

JOHN AND ELIZABETH (WILLIAMS) PETTRY FAMILY

Joann Burnside Townsend

Elizabeth Williams was the daughter of Jeremiah and Susannah (White) Williams. She was born about 1842 in Fayette County, Virginia. Her birthplace was actually in present-day Raleigh County, West Virginia. As was common in the early days of the state, the county lines changed; but the families did not move. Jeremiah's parents were Alexander and Eliza Williams.

When she was seventeen, Elizabeth Williams married twenty-one year old John Pettry. John was the son of Martin and Sarah (Davis) Pettry. John was listed with his parents in the 1850 Raleigh County, Virginia, Federal Census, as age 12 and living at the Mouth of the Little Marsh. They were married in Raleigh County in the house of Mrs. Elizabeth Jarrell by Matthew Ellison, a well-known Raleigh County Baptist minister, on November 6, 1859. Their marriage license is on record at the Raleigh County Courthouse, Beckley, West Virginia, Record Book of Marriages, 1850 -1895, Page No. 7. Elizabeth and John were starting a small family when the terrible rumble of civil war began in America. Elizabeth and John had daughters, Rosella, born October 31, 1860, and Susan Elmira, born September 15, 1863.

John Pettry enlisted as a Private to serve three years in Captain James S. Cassedy's, Co. G, 8th Regiment of the 7th West Virginia (Mounted) Infantry Volunteers at Buffalo, Putnam County, West Virginia, on January 6, 1862. His brother, French Pettry, also enlisted at this same place and time. His brother, James M. Pettry was of Company G and had enlisted earlier on October 24, 1861, at Mud River. According to his war record, John Pettry was age 22, 5'9" tall, dark complexion, with blue eyes and dark hair. John was born in Raleigh County, Virginia, and was a farmer. John's age and birth place seem to conflict in his marriage record and war record. John was listed as absent and sick from October 5, 1862, to May 1863 at the General Hospital at Point Pleasant, Virginia. John was captured on December 19, 1863, by the Confederate Army (while in the service of the United States and in the line of duty) after the Salem Raid at Covington, Virginia, an



Cemetery at Andersonville, Georgia

was first sent to Libby Prison in Richmond, Virginia. In December 1863, belonging to Company G, 8th West Virginia Mounted Infantry, he was listed as absent prisoner of war. He then was transferred on June 17, 1864, to the notorious Andersonville Prison, at Andersonville, Georgia. This was a terrible Southern prison with thousands of prisoners. According to the history of this prison, there was much abuse. There was not enough food in the area to feed the residents let alone prisoners. It is to be remembered that during thirteen long months, they knew neither shelter nor protection from the changeable skies above, nor the pitiless, unfeeling earth beneath. Thousands of prisoners actually died from dysentery and starvation. John died from diarrhea while a prisoner of war in Andersonville Prison on June 29, 1864. He is buried in grave #2,645 at the Andersonville Cemetery. Company Descriptive Book of his Company had remarks: "In Rebels hands since 19 December 1863. Received official notice of his death from Washington May 26 (1865). Inventory of effects forwarded 27 May 1865. His total value of clothing drawn to December 1862 is \$52." He had "no effects" (belongings) at his death. This is an example of the horrors of war, and this happened on both sides.

After the death of her husband, it is certain that Elizabeth had a real struggle to keep her little family together. These were really difficult times. Armies of both the North and South moved into and out of the county frequently during four years of conflict, and neighbor turned against neighbor.

All functional county business was eventually discontinued in Raleigh County, West Virginia during the war. According to Raleigh County West Virginia, a history written by Jim Wood, there were no marriages, birth or deaths registered.

Eventually as the Civil War grew to a close and a kind of normal life began to emerge, Elizabeth decided to remarry. This time she married Thomas Arnold also of Raleigh County, West Virginia. Thomas was born ca May 1845 in Henry County, Virginia. He was the son of John and Nancy Griffith/Griffin Arnold formerly of Patrick County, Virginia. They were married on July 23, 1869, by William H. Bailey in Raleigh County, West Virginia.

There were some legal formalities with respect to a guardianship of Elizabeth's minor children begun by Thomas and his father, John Arnold. These apparently were never finalized. Elizabeth and Thomas had the following children: Polly A., William, Charles P., Nancy Margaret, Bud and Dorsey Arnold.

At some point in time after Elizabeth married Thomas Arnold, her daughter Susan began to use the surname Arnold, although she and Rosella were listed on the 1870 and 1880 Raleigh County, West Virginia, Federal Census as stepdaughters with surname of Pettry. Her nickname was "Duck" hence the name Duck Arnold as she was earlier known. On December 15, 1881, in Raleigh County, West Virginia, Susan Elmira Pettry married Charles Alexander Burnside, son of Andrew Smith and Dorcas Wilson Abbott Burnside. They were married by James F. Webb. Susan Elmira Pettry Burnside had four children, Dollie, Dillie, Dale Smith, and John O. Burnside. Susan and her sister must have surely had an extremely difficult early life being born during the Civil War as well as suffering the devastating loss of their father. On January 21, 1881, older daughter, Rosella, married George Washington Jackson of Raleigh County, West Virginia.

While doing research on this family the writer discovered that there were many Elizabeth

Williams. The Elizabeth Williams who was married to John Pettry and Thomas Arnold, has been confused with another Elizabeth Williams. An Elizabeth Williams, b. 1825, was married to John Arnold, father of Thomas. This error has been recorded in several publications. Research has produced information to substantiate this statement.

Sources:

Raleigh Co., West Virginia by Jim Wood, page 95. Raleigh County was created in 1850, 19 years after the creation of Fayette County in 1831.

Elizabeth Williams was listed as age 29 in the 1870 Raleigh County, West Virginia, Federal Census and age 66 in 1910 Raleigh County, West Virginia, Federal Census. She was listed as age 17 on November 6, 1859, in the Raleigh County, Virginia Marriage Record of her marriage license to John Pettry and as age 26 on the July 23, 1869, Raleigh County, Virginia Marriage Record in her marriage license to Thomas Arnold. It appears that she should have been born between July 26 and November 6, 1842.

Petry, Pettry, Petrey, Pettrey and Allied Families, by D. L. Petry is a well-documented book on the Pettry family of Virginia and West Virginia with various other spellings of the name. Our Martin Pettry (page 156) was the son of James and Mary Polly” (Lacy) Pettry (page 4).

“West Virginia County Raleigh to Wit: I hereby certify that the marriage between John Petry and Elizabeth Williams is duly recorded in “The Record Book of Marriages” in the Recorders Office of this County to have been solemnized on the 6th day of November 1859, by Mathew Elison at the House of Elizabeth Jarrel’s in said County. Given under my hand & official, Seal this 20th day of October 1865, Jno Rogers, Recorder”

Raleigh County, West Virginia, by Jim Wood, pages 143-145. - “When Floyd’s Confederate forces began loosening their grip on western Virginia in the autumn of 1861, the Federal army moved into Raleigh County and began extensive recruitment of men from the county’s neighborhoods that had remained loyal to the Union. Most of these men were to serve in the Eighth Virginia Mounted Infantry, which was reorganized January 26, 1864, and thereafter known as the Seventh West Virginia Volunteer Cavalry.

Company G: French Pettry, James M. Pettry, John Pettry. Jim Wood’s notes were taken from “Records and Index to West Virginia Troops (1861-1864), microfilm.”

Raleigh County, West Virginia, by Jim Wood, page 146. - Company G: Pvt French Pettry, died of disease General Hospital, Washington, D. C. September 1862. Also, War Record, Private French Petrey, Company G, 7th Regiment, West Virginia Cavalry appears on Company Descriptive Book as age 20 years, height, 5’9”, complexion fair, eyes blue, hair light and born Raleigh Co., VA, and was a farmer. He died of disease in hospital at Washington D. C.

“Prisoners who died at Andersonville Prison - Atwater List”, vii, “But after this, whenever any man who has lain a prisoner within the stockade of Andersonville, would tell you of his sufferings, how he fainted, scorched, drenched, hungered, sickened, was scoffed, scourged, hunted and persecuted,

though the tale be long and twice told, as you would have your own wrongs appreciated, your own woes pitied, your own cries for mercy, heard, I charge you, listen and believe him.”

“Prisoners who died at Andersonville Prison - Atwater List”, page 68.

Raleigh County, West Virginia, Jim Wood, Chapter 15, “Picking Up The Pieces”, page 235. - For 34 months - from November 1862 to September 1865 - the county was without a government. The result was chaos. Taxes went uncollected, lawbreakers unarrested, marriages, births, deaths, deeds and wills unrecorded, civil suits untried, roads unrepaired, the mail undelivered and the poor unfed. The war had been over four months before the first efforts were undertaken to set up a new county government in a new state - West Virginia.

1900 Raleigh County, West Virginia Federal Census, page 217, House #261, Family #261, Marsh Fork Dist., Raleigh County, West Virginia.

“Claim of Guardian of Orphan Children for Pension.” - The State of West Virginia, County of Raleigh, SS. On this 22 day of November, A.D., 1869, before me, (1) Clarkson Prince, Clerk of the Circuit Court of the ___ in and for the County and State above named personally appeared Thomas Arnold, a resident of Clear Fork Township, in the County of Raleigh and State of West Virginia, aged 28 years, who being first duly sworn according to law, doth on oath make the following declaration as guardian of the minor children of John Petry, deceased, in order to obtain the benefits of the provision made by the act of Congress approved July 14, 1862, granting pensions to minor children under sixteen years of age of deceased officers and soldiers: and also of the act of July 25, 1866. That he is the guardian of Rozilla (Petry) and Susan E. (Petry) (minor children of John Petry), whose father was a private in Company G commanded by Captain James S. Cassady, in the 8th Regiment of Virginia Volunteers, in the War of 1861, and that the said John Petry died at (Andersonville Prison, Andersonville, GA) on or about the 29th day of June, 1864, by reason of disease consequent upon his exposure as prisoner of war. That the mother of the aforesaid children remarried with Thomas Arnold (whose wife she now is) on the 25th day of July 1868 (1869), that the date of birth of his said wards are as follows: Rosilla born on the 30th October 1860, Susan E. was born 14th Sept 1863. He further declares that the parents of his said wards were married in Raleigh County on the 6th day of November 1859, by one Matthew Ellison a Minister of the Gospel; and he also declares that he has not in any manner been engaged in, or aided or abetted the Rebellion in the United States. His post office and address is Matville, Raleigh County, Wva”.

Recorder’s Court held for Raleigh County, Recorder’s Office, Raleigh County, April 26, 1870, page 37.

Certificate of Marriage, State of West Virginia, County of Raleigh, Book 1850-95, Page 31.

Marriage Records of Raleigh County, West Virginia, at Courthouse, Beckley, Raleigh County.