

## COOKEVILLIAN UNCOVERS RELATIVE WHO SIGNED DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

By Megan Trotter

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**COOKEVILLE** – When retired Cookeville firefighter Gary Vickers started working on researching his heritage with his wife, Linda, he was excited to uncover more about his family history. However he never expected to find that he had a connection to one of our country’s most famous documents. It turns out his first cousin, eight times removed, was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence.



“It was just by chance and luck that I found it,” Vickers said.

Thomas Stone, who was born in 1743 and died in 1787, was a delegate for Maryland and also worked on the committee that drew up the Articles of Confederation, which established the United States from the original 13 founding states and served as its first constitution. His signature, which reads “Thom Stone,” is three below the famous John Hancock on the Declaration of Independence.

“I’ve been writing down the children’s names (in my genealogy), but that’s all,” Vickers said. “I haven’t been researching who they married and all that. So it was really just by luck that I found (out about Thomas Stone.)”

He stumbled onto the name while researching other Thomas Stones in his family, and while doing an Internet search, came across websites dedicated to a Thomas Stone, signer of the Declaration.

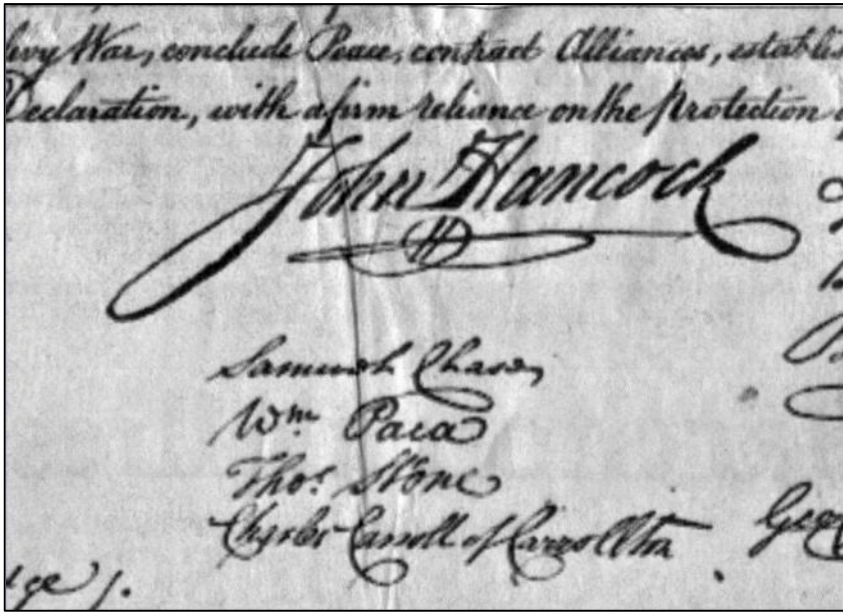
Intrigued, he did more research and discovers that he was, in fact, related. (Pictured: Signer’s relative: From left, cousins David Vaught, Vicky Vaughn O’Rear, John Vickers and Gary Vickers look through the history of Thomas Stone, their first cousin eight times



removed who signed the Declaration of Independence. Not pictured: cousin, Royce Dean Clinton).

“Of course, there’s thousands of people who are kin to them. We’re not the only ones,” he said. Also in his research, Vickers discovered another distant cousin, Benjamin Stone, who was a minuteman – a militia force during the American Revolutionary War – and fought with George Washington at Valley Forge, Penn.

“His wife, her name was Anna Asbury, and while her husband was with George Washington in Valley Forge, she rode a horse from Culpepper County, VA to Valley Forge, which is about 250 miles.” Vickers said. “She took supplies that she had from her home – salt, clothing and other supplies – to her husband and her two brothers who were



there with Benjamin. Somewhere along the way, somebody found out she was going to General Washington and gave her some valuable papers and she took and gave that to Washington at Valley Forge.”

Vickers has been sharing his research with Cookeville cousins: Vicky Vaughn O’Rear,

Royce Dean Clinton, John Vickers and David Vaughn, as well as cousin Steve Barger of Oak Ridge, Jerry Barger, of Fort Rucker, Al, and Sammy Vaughn of Nashville. As members of a family who have fought in the Korean War, World War II, and Vietnam, they are thrilled to learn of this connection to the country’s founding documents.

“Our family is very patriotic,” Vickers said. “My father passed away in ’08, but he would be thrilled if (he) had known about this.”

\*Read more about the people and history of Putnam Co., TN and surrounding areas at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>.