

7. THE JONES RELATIONS

The Jones family had been long established in Greene County by the time Gideon Sentelle first arrived on the Nolichucky. They were known, as they remain today, as a vigorous and proud clan whose roots extended to the earliest period of white settlement in the region.

The Houstons

Tradition holds that Rachel Jones' grandfather, George (Corn) Jones, and his brother Henry came to the present Greene County from Virginia or Maryland with the James Houston family,¹ and that George married a Houston daughter. The journey was made, according to the story which has come down to us, in a two-wheel ox cart, and the family carried gold which was hidden in the wheels of the cart as security against theft.

James Houston. We have been told by Oscar Jones that his Houston ancestor was the first sheriff of Greene County and that he attended the first Tennessee Convention.² He belonged to the Flag Branch Baptist Church (now known as Mountain View), and was one of the first three county magistrates.

According to Ramsey, the Tennessee antiquarian, James Houston was a member of the first Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions for Greene County meeting "On the third Monday in August" (18 August) 1783, and the May 1785 Session of the Franklin assembly reappointed or confirmed Greene County officers, including James Houston affirmed as sheriff.³ He served as sheriff in 1785-86, and he was the second man, not the first, to fill that post.⁴

A North Carolina grant of 200 acres on Richland Creek north of the Nolichucky River was entered for James Houston in Greene County under date of 1 November 1786.⁵ The early Greeneville settlement grew up around the Big Spring which forms the headwaters of this Richland Creek. We are told that Houston was located here as early as 1778, and that he later sold this land to

¹ Oscar Jones in an interview by Estelle Jones and Goldene Burgner said his ancestors came from Virginia and Fredericksburg, Maryland. He may have intended Frederick (Maryland), or Fredericksburg, Virginia, but probably Fredericktown (now Winchester) in northern Virginia.

² . G. M. Ramsey, **The Annals of Tennessee** (Charleston, South Carolina: Walker and Jones, 1853), p. 650. The statehood convention met in Knoxville on 11 January 1796 with delegate James Houston from Blount County. (Cf. footnote 8.)

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 277, 334.

⁴ Goodspeed's **History**, p. 1890.

⁵ **Greene County** (Tennessee) **Deed Book 1**, p. 26.

buy 640 acres south of the river at the head of Brush Creek. He built a two-story log house, part of which was still standing in 1953, and a log church. This was the original Pine Springs Baptist Church. In 1803, James Houston helped organize Flag Branch Church, now Mountain View. The surrounding Houston Valley took its name from the family.⁶

The Houston Family in the early days seemed to have the slickest horses, best houses, prettiest women and paid the highest taxes of anyone in the Southside. They owned slaves and fought for the CSA -- Civil War. Two Houston men were killed in arguments over the war.⁷

An inclination among the early settlers to favor certain names has confused our efforts to disentangle the blood lines. There were at least four men by name of James Houston in East Tennessee at the close of the Eighteenth Century, and three of these were first cousins.⁸

In his will dated 18 April 1820 and probated in Greene County on the following 24 September, James Houston left to George Jones "one Negro boy named Marshal."⁹ Beyond a dim family tradition, this is the only evidence which links the Houston clan with our Jones relations. And yet we have no reason to doubt that George Jones was in fact the son-in-law of James Houston. Of the eight legatees of the estate, the relationship was specified for only one, a granddaughter. The remaining names account for all the known Houston children, and at least one daughter (Agnes Horton) other than the wife of George Jones is represented in the will only by the name of her husband. The Balis Jones family **Bible** tells us that "Rachel Jones departed this life September 22, 1834." This must have been Balis' mother, since the death of his father George

⁶ Goldene Fillers Burgner, **The Southside** (Greeneville, Tennessee: The Author, 1977), p. 113. Brush Creek is in present Cocke County.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

⁸ Harry E. Mitchell, **The Mitchell-Doak Group** (1966), pp. 241-243; Samuel Rutherford Houston, **Brief Biographical Accounts of Many Members of the Houston Family** (Cincinnati: Elm Street Publishing Company, 1862), pp. 300-301. There was a another first cousin James Houston who died in Rockbridge County, Virginia, in 1803. A James Houston represented Blount County in the Tennessee Constitutional Convention meeting in Knoxville on 11 January 1796. Ramsey, *op. cit.*, p. 650; Mitchell, *loc. cit.*; Houston, *op. cit.*, p. 210; Samuel Cole Williams, **History of the Lost State of Franklin** (Johnson City, Tennessee: The Watauga Press, 1924), p. 314. Williams apparently is in error in his statement that this James was the "father of Sam Houston, the great Tennessean [*sic*] and Texan." Our James was an uncle to Gen. Sam Houston and a first cousin to the man cited by Williams. By a process of elimination, we believe our James was the son of Robert Houston (1720-1761) and Mary Davidson; the grandson of John Houston and Mary Cunningham. Born in Ireland about 1688, John Houston came to Pennsylvania about 1735 and settled on the Borden's Tract in Augusta County, Virginia, in 1742. He died there in 1755.

⁹ **Greene County** (Tennessee) **Will Book 1789-1836**, pp. 153a-154.

(Corn) Jones twelve years later is also shown here, and unlike other names in the **Bible** there is no birth or marriage record for either Rachel or George Jones.¹⁰

The family register apparently was established sometime subsequent to the passing of the grandparents. And consequently after 150 years we have only this single piece of direct documentation of the life of the presumed daughter of James Houston -- a notice that she died.

The 1830 Census for Greene County shows the George Jones family with one male and one female, each between 60 and 70 years of age.¹¹ This places the birth of both husband and wife between 1759 and 1770.

George (Corn) Jones

Born as he was in the decade immediately before the great flood of white settlers into East Tennessee, George (Corn) Jones may have been in his late teens when he and his brother came to the Nolichucky settlement with the Houston family, and he probably married the daughter of James Houston sometime after their arrival in Greene County. The earliest birth date of three known to us for the eight children of George Jones is 1791, but two of the daughters married in 1805, suggesting a marriage date for their parents three or four years after James Houston first appeared in the Greene County records in 1783.¹²

Land records. The first land entry for George Jones recorded in Greene County appears to have been that of 7 January 1793 in which he paid 40 pounds for "land on S. of River."¹³

Three years later, on 4 February 1796, Thomas Wilkinson sold George Jones 100 acres on the south side of the Nolichucky River "for sum of 60 pounds Virginia currency to him in hand," and the following day George Jones paid John Jones twelve pounds for a second 100 acres on Little Lick Creek, south of the river.¹⁴

¹⁰ The Balis Jones **Bible** is in the possession of Mrs. George Birdwell, Route 5, Greeneville, Tennessee.

¹¹ Byron Sistler, **Index, 1830 Census of East Tennessee** (Evanston, Illinois: 1969), p. Gr-196.

¹² Goldene Fillers Burgner, A Collection of Miscellaneous Materials Relating to the Jones Family. These include a copy of the Balis Jones **Bible** register, abstracts of certain public records, and notes on interviews with Bruce and Oscar Jones.

¹³ **Greene County** (Tennessee) **Deed Book 2**, p. 214.

Three months after the death of his wife, George Jones conveyed land to two of his three sons. The third son may have left the area by this time. At the settlement of the family estate in 1846, this third son, last seen in Cuba, was believed to be dead. On 26 December 1834, George transferred 202 acres south of the river to his son Balis, and retained a life interest in the property. Three days later, he transferred 227 1/2 acres to another son Thomas. (This was Aunt Betsy's grandfather.) Thinking perhaps he had favored Thomas over his younger son, he then conveyed to "Balis Jones, the Son of the Said George Jones," on 31 December 1834, a cultivated island in the Nolichucky between his lands and Alexander's.¹⁵ This was probably Jones Island, an elongated strip of land which is no longer an island and now lies on the south bank of the river a short distance above Jones Bridge.

His death. George Jones married Nancy Sexton after the death of his first wife in 1834, but there were no children from this union. He was more than 64 years of age at the time of his second marriage.

The Balis Jones **Bible** shows his death on 25 July 1846, and he was buried, according to Goldene Burgner, at Jones Bridge atop the high knoll overlooking the river on the south side. The spot lies to the immediate right (downriver) as one crosses to the south bank. Present owners of the property tell us that in years gone by they removed several field stones from this hill, not suspecting that they probably marked the resting places of our earliest ancestors on the Nolichucky.

Two of the grandchildren of George Jones brought suit after his death (16 October 1846, according to Mrs. Burgner's notes) against the executors of the estate over the ownership of certain slave children. These children had been born after the drafting of the will, and hence there was no provision for their disposition upon the death of their owner.

Balis Jones

Balis Jones, a younger son of George Jones and Rachel Houston, was born in Tennessee, probably in Greene County, on 11 May 1801.

Balis Jones to all accounts was a spirit unfettered by convention. In his middle years, his face bore the plain, confident features of a planter aristocrat, and there was an air about him of a man who knew life and people and enjoyed

¹⁴ **Greene County Deed Book 4**, pp. 177, 189.

¹⁵ **Greene County Deed Book 17**, pp. 296, 298, 315.

both. His hair was straight, not too dark, and he wore it short and complemented with a beard in later life.¹⁶

"Balis? I've seen him!" Bruce Jones reminisced to Goldene Burgner and Estel Jones in November, 1970. "He was one awful fellow! Never worked! Traded all the time! Nobody had money but Balis. He bought Gid Sentelle's [farm], Old Forge, Green Ridge, Ore Bank, and Cal Jones' Farm." These names all identify areas between Greystone Mountain and the Nolichucky. Green Ridge is at the head of Middle Creek. Old Forge is on Jennings Creek between Green Ridge and Greystone. Cal Jones lived on Water Fork of Camp Creek, and Gideon Sentelle lived nearby on Hopson Branch.

"He was good to people," Bruce Jones said of Balis. "[He] raised Sal Marshall's girl. [He was the] workinest feller you ever seen!" We suspect that Balis never allowed himself to become saddled with monotonous heavy labor for very long at a time, but he seemed to be nonetheless full of energy and into everything that was going on.



Balis Jones (1801-1896/7)

This only known likeness was provided by Estel Jones.

Balis bought his own coffin, Bruce recalled. He "built a small room in [his] log house for [the] coffin," and he "would lie down in [the] coffin to see how it fit." Later he used the coffin to store apples, and we doubt that anyone ever offered to steal any of the fruit from this macabre larder.

But Balis never made use of the coffin himself. When Sally Marshall died, he donated it for her burial. Sally "lived on Balis' place," and they "brought her out on a sled to [the] old graveyard on [the] hill," said Bruce.

Catharine Nichols. Balis met his first wife while he was going to school in Maryville, Tennessee. He may have been boarding with some of his Houston kin in Blount County at the time.¹⁷

¹⁶ Estel Jones has a professional charcoal drawing of Balis which has been passed down through the family.

¹⁷ James Houston, Sr., was a trustee of Porter Academy in Maryville. Goodspeed's **History**, p. 831.

Her name was Catharine Nichols, born 6 April 1810, the daughter of James Nichols, and possibly a relation of John and Josiah Nichol [sic] from South Carolina who were among the first merchants in Maryville.¹⁸

The date of her marriage to Balis appears in the family **Bible** as 5 October 1823, but we can barely make out the last digit. Their children arrived at fairly regular and close intervals, and this fact is inconsistent with a lapse of four years from their wedding until the birth of their first child. Catharine would have been 13 years old in 1823, an early age for marriage even by the standards of that day and time. More likely they were married on 5 October 1826 when she was 16, and a year before their first child was born. Balis would have been 25 years old at the time.

It was in 1826 that Balis seems to have first acquired land, an event often associated with marriage and plans for a new family. On 14 January 1826 he paid John Sevier¹⁹ \$758.50 for 600 acres on Camp Creek south of the river, and Sevier conveyed an additional 12 acres also on Camp Creek to Balis a week later in consideration "of the Sum of Six Dollars to me in hand."²⁰

Oscar Jones said that two servants were given to Catharine by her parents, and Balis may have first acquired slaves through this dowry. Perhaps "Henry Nochles [who] was borned the 2nd day of April 1845," according to the **Bible** register, was the son or grandson of one of these servants. Other slave births are recorded -- George in 1840, Doley Jain (Dolly Jane?) "the 3 day April 1845" (perhaps a twin sister to Henry Nochles), and Hariet in 1851 -- and their appearance in the family **Bible** rather than a farm ledger suggests an implicit recognition of their humanity by the family. The Jones slaves evidently were considered of a higher order than mere livestock or chattel property. Bruce Jones recalled that his Grandpa Balis "had a nigger foreman. His boys worked under [a] nigger foreman," said Bruce. "They made horseshoes, etc."

In 18 years or so of their marriage, Catharine gave life to ten children. Rachel Louise, born 29 January 1844, was the youngest of the eight who survived to maturity.

Catharine died 26 September 1845 at age 35, possibly as a result of childbirth complications. There is brief mention in the Burgner papers of an infant, presumably not surviving since it was unnamed, which was born after Rachel.

¹⁸ Goodspeed's **History**, p. 830.

¹⁹ Gen. John Sevier died in 1815. This probably was his son, Maj. John Sevier, Jr..

²⁰ **Greene County Deed Book 13**, pp. 512, 516.

Catharine was buried at Bethesda (Harrison's) Cemetery in Greene County, south of the river. The slate marker on her grave had weathered nearly to illegibility when we found it and replaced it with a granite stone.

Malinda Skyles. Balis was 44 years old when Catharine died, and he probably began an intimate liaison with Malinda Skyles sometime in the next five years. She was about 19 years old in 1851.

Balis must have had an eye for younger women. Or perhaps one needed to be young to keep pace with him. No doubt his wives were all attractive women as well. Their descendants today assure us that most of the good looks south of the river are due to Jones connections somewhere along the way.

Whatever the nature of the relationship between Balis and Lindy Skyles, it must have been something more substantial than a passion of the moment. Malinda gave birth to three sons by Balis in the years from 1851 to 1858, and excepting the interruption of his second marriage, their association would continue for the rest of his life -- nearly half a century.

A marriage license for Balis and Malinda was issued 30 August 1858, but it was never returned to the clerk's office. Balis married instead the widow Jane Ottinger, aged 42, on 25 November 1858. Jane's first husband had died on 1 October, less than two months before, and a month after Balis and Lindy had taken their own license.²¹ Apparently there had been a change of heart due perhaps to some misgiving over the age difference. Balis was 57 years old at the time, and Malinda only 26 or so. He had two, possibly three, living children who were older than his young mistress, and we should not be surprised to learn that some of the family voiced their opinions on the matter quite forcefully. And what about the Skyles children who might advance claims one day to their share of the Jones holdings?

Malinda Skyles left East Tennessee sometime in the following decade. She appears in Phelps County, Missouri, in the 1870 Census and again in 1880. She may have moved with her family to Phelps County. We are told that at least two of her brothers lived there.²²

Jane Ottinger died 17 July 1874 after almost 16 years of marriage to Balis, and she was laid to rest beside Catharine Nichols in the Bethesda Cemetery at Harrison's.

²¹ Jane Ottinger was born 22 April 1816.

²² Frank Skyles, Route 4, Box 264, Rolla, Missouri 65401. Interview 15 July 1980. Frank's grandfather was a brother to Malinda, and his father had been raised by "Aunt Malinda."

The plot to the right of their graves remains vacant to this day. Balis never used the coffin he bought for himself, nor did he ever make use of the space reserved for him in the cemetery of the family church. Circumstances would lead him to a final resting place far from the Nolichucky country he had known as home for more than 70 years.

Removal to Missouri. We may never know the story behind Balis' departure from Greene County at a time in life when most men would have been content to pass their sedentary years in the security and satisfaction of an established home and extended family.

But these were the days after the Civil War, and wars are always followed by a time of general restlessness. The Jones family had been Democrats and strong supporters of the Confederate cause. Balis lost two sons in the war, killed four days apart in the vicinity of Murfreesboro shortly before Bragg's withdrawal toward Chattanooga. In the general emancipation, Balis would have lost his slave stock, and his standing among the friends and neighbors of a lifetime -- who probably envied him in any case -- may have turned sour in the rabidly Unionist atmosphere of East Tennessee. We know there was friction between Balis and the wife of his youngest son. Julie and Mason Elbert Jones lived with Balis at the old home place, and Bruce Jones tells us that Balis built a brick house for the couple. This is the old home which stood for years just south of Jones Bridge on the Nolichucky. Although the structure was thought to be antebellum by many, Balis probably built it shortly after Eb and Julie were married in 1867.

He may have built the brick house for the young couple in order to have more personal privacy in his own quarters. He continued to live in his old log house which stood in front of the new brick home. But Julie probably considered the old cabin an eyesore and a nuisance, and she wanted it removed from her front lawn.

Meanwhile Balis had maintained contact with Malinda Skyles and their sons in Missouri. He sent George Skyles to college, and the boy later distinguished himself as a circuit court clerk and a judge of probate in Phelps County.²³ George returned periodically for visits to his old home in East Tennessee.

Oscar Jones tells us simply that "Balis went to George Skyles," in Missouri after Eb's wife had moved into the brick house. The date of his departure from Greene County is not known to us, but it must have been after 1874 when Jane died and before 1882.

²³ Oscar Jones has told us that George Skyles was a circuit court clerk in St. Joseph. He probably confused that city with the county seat of Phelps County which is St. James. Our Skyles cousins tell us that George was probate judge for Phelps County about 1917.

There is ample evidence in some of the private papers which remain with the family²⁴ that Balis had turned his thoughts toward Missouri for some time before he left the Nolichucky. His son James N. Jones and wife Elizabeth wrote the old man from Edgerton (3 October 1877). And Harvey Branch in Scotland County wrote (22 July 1877) that you "can plow more here in one day more [*sic*] than you can plow in four days Back there." In the family **Bible** is an undated clipping from the Missouri and Kansas Farmer showing travel connections of the Kansas City, Ft. Scott, and Memphis Rail Road. "There are more than half a million acres of Public Lands still open to settlers in South Missouri," the notice proclaims, "and double that quantity in Northern Arkansas."

On 7 October 1882 when he was 81 and she was about 49 years of age, Balis Jones married his old sweetheart Lindy Skyles. Perhaps he found the arrangements awkward living with George Skyles and his son's unwed mother, and the marriage may have been one of accommodation.²⁵ But Balis was not a conventional person unless it suited him, nor one to be pushed into something against his will. We prefer to believe that in the end love won out over time and distance and whatever objections the families might have made.

The children in Greene County heard from their father vicariously if not directly. On 21 March 1883 Balis conveyed to "Malinda Jones, wife," some 70 acres in the 22nd Civil District, including 50 acres of the White and Catharine Morgan tract. This same property seems to have been deeded again on 18 September 1886 when "Baylis Jones and Malinda Jones his wife of Phelps Co Mo" for \$250 conveyed to George A. Skyles 70 acres in the 22nd District, including the White and Catharine Morgan tract. And on 7 May 1883 Balis and Malinda Jones for \$150 conveyed to George A. Skyles, John B. Skyles, and H. B. Skyles some 33 3/4 acres in the Green Ridge and Ore Bank area in the 1st District.²⁶

Rachel Sentelle kept a portrait of her father on display in her home as long as she lived, but the circumstances surrounding the affairs of Grandpa Balis and his late removal to Missouri were never open to discussion.

We are told that Balis died in 1896 or 1897. He is probably buried near George Skyles in the Wishon Cemetery -- once known as Little Prairie -- on the old St. Louis-to-Springfield Road between St. James and Rolla, Missouri.

²⁴ Papers and **Bible** held by Mrs. George Birdwell, Greeneville, Tennessee.

²⁵ Skyles descendants suggest that in Missouri he went by the name of Balis Skyles, and that there was a second marriage recorded in 1888 for Balis Skyles and Malinda Skyles. Margaret J. Skyles, 2505 W. Little Rock, Broken Arrow, Oklahoma 74011. E-Mail dated 28 May 1998.

²⁶ **Greene County Deed Books 46**, pp. 543, 544; **50**, p. 219.

Malinda died about 1910. Perhaps she is resting there also, united again and forever with her husband of 15 years and her lover of a lifetime.

Rachel Louise Jones

Rachel Louise Jones was born 29 January 1844. Named perhaps for her grandmother Rachel who had died ten years earlier, she was to be the youngest surviving child of Balis Jones and Catharine Nichols.

Her mother died when Rachel was less than two years old, and she was in her early teens before her father married again.



She may have spent some of her childhood years in the home of her Uncle Thomas Jones. His son Mason was probably close to Rachel's age, and in later years after Mason had drowned in the river, one of his daughters, Florence Elizabeth Jones, made her home with Rachel and Gideon Sentelle.

Betsy Jones was described in the 1850 Census returns as a niece, and this term suggests that Rachel may have regarded Betsy's father as a surrogate brother of sorts during her early years.

Rachel Louise Jones (1844-1926)
This is probably a wedding portrait from 1865 when she was 21 years old.

Her own father Balis was keeping company with Malinda Skyles when Rachel was in her most impressionable period between six and 13 years of age, and the repercussions of this affair in the home and community must have left a mark as the child grew in awareness and understanding.

The census taker in 1860 found Rachel, aged 17 years, living with her father, stepmother Jane, and brothers Marion and Elbert. Marion was her senior by three years, and Elbert was a year older than Rachel.

It may have been about this time that Gideon Sentelle first saw her boarding a carriage at the river crossing and declared, "I'm going to have that woman." During the last months of the Civil War, they probably courted on the several occasions when Gideon's unit was in the area. And they probably courted in secret as he was a Union soldier, and the Jones family were strong Confederates.

But two months after his separation from service, "Rachel L. Jones was mar[r]ied at home -- " to Gideon Sentelle by the old chaplain of his regiment.

Not too much really is known about Rachel. She was a good wife and a good mother, and considering the time and place perhaps no higher accolade could be offered.

Her dark coloring is not apparent in the pictures we have of her.

Rachel had a practical turn of mind and a down-to-earth quality about her which made a good foil to Gideon's aloof and austere manner. When he fussed with her for sitting in the outhouse with the door open, she smartly invited him to come on in and ease himself. When Gideon insisted that a Sentelle nephew was no relation of his, Rachel exclaimed, "Why, Gid! The boy looks more like you than your own flesh and blood!"

She and Betsy sometimes indulged themselves with chews of burley tobacco. The grandchildren remember how the women made their own twists, removing the stems from the leaves and rubbing the tobacco in their hands to make it soft.

[Rachel] had a merry twinkle in her grey eyes. She would get tickled as a ten-year-old and have to excuse herself from the dinner table right in the middle of the most serious discussion with the visiting preacher.

[She] was small and slim, moving about quickly and with a gentle manner. When I first saw her she was almost skipping to the side gate to meet us. When she realized her husband wasn't there also she said, "Oh, where's my Darling?" and hurried us along to the barn to find him.

How patiently she listened, and how kindly she answered all questions. Just to hear her speak was soothing and comforting.

Neighbors, rich and poor, came to her for advice and aid of all kinds. Old "Aunt Sarie Shaw," who had a son in jail, always came to her for comfort, dipping snuff and commenting that her daughter's baby "Hain't growed a bit." Or Jim Bowman, the drunkard, wanting help for his poor wife and many children. Seldom did we leave a breakfast table in early morning but someone in need called [Rachel] from the back door, or slipped into the kitchen to beg the use of a pail on the way to the berry patch.

[She] never weighed as much as a hundred pounds; and was never sick a day in her life. ²⁷

Dick Anderson has provided a letter written by Rachel when she was 81 years old in November 1925, about four months before her death.²⁸

Tuesday after noon

My Dear Jennie,

[I] am always glad to hear from you and kno[w] all is well[.] we all stay verry well[.] Gid is rite feheble[.] he goes all the time [and] does not complain[. He] has a good apitite & sleeps well[.]

we have lots of rane and [it] is rite cold[.] we have good fires [and] stay rite comfortble this damp wet weather[.] ever thing is going own verry weel[. There] is not much work down own the farm[.] the farmers is terble behind with there work[.] we have some wheet sown [and] have a lot more to sow if the groun[d] gets dry so they can gather the corn[.] we a[i]med to sow wher[e] we had corn if the groun[d] gets dry to plow if [it] is not too late to sow wheet[.]

Mark came home Thursday [and] staid till Monday[.] Agnes and chilaren were well [and] doing fine[.] does Agnes write you[?] she don't writ[e] me offften[.] had you heard Aggie had her arm broken[?] she fell [off] her bysickle[.] it was done a few weeks after they went to Davidson[.] they did not write me[.] Mark told me when he came home[.] I scol[d]ed Agnes for getting Aggie a wheel[.] I told hir she would be crippled[.] Mark got Walter a whele & Agnes or[der]ed Aggie one[.]

do hope you all can come to see us when Agnes grad[u]at[e]s[.]

had a letter from May[.] she was pleas[ed] so much with Agnes and Ruth['s] visit[.]

the kind folks [*kinfolks*] is all well[.] hope you all stay well[.] love and kisses to all[.]

Mother

write soon[.]

²⁷ Ruth Virginia Anderson Knight. Unpublished paper provided by her brother, Richard Dawson Anderson, 2520 Sedley Road, Charlotte NC 28211. Recollections are probably from her mother, Agnes Houghton Anderson (born 1903); Ruth was born 1927.

²⁸ Richard Dawson Anderson. The letter is written in pencil on lined paper. Rachel is writing her daughter Jennie Houghton, Dick Anderson's grandmother, who is 54 years old at the time. Other children mentioned are Mark (51), May Lea (49) and Agnes Brown (47). Agnes Brown and her two children, Walter (11) and Aggie Beck (10) were living at Davidson with Mark. Ruth and Agnes are Jennie's daughters Ruth Harrison (15) and Agnes Anderson (22). Agnes would graduate from Maryville College in June 1926. A postmark of November 11, 1925, suggests the letter was written on Tuesday, November 10th.

One day in the spring of 1926, Rachel began to suffer from "acute indigestion," and at 11:00 o'clock on the morning of 20 March she died unexpectedly.²⁹ She was buried at Mt. Zion on Camp Creek. Betsy was laid to rest beside her in 1934, and Gideon joined them two years later.

* * * * *

A quietness has settled on the busy home place where Rachel once tended her children and grandchildren. The outhouse has long since vanished. The springhouse is dry and dilapidated. Another family lives in the old house on the hill over Hopson Branch of Camp Creek.

But in our fancy we often wander back to that distant time and place. As the years fall away, we see Gideon again waiting on the front lawn -- by the fence of wooden pickets. Rachel is bringing up cream and butter from the spring. And that looks like Betsy on her way to tend her calf and chickens in the barn.

And in the distance off down Hopson Branch, off toward Aunt Sarie Shaw's, we hear again the familiar shout. We hear Uncle Marion Jones, well-soused with spirits, yelling at the top of his lungs that he is coming to see his little sister Puss.



Rachel and Betsy (left)

With grandson Mac Sentelle (born 10 June 1917), this photo on the front porch dates from about 1918 when Rachel was 74 and Aunt Betsy was 56.

²⁹ **The Greeneville** (Tennessee) **Democrat Sun**, Saturday, March 20, 1926, p. 3.