

Hamilton County Pioneers - the Pendergrass Family

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Nimrod Pendergrass was one of Hamilton County's earliest settlers, having located on Opossum Creek at Bakewell before the county was created in 1819. The Pendergrasses long farmed at Birchwood. During the Civil War, many of the clan went with the Union.

The Pendergrasses are said to have originally lived north of London in England. John Pendergrass was born in England in the mid-1700s and made his way to Bute County, N.C., then to Lancaster County, S.C. He married Margaret Pownall, whose father, John Pownall, had an interesting history. He was taken from the gaol at Essex, England, and placed aboard the frigate Smith, in September of 1730 along with 76 other convicts for transport to Virginia. At Westmoreland County, he married Elizabeth, widow of John Butler. His second wife was Margaret Nelson. The Pownalls moved to Granville County, N.C., where the reformed convict acquired 680 acres. Bute County was taken off Granville County, and the Pendergrasses and Pownalls were neighbors there. Both families moved on to Lancaster County, S.C., where John Pownall died in 1785.

John Pendergrass in 1779 acquired 75 acres on the mouth of Cedar Creek at the Wateree River in Craven County, S.C., for 570 pounds. Pendergrass fought with the Colonists, though he is listed among the "return of persons who have gone over to the British." For this offense, his land was apparently later confiscated. Other accounts say John Pendergrass was murdered by a band of roving Tories near the end of the Revolution.

His son, Nimrod, made his way to Sevier County, then to Hamilton County, while his older brothers, Nathaniel and John, went to Jackson County, Ga. Nathaniel Pendergrass married Hannah Nixon, then Elizabeth Burk. He lived until about 1843. John Pendergrass lived until 1868.

Nimrod Pendergrass had a mill on Possum Creek near the Pendergrass Ford and the family graveyard. He added to his holdings in 1824 by obtaining a grant for 640 acres on the north side of the Tennessee River about a mile below the mouth of North Chickamauga Creek. It was "above the large spouting spring at the edge of the river." Nimrod

Pendergrass, who was born in 1780, had married Martha Reynolds about 1804 while he was still at Lancaster County. She was the daughter of William Reynolds and Ann Nixon. He took a second wife, Sarah, about 1840.

Jesse Pendergrass, eldest son of Nimrod Pendergrass, married Ann Witt, daughter of Charles Witt and Alabama Gibson. This family moved to Putnam County, Tenn. A son, Nimrod Jr., made investments at Vannville, then he moved west to Missouri. Other children included Martha who married a Riddle, Anna who married a King, Jefferson C. and Nathaniel.

Nimrod Pendergrass also had twin sons, Hiram and John C. Hiram married Mary L. Hannah, and they lived at Sale Creek. Their children included Amanda J. who married Israel Alonzo Condra, Elizabeth who married William Anderson Jones, Asa Nathaniel who married Mary Ophelia Hall, John Houston who married Delphia Luvicie Riddle, Mary, Martha Ellen who married James T. Williams, Nathaniel Adnega, and Susan. John and Asa were blacksmiths. The youngest son, Adnega, volunteered at Nashville with a Union unit on July 24, 1863, though he was only 16. He caught smallpox in October and soon after returning to duty was captured at Sulphur Trestle, Ala. After being paroled and returning to duty, he was on the steamer Sultana when its boiler exploded near Memphis April 27, 1865. He was badly scalded around the face and right shoulder, and he died at a hospital at Cairo, Ill, on June 19, 1865. He was not yet 19. Hiram Pendergrass lived until 1891, and Mary Hannah Pendergrass survived until 1897.

The first wife of the other twin, John C. Pendergrass, was Elizabeth. His second wife, Ellender Taylor, was born in 1835, whereas he was born in 1808. A native of Blount County, she was the aunt of Alfred Taylor and Robert Love Taylor, who waged "The War of the Roses," a colorful campaign against one another in 1887 for governor of Tennessee. John C. Pendergrass was a Methodist preacher and a stonemason. In 1848, he was pastor of the Methodist Church at Chattanooga. John C. Pendergrass had a brief Civil War career though he was older than most recruits. He volunteered into the Union forces on Nov. 11, 1861. John C. Pendergrass received a medical discharge due to asthma on July 1, 1862. He died in 1879. John C. Pendergrass had 11 children by his first wife, and he had five sons by Ellender Taylor. The first set of children included James A. who married Eliza Roark, Oliver, Mary, Elizabeth, John who married Sarah Agnes Carr, Harriet who married Benjamin Emery, Martha, Margaret, Jennett who

married Robert Varner, Emily who married James Clements, and Hiram Newton who married Sarah E. McDaniel. His second set of sons were William Joshua, Nathaniel Nimrod who married Julia Alice Smith, Jefferson, Francis Marion who married Almedia Jane Posey, and David Goliath. Oliver apparently died during the Civil War period. John joined Union forces in Scott County, Tenn., in September of 1862. In 1869, he moved his family to Missouri. William Joshua went to Arkansas and made a fortune in the coal fields.

James A. Pendergrass was the chief heir of his grandfather, Nimrod. He and his large family resided at Birchwood. The three older children married children of the family of John and Margaret Fine. Zerelda married Phillip Fine, LaFayette married Adelia Fine and Looney married Elizabeth Fine. Other children of James A. included Mary who married Charles McAfee, Martha who married Gideon Lyons, and Jack who married Nan Bowers. Another son, James Thomas, was born in the last year of the Civil War. He married Nancy J. Elsea in 1887 and they farmed at Birchwood. One of their sons, Jesse James Pendergrass, took over this farm. He married Martha Ellen Allison. Two of their sons, Frank and Kenneth Pendergrass, still reside here as do their sisters, Clara Pendergrass Tennyson and Pauline Pendergrass Roark. Ruby Lillian Pendergrass Johnson and Viola Eleanor Pendergrass Burns, daughters of James Thomas Pendergrass, reside here. Joseph Nathaniel, youngest son of James A. and Eliza, lived at Sale Creek at the old Nimrod property. His daughter, Thelma, resides at Red Bank. Children of his son, Brutus Elmer, still here include Rex Pendergrass, Ross Pendergrass and Helen Pendergrass Woods. Children of his son, Ray, still here include Margaret Pendergrass Burt, Claude Pendergrass, Broyles Pendergrass and J.A. Pendergrass. Thomas J. Pendergrass, a son of LaFayette Pendergrass, had a farm at Sale Creek. He married Edna McClanahan.

Their children still living here include H.L. Pendergrass, Faye Pendergrass Curley, Jewell Pendergrass Hyder and Irene Pendergrass Isles.

John Pendergrass md Margaret Pownall, d/o John Pownall & Margaret Nelson =

Nimrod Pendergrass md Martha "Patsy" Runnolds/Reynolds =

Jesse W. Pendergrass md Ann Wirt =

John T. Pendergrass md Annie Solomon =

William W. "Willie" Pendergrass md Rachel J. Franklin =

Willard Lonzo Pendergrass md Laura "Ada" Pert Hutchison & md Matilda Minnie

Brown who md 1st Milburn Hershel Shipley. She was the d/o John Litton Brown & Jane Goolsby =

Betty Joan Pendergrass md John Ray Loftis, s/o Milton Otis Loftis & Essie Avo Jernigan.

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