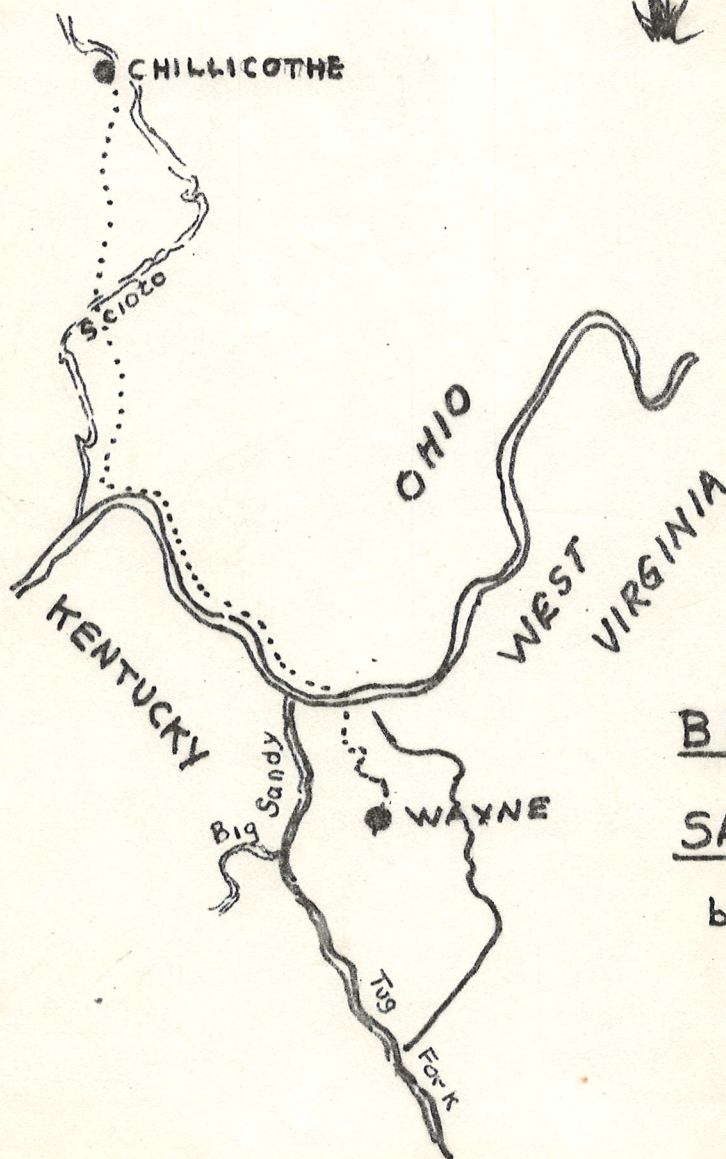


SLD
4/80



MILLERS FORK



BRIEF HISTORY
of the
SANSOM FAMILY

by Edwin DuFeu

THE SANSOM FAMILY

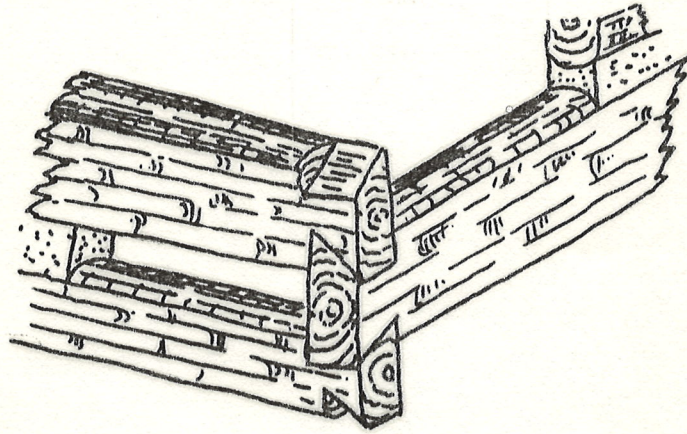
Inside many a poor soul lurks a hidden being, a frustrated writer trying to escape the dull clay that confines him, but he's usually short on knowledge, doesn't have a sufficient vocabulary, and certainly lacks the craft or skill that marks an accomplished writer. There may be another frustrated being inside us, also, one that longs to know from whence he came, one who yearns to know of his roots. Both of those hidden beings flutter feebly within my being, trying, almost vainly, to escape. Now and then they manage to crash out together. The first time this happened I wrote about the many fond memories I have of my father. This is a slightly bolder venture, to write of my mother's family: the Sansom Family.

What I shall write contains woefully little factual information, most of that passed along in the ancient oral tradition by my mother, or by her brother Maston, or her sisters Elizabeth and Mildred. Some information has been gleaned at the library, some from the National Archives in Washington, D.C. I flesh out the bones with some things that are only speculation on my part. I hope there is enough to whet the interest of any reader who may be inclined to dig more deeply than I have. I am solely responsible for the mistakes and welcome any corrections or additions anyone cares to offer.

The Sansom Family is rooted deeply in the hills and valleys of the Twelvepole Creek basin in Wayne County, West Virginia. This small stream drains about 440 square miles of the Appalachian Plateau in southwestern West Virginia and flows into the Ohio River at ~~Huntington~~ ^{KENOVA}. Mention West Virginia and many people think of poor hillside farmers or coal miners, but just as this is not the whole truth today, it wasn't the whole truth in the past. It's a land rich in heritage, rich in the beauty of a countryside covered with lush hardwood forests, but richest of all in the proud people who came to this country as pioneers and carved a life for themselves and their offspring out of that wilderness. Some of the hill farms have been depleted and have become poor through years and years of constant tilling of the crops. Some of our ancestors farmed those hills, but as Mother always tells me, "They may look poor in the pictures, but they were pioneers when they settled that beautiful land." And that is the truth!

To me, the tap root of the entire Sansom Family is firmly planted in the soil on which stands the old log house on Miller's Fork. Here a lame-armed schoolteacher named Hugh Washington Sansom and his wife Sara, "Aunt Sack," birthed and cared for 12 children of their own, plus a niece and 2 nephews. If any of you who read this haven't seen that home and those hills,

you should make the pilgrimage. It's still lived in by a Blankenship, Sarah Blankenship Myrtle, a warm, friendly woman who Mother says reminds her of Aunt Sack. The house no longer looks like the house in my favorite painting by Aunt Middy, but the core cabin is still there; great square logs shaped by an adze and locked together by beautiful, but most difficult, miter dovetail construction, with whitewashed clay mortar between the logs.



Listen for a moment to a writer by the name of John Graves* tell why this cabin still stands, though it is well over 100 years old (I don't know when it was built):

"Deep Southerners from the big-pine states cut simple, vulnerable half-notches and quarter-notches of the kind they'd use with the long, straight, expendable timbers of home. Those flat notches rot-out fast xxx. Hill Southerners -- Tennesseans and Kentuckians and Carolinians -- had the tradition of the

*John Graves, Goodbye to a River, 1959.

peaked saddle-notch, a tight joint suited to quick-tapering mountain hardwoods and good with post oak, too xxx. Pennsylvanian Germans, apparently, shoved the use of the dovetail and the miter dovetail on into the Midwest, and when you find a house with those corners xx you know that an ancient Ohioan or Illinoian had his hand in it. xx The easy skill with edged tools, with ax and adze and froe and knife which went into the construction of those houses xx is nearly inconceivable now. If you doubt it take a look at a good set of corners. I never knew anyone who could do that kind of work on uneven logs of varying size without tools or elaborate measuring gear." Graves could have added West Virginians to his builders, because our ancestors built a house to last through the centuries.

Any attempt at genealogy soon gets bogged down in an ever increasing number of names for each backward step through time. With the Sansom Family, however, it is easy to be content with only four main branches and one vexing limb that can't be located properly, though it may be one of the most interesting parts of the tree. The four main branches are the Sansom, Blankenship, Morrison and Adkins families; the mystery limb, the one I have spent the most effort on, contains the great statesman Henry Clay. He belongs somewhere on the tree, but as an uncle, father, cousin, or nephew is unknown. More on Henry later.

Like many histories, more family information clusters around great wars than can be found during the times of great peace. Our history parallels that of the United States itself; it starts with the Revolutionary War (unless we can solve Henry's place, at which point we can go all the way back to the earliest settlers in Virginia) and leaps forward with great gaps among the real life histories of its people to the Civil War, and on into the present in a more orderly fashion. Look at the Family Tree which I've drawn; it spans little more than 200 years, but those 200 years encompass the entire history of our country! What could be more glorious than that?

Wayne County itself is part of that history. In the 1770's King George III rewarded his soldiers who had successfully fought in the French and Indian wars by granting them land in Virginia west of the mountains. The first patent went to John Savage and about 60 of his troops on December 15, 1772. Peter Blankinship, a direct relation, apparently was one of those soldiers. The land was surveyed by a young Virginia planter, George Washington. Each man was given 467 acres in what was then part of Montgomery County, Virginia. In 1778 Kanawha County was formed out of Montgomery County; in 1809 Cabell County was carved out of Kanawha; and finally in 1842 Wayne County was formed from Cabell County. West Virginia came into being as a

state on June 20, 1863. The county was named after the victor at the Battle of Fallen Timbers, General "Mad Anthony" Wayne, "Mad" because he had his troops rout the Indians by advancing with fixed bayonets, a weapon that so terrified many of the Indians that they fled without fighting.

Wayne County remained as "home" for the family even after they had moved to Chillicothe. My mother was born August 17, 1903 in a neat frame house on Wilson Creek belonging to her great-grandfather, M. M. Morrison. That house, too, still stands next to the church where the children used to attend Sunday School.

Two other thoughts before looking at these brief histories. First, among family groups isolated in the vast wilderness with few roads or trails and only horseback or shank's mare for travel, it was common for first cousins to marry. It was often the only way to find a mate and to assure a continuing line of stalwart young men to do the arduous, back-breaking labor required just to exist in those hills. Second, it is common among family histories for famous or favorite great uncles to be remembered as great-grandfathers, even to be recorded in the Bible as such. Not all of my "facts" may be entirely true, either.

I'll start with the Blankenship family (the old spelling was Blankinship) and the French and Indian Wars. Although the French and English had been fighting since the late 1690's, it

was in 1754 that the war began in earnest in the "Ohio Country." On July 7, 1755, General Braddock and young Colonel Washington were soundly beaten near Ft. Duquesne (present Pittsburgh) by the French and their Indian allies. Braddock was killed and Washington led the retreat of the broken troops. The British continued to lose battles until 1759 when the tide turned in their favor. In September General Wolfe was killed while winning a great victory over Montcalm on the Plains of Abraham above Quebec. Finally in 1760 the 70-year war came to an end and France had lost her New World empire.

Peter Blankinship Senior (B. circa 1725) was one of King George's victorious soldiers, for which he was awarded 467 acres of land in Montgomery County, Virginia. The Virginia land, about 26,677 acres of it, may have been equally divided in size, but not in quality. The rich bottom lands along Twelvepole Creek made better farms than did the hillside plots up the small side creeks, such as Miller's Fork.

About 1755, the year Braddock was killed at Fort Duquesne, Peter Blankinship Junior was born somewhere in Virginia. He would be about 18 years old in 1772 when his father claimed his land in Western Virginia. Peter, the son, married Jemimah "Jenny" Perdue. About 1783 they had a son, Jesse, who later married Margaretta Stafford. Jesse's son, born in 1816, was John

Blankenship (the first time with an "e"). John's wife was Sarah Stephenson (her grandfather, John W. Stephenson, Senior fought in the Revolutionary War). John and Sarah Blankenship had seven children; one of them, Sarah, married Hugh Washington Sansom on September 2, 1874. Hugh and Sarah had 12 children. Andrew was the father of my mother.

The children of Hugh and Aunt Sack were:

Maryann, 1876-1928, 52 years

Okey Ewing, 1878 - drowned 1906, 28 years

Ulysses, 1880 - still living at 100 years

Andrew, 1882-1969, 87 years

Richard Baxter, 1885-1960, 75 years

Emma Tokey, 1887 - typhoid 1901, 14 years

Minerva Florence, 1889 - 1 month old

Pearl Walker, 1890 - ?1966, 76 years

Martha Verda, 1892-1976, 84 years

Thurman Franklin, 1897-1968, 71 years

Jetty Myrtle, 1899 - still living at 81 years

Hugh Elias, 1901 - still living at 79 years

They are a long-lived group, for which we all should be thankful.

In addition, Hugh and Aunt Sack raised two nephews, Odie and Rolland, and a niece, Valeria, who also was born in 1880.

She married her first cousin Ulysses. Valeria's ^{father} ~~mother~~ was a ^{brother} ~~sister~~ to Aunt Sack, and her ^{mother, Amasetta,} ~~father~~ was a ^{sister} ~~brother~~ to Hugh, so that Valeria and Ulysses were double first cousins! Valeria died in May 1980, but until her death she lived in the house and he lived in a trailer in the back yard, and these two marvelous old people hadn't spoken to each other in years!

While you're reading this history, savor the wonderful names. Some are merely old fashioned, but others give clues as to their time in history; many came from the Bible; some are just plain astonishing. Absalom, Josiah, Jemimah, Francis Marion (after the Swamp Fox), Okey and Tokey are interesting, but consider living up to King Eglon Blankenship! A distant cousin back in 1860 married a 32 year old woman named America Drown. Today the names sometimes sound funny, but they were magnificent in their proper geographic setting and proper time.

Let's turn to another family: the Adkins. Here is the dark romance that some people used to hide in their closets: the unmarried mother of the clan, Mary Adkins.

Mary Adkins was of Scotch ancestry. It is not known how or when she arrived in the Colonies, but there were Adkins or Atkins in America as early as 1639. What is known is that sometime prior to the Revolution, Jacob Oxford, son of an English Earl, came to America as a tax collector. He met and by common-law

marriage lived with Mary Adkins. Inasmuch as it was rumored that Mary Queen of Scots was in her ancestral line and she lived with the son of an Earl, these Adkinses were known as the "Royal" Adkins. To Mary and Jacob were born three boys: Jake, David and Sherd or Sherrid. It is possible only Jake reached manhood, but there are reports of Dave, Sherrid and Jake Adkins who crossed the mountains from Giles County, Virginia to settle in the West.

When the Revolutionary War started, Jacob Oxford returned to England without his family. At his death he reportedly left a large sum of money to Jake, but his son refused to go to England to collect his fortune. Jake was about 17 when the War started. I don't know if he fought in the War or not, but sometime after it ended in 1782 Jake and his mother moved west to settle on Beechfork Creek in what is now Wayne County. Jake met and married Phoebe Brachter.

Jake and Phoebe had six children. The oldest boy became blind in later life and was known as "Uncle Blind Charles." On December 9, 1821 Charles married Polly Scott in Cabell County, Virginia. He lived to a ripe old age; Charles must have been in his late nineties when he died on February 10, 1897. Charles and Polly had five children: Girard, Lucinda, Adeline, Peter and Jones. Aunt Lucinda married a Gilkerson, for whom a church was named. Jones married Louise Permentor. They set some kind

of a family record which most of us are glad not to duplicate. Besides two single children, Hiram "Uncle High" and Lucinda, Jones and Louise had two sets of twins and one set of triplets! My great-grandmother Armintha Adkins Morrison was a triplet.

Listen again to the names - not always direct relation, but all Adkinses; "Preacher" Pete, Bold Isaac, Hezekiah (Red Kiah), Hiram "Indian Heel," Roland, Wootson, Erastus, Zatto, Okey (again) and Tootsie!

The Morrison family is one of the most interesting and only in part because of the Henry Clay enigma. Family history relates Henry belongs on the Morrison family tree, but how? The Morrison family apparently came from France, but when is not known. M.M. used to say that like most French he wouldn't eat the "poison apple" or tomato. What is known is that in the United States census of 1850 for Wayne County, the head of one household was listed as James Riley Morrison, age 42; occupation joiner (carpenter); born in Virginia (1808). His wife was Sarah Clay Morrison, age 37, born in Virginia about 1813. There were seven children and two other adults living in the house. The four oldest children, Namon, 17, Madison M., 15, Mary A.E., 13, and Zurrilda, 11, were all born in Kentucky. The four younger children were born in Virginia, but at least from 1832 to 1839 the family must have lived in Kentucky or Sarah went home to

have her children. Living with the family was James' brother Asa and Elizabeth Clay, born in Kentucky about 1822.

In the 1860 census Maston M., age 24, and his wife, Sarah Elizabeth Tooley, age 20, are the head of the household. James (52) and Sarah (47) still live there (and probably run the show), as do five of the younger children: Mary, Zurrilda, Amanda, Jordan, and Nancy. Namon has departed; Asa has his own farm; and Elizabeth Clay has disappeared. The family had one new addition, listed as James Riley Clay, but this is undoubtedly the infant James Riley Morrison, son of M.M. and Sarah Clay Morrison.

There is one more piece to the mystery, but first a brief look at Henry Clay. He was born in 1777 in Hanover County, Virginia and moved to Lexington, Kentucky in 1798 when he was 21. He served in the Congress of the United States with a few brief gaps from 1806 until his death in 1852. Between 1806 and 1811 he served for two separate unexpired terms in the Senate. He was in the House of Representatives and Speaker of the House from 1811 to 1825. He was Secretary of State under John Quincy Adams from 1825 to 1829. Clay came back to the Senate in 1831 and was there until he died of tuberculosis on June 29, 1852. But that wasn't all. He was nominated for the Presidency three times in his life. In 1824 he was one of four candidates.

When he threw his support to Adams to break a deadlock, he gained the enmity of Andrew Jackson. In 1832 he was defeated by Jackson; in 1844 he was defeated by Polk. In 1849 he tried for a fourth nomination, but when the Whig Party was split between Clay and Webster, a darkhorse, Zachary Taylor, got the nomination and the Presidency. In 1821 (a year before Elizabeth Clay was born) Henry and Lucreta Clay had a son they named John Morrison Clay!

There can be no doubt the Clays and Morrisons were good friends. But who was Sarah's father? It wasn't Henry; all 11 of his children can be accounted for. Only two of Henry's brothers and sisters reached adulthood: Porter, who died in Camden, Arkansas on February 16, 1850, and John, who went to New Orleans and married Julie Duvalde. I don't believe it was Porter. Could it be John -- or was it another family entirely? Another famous Clay was Cassius Clay (the original), who had a daughter named Sarah, but so did Henry's Uncle Edward Clay. And perhaps here is one of those problems: Henry was not in the direct line, but was himself an uncle or cousin to our Sarah. If any relationship exists, the family can be traced with ease back to 1613, when Captain John Clay, "The English Grenadier," came to settle Charles City on the James River, and even to earlier dates in England and Wales. Ah, well!

But back to the Morrisons. James Riley and Sarah (Clay)

Morrison had a son Madison Maston who married Sarah Elizabeth Tooley. Their son was James Riley Morrison, who married Arminta Adkins. Their daughter Amanda married Andrew Sansom (and, later, Lee G. Beoddy). Amanda had seven brothers and sisters: Goldie, Mary, "Aunt Bessie," Minnie, James, Jones (Jones Adkins was his uncle), and Maston.

Amanda and Andrew had six children:

Ethel Gertrude, August 17, 1903, living in Chillicothe

Sarah Elizabeth, March 28, 1905, living in Lake Charles

Maston Morrison, August 27, 1907, living in Chillicothe

Martha Eunice, died as an infant, 1909

Mildred Bernice, October 4, 1912, living in Dublin

Andrew Roland, May 1914 - April 16, 1969.

The children of Amanda and Andrew have fond memories of their great-grandfather M.M. Morrison. Amanda was raised by her grandfather and she and Andrew were living at his house on Wilson Creek when my mother was born. Although Andrew moved his family to Chillicothe about 1904 so that he could work on the B&O Railroad, Amanda continued to return home to have her children. Elizabeth and Martha were born on Wilson Creek; Maston was born at M.M.'s house in Wayne. It's still there, or was in 1977 when I saw it, but is deserted and falling down.

The "Granny" that all of Amanda's children remember was

Grandpa's second wife. In 1902, after the death of his first wife, Grandpa married Martha Endicott. She had three daughters by a previous marriage and the youngest, Minnie, lived at home until she married a Blankenship.

Madison Masdon Morrison fought in the Civil War for the Confederacy. Coming from western Virginia, that required some courage.

During the period from February 4 to March 11, 1861, seven states seceded from the Union to form the nucleus of the Confederate States of America. On April 12 the Confederates under General Beauregard fired on Ft. Sumpter, South Carolina. On April 17 Virginia seceded and joined the Confederacy. On April 20 Colonel Robert E. Lee resigned his commission in the U.S. Army and on April 22 assumed command of the Army of Virginia. Many people in western Virginia were torn between loyalty to the State and loyalty to the Union. The Union forces finally carried their cause to victory and West Virginia became a new state on June 20, 1863, but not everyone wanted to be a Yankee. On September 6, 1862, M.M. enlisted for three years in Captain Milton J. Ferguson's Battalion of Virginia Cavalry. M.M. was 26 years old, married, and had at least one son, James Riley Morrison.

Captain Ferguson's Battalion, also called the Guyandotte

Battalion (Was Captain Ferguson from the town of Ferguson, 20 miles south of Wayne? Guyandotte is the name of a river about 20 miles east of Wayne.), was an unorganized command composed of 7 companies. Private Morrison was mustered-in at Wayne, Virginia, though his home was listed as Atkinsville. On October 6, 1862, Private Morrison had his horse killed during action near Cassville, Wayne County, Virginia. Captain Ferguson attested to his loss and M.M. submitted a bill for \$125 to pay for the horse. Payment was ordered by a Lt. Col. Wm. L. Casaham, Commanding. On January 15, 1863, six companies of Ferguson's Battalion were consolidated with four companies of Major Caldwell's Battalion to form the 16th Regiment Virginia Cavalry. Pvt. Morrison was in Company H, Andrew Sansom was in Company E.

On February 5, 1863, Pvt. Morrison was admitted to a private hospital in Roanoke, Virginia, cause not known. He wasn't discharged from the hospital until April 11, 1863.

On April 29, 1863, he was finally paid the money owed him for his horse killed nearly eight months previously. At this time Company H was in camp near Salem, Virginia.

On May 11, 1863, Pvt. Morrison received a commutation of rations for the 66 days he spent in the hospital. He received \$49.50, or 75 cents a day for rations. He was paid by a Captain McDonald of the 16th Virginia Cavalry while in camp at

Jeffersonville, Virginia.

On November 18, 1863, Pvt. Morrison was captured by the enemy near Louisa, Kentucky, only 20 miles from home. He was sent to the Military Prison at Louisville, Kentucky. He appears on one roster at the Louisville prison as a "deserter from the Rebel Army," but all other rosters list him as a prisoner of war.

On December 24, 1863, Pvt. Morrison was discharged from the Louisville Military Prison and shipped to Rock Island Prison, Illinois.

On December 26, 1863, he was mustered-in at Rock Island, an infamous Union prison on the Mississippi River. Like most of its kind, both Union and Confederate, there was never enough to eat for the prisoners, and treatment was often cruel and inhumane. During one hard winter the prisoners had nothing to eat but saur-kraut, and the ground was frozen so hard they could not bury their dead.

On March 18, 1864, Pvt. Morrison's name appeared on the roll of those who wished to take the oath of allegiance to the United States. Under remarks is the cryptic entry: "Coerced."

On October 25, 1864, Morrison finally took the oath of allegiance and was released from prison. He volunteered for frontier service in the U.S. Army, but was rejected. At the time of his release from prison he was described as:

Place of residence: Atkinsville, Virginia*

Complexion: Dark; Hair: Black

Eyes: Hazle (sic); Height: 5-6

Age: 27 years.

After the war, M.M. served in the Virginia legislature. 1903

In 1919 the world was swept by a great epidemic of flu which killed tens of thousands of people. Soldiers at Camp Sherman outside of Chillicothe died by the hundreds. The ground was frozen so hard graves couldn't be dug and bodies were stored in the old Majestic Theater. M.M. came to Chillicothe to visit Amanda and his beloved great-grandchildren, caught the flu, and died at the age of 83.

And now, finally, we reach the Sansom family. John Sansom was born in England in 1776 at the start of the Revolution in America. He came to America about 1790 as a youth of 14 and lived for a while in Norfolk, Virginia. He eventually moved to Giles County, Virginia, where he married Elizabeth Davidson. About 1800 they moved to what is now Logan County, West Virginia. They had 11 children, 7 boys and 4 girls. One of the sons, Andrew, was born January 29, 1823. Sometime about 1840 Andrew married Mary Ann Smith. Mary Ann was the daughter of John C. Smith, a soldier in the Revolution, and Elizabeth Cheatham

*Atkinsville was a post office in Raleigh County, Virginia, now West Virginia, but the town no longer exists.

THIS SEEMS AN ERRDR AS HIS PLACE OF
RESIDENCE WAS ADKIN'S MILL - NOW EAST LYNN.

Perdue (Peter Blankinship had married Jenny Perdue). Aunt Mary Ann lived to be 92 years old.

Andrew was another Western Virginian not content to be a Yankee, so, like M.M. Morrison he did something about it. On September 1, 1862 (five days before M.M. Morrison), Andrew Sansom enlisted in Captain Hurston Spurlock's Company. He was mustered-in at Wayne, Virginia on September 2 for a period of "3 years or the War." His horse was valued at \$125, his equipment at \$15. He was made a corporal. At the time of his enlistment Andrew was 35 years old, married to Mary Ann Smith, and had five children, one of whom was Hugh Washington Sansom.

Spurlock's Company subsequently became part of Ferguson's Battalion Virginia Cavalry, which was also part of the Guyandotte Battalion. It appears to have been an unorganized command composed of seven companies which were formed on various dates between August 4, 1862 and January 12, 1863. Six of the companies were consolidated with four companies of Major Caldwell's Battalion Virginia Cavalry on January 15, 1863 into the 16th Regiment Virginia Cavalry.

On September 15, 1862 Corporal Sansom was "present" on the Company muster roll at Wyoming Court House. There are no other records for Corporal Sansom until October 31, 1863, but he and M.M. Morrison must have seen each other often, though Andrew was

in Company E and M.M. in Company H of the 16th Regiment. Corporal Sansom was present for muster from October 31, 1863 to March 31, 1864. He was last paid by a Captain Ward on October 30, 1863. On November 18, M.M. was captured by the enemy near Louisa, Kentucky. By October 31, 1864, Andrew had become Sergeant Sansom. It is noted that he is owed a \$100 "bond bounty," but hasn't been paid in a year. In fact, he was paid his back pay on August 31, 1864 by a Major T. J. Jenkins. On November 2, 1864, Sergeant Sansom was absent from Company muster by reason of "horse detail." Thus ends the records. My mother says Andrew was nearly captured by Union troops when he was home on Miller's Fork on leave. He was shot at but escaped. The troops made Hugh Washington climb a persimmon tree with threats that they would shoot him out like a "possum"! Hugh would have been 17 or 18 years old, but he had a very lame arm, hurt when he was somehow injured while still a small baby. The soldiers finally let him go, laughed and rode away. When Mother was a young girl, Grandma Sansom would show her holes in a large log made by Union bullets as Grandpa was sitting on it.

Young Hugh Washington having survived the cruel jests of the Yankee soldiers waited until he was nearly 28 years old to marry Sarah Blankenship on September 2, 1874. He died just two months after I was born on June 12, 1924. He and several members

of the family are buried in the ^{BOOTON}~~Beeton~~ family cemetery, south of ^{FORK}~~Wayne~~.

Sarah lived to be 86 and died in Chillicothe in 1944.

At least three of Hugh's sons worked on the railroad. Both Richard and Ulysses were firemen on the B&O; Andrew was an engineer.

Grandpa Andrew lived to be 87 years old, dying April 16, 1969. Grandma Amanda Jane was 82 when she died October 1, 1967.

Whether or not Henry Clay ever proves to be part of our family, his family left a marvelously humorous epitaph. In the Parish Church of England stands a monument to Sir John Clay of Wales, father of Captain John who came to Virginia in 1613:

"Soules they are made of Heavenly spirit:

From whence they come ye heavens inherite:

But know that the body is made of Claye:

Death will devour by night and daye:

Yett is her as her was, I saye:

Ye livinge and dead remayneth Claye:

His very name that nature gave;

Is now as shall be in his grave:

Tyme doth teache, experience tryes;

That Claye to dust the wind updryes:

Then this a wonder count we must:

That want of winde should make Claye dust."