

# MOUNTAIN HERITAGE

The Gilmer County Genealogical Society, Inc.

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Volume I, Issue 1

## Working With The Indians Prior To 1840

BY LESLIE BARKER THOMAS

The Gilmer County Genealogy Society began a project in 2012 working on the pioneering families that were the settlers of the county based on the 1840 census. *There* were many of these people already living in what was, until 1838, known as Cherokee Indian Territory of Georgia. Many worked and lived in the Territory provided they would teach the Cherokee “how-to”.

Listed as permitted white residents:

- Richard Bearden and wife – farmer
- Stephen and William Carroll – farmers
- John Conner – blacksmith
- Charles Ferrell – schoolmaster
- William Henson and wife – farmer
- Uriah Holden and wife – farmer
- Benjamin Jones and wife – farmers

- Samuel C. Jones and wife – farmer
- Alexander, James and John Kell – farmers
- George Lowman – farmer
- Asa May – merchant
- William May and wife – farmer
- John McClure (widower with four children) – farmer
- Joshua Newberry and wife – farmer
- Duncan O’Bryan and wife – missionary
- Robert Ralston – farmer
- John Sims and wife – farmer
- Ralph Smith and wife – farmer
- John Southerland and wife – farmer
- George W. Timmons and wife – farmer
- Buckner Walker and wife – farmer

Others may have lived in the area and avoided the census takers due to lacking proper permission or paperwork to live in the area. The governors of Georgia were apprehensive about whites living in the Territory, so they took annual censuses from 1827 to 1838. They are recorded in *Whites Among The Cherokees* found in the Gilmer Library Genealogy Room. Heritage Papers is reprinting the book in Athens, GA. This book also lists those whites that were married to Indian women and had mixed-blood children.



*Exploring the Upper Part of Georgia. Alex H Stephens, A Comprehensive and Popular History of the United States, 1882.*

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*Backwoods Girl. Edward Eggleston, A First Book In American History, 1889.*



## First Families Project: The Griffiths

BY EURILLA DAVIS HYATT

### Among My Favorite Ancestors Are The Griffiths

Benjamin M Griffith, Jr. is honored as an early settler in Gilmer County. Family history gives Benjamin's birth year as 1773 in Greenville District, Laurens, South Carolina. His wife, Mary Reed, was born in 1787 in South Carolina. They were members of the Standing Springs Baptist Church in Greenville County. Mary's mother, Frances Robins Reed, and her sister, Keziah, were also members of the Standing Springs Baptist Church. Keziah later married Josiah Clayton.

The Griffiths moved to Hall County, Georgia about 1823 and appear on the 1827 records there. They made their way to Gilmer County before 1840. After the removal of the Indians, Benjamin and Mary's farm was situated along the river south of Ellijay. In more recent years, a wooden and metal bridge, Cobb Bridge, stretches across the river. There was a family cemetery with members of the Griffith and Reed families buried there. That property is now part of the former Gold Kist plant. Roy Cobb told Gold Kist about the cemetery when the grading began. Mr. Cobb's family had once owned the property and he had family members buried in that location.

Benjamin M. Griffith, Jr. and Mary Reed Griffith were the parents of Elizabeth (married John W. Bramlett), Stephen (Charlotte Inlow), Benjamin M. (married Talitha/Talpha M. Stephens), Frances R. (married John Stephens), Mary C. (married Coke A. Ellington), William Reed (Sarah Johnson), John W. (Hannah Spencer), Hannah C. (Jasper Johnson) Telitha C. (Andrew M. Love), and Rebecca M

(married John L. Reid).

In the 1840 census, John W. and Hannah are still in the home, and there is an addition of Coke who is 7 years old. This could be a grandchild.

Benjamin M. Griffith, Jr. wrote a letter to a federal or state official concerning Indian Affairs and the work of an agent, Benjamin Chastain. "He did exercise the duties of agent during the year 1836, but being situated in a remote part of the county I knew but little of his actings."

At his friends urging, he recommended his son Benjamin M. Griffith III for the job. The reply was this: "B. Griffith, Georgia, Gilmer County. We take a pleasure in recommending to his Excellency (Gov.) George R. Gilmer, Benjamin M. Griffith as a fit and suitable person (for) the States agent of this County. December 19<sup>th</sup> 1837. The older Griffith sounded as if he wanted to be fair in his review, and he showed humility in the way he had to be pressed to recommend his son for the job. Quoting from the booklet: "Among the first settlers to Gilmer County was Benjamin Griffith (Griffeth). He is listed among the 403 heads of households in the 1840 census. It is noted that he is among the slave owners with 6 slaves." (*Gilmer County Historical Annual, Volume II, 2008* (page 43).

*"The purpose of the First Families program is to honor the pioneers who were settled in Gilmer County by 1840 or before and to recognize those descendants who became members of this program."*



Leslie Barker Thomas



## First Families Project: The Griffiths

Continued from Page 2

An Arkansas historical biography of Benjamin and Mary's grandson mentions that the Griffiths and their kin practically ran Gilmer County during the first 10 years of Gilmer County's existence. This may stretch the truth a bit, but we see the family names of William Reed, Coke A. Ellington, Moses Greer, and John Wesley Bramlett as prominent citizens that served as elected offices and teachers. The first man to fly across the Atlantic, Major Towers of Rome, Georgia descended from Gilmer County ancestors, the William Reeds. This connects him to the Ellingtons, the Griffiths, the Bramletts, the Charles, the Greers, and the Claytons.

Information gathered from early newspapers and newspaper articles by T. H. Tabor mention that the Griffiths served Gilmer County well. A booklet, *Interesting Historical Facts about Gilmer County*, lists elected officials pulled from articles that were published in the early newspaper which would later become the *Times-Courier*. The booklet lists Benjamin Griffith's contributions as State Senator during 1833-34, 1834-37, and 1837-38;. It lists him as county surveyor in 1833-36, 1838-42, and 1845-53. Additional lore cites that Benjamin was a Justice of the Peace and Postmaster. He seems to have been selected as Postmaster in 1834, but probably never served.

*First Families applications can be obtained at the Gilmer County Library or sent by Betty Riddle. Contact information is 770-735-4970 or [bsriddle@tds.net](mailto:bsriddle@tds.net).*

B. M. Griffith is listed as making purchases in the day book of Coke A. Ellington's store. The book dates begin on August 29, 1935 and end in 1838. The elder Benjamin Griffith is listed in the 1840 and 1850 Gilmer County Censuses. In 1850, he was listed as owning 10 slaves, all black, none mulatto. Benjamin Griffith's death is noted as 1862 in Gilmer County, Georgia. However, he is not on the 1860 Federal Census with his wife, Mary.

The last will and testament of Benjamin Griffith was drawn on April 12<sup>th</sup>, 1853. It begins: "In the name of God amen, I Benjamin Griffith being of advanced age and knowing that I must shortly depart this life" seems to indicate that he was not well. Item I reflects his faith as it directs that he be buried in a decent and Christian-like manner suitable to his circumstances and condition in life. He states: "My soul I trust shall return to Rest with God who gave it as I hope for eternal life, through the merits of our Blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

The will is in the court records of the May Term in 1853, Court of Ordinary in Gilmer County. In the will, Benjamin left bequeaths to his beloved wife, Mary; his daughters, Elizabeth Bramblet (Bramlett), Frances R. Stephens, Mary C. Ellington, Hannah C. Johnson, Telitha C. Love;, and Rebecca M Reid; his sons John W. Griffith and Benjamin M. Griffith. It does seem that Benjamin Griffith's family made an impact on the history of Gilmer County and is worthy to be remembered. The descendants of this family are spread across the country in Georgia, Alabama, Arkansas, Texas, California and other places. The "First Families" program pays tribute to this family.



## In Focus: Scrougetown Community Church

BY HOLLYANNA HARDY WHITE

Scrougetown Church was rebuilt in 1923 after a fire destroyed it in 1922. However, it was a school in 1859 and used as a church on Sundays. Information found in a Gilmer County History book entitled: "The Annals of Upper Georgia Centered in and Around Gilmer County".



Henry Green Cantrell with grandson, John Henry Cantrell

There is an allure to this precious little church hidden in the mountains. A narrow road leads to a clearing where the church sits among the wildwoods. Land was first donated by Dennis Chadwick and Fletcher Pettit with additional land donated in later years by John and Gwen Cantrell.

John Henry Cantrell is the grandson of one of the first preachers, Henry Green Cantrell, who was a well-loved country doctor that would come and stay with the sick until they were better. There have been many beloved men of God over the years who have preached to an overspill out into the church yard. Today, Reverend Billy Cantrell preaches a spirit filled message at Scrougetown on the 3rd and 5th Sunday at 6 p.m.

The oldest dated headstone in the cemetery is for Aaron J Hagin, who was born 3 Dec 1826 and died 20 Jan 1894. The second oldest dated headstone is for Nathan A Cantrell who was born 2 May 1872 and died 23 Mar 1895. There are many unidentified marked graves.



Taken by James Cochran, 2013

## The President's Desk

BY KAREN TITUS

As incoming president of the Society, I am very excited that the group is planning several projects to collect and preserve the history and genealogy of Gilmer County.

One of our earliest projects is a day in May devoted to copying old pictures of people and places in Gilmer County since it was formed. On that same day we will be asking folks to let us



copy their family Bible records. All the work will be done at the library and originals will be handed back immediately. These copies will be kept at the library in an archive which will serve as a back-up in case of loss due to tornadoes or other natural disasters.

Several committees are researching different parts of the county to re-construct the homes, schools, churches and families who first lived in Gilmer. We have a lot of ideas and are ready to get started. Come join us and help preserve the histories of Gilmer's families."



## Upcoming Events For 2013

BY BETTY RIDDLE

Being a member of the Gilmer County Genealogical Society is all about honoring our kin, who settled this area, making Gilmer County the great place to live and do business that it is today. We are family orientated and besides encouraging and helping others in their quest to honor their pioneer kin, we enjoy each other's company and sharing good times. As Special Event Chairman, our committee of Rebecca Burrell, Joyce Whitaker and Mary Jones want to pass on our plans for the year 2013.



*Frontier Women: The Women of the Neighborhood Gathered for a Quilting Bee. William Bagley and Charles Beard, The History of the American People, 1920.*

For many years, we have recognized the Library Staff during National Library Week. We will sponsor a luncheon on April 18th. Our members bring an abundance of their best covered dishes at 11:00 a.m. and lunch will be served at 12:00 p.m. It is a time to get to know our librarians, and better acquainted with each other, since we are

constantly gaining new members.

Our next big event is the Annual Picnic, which will be Thursday, July 11 a.m., at the ETC Pavilion on the beautiful Coosawattee River. GCGSI furnishes fried chicken and members bring delicious covered dishes. It is a relaxing, fun time, to mingle and get reacquainted with old friends. We meet at 11 a.m. and lunch is served at noon.

We will gather in November to decorate our Christmas Tree for the Sequoyah Library Systems Festival of Trees. A theme will be announced. This is another fun gathering where ideas are exchanged and future plans are laid. Before December 31st we will remove the tree and all are invited to lunch at a local eatery — the date and time will be announced.

We end our year with an Annual Christmas Luncheon at the Shriner's Building. Again, this is a festive time to mingle, eat, and install our Officers, for the coming year. It's a good time to exchange ideas and lay plans for a great New Year — the date and time will be announced.

We look forward to seeing everyone at the upcoming events. Just speak up if you would like to be involved in any of these events. We are always looking for fresh ideas and involving more of our members. See quarterly schedule on Bulletin Board page 6.



## Bulletin Board

### March:

- March 14th: Society Monthly Meeting, 2 p.m., Speaker — Joey Dye, Internet Archives
- Speaker - Joey Dye, Internet Archives
- Genealogy Research Center Volunteers: Cleve Greeson, Rebecca Burrell, and Kathy Watkins

### April:

- April 11th: Society Monthly Meeting, 2 p.m.
- Speaker - Vietnam Veteran Pilot, Herman Clark, Memories of a Vietnam Veteran
- Genealogy Research Center Volunteers: Eurilla Hyatt, Linda Wolfe, Shirley Sluder, and Gladys Spivey

### May:

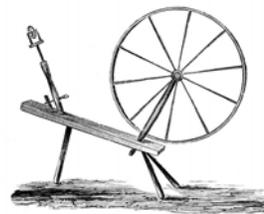
- May 9th: Society Monthly Meeting, 2 p.m.
- Speaker - Carol Hass and Diane Bucheim, The Who, What, How of the DAR
- Genealogy Research Center Volunteers: Becky Burrell, Linda Wolfe, Gloria Beaudet, and Joy Childress
- Preserving Our Heritage Scanning Project, date TBA
- May 30th: Digging Into The Past, Gilmer County Condensed Version of History, 6 p.m., Leslie Thomas

## Family Research Corner

The Family Research Corner lists individuals who are looking for information on ancestors from our area. If you have any information, lets help these folks in their research and make the links to local descendants, and invite everyone to join GCGSI.

- John Harshaw is trying to track down Dempsey Withrow and his spouses. Dempsey was married twice, first to Julia and then to Emiline Harper. Please email any information to [gcs@etcm.com](mailto:gcs@etcm.com).

- Joe & Mike McCabe  
7606 Caenen lake Drive, Lenexa, KS 66716  
Phone: 914-221-7816  
[m.mccabe@sbcglobe.net](mailto:m.mccabe@sbcglobe.net)  
He is searching for information on his great-grandparents, Robert Buford Evans and Nancy Elvira Mulkey. He would also like information on his grandparents, John Lee Evans and Sarah Bradley.



*Colonial Life: Spinning Wheel. William Cullen Bryant and Sydney Howard Gay, A Popular History of the United States, 1881.*



## 2013 Gilmer County Genealogical Society

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Membership Chair: Lillie Haire

Events & Acquisitions Chair: Betty Riddle

Inventory Chair: Kathryn Watkins

## Far-Reaching Effects Of First Families Project

BY LESLIE BARKER THOMAS

You might not know it, but the First Families Project has had far-reaching effects. Not just for families who had ancestors in Gilmer County, but for others wanting to know about our program and how we have done it. We received a request via email from Fitzgerald Georgia in Ben Hill County — way south. They wanted to do a similar program and wanted to know what criteria we were requesting from those who participated in our project.



*History of Farming: Cutting Grain With The Sickle. William H Mace, A School History of the United States, 1904.*

President, Gilmer County Historical Society



## Part I: Civil War In Gilmer County

BY LESLIE BARKER THOMAS

*“The Civil War began in 1861 and ended in 1865.”*

The 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Civil War began in 2011. The Gilmer County Genealogical Society would like to share some interesting facts and stories related to the war here in North Georgia. The events surrounding this anniversary will continue

through 2016. We hope you will take time to attend some of them. Look for more event information on the [www.gacivilwar.org](http://www.gacivilwar.org) website.

We hope to convey an understanding that the commemorative aspects about the war isn't purely Confederate or Union, nor about the issues of states' rights versus slavery, nor about Yankees and Rebels. It was an atrocity against the Constitution of the United States and its authority over all politics and government endangering this Nation. This is an issue we are again addressing even today.

Most entered upon the dispute thinking it would be over in a matter of weeks if not days. None feared for the safety of those brave young men who ventured upon the battlefields those first days of the war, until the first blood was shed.

The onset of the Civil War in Georgia was met with mixed emotions. Although most individuals know that Georgia was a largely Confederate state, most do not know that her loyalties were vastly divided between Unionists and Confederates. The majority of the population of North Georgia chose not to be committed to the causes of the Southern antebellum Georgia.

Those families living in the counties of Gilmer, Fannin, Union, Lumpkin, and Pickens felt there was little to offer for the Georgian Confederate causes of slavery. Less than 7% of the slaves in the area were Negro. Prior to the war in Colonial Georgia, virtually 60-80% of all Georgia's slaves were other than Negro. Most of the slaves were what could be identified as indentured servants, meaning they were conscripted to serve a master for a specified number of years or until death of the master, should they themselves outlive that individual. Then it was up to the surviving spouse or descendants, if they should so choose to grant these people their Freedman status.



*Flapjacks. Alfred D Richardson, Beyond the Mississippi, pg 200, 1867.*

Some of the residents were so adamant about not fighting for the causes of slavery, that they rebelled and chose instead to provide shelter to deserters and Union soldiers alike. They considered the war an intrusion, to their already difficult way of life. Lacking economic necessities along with a lengthy period of drought plaguing the region during the civil war years, made the hiding of livestock, foodstuffs, blankets, and valuables from Confederate soldiers a matter of survival for many mountain families. Additional hardships of increased taxes to pay for the war, enforcement of military service on unwilling men and confiscation of private property only added to the smoldering resentment.



## Past Quarter Highlights

DECEMBER 20, 2012

First Families of Gilmer County inducted new members at the annual Gilmer County Genealogical Society's Christmas Party.

Recognized individuals included: Lillie Haire, Charlotte Davis, Leslie Thomas,, Brenda Webb, Linda Wolfe, Melinda Ruth Hyatt, Ruth Caudell, April Teague, Patricia Henson, Betty Riddle, Eurilla Hyatt, Katherine Watkins, Phil Tankersley, Cleve Greeson, and Willie Long. The First Families



Program encourages those to apply who are directly descended from early citizens listed on the 1840 Gilmer County Census. This program is under the leadership of Betty Riddle of Jasper, Georgia.

Applicants are not required to be currently residing in Gilmer County.

To obtain an application:

- From [www.gcgisi.org](http://www.gcgisi.org)
- Email [bsriddle@tds.net](mailto:bsriddle@tds.net)
- Pick-up at Gilmer County Library

Newsletter Published By Hollyanna Hardy White  
and Laurel Brenda Cochran, Publishing Chair

FEBRUARY 14, 2013

### SONS OF CONFEDERATE VETERANS

Bobby Bradford, Commander of Sons of Confederate Veterans, was our guest speaker. He explained the mission and goals of the Sons of Confederate Veterans Organization. Their mission is to take care of their ancestral fathers, to study the history of the Civil War, and to preserve the legacy of those who fought in the Confederate Army. Today they also seek out preservation work: finding, marking, and restoring confederate soldiers graves.

Commander Bradford told us interesting a story about the youngest Civil War soldier on either side. David Bailey Freeman was only 10 years old when he joined the men going to sign-up. Two weeks after his 11th birthday, he officially joined the 6th GA Calvary, Company D, CSA.

A complete story of Little David, *The Youngest Civil War Veteran — Little David*, will appear in the next quarterly newsletter (June 2013).

### Gifts

Why not give a book , as a beautiful, portable, and impressive gift? Choose a quality, thought-provoking and personal gift.

- Everyone that sees the books are impressed with not only the contents, but also the old pictures.
- A special keepsake
- Pass on to the next generation
- Fun and educational facts for everyone



The Gilmer County Genealogical Society, Inc.  
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**We're on the web!**  
[www.gcgsl.org](http://www.gcgsl.org)  
Contact email: [gcs@etcmail.com](mailto:gcs@etcmail.com)

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## What Is Available Online?

- GCGSI Membership
- First Families Application
- Genealogical Links
- Officers
- Book Order Form
- 1834 and 1840 Census
- Contact Information



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