

GENEALOGY RESEARCH UNEARTHS

UNUSUAL BUFFALO VALLEY RELATIVE

BUFFALO VALLEY — Digging into family genealogy has been a fun pastime for Branda Cowman Francis of Nashville, and it has also led to the honoring of a veteran 146 years after his death.



“Digging into my family’s history has been fun,” Francis said. “It’s become a passion. Once you get into it, you just can’t stop.”

So far, her research has led her as far back as the mid 1700s to discover her ancestor, Edward “Ned” Cowan, who came to the Putnam County around 1770 as a long hunter to explore the land.

He built a small log cabin on Little Indian Creek in the Caney Fork River Valley and claimed 2,000 acres as his own. Davidson County records say that Ned was killed by Native Americans in 1794. That family farm, still in existence today in Buffalo Valley, is on the National Register of Historic Places.

However, Francis found one of the most interesting characters in her genealogy is that of Ned’s son, Matthew Cowan. At the age of 21, records say that he was fined 50 cents for two suits of assault and battery. Later, when he decided to marry, Matthew picked up his bride-to-be and rode away with her on horseback.

As they forded the river, the girl’s father shot at him from the bank. It was also said that he liked to get drunk and race through town on horseback, just to see people scatter to get out of his way.

Tradition says that during one of these occasions when he told another man on horseback to run, the man stubbornly stopped in the middle of the road. When Matthew demanded, “Didn’t I say, ‘run?’” the man replied, “This is Bill Hughes and I don’t run from anybody.”

Instead of being angry, the defiance seemed to please Matt, who is reported to have said, “Bill Hughes, you are the only man in this country who has any sense.”

Family lore said that Matthew was a first cousin to President Andrew Jackson; however, Francis’ research has not turned up anything concrete to support the claim.

“Matthew was married to Catherine Trousdale, and her father was in the Revolutionary War,” she said. “I found in the Sumner County News in 1888, one of her relatives, Julius Trousdale, wanted to run for a political position. The paper says his blood records date from Jackson down, so there may be a connection to Andrew Jackson through Matthew’s wife, but we don’t know for sure.”

Though he may or may not have had familial ties to Andrew Jackson, Matthew was a veteran of the War of 1812. He served as a militia captain, serving under Col. James Raulston as part of Maj. Gen. William Carroll’s division at the Battle of New Orleans. He died after the war, in 1864. He is buried in the Bockman Cemetery on Ensor Hollow Road in Buffalo Valley.

Because the small gravestone there was corroded away to nearly nothing, Francis’ uncle, the now late Ira B. Cowan, undertook the task of getting a military headstone put into place several years ago. It took a lot of work and help from family members and friends, but Ira finally got the headstone put into place, along with a large stone placed across the grave that tells of the family’s history.

Family members came to celebrate the honoring of one of their ancestors. Now Francis is looking forward to continuing her research and seeing what else she can find out about her family who came before her.

“It’s been like putting a puzzle together,” she said. “I’ve been working on this since 2004. I retired from teaching in 2003 and decided to do it. It’s easy to start research. I just got on Ancestry.com and went from there. Now I’m hooked. It’s a never-ending thing.”

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*See Buffalo Valley Historical Home and read more about Buffalo Valley, Putnam Co., TN & surrounding areas at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>