether such a "wild, entirely unlettered and largely given to illicit distilling" people actually existed. What she discovered was "a most peculiar people". As had been reported, Melungeons lived in an isolated area, "not mixing or caring to mix with the rest of the world" – except when it came to church-going.

Will Allen attended church one Sunday and found folks of all colors – "white women with white children and white husbands, Malungeon [sic] women with brown babies and white babies, and one, a young copper-colored woman with black eyes and straight Indian locks, had three black babies, negroes, at her heels and a third at her breast." The woman, however, wasn't a Negro, with a reddish-yellow skin and distinctly different from a mulatto. Even some who looked Negro claimed to be of Portuguese blood. [9]

It was what they had been told all their lives, some claiming to be Cherokee and Portuguese. However, no one seemed able to credibly explain from whence came their supposed Portuguese blood. As legend would have it, they claimed to have descended from shipwrecked Portuguese adventurers who had arrived in Virginia and headed westward, intermixing with Negroes and Indians. As time went by, a number of

misguided theories were put forth in newspapers, and later argued in journals.

Will Allen spent enough time with Melungeons to learn their mannerisms, concluding they were a rather shifty lot.

During the war they were a terror to the women of the valley, going in droves to their homes and helping themselves to food and clothing, even rifling the beds and closets while the defenseless wives of the absent soldiers stood by and witnessed the wholesale plundering . . . They are exceedingly lazy. They live from hand to mouth and in hovels too filthy for any human being. They do not cultivate the soil at all. A tobacco patch and an orchard is the end and aim of their aspirations . . . They all drink, men, women and children, and they are all distillers; that is, the work of distilling is not confined to the men.

They subsisted on "corn bread and honey, coffee without cream or sugar, and found life full and glad and satisfactory." She didn't have anything kind to say, concluding Melungeons were a "queer, queer people" – with little redeeming value to society.[10]

Reaction to her article was mixed, some believing no such people existed as she described, compelling Will Allen to defend her conclusions. Melungeons were definitely a mixed race and a queer people, but they were not mulatto.

In 1894 one resident of Asheville, North Carolina, having "mingled with them a great deal at one time", claimed to have the "inside story". He had concluded a "few relics of great age . . . in the shape of pottery and implements" indicated Melungeons were descended not only from Portuguese sailors, but from Aztecs. Obviously, the man didn't know much about geography, but didn't prevent his absurd "theory" from being widely published in 1894. [11]

The Aztec-Portuguese "theory" hung on for quite a while, repeatedly published in newspapers across the country – until the *Morristown Republican* attempted to changed the narrative in August 1897. The correspondent's name is unknown but they were certain:

NO PORTUGUESE BLOOD IN THESE PEOPLE.

There are a Mixture of Indian, Negro and White Races.

Sneedville, Tenn., Aug. 13. Much has been written by strangers and outsiders about the Melungeons of Hancock county and their origin. These writers have not yet learned, else they have failed to write it, and therefore the truth for them has not been told, and their origin is still a mystery to the outside world. People have come here to write them up and they represented them as a separate and distinct class of people. If they are from whence did they come? Melungeon is a home-spun word in the mountains of East Tennessee and Southwest Virginia, and originated here from a cross of the races of this section of country. [12]

According to this unnamed correspondent, the most savage of the area's Indian tribes had migrated westward, leaving behind a friendlier group who had migrated westward with the whites and, of course, intermarrying. Along the way the Negro race was grafted in, creating a sort of "mongrel" race. They arrived from North Carolina and Virginia, some Virginians bearing the aforementioned supposed Melungeon surnames of Collins, Gibson, Bunch, Bowlin and Goodman.

Among the early settlers of Hawkins (and later Hancock) County was Vardemon "Vardy" Collins, who occupied and owned four or five square miles on the Blackwater River. He and Buck Gibson arrived from

Virginia around 1797 (so the legend goes) – and the two men were both Indians.

A memorial plaque, placed in the cemetery where his descendants believe he was buried, refers to Vardy Collins as a Cherokee patriot, although locals referred to him as a Melungeon. His descendants believe he was born in Grayson County, Virginia in 1764 and later brought his family to northeast Tennessee, where their patriarch lived until his death in 1860. His wife Margaret was the daughter of Shepherd and Matilda (Collins) Gibson. Buck Gibson was his brother-in-law.

Will Allen Dromgoole wrote another article in May 1891, entitled "The Melungeon Tree and its Four Branches". Vardy and Buck were quite a pair. Through a bit of cunning Cherokee chicanery they were able to acquire the aforementioned land.

Old Buck, as he was called, was disguised by a wash of some dark description, and taken to Virginia by Vardy where he was sold as a slave. He was a magnificent specimen of physical strength, and brought a fine price, a wagon and mules, a lot of goods, and three hundred dollars in money being paid to old Vardy for his likely n_____. Once out of Richmond, Vardy turned his mule's shoes and stuck out for the wilderness of North Carolina, as previously planned. Buck lost little time ridding himself of his negro disguise, swore he was not the man bought of Collins, and followed in the wake of his fellow thief to the Territory. The proceeds of the sale were divided and each chose his habitation; old Vardy choosing Newman's Ridge, where he was soon joined by others of his race, and so the Malungeons [sic] became a part of the inhabitants of Tennessee. [13]

Will Allen was certain the story was true, as was the fact that Vardy and Buck stole their surnames from white settlers in Virginia. More members of Vardy's family arrived later, but rather than be classed as a family they were tribes, then clans and then families.

His older brother Benjamin was head of the Bens or Ben Tribe, and his brother Solomon was head of the Sols or Sol Tribe. There didn't appear to have ever been a "Vardy Tribe" so he was considered leader of the entire people. That was a lot of Collins, however. As they proliferated it became necessary to find some sort of naming convention to distinguish between the children of Ben and Sol, and their other brother Mitchel.

Ben Collins' children were distinguished from the children of Sol and Vardy by prefixing the Christian name either of the father or mother to the Christian name of the child. For instance, Edmund Ben, Singleton Ben, Andrew Ben, Zeke Ben, meant that Edmund, Singleton, Andre, and Zeke were the sons of Ben Collins. Singleton Mitch, Levi Mitch, and Morris Mitch, meant that these men were the sons of Mitchel Collins. [14]

Talk about a genealogical puzzle! For some time they were all Collins until, as Will Allen surmised, "three foreign shoots were grafted into the body of it, the English (or white), Portuguese, and African." [15]

The English branch arrived in the person of Jim Mullins, a trader. He felt quite at home with the Indians and "was always cheek by jowl with the Cherokees and other Indian tribes among which he mingled." [16] After stumbling upon the Collins tribe of Newman's Ridge, he remained with them, marrying a descendant of Sol Collins and generating the first drop of white blood.

By marriage it was assumed there was no formal service, but rather he "took up" with her and then had a large family of children. Jim Mullins later exchanged wives with Wyatt Collins and "proceeded to cultivate a second family." Once Hancock County was

formed, both Jim and Wyatt were forced to formally marry the wives with whom they had children and grandchildren. By the time Will Allen wrote the article, the Mullins tribe was head of the Newman's Ridge people.

The African branch came along by a Negro man named Goins, although he didn't settle on the Ridge, but near Big Sycamore Creek in Powell's Valley. However, in like manner he took up with a Melungeon woman and they began their own tribe. The Goins family was characterized by "kinky hair, flat nose and foot, thick lips, and a complexion totally unlike the Collins and Mullins tribes." [17] Will Allen had picked up on the controversial African line, observing Melungeons who, repudiating the idea of Negro blood, instead claimed it was Portuguese blood.

Although it had long been a riddle, she believed Portuguese ancestry had been traced to someone named Denham who married (or "took up with") Sol Collins' sister. It was supposed he had migrated up north from a southern Spanish settlement, considerably less romanticized than another version – that Denham had been dropped off on the North Carolina coast by Portuguese pirates and left to fend for himself.

It was quite a tale passed on via a number of theories over the years. It meant the subject of Melungeons and their origins would be discussed and argued for decades to come.

In August 1897 the Holston Presbytery held its fall meeting in Greenville, Tennessee. While a number of stirring messages on foreign missions were delivered, the regional mission work of Reverend C. Humble in the remote mountain regions was of great interest.

He is at this time projecting a work that touches the bottom of society, and aims to help those deprived of much that we enjoy, to make the most of what they have, just where they are. In other words, it is a movement to elevate the home life of the mountain people, and in this way elevate the people in every direction. This work embraces a movement in behalf of the people living on the Blackwater and Newman's Ridge in Hancock County, a people known to the outside world as "Melungeons," a name which they repudiate, and which Dr. Humble uses only that he may be understood. [18]

In the late nineteenth century "one of the most conspicuous and widely-known characters" on Newman's Ridge was Mahala Mullins, a well-known dealer in moonshine, who had thus far managed to evade prosecution in violation of Uncle Sam's revenue laws.

It wasn't her cunning, per se. Mahala Mullins was a rather "stout" woman shall we say, variously reported to have weighed between 400 and 700 pounds. She lived in a lone cabin on top of a near-inaccessible hill, spending most of her life in bed with a "keg of spirits within easy reach from which she [supplied] her customers."

Revenuers issued warrant after warrant for her arrest. She just laughed and said, "Here I am, take me – if you can." [19]

Mahala was born on March 30, 1824, the daughter of Solomon Dickerson and Virginia Jane (Goins) Collins. She married John Mullins around 1840 and census records indicate she gave birth to at least fifteen children. One source indicates she may have birthed as many as nineteen!

John was a farmer, who in the summer of 1872 made his own headlines:

The Jonesboro Flag tells of an old man named John Mullins, who was struck by

lightning, and driven several feet into the earth, and on being dug up exclaimed, "I am not dead but slightly shocked." He is getting well. [20]

Reportedly, following the birth of her last child she developed elephantiasis, thus ballooning her weight. Her size made her perhaps the most well-known Melungeon. In March 1896 there was a fight at "Haley Mullins' saloon on Newman Ridge . . . at the home of the noted fat woman." [21]

Years later one man would remember his boyhood days growing up near her home. According to B.L. Day, the house was built around her and when she died they had to knock down the wall to remove her body. Day knew stories no one else knew, at least ones which had never been published.

Her moonshine business was a family affair – they made it and she "dispensed" it by ladling it out "by the dipperful from a barrel beside the big bed on which she spent most of her days." Given that there were about a thousand apple trees in the Mullins orchard on the Ridge, she mostly sold apple brandy – a lot of it, enough to be in violation of the law many times over. Ever so often a lawman would show up at her door, warrant in hand only to discover he could catch her but not fetch her . . .

And she'd get up and walk to the door laughing, and would honestly try to squeeze her 800 pounds through the opening.

She never made it, not by quite a few pounds. So the officer would walk back to the jail and threw the warrant on the table. After several years there were seven warrants pending against Mahaley Mullins.

By and by Wash Eads was elected sheriff. He took the seven warrants up to Newman's Ridge and told Mahaley she was under arrest. "All right. Ha! Ha! Ha!," laughed Mahaley.

Again she had the first laugh and the last laugh. She was still too big and the door was still too little. "I could tear down the house," the sheriff thought out loud.

Mahaley chided him for even thinking that. "The law don't allow you to tear down the house," she reminded him. And that's when Sheriff Eads turned over the newest warrant and wrote across the back of it those now famous words:

"Mahaley Mullins – Catchable, but not fetchable." [22]

In the late 1890s articles began appearing occasionally in newspapers around the nation, most referencing her illicit business. An *Atlanta Constitution* article in early 1897 made the rounds, referring to her as "Betsy Mullens":

SHE SELLS MOUNTAIN DEW


HOME OF THE BIG WOMAN.

Betsy Mullens is the largest woman in Tennessee. She lives in a little log house on top of Newman's ridge, in the mountains of Hancock county, where she earns a living by the sale of illicitly distilled whiskey in open defiance of the government officers, who have time and again been sent to arrest her, but have never been successful. . .

The place where she lives is sixteen miles from the railroad, and by no means easy of access. As you near the foot of the ridge where the woman lives you can see her cabin on top. A conveyance cannot wend its way to the home, and those who wish to see the largest woman in Tennessee, and

one who has caused more talk than any other woman in the state, have to leave every conveyance behind and make it on foot up the steep mountain side.

The first thing one might see, noted the correspondent, was four mounds in the back yard where her husband and three sons (who had died in the course of "mountain fights") were buried. There she could turn herself in her bed and gaze out the window to see their resting place.

Her husband had been an invalid for years before he passed, leaving the family without means to earn a living. That's when Mahala came up with the idea of selling whiskey. Some of her "mountain dew" was imported from Kentucky, just across the state line.

Of course, she was in violation of revenue laws many times over, but there was no way to extract her from the cabin. Like it or not, Mahala's idea to sell whiskey was a stroke of genius, although the correspondent didn't see it that way.

SELLS LIQUOR IN BED.

In Mrs. Mullens will be found the personification of ignorance. Her knowledge of the world is confined to a radius of three miles of her home. She was born near the place where she lives, and has never been off the ridge. Never saw the little county town of Tazewell, the county seat of Tazewell county, and has never seen a railway train . . . She delights in having visitors call to see her and talks interestingly. During all the years that Mrs. Mullens has been confined to her bed she has seen her three sons and husband pass to the beyond. She could not attend the funeral services at the little church, which is situated several miles from her home, and the funeral services, if such they might be called, were held in the rooms where the mother and wife lay on the bed, and their bodies were laid to rest just outside the door in the back yard, where she could witness the interment. The woman takes her misfortune good-naturedly, and says that she will continue the sale of whisky until her time to die has come, and then she, too, expects to be laid to rest beside the bodies of her husband and sons in the little plot in the back yard, known as the family burying ground of the Mullens family. [23]

John Mullins, the "husband of notorious Betsy Mullins" died in January 1897. He weighed only 89 pounds while his wife weighed 540, he as small as she was large. He had suffered from kidney disease for years and on January 20 had "shuffled off this mortal coil." [24]

One 1895 article stated five sons were buried in the back yard and her "partially paralyzed husband, a puny, feeble man wholly incapacitated" was apparently still alive.

Three revenuers had recently visited her and persuaded Mahala to let them measure around the largest part of her body:

The measurement was nine feet and three inches. As she sits up in her bed, with feet on the floor, her stomach lies out nearly to her knees.

She displayed one of her ankles to the boys and they say it must have been as large around as the brim of a Stetson hat. [25]

When Reverend Humble visited her, she had been willing to have her picture taken, but wanted a copy of her own. When the photographer asked for Mahala's address her daughter remarked, "You did not tell him how many yards it takes – "it takes twelve yards to make her a dress." She had obviously misunderstood his question, but it indicates just how large she was. [26]

Another account appeared in the *Chicago Chronicle* in late 1896. Apparently, Mahala wanted to attend a dance hosted by one of her many customers, and her neighbors were "devising ways and means to gratify her wish". Never mind that the 1895 article had surmised it would take a derrick to hoist her away.

Complete with illustrations the article described how her neighbors proposed to get her down the mountain:


SHE WILL BE LOADED ON THE CAR AND SENT TO THE "FLAT WOODS."

She wants to attend a dance to be given by one of her customers next Wednesday and her friends have undertaken the job of building a tramway down the mountain, and if a platform car can be made to work the end of "Betsy's" house will be removed and she will be loaded on the car and sent to the "flat woods." She will be the guest of honor at the ball. [27]

An article made the rounds in various newspapers within days of John's death claiming her neighbors had succeeded in constructing a tramway.


EN ROUTE TO A DANCE.

Her neighbors built a sort of railway to facilitate her progress down the mountain. The side of Betsy's house was taken out, and she waddled, with assistance, to the specially constructed car, in which she was loaded. Then with a very stout cable and a windlass, worked by strong hands, she was lowered down the mountain and on to the dance. [28]

Most accounts reported her to be 50 years old, but by that time she was already in her 70's. In late 1897, long after John's death, newspapers were reporting she had given birth to quadruplets!

FOUR YOUNG MOONSHINERS

Born to Mahala Mullins, Who Weighs 390 Pounds

The accounts were claiming her invalid husband, weighing less than 100 pounds, had fathered four sons – all born alive! [29]

At Find-A-Grave several of her children are linked and it appears she may have given birth to two sets of twins. Where that much-circulated story came from is unclear, but it was a whopper!

In late August 1898 it was widely-reported that the "famous fat woman moonshiner takes unto herself a husband . . . The lucky man is Samuel Johnson, a prosperous Hancock County farmer." [30]

As it turned out, however, Mahala Mullins wasn't long for this world. She died on September 10, 1898 "at her home in the mountains of Hancock county after living a most wonderful life for years past." She was 74 years old, the mother of eighteen children and grandmother to one hundred and six.

Her dealing in whisky was the only fault that could be found with her. She had the reputation of being a good woman and a kind neighbor. She was charitable, assisted many a poor family in times of need, who will now miss her.

Her desire and love for the whisky business she inherited from her Indian descent. She was descended from that unknown tribe of people who are only found in Hancock county called "Melungeons." Her father, Satowan Collins, was chief of the tribe and was highly respected in the county in which he lived. Two brothers of the woman still live – Frank and Bailey Collins – both of whom made good soldiers during the civil war in Brownlow's regiment.

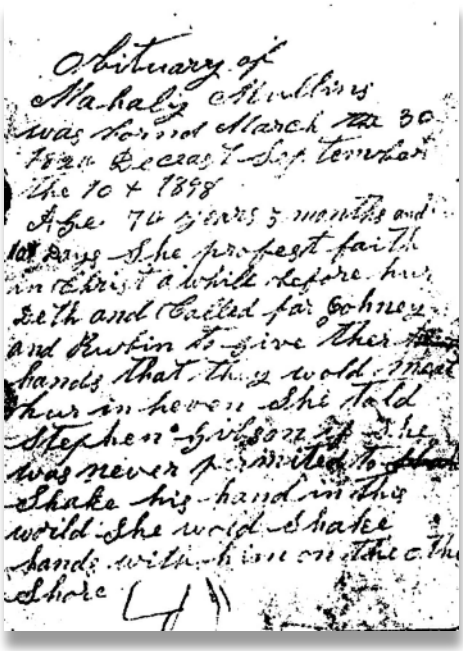
Aunt Betsy was buried Friday morning at 10 o'clock. About three feet extra door-way was cut out of her house in order to get the coffin, which was an immense pine box out. An ox team conveyed the remains to the grave and log-chains used to lower the coffin into the grave. [31]

One earlier newspaper account surmised the graves of her children had reminded her of how they were gunned down by revenuers, but "instead of making her repent, only hardens her in crime." [32] However, not long before her death she had made her peace with God, and perhaps an enemy or two. In a handwritten "obituary" by an unknown person it stated:

Obituary of Mahaly Mullins

Was borned March the 30th 1824. Deceased September the 10th 1898.

Age 74 years 5 months and 10 days. She profest faith in Christ a while before her deth and called for Gohney and Bowlin to give their hands that they would meet her in heven. She told Stephen Gibson she was never permitted to shake his hand in this world. She would shake hands with him on the other shore. [33]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Shore

As expected a number of articles and "tributes" were published throughout the nation as word spread of her death. Each was a bit different detail-wise. She had been newsworthy for several years due to her weight, which essentially ensured she could keep right on illegally dispensing hooch without fear of retribution. The *Springfield Republican* (Massachusetts), via the *Philadelphia Times*, referred to her as "Sockless Mahala Mullins, A Tennessee Giantess Who Defied Revenue Officers":

Mrs. Mullins' individuality is interesting, as well as her open violation of the laws in selling whisky. She weighed, a short time previous to her death, 519 pounds. She was 74 years of age a few months ago. Her chest measure contracted, was five feet six inches. She measured seven feet 6½ inches about the hips. This remarkable woman enjoyed the best of health until within three weeks of her death, when she was stricken with mountain fever, which, owing to her age, proved fatal.

For many years Mahala Mullins had been prepared to meet death. She was a Christian woman, notwithstanding the fact that she sold liquor. She believed it the prerogative of every man, woman and child to make and drink whisky, and saw in it no wrong to either religious, social or legal legislations. . .

East Tennessee has lost a noted character in the death of Mrs. Mullins. The fact of the existence of such a woman has been heralded all over the country. Scarcely a month has gone by for many years but that some tourist coming to this city sought an opportunity to climb in to the Cumberlands in the hope of seeing her. [34]

Mahala Mullins was gone, but not forgotten, as the public's fascination with Melungeons continued. At the turn of the century many were adamant in their assertions that all

Melungeons "in this country are descendants of the Portuguese colonists who were presumably shipwrecked on the eastern coast at some point in what is now the state of North Carolina."

Someone known only as A.J.F., a correspondent (or reader) of Knoxville's *Journal and Tribune*, expressed "little doubt that these strange people are the descendants of Portuguese colonists". His theory seemed to be "the most plausible of the many advanced in guessing their origin". Or perhaps (as another theory postulated) Melungeons were descended from ancient Carthagenians, great sailors all, or maybe the Moors of North Africa. [35]

Surely, by the time the Scotch-Irish (and Daniel Boone) had arrived this peculiar tribe had already been established after decades of mingling with Indians, whites and Negroes. However, by the early twentieth century most theories published in newspapers weren't scientifically or anthropologically sound – they were guesses at best.

By the 1920s the narrative had shifted, perhaps due to heightened racial tensions as Melungeons were theorized to be "Phoenicians who removed from Carthage and settled in Morocco. They have no ad-mixture of negro blood." [36] By the late 1930s, however, even those who lived in and around Newman's Ridge couldn't rightly say just what their ethnic origins were. One man, a known descendant of the "lost tribe", was asked if he was Melungeon.

Even though John Varner had always seemed proud to be descended from Melungeons, he answered that he was English as far as he knew. "He was just born in that holler, grew up there, and is still living there. That's all he knew." [37] Perhaps the novelty had long since ebbed away.

Anthropologists and historians were still interested, however, as more serious research was conducted and documented. In 1951 Edward T. Price estimated there were perhaps around a thousand Melungeons still residing in Hancock County, most readily identifiable by the well-known surnames of Collins, Mullins, Gibson, Goins and so on. A few scattered groups were located in southwest Virginia, southeast Kentucky and Eastern Tennessee (Rhea County).

As to their ethnicity Price cited early census records. It's interesting to note, for instance, the Collins "tribe". Most Collins families (one exception) were enumerated as "free colored persons" in 1830. Vardy Collins was head of household of eight free colored persons. By 1840, however, all Collins families were enumerated as white, as were those of the Gibson family. Another common surname was "Minor". In 1840 Minor families were enumerated as a mix of both white and free colored persons in the same household.

What changed during the ten-year span? It might well have been the 1834 Tennessee Constitutional Convention when legislators amended Article 1, Section 26 to read "That the free white men of this State have a right to keep and to bear arms for their common defence." [38] It's unclear, however, as to how (or why) these families were reclassified as white. Melungeon research isn't for the faint of heart!

Fast forward four decades to the 1880 census and it's interesting to note that a few Melungeon families in one particular Hancock County district (surnames Minor and Goins) were first enumerated as Portuguese, but later written over in crayon as "W". Whether the families insisted on being identified as Portuguese is unclear.

In 1969 an outdoor drama, written by Dr. Kermit Hunter and entitled "Walk Toward

the Sunset", debuted in Sneedville for a six-week run. Some of the citizens of Hancock County of Melungeon descent would act in the two-act drama. The play emphasized a unique piece of Hancock County history which had been reinforced by nineteenth century newspapers.

However, as time went by the stigmatization of Melungeons gradually faded as a number of books were published. Many are based on the author's research into their Melungeon ancestry. One such book, *The Melungeons: The Resurrection of a Proud People (An Untold Story of Ethnic Cleansing in America)*, by Brent Kennedy, made quite a splash in the late 1990s.

According to an editorial review of the book at Amazon, Brent Kennedy " is the prime mover behind the recent, and astonishing, revival of Melungeon identity. His determination to uncover and to understand his heritage makes for a fascinating story, which is still in the process of unfolding. But this is the book that started it all." This may have been true. However, the book was not without its critics.

As the book's description indicates: "One day he began explaining to his parents their heritage and thus unraveled family mysteries that go back for generations. After years wondering about the mysterious dark-skinned people he had often encountered while growing up, he realized that he was indeed one of them, that his family was part of the proud, troubled heritage of the Melungeons."

Critics took issue, however, with the book's "egocentric" focus, as well as the integrity of Kennedy's research and conclusions. He appeared to go out of his way to prove purported Portuguese ancestry, despite those nineteenth century assertions having been downplayed over time. Some critics almost made him sound like a modern-day Gustav Anjou, the undisputed "king of genealogical fraud" of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

First of all, the book's subtitle is rather dramatic – "An Untold Story of Ethnic Cleansing in America" – and written during a time when the term "ethnic cleansing" was prominent in the news (Bosnian War). Virginia Easley DeMarce, in a review for the June 1996 National Genealogy Society Quarterly, observed the full title left no doubt that Kennedy intended to utilize "racial prejudice and persecution", to "meld all this together". [39] Like other critics she was most concerned with his lack of properly cited evidence and the use of standard genealogical methodology.

Another critic summarized his lengthy book review:

It is fair, even appropriate, to ask of any general argument: do the weaknesses of its parts destroy the whole? In the case of The Melungeons, there can be only one conclusion and that is that the hypothesis that the Melungeons are a definable ethnic group whose origins can be traced to historical events in the 16th century is irredeemably undermined by – once again to borrow Kennedy's own description of his work – his "maniacal ravings." [40]

Ouch! By the way, I include this information because it's likely many genealogical library collections have this book available for researchers. As the saying goes, *Caveat Investigator*.

Resources to Explore

That's not to say these types of books have little to offer in the way of credible research, however. Just follow it up with your own diligent research. Other books to explore:

- *Kinfolks: Falling Off the Family Tree*

- *Windows on the Past: The Cultural Heritage of Vardy, Hancock County, Tennessee*
- *Walking Toward the Sunset: The Melungeons of Appalachia (Melungeons: History, Culture, Ethnicity & Literature)*
- *Melungeon Portraits*
- *Children of Perdition: Melungeons and the Struggle of Mixed America*

Search for "Melungeon" at Amazon to explore more historical and fictional works.

Journal articles may offer a more balanced perspective on Melungeon research:

https://www.jstor.org

https://www.hathitrust.org/

There are also a number of web sites to explore, some maintained by those of Melungeon descent:

http://www.historical-melungeons.com/front.html

http://melungeon.org/

http://jackgoins.blogspot.com/

What About DNA?

First of all, there is no "Melungeon gene". The best result one might receive from DNA testing is an indication of the commonly associated ethnicity – white, African and Indian. Any such result, of course, must be followed up with diligent genealogical research.

That being said, a Melungeon DNA project was initiated at Family Tree DNA in 2005. For a thorough summary of findings:

https://jogg.info/pages/72/files/Estes.pdf

One More Thing

I found one more unexpected resource, a thoughtfully written chapter about Melungeons in a book entitled *Appalachian Curiosities*, by Laura Wright. She points out that those belonging to this "strange people" group never actually called themselves "Melungeons". Rather, it was a "racial pejorative given to persons of all colors. . . the equivalent of such offensive words as "half-breed" or "octoroon."

She also makes a salient point about nineteenth century newspapers. The term was used to label (mislabel) one's political or social opponents. In fact the term found common usage as an epithet during the Reconstruction era. "Democratic editors of Central and Western Tennessee used the term to malign everyone in Eastern Tennessee because they were predominantly Republican."

Will Allen Dromgoole investigated a tight-knit community who were "portrayed as subhuman, filthy, and inferior in every way. They were lazy moonshiners, uneducated, and had only the basest moral standards. As with all fantastic tales of rural southern communities, they lived in filthy conditions." [41]

Wright also found it curious that, in the matter of their mixed ethnicity, they picked Portugal as their country of origin. Other countries such as Spain, Greece and Egypt were well-established and quite well known. At one time Portugal had been quite prominent, that is until the great Lisbon earthquake of 1755, thought to have perhaps measured 9.0. The nation was devastated.

For trading purposes they spoke broken English, but had an entirely different spoken language for the community at large. There were no written texts, however. Somehow it was presumed they must be speaking Portuguese!

Some of the population shifted and moved away, although not far, sometime in the 1860s. By 1900 there may have been approximately 400-500 people (or perhaps even less) called Melungeon still living in

the vicinity of Newman's Ridge. They had long lived remotely, wishing to be left alone to live their lives as they pleased. There was, of course, considerable intermarriage amongst the families commonly identified as Melungeon.

However, by 1900 community elders realized their way of life was in danger of dying. An infusion of new blood was in order – preferably Caucasian. They were not shy about advertising their "edict" either.

PALEFACE HUSBANDS WANTED

Inducements Temporarily Offered by Malungeons Indians of Hancock County

An edict has been issued by the Malungeons Indians, who live in the mountains of Hancock county, Tenn., sixty or more miles from Middlesboro, giving the maidens of the tribe the right to choose their husbands from the palefaces. Formerly this was a violation of one of the sacred laws of the tribe, and the girl that married a white man was banished from Indian society. But now the chief men have decided that the daughters of the tribe should secure palefaced husbands, and as an inducement they are offering to every white man who will take an Indian wife from fifty to one hundred acres of mountain land. The number of acres, of course, depends on the quality of the husband, and the man who comes well recommended will get a better wife and a better farm than the man who does not.

But the Malungeons only want the best of whites, and hobos need not apply. The applicant must be honest and industrious and of good character. He must also give a solemn promise that he will forever eschew the daughters of the palefaced nation, which, in effect, is that he will love and protect his Indian wife as faithfully as he would one of his own race.

The Malungeons made this offer because they came to the conclusion that their race was doomed and that the only way to save it was by amalgamation. Continuous intermarriage among the Indians is resulting in inferior progeny. After a few years, it is said, the Malungeons will return to their old law of marriages only among their own race.

The Malungeons number about one hundred and fifty. They are the last of a once numerous and powerful race older than Tennessee itself. A tradition among them is that they are descendants of a colony of Portuguese, who amalgamated with the Cherokee Indians hundreds of years ago. Another legend is that they are descendants of the Lost Colony of Roanoke and the redskins. The Lost Colony of Roanoke was composed of English settlers, who made their home on the eastern shore of Virginia. The Malungeons are thrifty farmers and honest and upright as a general rule. They are brown-skinned and black-haired and have regular features. [42]

At that point media attention waned in regards to Melungeons. Kermit Hunter's outdoor drama brought renewed awareness in the late 1960s, but the mid-1990s saw a significant surge in interest as people began researching their ancestral roots in hopes of finding a Melungeon connection.

And, then along came DNA as a tool for discovering one's ethnicity and the possibility of locating long-lost kin. However, as Wright points out, it has in many ways clouded the field of genealogy. People have been known to manipulate results in order to support long-held family "legends". By the way, descendants of the Gibson, Collins and Mullins lines have tested, revealing primarily European DNA – maybe Portuguese isn't so far-fetched, eh.

Fascinating topic, but as I said, Melungeon research isn't for the faint of heart!

THE DASH

Benjamin Franklin Cooley (1774-1847)

by Sharon Hall

Editor's Note

I came across an interesting story while researching my sister-in-law's ancestors. Benjamin F. Cooley is her third great grandfather, one of the early settlers of Grayson County, Virginia, and, at the time, one of the finest clockmakers in the country. Here is his story.

Master Clockmaker

Most family researchers believe Benjamin was the son of Abraham and Sarah (Reeder or Reader) Cooley, and if so, was probably born in Orange County, New York on August 3, 1774. He was the firstborn child following their marriage in 1773. Of course, this time in American history was volatile and records indicate that Abraham Cooley was a staunch patriot. After all, he named his son after one of the nation's most famous patriots, Benjamin Franklin.

On April 29, 1774 New York committee members drew up a pledge and sent it around to all counties and towns:

Persuaded that the salvation of the rights and liberties of America depend, under God, on the firm union of its inhabitants in a vigorous prosecution of the measures necessary for its safety; and convinced of the necessity of preventing anarchy and confusion which attend the dissolution of the powers of government, we, the freemen, freeholders and inhabitants of _____ do, in the most solemn manner, resolve never to become slaves; and do associate, under all the ties of religion, honor, and love of our country, to adopt and endeavor to carry into execution whatever measures are recommended by the Continental Congress, or resolved upon by our Provincial Convention, for the purpose of preserving our Constitution, and opposing the execution of the several arbitrary acts of the British Parliament, until a reconciliation between Great Britain and America, on constitutional principles (which we must ardently desire) can be obtained; and that we will in all things follow the advice of our General Committee respecting the purposes aforesaid, the preservation of peace and good order, and the safety of individuals and property. [1]

Abraham Cooley, a representative of the Cornwall Precinct of Orange County, appeared as a signatory to the pledge, and later served as a private under the command of Captain Phenihas Rumsey's company. Following the war, Abraham and Sarah migrated to North Carolina where Abraham received a land grant of 400 acres in Surry County on October 13, 1783.

Abraham didn't remain long in North Carolina, selling the land in 1786 and migrating to Montgomery County, Virginia, from which Grayson County was formed (and later Carroll County). The family settled along Coal Creek and he began appearing on tax rolls in 1787, although the first land grant issued to him wasn't recorded until 1794. He later sold the land and in 1806 purchased land from his sons Peter and Benjamin.

Benjamin married Jane Dickey, the daughter of Mathew and Rebecca (Wiley) Dickey, on October 1, 1805 in Grayson County. In 1820 there were two adults and seven children enumerated, and nine other persons not Indians and not taxed (perhaps slaves?). John P. Alderman, author of *Carroll 1765-1815, The Settlements: A History of the First Fifty Years of Carroll County, Virginia* indicates the following

children were born to Benjamin and Jane: Martin, Mary, William, Nancy, Rebecca, Eliza, Amanda, James Dickey (my sister-in-law's second great grandfather), Elizabeth, John and Julia. The family lived on Coal Creek.

After Carroll County was formed from Grayson County, Benjamin's name began appearing on records for the first court held in the county for the term beginning June 1842, and soon thereafter he was appointed Sheriff. Two sources, *Pioneer Settlers of Grayson County* by B.F. Nuckolls and *Footprints on the Sands of Time* by Dr. Aras B. Cox, indicate that "Esquire Cooley was a useful and honored citizen, and had an intelligent and highly respected family."

Dr. Cox wrote of Benjamin:

No modern Tubal Cain could have excelled him as an artificer in his superior skill in working metals. He made some of the finest clocks in the United States . . . [one clock] not only kept the usual order of time, but the days of the week and the month, and the changes of the moon. [2]

Clocks and time pieces were few and far between at that time, according to Dr. Cox. The twelve o'clock mark for the sunshine in the open door on the floor, was the only way many of the pioneers could tell the time of day." Benjamin, or Esquire Cooley as Cox referred to him, decided to travel to Salem, North Carolina (perhaps in the early 1800s) to learn how to make clocks under the tutelage of the Moravians.

Salem had been settled by eleven unmarried Moravian men of Pennsylvania in 1753. Founded in Moravia in 1457, the Unitas Fratrum (or Unity of Brethren) became known as the Moravian church in England and the colonies. They first arrived in Pennsylvania, and after successfully establishing a number of industries were offered 100,000 acres on Lord Granville's land grant in North Carolina.

The first settlement was called Bethabara ("house of passage" in Hebrew) and the large tract was called Wachovia because it reminded them of a picturesque area of Austria.

Despite an abundance of fertile land the Moravians had their eye on building up "an urban and industrial culture not at all inferior to life in Germany or in the more developed parts of Pennsylvania." [3]

Their plans were put on hold during the French and Indian War. In the meantime they summoned Christian Gottlieb Reuter, the royal surveyor for Frederick the Great. The streets of Salem ("peace") were laid out and plans for a water system were formed. There would be no running to a spring or a well – Salem would have its own running water throughout the town.

As a "congregation town" everything was organized and controlled by the church. To be a citizen of Salem required a certain amount of conformity. The church owned the land and residents, or tenants, paid annual rent. People were divided into groups by age, sex and marital status, creating a rigid society. A Board of Elders oversaw everything – "morals, religion, education and behavior in general." [4] The board also decided what trades would be allowed to operate, including setting prices and wages.

Single Brothers and Single Sisters each had a house. Most of the unmarried men constituted the majority of the town's tradesmen and craftsmen. Single Sisters

also practiced their crafts of weaving, spinning and sewing.

Nearing the end of the eighteenth century, Moravians had cultivated a sophisticated, albeit controlled, society. Clearly, Salem was not an agriculture center. The administrator of the Wachovia tract made that clear when the town was first being laid out: "This town is not designed for farmers but for those with trades." [5] Every kind of trade imaginable (at the time) operated in Salem – tannery, gunsmith, blacksmith, gun shop, shoemaker, tailor, baker, carpenters and masons. What they were missing, however, was a clockmaker.

While there were some men possessed of sufficient mechanical genius to either make clocks or repair them, there was no full-time clockmaker. The town began making overtures to entice a clockmaker to live amongst them. Answering the call was Johann Ludwig Eberhardt of Gnadenfeld, Germany, who arrived on November 29, 1799. Single and forty-one years old, he moved into the Single Brothers House.

Eberhardt grew up in the Lutheran faith and had lived and worked in a Moravian community, but his arrival in Salem was disruptive. The NCPedia web site notes "his excessive pride, impatience with the public, and especially his frequent drunkenness caused conflicts". [6] He was shunned, denied Communion on a number of occasions, but nevertheless a fine and much-needed craftsman. The clocks he fashioned were anything but ordinary. His impressive projects included:

In 1801, he added a minute hand to Salem's town clock and moved it to the gable of Home Church. Five years later he altered the clock so that it would strike the first, second and third quarter hour. In 1805, he made a musical clock for a Quaker in Randolph County. The organ placed in its base could play one of several tunes on the hour, and it could be adjusted to repeat the songs from three to six times so that entire hymns could be sung. Eberhardt crafted many movements for tall case clocks, over thirty of which survive. He also repaired watches and clocks; in 1806 he reconditioned the Hillborough town clock at the request of Duncan Cameron, a lawyer there. [7]

Eberhardt also made jewelry and fashioned silverware and other metal objects. He was a brilliant craftsman, but a poor manager of his finances.

If it was Eberhardt with whom Benjamin wished to train, he considered the fees charged for training excessive, vowing he would not pay the price and would instead teach himself how to make clocks. He returned home and visited William Bourne, owner of a grandfather clock, the first one ever brought to Grayson County. Its works were made of brass, showing the time and moon changes. When Benjamin asked if he might make a pattern of the clock, Mr. Bourne consented.

Benjamin took the clock apart, piece by piece, and made patterns of each. From those patterns he made clocks and sold them throughout the country. When Carroll County was formed out of Grayson County in 1842, Benjamin was appointed as the first sheriff at the age 62.

In 2013 the Cooley family donated one of his clocks, previously displayed at the Carroll County Library, to the Carroll County Historical Society. It is described as seventy-eight inches high with an eight-day wind. The large dial features two sequences, one a smiling moon over a landscape and a similar moon over a seascape on the other side. A 30-day calendar is also included.

Benjamin Franklin Cooley died on March 24, 1847 at the age of seventy-two. He is buried in the Cooley Cemetery in Carroll County. Jane, several years younger than Benjamin, died on January 22, 1872.

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