

Biographical Sketch of Mary Polly Vaughan, From Idyllic Beginnings to the Bloody Aftermath of Civil War

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By Helen Vaughan Michael



A petrified tree root is now part of an ancient road in front of the old John Vaughan home.

Introduction to My Vaughan Narratives

... Enquire I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of thy fathers; for we are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow. . .
Job, IX: 8 & 9. KJV

In my search for ancestors I have been aggravated by finding that--this record exists here and that record exists there, and that there exists family talk linking the two, but, no paper trail between them can be found. Recent news that in Texas old boxed up paper files are turning to dust means that more written family history could be disappearing. Add these to files that have gone up before in the fire and smoke of homes, churches, courthouses, and government buildings. Most of my family trees have suffered heavily from such losses.

The Vaughans suffered the least. Thanks to my great-great-great grandmother, Nancy Callicott Vaughan, one of the branches of my family tree left a fine paper trail to accommodate my talkative kin and my need to write down everything I hear. Sometimes I see a story emerge from what I've heard and what has been written, and most of the time the spoken word and the written word actually match up and form a fact about the Vaughans. Then, the loose ends, when played with, and trailed through American history, can turn into quite a yarn. Being in love with the English language, I spin words into my stories for fun. Loving history, I write to record what facts are still readable, combine them with stories Vaughan chroniclers have told, and in effect, use facts for fun and family. Along the way a photo or relic or letter has turned up here and there to help sort out the fibs from the facts. The final result is--my folks get to take up a page in the annals of their nation's history, which, though un-named, they helped to make. Sometimes, as in the case of James L. Vaughan, they should have been named

The whatifs, the wudduh-cudduh-shudduhs, and the maybes expressed in my stories are products of a blend of curiosity and imagination and are intended to provide interest and provoke my descendants, and others, to keep digging before all they have to dig through is ashes and dust. The views expressed and the questions I raise are my own. Tim Childress provides a repository at his website, <http://www.childresscousins.org>, to preserve my old-fashioned, often flowery, ramblings in case I am on to something. Being deeply motivated by belief in a spiritual world—motivation that might be viewed in some circles as insanity—I always feel one ancestor or another may be reading over my shoulder, saying, "It's about time."

Helen Vaughan Michael
1/20/2013

*Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.
Exodus 20: 12, KJV*

Idyllic Beginnings

James
Was Born Oct
the 13 day 1797
Beverly Callicott
Beverly Vaughan
Was Born January
the 4 day 1798
Poley Vaughan
Was Born April
the 12 day 1800
Rebecca Greer
Was Born June
the 24 day 1802

With her birth, Mary Polly Vaughan became the first daughter of John and Nancy Callicott Vaughan. Poley is the name her mother wrote in her baby book, but in time she became known as Mary Polly. ([Daybook, p. 1](#); [Note changes in dates.](#)) Nancy gave birth the 12th of April, 1800 in Hawkins County, Tennessee. Thomas Jefferson would be elected President in the fall, and Mary Polly was a part of the Anglo Saxon population surge that would soon flood the North American continent because of him. Jefferson's land policies—from the Louisiana Purchase to the Lewis and Clark Expedition would one day provide some of her siblings with a place to roam out West. As for Mary Polly, she was born in Hawkins County, and that is where she lived her whole life. Her life, as it is related to kinfolk and neighbors, weaves a nineteenth century tapestry of the rise and fall of Hawkins County, from in the beginning, when it started out as a community of gentlemen farmers envisioned by Jefferson, to the aftermath of civil war, when an aging Mary Polly watched it turn into an destitute county plagued by devastating feuds.

After their marriage John and Nancy resided in Halifax, Virginia with their two little boys, James L. and Beverly. They moved from Halifax about the year 1800, perhaps with Nancy pregnant with their first daughter, and they stopped in what would become Hawkins County on a spot near the Virginia border. This northern part of Hawkins County was later changed to Hancock. They settled near the Clinch River about six miles from the Gilliam farm, property which Mary Polly would one day inherit. The Vaughans settled in the house which still stands today. Four years later, Mary Polly had a little sister and baby brother to play with--Rebecca Greer and Benjamin. The family had a sturdy log house to fill.

Nancy and Mahala came next, and in 1808 their mother's sister, Dicey Callicott Vaughan Ford, moved into the Hawkins neighborhood.

Perhaps it was Aunt Dicey who helped with the birth of her new nieces and nephews, for after 1808 the handwriting changed as the name and day of birth were entered in Nancy's baby book. Nancy's big sister was no doubt a welcome help with her growing brood of Vaughans.



Left: Original home of John and Nancy Callicott Vaughan, where Mary Polly was born, now reconstructed.



The Vaughan farm--Mary Polly's childhood playground. Mabel Harp Photo, 1997.

In those days, however, children earned their keep and were valuable assets to pioneer families. Even while small they were taught how to do simple but vital chores—feeding chickens, gathering eggs, picking berries and beans, and even helping in the fields where they could. Working in the fields, they enjoyed the excitement of discovering arrow heads, catching bugs, chasing butterflies, and picking herbs and wildflowers. Daughters helped mothers with the laundry, cooking, cleaning, sewing, and tending smaller siblings. Mary Polly's mother could read and write, and several of her siblings left written documents; since her 1880 census says that she could read and write, the Vaughans probably had books in the house. It was not uncommon for young Americans of this era to read and memorize great passages from the Bible, Shakespeare, and Homer; her peer, the boy Sam Houston, was known to read and to quote from Homer's Iliad—endlessly. While pen and paper were rarities, not so with chalk and slate, thus, many children learned to make their abc's and numerals. She surely had a doll and may have claimed a favorite spot in the woods, or down by the creek, where she could play house. As Nancy's oldest daughter, she probably spent more time working in the house than at play.

Below, reconstructed and remodeled Vaughan kitchen. 1997 Mabel Harp Photo at Right.





Family Tree

Mabel Harp, John Vaughan's great-great-great-granddaughter is dwarfed by this giant tree growing in Hancock County, Tennessee at the site of his original farm. Mabel said, "Just think of all the children who played under this tree."

In April of 1813, Mary Polly became a teenager during a war--the War of 1812, in which fellow Tennesseans Andrew Jackson and young Sam Houston became heroes, beating the British one more time, surely to the delight of her veteran father and his peers. The birth of three more brothers—John Jr., Samuel N., and George Washington, along with their sister Martha, filled up the home by 1820. By then, Mary Polly's two oldest brothers, James L. and Beverley, had moved west and started families; her records suggest she was just over twenty when she and John A. Gilliam, Sr. got married, and she moved onto the Gilliam farm, six miles down the road toward the town of Rogersville.

John A. Gilliam Sr. was born in 1799. Members of his father's family, like Mary Polly's dad, also served in the Revolutionary War, and they owned substantial acreage in Hawkins County. Some of his kinfolk owned slaves, and the Gilliam place, itself, lay next door to a plantation. When John A. Gilliam Sr. died in 1873, he left Mary Polly a widow, and also a will in which he named their children—both living and dead. Since James Gilliam, their first son, was born around 1822, the couple probably married when Mary Polly was in her early twenties. Ten more children were born over the next twenty years. Their sons and daughters, in addition to James, and with wavering years of birth are: Hinchea 1828, Lemuel 1830, Sarah 1832, Wiley 1834, Sallie 1835, John A., Jr. 1837 and possibly a twin, William 1837, Nancy Ann 1840, Susan 1844, and Benjamin C. 1849.

There were at least nine Gilliam weddings, and before long Mary Polly was a grandmother many times over. An especially interesting marriage was that of her daughter Susan to Jacob Logan Flannery in 1875. Logan, along with Mary Polly, had four nephews who became notorious outlaws in the 1890's along the Scott, Virginia-Hawkins/Hancock, Tennessee border, and the offspring of Mary Polly's siblings—Samuel N., John Jr., and Nancy—all married into the outlaw branch of the Flannery family.

Mary Polly's mother raised all her children to adulthood, but during the 1830's the Vaughans lost Mahala, a young mother. Deaths of women, especially during childbirth, were common in the nineteenth century, but its frequency made it no less tragic. As with her mother, down the road ahead Mary Polly would also know the sorrow of losing a child; two of her grown daughters--Sarah, who married Isaac Johnson, and Nancy, who married Elijah A. Fletcher--both died, and the two women left children who are remembered in their grandfather's will.

In 1841, Mary Polly is remembered in her own father's will.

WILL OF JOHN VAUGHAN

Dated: Dec. 27, 1841

Proven: Aug. Term 1842

I, John Vaughan of the County of Hawkins and State of Tennessee, do make this my last Will & Testament hereby revoking and making void all former wills by me heretofore made.

First. My will and desire is that all my just debts be paid out of any money that I may die possessed of, or that may first come into the hands of my Executors.

Eighth. I do give and bequeath unto my daughter Mary Gilliam one dollar.

And for the performance and execution of this my last will, I do appoint Robert W. Kinkead my Executor. In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal. This 27th day of December, 1841. John his x mark Vaughan (seal)

Mary Polly didn't know it, but the following July the death of her father would put her fate and that of her mother on an intersected course. Her father left her mother in the care and keep of her youngest

brother, George Washington, but by 1844 his plan broke down when George W. sold out and reportedly moved to Nashville. So, the widow Nancy moved to the Gilliam farm, and thus, ironically, it was Mary Polly who took care of Nancy Callicott Vaughan the last years of her life.

In 1858, with Civil War brewing, and with her siblings moving off--perhaps in search of a safer place, Mary Polly lost her mother in September. On September 28, 1858, the attorney, William Strickland, wrote a final page to the old woman's application ordeal:

Hawkins County Tennessee

Sept 28, 1858, Sir, In the case of Nancy Vaughan, widow of John, a Revolutionary Soldier, she deceased a few days ago.

Wm C Strickland

Affidavit, Widow's application for Revolutionary War Pension, 1858, excerpt from transcription

By that time her brother, George Washington, was gone; baby sister Martha and her family were in Knoxville--but would head out for Missouri during the war; Rebecca had moved from her neighboring Scott, Virginia address to Missouri; and Beverley had been seen in Arkansas. Earlier, James L. came home for a visit or two, but he was back in Texas in 1860 and that is probably where he was at the time of his mother's death. Nancy, Mary Polly's sister, married David Hickman and lived only six miles away; thus with Mahala's death and the departure of Rebecca and Martha, Nancy Vaughan Hickman was the only sister left in the neighborhood. It was Nancy who produced the Vaughan link to Mary Polly's four notorious nephews.



By 1860 Mary Polly's siblings, including brother Benjamin--who took his family to Texas, had followed Lewis and Clark into parts unknown and made good use of Thomas Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase. Six of her brothers and sisters, who already owned Tennessee and Virginia farmland, followed the American migration west for unknown reasons, but she and the others stayed on their farms. In 1860 Mary Polly's residence lay along Fisher Creek in District 9, Hawkins County, Tennessee, and her Post Office was Rogersville. She lived with her husband, John Gilliam 59, and five of their children: William 23; Sallie 25; Hinchea 17; Benjamin 12; and Susan 14. During the sixties, not only would she see Civil War come to Hawkins County--dividing families, but the Grim Reaper made its ghoulish appearance--destroying some of them. Two of the homes hit by death were those of her two daughters--Sarah and

Nancy. The death of both women left her with orphaned grandchildren in her Fisher Creek household. Then in 1869, John Gilliam, Sr. at 68 felt ill enough, or old enough, that he wrote his will. He died in 1873, leaving his widow in the care and keep of a son.

Thirdly - To my son Benjamin C. GILLIAM I give and bequeath the following described parcel of land, subject to the conditions being aforementioned, beginning on the bank of the creek near the house wherein Jack Clifton now lives, thence up Fishers Creek to the aforesaid church or meeting house, thence up the W. H. Johnson branch to the aforesaid John A. GILLIAM stable, thence along the John A. GILLIAM line hereinbefore mentioned to the said conditional line between me and Gross - thence running across the valley a southerly course to top of the knob or ridge back of my place between me and Gross thence along the top of the ridge or knob calling for T B Johnson line to the beginning being the parcel of land whereon I now live and containing the principle improvements on my land in the way of livery stables, barns etc. ---

Item 14 - It is my will and desire that the lot of land given to my said son Benjamin C. shall support my beloved wife Mary should she survive me, also that she shall have the control of the dwelling house, the stable, barns, and all the other out houses or so much room in the outer buildings including the stables as may be sufficient for the use and convenience of stabling all the stock she may keep for her allotted use and necessities for housing, cribbing all the roughage and grain she may raise or have raised on the farm, should she and the said Benjamin C. at any time disagree it is my will and desire that my said wife Mary shall have all the household and kitchen furniture and where so ever permitting the Statute laws of the State of Tennessee shall allow her at the time of my death for her decent and comfortable support maintenance. This bequest to be outside of the notes and other evidences of debt that I may die seized and possessed of. It is my desire furthermore that should my said wife Mary choose to live with any of my other children away from the homestead thence she shall have a support during her natural life and of the profits coming from the parcel of land bequeathed to Benjamin GILLIAM has in this will, she shall not have the management or control of any part of the said lot of land or of the house or any of the out buildings thereon.

From: John Gilliam 1869 Will, Proved, 1873

This home on Fisher's Creek, whereon they were living in 1869, is the place where Mary Polly-- and her mother, Nancy Callicott Vaughan, lived out their lives.

State of Tennessee, County of Hawkins; On the 2nd day of June AD One Thousand Eight Hundred and Fifty Eight personally appeared, Mrs. Nancy Vaughan, Claimant, saying, . . . they resided in the state of Virginia some six years and that they moved from the state of Virginia about the year 1800 and came to Hawkins County, Tennessee, that they settled on or near Clinch river some 5 or 6 miles from here where she now lives, then Hawkins County, now Hancock County, Tennessee, and lived there all the while until the year 1832 at which time her said husband bought land on this side of Clinch mountain, and "We moved over here in this valley, called then and now, Poor Valley in Hawkins County, Tennessee, in about one mile of where I now live with Polly."

1858 Affidavit, Nancy Callicott Vaughan, Pension Application, edited transcription

When her mother died there in September of 1858, through death, she escaped the trouble to come, but Mary Polly did not. Battles of the Civil War devastated homes and farms all across Poor Valley, up and down Fisher Creek, and along the knobs and ridges of the Clinch Mountains. Nearby her farm stood the Gross Plantation with its slaves, adding to the fears of many white people.



Civil War

The war did not go well for Tennessee soldiers or for civilians.

Politically, many border state folks were opposed to secession. Militarily, by 1862 the United States flag was flying over Nashville, and there were Tennessee regiments of men and boys enlisting in the United States Army. Letters sent home from Tennessee soldiers fighting for the Confederacy were full of complaints that they were poor men fighting a rich man's war, and later memoirs of former Rebels told the same story. At the end of 1863 the mighty Confederate Army of Tennessee was in disarray. It had been crushed—not altogether by the Yankees, but in part by the politics and bureaucracy of bumbling Confederate leaders who were not Tennesseans. In the view of United States Army General Ulysses S. Grant, the bitter political infighting between the inept Jefferson Davis administration and the highly skilled and devoted Confederate commanders of the Army of Tennessee did as much to defeat the Tennessee Rebels he fought as did his Yankee troops.

Statewide, men who were patriots put together enough soldiers to send several regiments North. This meant that Tennesseans began shooting at fellow Tennesseans—even their neighbors and kin.

COMPANY D, 2ND TENNESSEE CAVALRY REGIMENT, USA

Every Confederate state, except South Carolina, sent regiments North. Co D served in one of many units from Tennessee. Also called 2nd East Tennessee Cavalry Regiment. Organized in East Tennessee July to November, 1862; mustered out at Nashville, July 6, 1865.



Tennesseans in the Civil War, Vol 1. © 1964 Civil War Centennial Commission of Tennessee

Along the way, the league of states called the Confederacy became divided and impoverished, Many of its soldiers seceded from it before the war was over. As the rebellion began falling apart, Rebels headed for home. Reports appeared in newspapers making shocking claims:

Dec 3, 1863, ***The New York Times***:

The mountains are full of Kentucky and Tennessee deserters trying to get home.

Oct 20, 1864, ***Chattanooga Daily Gazette***:

Our reserves of able-bodied men are exhausted, and two-thirds of those now enlisted in the army, are declared by President Davis as absent without leave now. . .

Unhappiness in all ranks of the Confederate Army of Tennessee pooled with local animosity that surged in Hancock County where Mary Polly's siblings—Nancy, John, Jr., and Samuel N.--still lived. Confederate paramilitary groups, especially the Home Guard, terrorized AWOL Rebels and Yankee sympathizers, alike. Moreover, residents on both sides witnessed control of their towns, farms, and homes change hands many times:

-- November 6, 1863: *The Battle of Rogersville*. Confederates recaptured Rogersville along with supplies from the town's railroad storehouses. The USA 3rd Brigade, 4th Cavalry Division and the 2nd East Tennessee Mounted Infantry (pictured, p. 23) were camped out near the town and were surprised by the raid. Fighting spread into the town.

-- Late fall, 1863. Confederate General James Longstreet, having learned of fellow Confederate Braxton Bragg's defeat at Chattanooga, headed toward Rogersville—the County seat of Hawkins County, to make his winter camp.

-- August 21, 1864 United States Brigadier General Alvin C. Gilliam took Rogersville back. Main and Depot Streets exploded with Confederates pursued by Union soldiers.

-- December 26th, 1864 the 13th Tennessee Cavalry, USA, set up camp in Hancock County, near “the Rogers place.”

-- In McMinnville, October 28, 1863, Colonel H. C. Gilbert, 19th Michigan Infantry Regiment gave this description of what a war torn town looked like: "I found the Town in a most deplorable condition. The Rebels robbed the citizens of pretty much all they had; and after they left, the 1st East Tennessee Cavalry were sent here, and from what I learn, were a nuisance hardly inferior to the Rebels. They stabled their horses in the public buildings, and quartered in the houses. The Town was indescribably filthy."

Before the war was over more than half of what was left of the starving, half-naked Confederate army headed for home, and returning soldiers of either side might be met with malice by citizens on either side. It was the return of one Kentuckian that started the infamous Hatfield and McCoy feud.

By the thousands rebels were reported as missing or captured on battlefield after battlefield, only to have to fight their neighbors when they turned up back at home. From both sides, Tennessee bushwhackers and violent gangs who were her kin forced terror and tragedy into Mary Polly's community. The county descended into chaos as the Civil War begat a civil war. Perhaps it was her kinsmen who helped bring the war to her town. . . .

When Brigadier General Alvin C. Gilliam's Union troops attacked Hawkins County, they occupied the courthouse, and chased rebel soldiers down Main Street and out of Rogersville. His men “commandeered” a fine Hawkins horse for him to ride while he was on the U.S. Army's cleanup campaign in East Tennessee. Meanwhile, a General or Colonel John C. Vaughan headed a Confederate cavalry unit, made up in part by Hawkins Rebels. He may have grown tired of hearing his guys complaining of recent incidents that put them in this “poor man's fight, rich man's war.” Even beloved Tennessee officers had lost their jobs--and their lives--because of top brass meddling. So, late in the war, Col. Vaughan reportedly told his remaining horsemen they could go home “when they pleased.” His 39th Brigade had been split and half of his men had been marched to Virginia to help Lee with Grant. The South was beaten, and with men still dying uselessly, perhaps seeing all was lost, Vaughan humanely disbanded his remaining horsemen.

These two men, a Vaughan and a Gilliam, two officers on horseback, riding off into a Hawkins sunset they could see coming down on the Civil War, simply add a poetic symmetry to Mary Polly's story. Theirs is a military episode in the life of a Vaughan-Gilliam woman trying to survive the conflict while tending a family and helping to run a farm in war-torn Hawkins County, Tennessee, 1861-1865.

In her area, during these trying times, Unionists men were executed for their beliefs. As the soldiers returned home—with or without leave--the times could only be described as horrific for mothers with war age sons who did not want to fight against the United States. Even after the war there was plenty of malice and too little charity in Hawkins.

These were times of personal deprivation for every member of Mary Polly's family, and for every family in the South. While shops in the United States bustled with activity and war production, the Confederacy had millions of slaves growing cotton for foreign industries that enriched Southern planters and a few Northern bankers. Unbelievably, while the South produced cotton for two thirds of the world, it had no textile mills to process its cotton—not even for cool khaki uniforms, which the ragged Southern soldier would have



deeply appreciated in the sweltering heat of summer, or for socks, for the many Rebel feet that went bare in the wintertime.

The following letter to a local family gives an account of deteriorating conditions in a unit made up of Hancock and Hawkins men. Ironically, it was written on the Fourth of July; Robert E. Lee had just been whipped at Gettysburg and General Grant had taken Vicksburg that very day. It says, in part:

Camp Sweetwater July 4th, 1863

Dear Father I seat myself to inform you that I am well, hoping these few lines may find you all well. I would like to see you all in the best kind of way but I cant get to come home, Lt. Anderson wont come up, and Lt. Eitson being captured, I cant get off to come home. I want you to send John and Thos (Larkin's brothers who were also in Co F) back as soon as you get this for if they stay over their time they will be reported as deserters and punished. I sent for a pare of pants by Thos when he come home, I havent got none attall. The report is that Bragg is falling back from Tulihomy & if that be so we will have to fall back from East Tennessee & then we will not get to come home.

Larkin D. W. Moneyham, 2-Lt. 16th TN Cav. BN, F Company, CSA.

Unfortunately for Larkin, the South had no pant factories, or factories of any kind. Furthermore, the Confederacy had no treasury, no banks, and no money. Even if they had a Yankee dollar, mothers couldn't find simple necessities—fabrics, thimbles, needles and thread, kitchen utensils, cookware—or staples for cooking. Their husbands went without new hats, belts, and shoes and could not get new tools or gear to harness their work animals. Scarcity of basic provisions that had created suffering and death and had driven many a barefoot soldier off the battlefield turned into an atrocity of war.



Post War

Not all fighting took place on the battlefield or went on during the war years. Post war violence wreaked havoc on the Vaughan and Gilliam families and perhaps between them. Peaceful farmers became post-war warriors. Men who once worked the land in stillness that draped the gentle hills of East Tennessee became ensnared in a wicked shroud that curtained their fields, villages, and towns for the next forty years. When the war was over, the scenic land, once painted in conversation to sound like a dream, erupted into a nightmare of bloody feuds. Civil wars are always “brother waging war against brother,” and the area’s civil war, without any other apparent cause, became the epitome in miniature of the bigger battleground.

It isn’t known how the war affected Mary Polly’s family, but none of her sons seem to have enlisted or fought. Sadly, she suffered the loss of two daughters shortly after the war. The deaths of Nancy Ann and Sally were recorded in their father’s will in 1869. These were miserable times of personal sadness, as her brother Samuel had died during the war. He was only forty-nine. In addition, two of his young sons, Hiram and Evan, also passed away. Two of his three oldest sons were away at the time of his death, fighting for the Confederacy.

Personal tragedies and the ravages of war created some documentation amongst womenfolk whose only recourse was to take pen in hand, or, prayer. Unlike her mother, Mary Polly left no written record on any part of her life and times. A few Southern women did leave diaries, journals, and letters which became their memoirs, but sadly, Mary Polly—who was literate and had plenty to write about—left nothing. Without her words, we cannot know what she thought or felt, but, according to history, we can know what she saw; letters home, battle scarred landscapes, war stories, and overflowing graveyards of the Civil War era tell the story to anyone who is listening.

Especially revealing is the post war boom in the newspaper industry and the beginning of sensationalizing the news. . . .

During the war when AWOL troops began trickling back to their homes in Hawkins County, a ghastly episode of civil strife broke out that never ended. As gunfire raked back and forth across hearth and home, barnyard and pasture, allegiance to either side was risky. The grudges that grew out of misunderstood loyalties, sometimes cropping up around horse thieves or a man's hogs or his garden, were not forgotten. It didn't take much more than a cabbage to get hungry folks to fighting each other. It wasn't long before their fights turned into newsworthy feuds. Yellow journalism may have gotten its start in East Tennessee.

For one thing, the Wright gang in the attached news clippings (Right) is the gang with which Mary Polly's Flannery nephews rode. They were the grandsons of her sister Nancy, and papers of the time grew fat with the infamous name of Flannery. At one time the gang aimed their guns out of the windows of Nancy's house and killed the lawmen who had come to arrest them.

Jim Wright, of Hancock County, their leader, was the victim of an atrocity of the war. After his father was executed for supporting the Union, the boy spent the rest of his life seeking revenge, or some would say, justice. Newspaper reporters hungrily fed at an angry trough, and citizens like Mary Polly, who could read, eagerly--or anxiously--awaited their stories.

It has been said that the post-war Tennessee-Virginia border resembled a lawless era of the Old West, a part of which was a strip of Southwest Texas—a land of Mexican banditos, unruly Comancheros, and angry Comanche—which her brother, James L. Vaughan, had helped settle. Unfortunately, the war did not settle personal rancor; bloody family feuds and individual reprisals found many family members, wherever they traveled, up to, and into, the twentieth century.

It is interesting to note that of Mary Polly's seven sons, none of them have Civil War records, and the worst danger they faced may have been when their cousins and kin began feuding after the war.

The time and place of Mary Polly Vaughan Gilliam's death and burial are unknown, but the year 1880 found the widow, age eighty years, still at home on Fisher Creek. Her sister Nancy Vaughan Hickman lived six miles away in Hancock, near their sixty-five year old sister-in-law, Malvina Church Vaughan, Samuel's widow. The aging women are listed on the 1880 census, as is her brother, John Vaughan, Jr. Mary Polly was living in District 9, Hawkins County, Tennessee with her son, Benjamin C. Gilliam—just as her husband had willed.

TERRORIZED BY OUTLAWS.—An order for 164 Winchester rifles and 1,000 cartridges was received at Gate City, Va., Saturday night from citizens living in Scott county. The order was accompanied by the statement that the guns were to be used for the protection of the many families in that vicinity who have been threatened with violence by the unscrupulous "Jim" Wright band of outlaws. The band has committed many murders in the mountainous section embracing Scott, Lee, Dickenson, and the border Kentucky counties. The story sent out from Kentucky over a week ago that a sheriff's posse had killed Wright and two members of his gang is not believed by the citizens of Scott county, and the people of Scott and Lee counties are said to be in mortal terror of the outlaws. They have been warned that the band is on the warpath and has sworn to kill every man who assisted in the effort to bring them to justice. John Templeton, one of the leaders, is known to have been seriously wounded. He was shot two weeks ago in Lee county.

A MULTI-MURDERER.
There is a reward of \$500 offered by the Governor of Tennessee for the arrest of Jim Wright, an escaped convict and multi-murderer, of Hancock county. He is supposed to be in the border of the county near the Virginia line. It is a wild section of the country and the scene of numerous horrible crimes. The criminals, it is alleged, band together and easily defy the officers. Many criminals have escaped from this county into that section and were never arrested. It was there that the Flannerys, who murdered a boy, killed Joel Necessary and seriously wounded another man from this county, who were trying to arrest them, about two years ago. The Flannerys are still at large, and reported to be in Texas.

Will of John Gilliam, 3 Aug 1869, (Excerpt)

The Last Will and Testament of John Gilliam, deceased, filed and proven the 2nd day of June 1873.

I John Gilliam of the County of Hawkins, State of Tennessee, being of sound and disposing mind and of good memory, being somewhat advanced in years. . . do make and constitute this to be my last will and testament . . .

Seventhly - To my grand daughter Mary Katharine Fletcher, daughter of my daughter, Nancy Ann (who is dead), I give and bequeath the sum of one dollar to be paid by my executors out of my estate after my death, this being the amount I desire for the said Mary Katharine, in addition to what I gave her Mother.

Eighthly - To my grand son Isaac S. G. Johnson, son of my daughter, Sally (who is dead) I give and bequeath the sum of one dollar to be paid by my executors out of my estate after my death this being the amount I desire for the said Isaac S. G. Johnson, in addition to what I gave his Mother..

In testimony whereof I set my hand and seal this third day of August, in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Sixty Nine (1869 AD) in the presence of the subscribing witnesses. . .

Sig: John Gilliam (Seal)

Attest: Stephen Creech, Thomas W. Bradshaw, W. H. Watterson

Rec: 2 Jun 1873. Will Book II, Page 118, Hawkins County, TN.

At thirteen, Shelby Johnson lived with Mary Polly. He was the late Nancy Gilliam Johnson's boy, now a motherless child, living with his grandma. His Tennessee was a far different place than the idyllic and flourishing farm of John and Nancy Callicott Vaughan where a young Mary Polly spent her childhood. 1880 East Tennessee was still in a war that had started before Shelby was born, and it went on and on and on—in time, and even spread to parts unknown.

It is said that time heals, and it must. Descendants of the former outlaws who terrorized Mary Polly's world describe men who later reformed into gentle grandfathers and who, as fathers, reared sons who became doctors, lawyers, merchants, and ministers, and perhaps, even the gentleman farmers envisioned by Thomas Jefferson. They provided for their families and taught their children to do the same. They would become ancestors of brave men who became soldiers who helped save the world from German Nazis, Japanese Samurai, and fascist Italian mobsters. The war that scarred their lives, though, had been quite different—a civil war wherein a brother kills a brother, or a friend a friend—takes a long, long time to get over.



From Playground to Graveyard

A stand of cedars above the original Vaughan homestead marks the Vaughan Cemetery where lies Mary Polly's brother Samuel, his wife Malvina, their son, and one grandchild.

The End

Timeline, Mary Polly Vaughan

Parents: John Vaughan (1762-1842) Nancy Callicott (1777-1858)

Spouse: John A. Gilliam Sr. (1799-1873)

Children:

James Gilliam (1822)

Hinchea Gilliam (1829-)

Lemuel Gilliam (1830-1900)

Sarah Gilliam (1832-)

Wiley (1834)

Sallie (1835)

John A. Gilliam Jr. (1837-1916)

William Gilliam (1837-)

Nancy Ann Gilliam (1840-)

Susan Gilliam (1844-1915)

Benjamin C Gilliam (1849-)

1800, Birth 12 Apr 1800 in Hawkins, TN, US

1880 US Federal Census

Mother's Daybook

1813, Age: 13 Early Life

Hawkins Co, TN, USA Mary Polly becomes a teenager during the War of 1812 Photo1)

1821, Age: 21 Marriage to John A. Gilliam Sr.

Hawkins Co., TN

1830 ?, Age: 30 Residence

Hawkins Co, TN, USA

1836 Age 36. 1836 Hawkins Co. Tax List.

Civil District 9: Beginning on the top of the **Stanley Valley Knobs** at the gap between Benoni Caldwell's and Walter's at the corner of District No. 8. This is the neighborhood of the Vaughan's second home—aft 1832, but John Vaughan is still paying taxes in his original district where he left three of his sons.

1840, Age: 40 Residence

Hawkins Co, TN, USA In Parents Neighborhood. 7 children: 6 boys and one girl. Wootens, mentioned in will are next door to John and Nancy Vaughan. Incl: Johnson, Brown, Benjamin W., Rogers, Sizemore.

1858, Age: 58 Residence: Poor Valley

Hancock Co, TN, USA From Nancy Callicott Vaughan's Pension Application

State of Tennessee, County of Hawkins; On the 2nd day of June AD One Thousand Eight Hundred and Fifty Eight personally appeared, Mrs. Nancy Vaughan, Claimant, saying, . . . they resided in the state of Virginia some six years and that they moved from the state of Virginia about the year 1800 and came to Hawkins County, Tennessee, that they settled on or near Clinch river some 5 or 6 miles from here where she now lives, then Hawkins County, now Hancock County, Tennessee, and lived there all the while until the year 1832 at which time her said husband bought land on this side of Clinch mountain, and "We moved over here in this valley, called then and now, Poor Valley in Hawkins County, Tennessee, in about one mile of where I now live with Polly."

1860, Age: 60 Residence

District 9, Hawkins, TN, US 1860 Census abt Mary Gilliam 60 B 1800 TN; Hme in 1860: Dist 9, Hawkins, TN; PO Rogersville; HH: John Gilliam 59; Mary Gilliam 60; Willie 23; Sallie 25; Haney 17; Benj 12; Benj Thacker 40; Susan 14; Joanna Bronn 3

1865, End of Civil War, death of two daughters.

Deterioration of community standards. Future terrorist signed mother's pension application.

that I Believe she is the identical person she represents herself to be and that I am in no way related to the applicant and that I have no interest in the prosecution of her claim or otherwise whatever.

John M. Charles

John Templeton

James Harrison

Sworn to, Subscribed, and witnessed before me this 2 day of June AD 1858,

Wm Hutchisson JP, For Hawkins County, State of Tennessee, Hawkins County} ss I, James H Vance, clerk of the county court of said county, do certify that William Hutchisson Esq. before whom the foregoing declarations and affidavits were made is now and was at the date thereof was acting Justice of the Peace in and for said County legally commissioned and qualified and that his several Signatures foregoing are genuine.

Given under my hand and Official Seal at office in Rogersville the sixth day of June 1858, J.H. Vance, Clerk.

1869, John Gilliam writes will.

1873, Age: 73 Reading of husband's will

Hawkins Co, TN, USA John Gilliam's death left Mary Polly a living heir.

1880, Age: 80 Residence

District 9, Hawkins, TN, US 1880 US Census abt Mary Gilliam 80 B: 1800 TN; Hme in 1880: Dist 9, Hawkins, TN; Rel to Hd of Hse: Mother, Widowed; Father B: TN; Mother B: TN; HH: Benjamin C. Gillem 31; Sarah S. Gillem 28; Mary 4; Margaret 2; Mary Gillem 80; Shelby Johnson 13; Matilda Johnson

Age: Death aft 1880 in Hawkins, TN, US. Theoretically, she could have lived until 1899.

Sources

Nancy Callicott Vaughan Daybook, Page 1

1830 Census

1840 Census

John Vaughan Will, Dec 1841

1858 Nancy Callicott Vaughan Pension Application: Excerpts

1860 Census

1869 Will of John Gilliam, Will Book II, 3 Aug 1869, Page 118, Hawkins County, TN

Records of Eula Mae McNutt: Letter of Dec. 17, 1986 to Mary England

George Washington Vaughan, Sr. and Descendants, Opal Frances Vaughan

Oral History

1880 Census

U.S. Civil War Soldiers, 1861-1865, Ancestry.com

Name: John C. Vaughan

Side: Confederate

Regiment State/Origin: Tennessee

Regiment Name: 3 (Lillard's) Tenn. Mtd. Inf.

Regiment Name Expanded: 3rd Regiment, Tennessee Mounted Infantry (Lillard's)

Rank In: Colonel

Rank In Expanded: Colonel

Rank Out: Colonel

Rank Out Expanded: Colonel

Alternate Name: J. C./Vaughan

Film Number: M231 roll 44

1890 Census of Union Veterans and their Widows, Hancock County, TN, research by Hallie Garner .

1890 Special Census of Union Veterans and Widows, HANCOCK COUNTY, TENNESSEE, National Archives and Record Administration.

Photos, 1985, A.J. Vaughan family

Photos, 1997, Mabel Harp

<http://www.childresscousins.org>

NOTES

NOTES: <http://www.angelfire.com/tn/hawkinsciviltwar/about.html>

THE BLUE AND GRAY FROM HAWKINS COUNTY, TENNESSEE , 1861-1865

by Sheila Weems Johnston

Divisions of the County - Where the Companies Were.

On the outer edge of Rogersville going toward Clinch Mountains and Hancock County was the area of Lee Valley, Poor Valley, and Little War Gap. Most of this area was Union. Many men from here rode with the 13th Tennessee Cavalry Regiment, USA .and joined the 8th Tennessee Volunteer Infantry Regiment, USA, and also went into Kentucky to join. Some men of this area rode with the infamous Union scout, or as many called him, Bill Sizemore, bushwhacker. Many of these men in this area were also later involved in the Greene/Jones feud. This area adjoins Hancock County, Tennessee.

Further to the north and toward the state of Virginia and Sullivan County, Tennessee are the areas of Fishers Creek, stopping at the North Fork of the Holston River. Here you have the Vaughans, Browns, Carmacks, Wingers. A lot of these men joined the 16th Tennessee Cavalry, F Company CSA, and the 12th Tennessee Cavalry BN, A Company, and 2nd Tennessee Ashby's Cavalry Battalion, CSA. There were also men in the 8th Tennessee Cavalry Regiment, USA from this area. This area would no doubt be widely split in CSA and USA.

Upper Holston area: It seemed in areas where you had strong Revolutionary War vets, there was a tendency to be more Union families there.

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NOTES: 1890 Special Census of Union Veterans and Widows HANCOCK COUNTY, TENNESSEE National Archives and Record Administration, Record Group M123, Roll 95 Extraction by Hallie Price Garner, Dallas, Texas 1996

Most of the 1890 census of population was burned in a fire in the Commerce Dept. building in Washington, DC in 1921. None of it survives for Tennessee, leaving a great gap in our knowledge of our ancestors in that time period. However, a special census was taken in 1890 to enumerate the Union Veterans and their widows, and that does survive for Tennessee and many other states. This schedule does not include those men and their widows that fought on the Confederate side, or those who were dead by 1890 without surviving wives. In this time period there were no death records being kept in Tennessee and most courthouse records in Sneedville burned in the two fires at the courthouse since 1890. Therefore, any records that give additional information about your ancestor are valuable. Some of the information in the Remarks column will not be found in any other extant records. ...Many gems of information are found herein, sometimes including former and later marriages of women that are so hard to find in a county which has no marriage records before 1936.

Because of space limitations, the actual dates served have not been extracted, but can be found on the microfilm and in the actual service record. Many men tried to register in this census but their names were marked through because they were found to be Confederate veterans. I have not copied those at this time. This census was taken 25 years after the end of the war and many memories, understandably, had faded. If you have a relative on this list, it is usually worthwhile to see if they had a pension application, because much valuable information is given in pension applications. Sometimes a complete list of children is given, as well as dates of marriage, maiden names, and residences. Hallie Price Garner.

1836 Age 36. 1836 Hawkins Co. Tax List.

Civil District 9: Beginning on the top of the **Stanley Valley Knobs** at the gap between Benoni Caldwell's and Walter's at the corner of District No. 8 running thence with the line of the same and along the top of said Knobs to Big Creek opposite to Cornelius Carmack's Spring then crossing the creek to the Stanley Valley road then along the road to the road that leads to through the Caney Creek Knobs at Molsby's Gap continuing along said road through William Molsby's land to intersect the little War Gap road near Spencer Acuff's field then along the road to the corner of the fence of the lot that includes said Acuff's home thence a straight line to the creek leaving said Acuff's to the west of said line thence up said creek to the top of Chestnut ridge then a straight course to the top of Clinch mountain leaving Pleasant Starnes, Andrew Spears, Hays Lewis and David Patterson to the west of said line then along the top of said mountain to the corner of Lot No. 8 thence with the line of said Lot No. 8 crossing the line that divides Coldwell and Walter's tracts of land to the beginning.

The election to be held at Arthur Galbreath's home in Stanley Valley: (edited, HVM).

Thomas ANDERSON; James ANDERSON; David ANDERSON; David M. ANDERSON;... Cornelius C. **CARMACK**; Lewis DAVIS; **Lilborn DAVIS**; **Thomas DAVIS**; **John GILLIAM**; **Jonathan HICKMAN**; **Prisula HICKMAN**; **Joseph HICKMAN**; William LANE; Benjamin LOONEY JR; Absalom D. LOONEY; **John LOONEY**; James LITTLE; **Absalom LOONEY JR**; **John SHANKS**; Michael SHANKS; John SHANKS SR; David SHANKS; **John VAUGHN**; William VAUGHN; Allen VAUGHN; James VAUGHN; **Benjamin Walker VAUGHAN**; Philli WINNEGER; Stephen WINNEGER; Jacob **WINNEGAR**

1836 Hawkins Co. Tax List.

<http://www.public.usit.net/billiam/hawkinscivildist.html>

Hello to all my fellow Hawkins county researchers. I thought some of you might like a description of the various civil districts of the county, as they are described on the 1836 tax list. I do not know if or when the various boundaries changed over the years. Sincerely, Mary Rollis

Edited for pertinent names, by Helen Vaughan. This is the neighborhood of the Vaughan's second home—aft 1832, but John Vaughan is still paying taxes in his original district where he left three of his sons and two daughters.
