James and Nancy begin to giggle. Their mother looks at them and mouths, “No one ever got into trouble by listening." James was laughing at the comment about cats having nine lives. He had teased his sister, Nancy, about her pet cat she had who stayed about the barn in the field near their home.

As the uniform was laid out upon a slab of wood, the children were examining the uniform. Some were touching the material, and as kids are kids, James reached to touch one of the brass buttons on the uniform. It comes out of his hands as he pulls it. No one sees him pulling the button, but James knows he will be reprimanded if his parents see what he has done. James quickly and stealthily places the brass button in his pocket. A 12-inch thread is still attached and securely wrapped around the brass button loop and the brass button. James moves away from the uniform to avoid being near in case one has noticed. However, Ruth, age 7, had seen what James had done, and she reached into the pocket of her grandfather's uniform, retrieved a tiny tin thimble, and placed it in her pocket.

The ceremony ends with prayers. William places another wood plank over the uniform and sandwiches the uniform between two wood planks. It is then buried next to the tiny grave of Mary Jane, whose headstone was a small rock with her name and date 1816. Jenny Coats reaches down and touches the stone. "Blessed you, dear soul." They depart and begin the trek to Ohio. It was a long journey, taking 90 days and over 450 miles. Jane carries Isaac and walks mostly during the trip. The generations have passed, and the promise of the sewing box and items has been forgotten. The war, the Time, has forgotten the promise made during the Black Plague so long ago. It was a different time. As the Coats family heads west, Jane reads out of the Bible to her family.

She chooses to read Ecclesiastes 3:8. Everything There Is a Season.

A person wearing a bonnet

Description automatically generatedTo everything, there is a season and a time for every purpose under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to break down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to cast away stones and a time to gather stones together, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing, a time to search and a time to count as lost, a time to keep and a time to discard, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.

Jane was a well-read woman. She was brought up by her mother’s Dutch family. She would read the Bible to her children all the time. It was the only book she had in her possession. Jane conducted a school lesson on spelling and history one day of the 90 days on the journey to Ohio. Jane said, "Okay, James and Nancy, spell Pennsylvania. James and Nancy would spell out the state. This would go on for days of her spelling lessons. James asked, "Where are we going to go to," Nancy, in disgust, said, "We are going to Ohio." James began to make faces at his sister. Being the mother, Jane had to quell the fight that was coming, “you two need to stop teasing each other” “we are going to Coshocton, then over to our new land.” Now spell Coshocton. James gets loud and says, "I know how to spell Coshocton." James began by saying the letters, C-A-U-S-H-U." Interrupting James in his spelling thoughts, Nancy says, "You stupid. It is spelled C-O-S-H-O-C-T-O-N. “That is when the fight started. James says shut up and pulls Nancy’s braided hair. Now, Now, says Jane. Correcting the children. I tell you what, if I must put Isaac down and beat your butts with a willow branch, I will. I told you that no one ever gets into trouble by listening. When your mouths open and say mean things, you will be A person pulling a wagon

Description automatically generatedin trouble.”

The Oxen snorted and pulled the wagon. They would turn westward on the national road, heading south towards Pennsylvania, heading near Uniontown. It was a change for the Coats family. A new land, a new state of Ohio, a town called New Comers. What awaits them in their new location? There will be opportunities and disappointments. It was a time of religious fever, of different religious sects, of dangers of Indians who felt threatened by these strange people. What had become of the blessed threads and sewing tools? It would eventually be revealed. A revelation just like Madam Warwick had told long ago, during the Black Plague, which possessing one or all of the items in the jack oak tree box, as long as a cat was near, would reveal. The promise was kept up to the first ninth generation, who was Robert William Coates III; now it was up to the following 9th generation's descendants to uphold until Madam Warwick returned to assume the possession of either the box or any piece of a thread from the spools or any original item like needles or thimbles. Again, over this time, memories fade or are lost, and the world distracts from promises made. What was hidden shall be revealed.

# [Chapter 2] — Hartwood

A cemetery sign on a hill

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On a chilly cold November night in 1844, Bryant Hursey was riding home from a courting expedition. His route led him past the Hartwood Cemetery east of Newcomerstown in Washington township.

Bryant Hursey was born in 1824 in Gnadenhutten, Ohio, his father, John "Johnny" Hursey, was thirty-three and his mother, Margaret Chadwell was twenty-nine. He is the step grandson to Rebecca Postel (b.1823–d. 1899) who is our second great aunt. Hartwood Cemetery is remarkably familiar with the Postels and Couts families who resided in Washington township. Nehemiah David Postel, our third great grandfather (b. 1797 d. 1867) is buried there and is the father of Rebecca Postel. It was well past midnight, Bryant Hursey felt a bit of trepidation passing by a graveyard surrounded by dense forest at that late hour. As the horse trotted passing the darkness of the cemetery, and feeling fear, he thought, “what could really happen? “Suddenly the silence of the night was broken, startling Bryant and his horse, a sound of other horses neighing somewhere in the darkness of the cemetery. His own horse answered them. That was followed by the sound of a heavy object being dragged along the ground in the vicinity of the cemetery. Hursey did not take time to investigate. He spurred on his horse and galloped as fast as he could to get out of the cemetery area.

Who was in that grave? Hugh M.K. Anderson was a well-respected 29-year-old school teacher in the small town of Mudsock. His sudden and mysterious illness sent shockwaves through the community. Despite the efforts of the local doctor, Hugh's condition rapidly deteriorated, and he passed away on All Hallows Eve in October 1844. The townspeople were devastated by the loss of such a young and promising individual. As per tradition, Hugh was laid to rest in the historic Hartwood Cemetery, a peaceful final resting place overlooking the town. The cemetery, with its ancient tombstones and eerie atmosphere, seemed fitting for the occasion, with the townspeople gathering to pay their respects on the somber evening of Hugh's burial. The full moon cast an eerie glow over the cemetery, adding to the solemnity of the occasion.

The news of Hugh Anderson's untimely death spread quickly through Mudsock and beyond, shrouding the town in a veil of mourning. Many wondered about the mysterious illness that had claimed the life of the beloved school teacher, leading to whispers and speculation among the townsfolk. Despite the sadness that hung heavy in the air, the memory of Hugh Anderson would live on in the hearts of those who knew him. Tragedy struck the peaceful town of Mudsock once again as grave robbers desecrated the resting place of Hugh Anderson. Under the cover of darkness on November 5, 1844, the heartless criminals disturbed the tranquility of Hartwood Cemetery by digging up Hugh's freshly buried body.

The townspeople were horrified and outraged by the heinous act, unable to comprehend the motives behind such a vile deed. The sanctity of the final resting place had been violated, and the memory of Hugh Anderson tarnished by the actions of these grave robbers.

Rumors spread like wildfire throughout Mudsock, with fear and suspicion gripping the townsfolk. Questions lingered in the air about who could have committed such a despicable crime and what sinister purpose lay behind it. The once serene cemetery now held a sense of unease and foreboding, with shadows looming over the graves of the departed. As the news of the grave robbery spread beyond Mudsock, neighboring towns whispered in disbelief at the audacity of the criminals. The authorities were called upon to investigate and bring the perpetrators to justice, but the dark cloud cast by the grave robbers' actions remained, casting a pall over the once peaceful town of Mudsock.

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Ok...of course there are witches and folk lore involved in this true story. I first must provide some background information.

Superstitions and witchcraft came west to Ohio with many pioneer families. If a woman had dark eyes, stepped stealthily, or spoke in a low tone of voice, gossips might soon proclaim her a witch in league with the Devil. Provisions for warding off a witch and her spells were many. Careful families greased broom handles, laid dead snakes headfirst into trails, hung horseshoes over the doorways, were careful to spit in the fire and never looked over their left shoulders when passing the home of such a feared creature.

When her wrath fell on them anyhow, oxen lay down in the field furrow and nothing could move them, including the reliable standbys of hot coals and boiling soapsuds.

Neighborhood stories chronicled family members unable to rise in the morning. When examined, the victim might exhibit the sure signs of having been witch-ridden during the night.

His sides might be black and blue from the kicking heels that urged him to his best paces, the corners of his mouth torn by the bit.

Others who were victims of a witch’s spite might awaken and find a brood of downy chicks walking on their chests. Piles of sprawling kittens under baskets also were blamed on witches. Voices heard in the trees at night, tracks with a cloven hoof among them in the road all pointed to a witch in the neighborhood.The poor creature earning the reputation of witchcraft might have an even more difficult row to hoe than her ignorant neighbors. Faced by the weeping mother begging her to remove the spell so a sick child could recover, many a sympathetic woman intensified her own problem by promising to help, rather than attempt to deny the tearful charges against her. Short of accosting the witch, the mother might resort to burning wool rags in the cabin to purify the air; stand the child on its head and count to 50 backwards; grease its spine with the fat of some animal; or cut hairs from the family cat and bind them to the forehead of the afflicted one while repeating a certain sentence from the Lord’s prayer.

The death of a child was so frequent in pioneer families that someone must be blamed. Our families had many of children die, and the remarks were " if a child dies, she or he dies" nothing can be done. However, there were folks to blame.

Hugh Anderson’s uncle, Jacob Anderson emigrated to the Washington Township area in 1828. He and his wife walked the entire length of the journey. Jacob carried his gun and a few necessary articles, and his wife held her baby in her arms. Jacob's brother and wife emigrated to Washington Township, Tuscarawas County Ohio in 1820. The baby's name was Lavina Anderson (Thomas). She died in 1891. Jacob Anderson was a man of great industry. He had the honor of clearing more land and producing more rails for houses than any man in the vicinity. One afternoon Jacob and an older hired help, a revolutionary soldier, who had entered the war when he was thirteen, were cutting timbers near Hartwood Cemetery. As they rested, the soldier said, " any man walks out of the cemetery after he been laid to rest, mustn’t been met for that"  I tells you, when I die,, I'm gonna be right over there in that hollow, sittN on one of those stumps, watchN you all, see'n what you doing.  And if you or my family are not doing what you need to do, watch out, I’m going to get cha."

If you end up there in a grave, it is your own dam booby self to blame!"

Since that time, folks and descendants when passing by, would side eye those deep dark hollows, hoping not to see a ghost sitting on a log.

The township’s first settler was Ananias Randall b 1806 d. 1898. His name was the first to appear on the county tax duplicate as a resident landowner in the territory which constitutes Washington Township. He entered the northeast quarter of Section 21 upon which the village of Newtown is situated and the northeast quarter of Section 22. Newtown was surveyed out in 1817 by Ananias Randall. He is the second great grandfather of my father's brother's wife, Virginia Randall Couts. The plat then made embraces forty lots, the full extent of its present bounds. It is situated in the northeast quarter of Section 21, near the southeast corner of the township. Samuel Hagans built the first house. Mr. Randall kept the first hotel in a two-story log building. Among the early settlers of the southeast corner of Section 22, was owned by William P. Coats and wife, Jane. Richard Lanning also came from New Jersey to acquire land in the township in the southeast quarter of section 19. His brother, Joseph Lanning also emigrated to the same area. His wife, Elizabeth hosted the first Methodist meetings in her log cabin as well as had school taught in her cabin. She offered vivid remembrance of pioneer hardships and struggles in writing down history.

The northeast quarter of this township was the wildest and the last settled. Abraham and David Kees arrived in 1821 to settle this portion.

The Tuscarawas Chronicle newspaper preserved the legend of the site of Gilmore 1817-1850.

Years before Gilmore was a town, and beyond the memories of most of the inhabitants, there lived a family near the present site of the village who were supposed to be robbers and murderers. Travelers passing that way through the wilderness, mysteriously disappeared, strange horses and property supposed to belong to travelers were seen in possession of this family and a number of suspicious circumstances made the community tolerably convinced that there was dark evil in this house. No direct evidence was ever obtained at this time, but after this family disappeared from the county, it was said that a number of articles found that could not have come into this family’s possession honestly! It was believed that many a poor victim lost his or her life here, and found a grave in the ravines and hollows near Gilmore, Newtown, Bird’s run, and Post boy vicinity, on the account of the valuables he or she carried]

Recollections of several former Washington Township residents have been transcribed or written down. Some information has never been published in any of the Tuscarawas County historical accounts.

Hartwood, Bernice (also known to locals as Mudsock), Newtown, Peoli, Bird’s Run, and Gilmore were the six original village areas in Washington or Oxford Townships where the homes of several first families were established from 1760-1880. These families’ surnames are Murphy, Kees, Casteel, Taylor, Quigley, Postel, Bourne, Chadwell, Couts/Coats, Peoples, Stewart, Randall, Parrish, and Hursey.

Land ownership was vital and at times was a motive to acquire at any cost!

Now, let us go back in time to October 1843. It was a beautiful Fall. The apple orchards were being harvested. The produce in the fields was plentiful and a wedding was being planned. Local folks were anticipating an invite. It was the wedding of a well-known and loved couple. It was a wedding for Isaac Coats and his young bride, 19-year-old Amanda Melvina McNamee. On the list to attend was Hugh Anderson, a local schoolteacher and a particularly good friend to James Coats and his wife, Rebecca. James and his brother helped the Anderson’s with surveying their farm and lands. The date of the wedding is set for November 19th, 1843.

A person and person in historical clothing

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