

George Snuffer, III

By Darry L. Snuffer

George Snuffer, III, nicknamed “Dickey,” was born May 23, 1821, the youngest child of George Snuffer, Jr., and Ailsey Huff Snuffer. His probable place of birth is in Wythe County, Virginia, since his parents have been documented living there in 1822. Dickey was only eight years old when his dad moved from Wythe County to Logan County, Virginia (now West Virginia). They settled on Breckenridge Creek near present-day Bolt, Raleigh County. That region of Logan County became part of Fayette County in 1831 and part of Raleigh County in 1850. George, Jr., had secured a 500 acre land grant from the State of Virginia, dated October 17, 1831. He was in the area at least two years earlier, because he was listed in the 1830 Logan County Census.

More can be found out about George Snuffer, Jr., his family and ancestors, by reading the well documented book, The Snuffers, by Jim Wood.

There was no public school system in Virginia before the Civil War, so Dickey had little or no formal education as a child. In later years, when he was transferring land, he would always sign land deeds with an “X” beside his name. He learned to make a living by farming, hunting, and trapping from his Dad, uncles and older brothers.

George Dickey grew up and fell in love with Christina A. Walls, a woman 8 years his senior. Born in 1813, she was the daughter of J. & R. Walls. The Walls family had settled in present-day Wyoming County around 1830.

Their marriage date is uncertain, but their first child was born in 1844, in Fayette County, so they were probably married around 1842. The following children were born to their marriage:

1. Emiline, born 1844, married George P. Lemon on December 21, 1870. She died July 11, 1881.

2. Rebecca, born 1847, married Joshua M. Calloway on September 3, 1868. Her date of death is unknown.

3. Cyrus, born June 13, 1850, married Nancy J. Burgess on January 30, 1873. He married his second wife, Virginia Smith, on June 15, 1886. He died in 1905.

4. Russell, born June 17, 1854, married Paulina A. Trump on July 15, 1878. He died December 20, 1925.

5. Lewis, born March 17, 1857, married Lucinda E. Snuffer on July 5, 1877. He died on April 14, 1945.

All of Dickey's brothers and sisters had married and moved away by this time. Dickey felt a responsibility to stay close by and help his aging Dad. Dickey and Christina moved into a cabin that was on George Junior's farm, about a quarter of a mile from his Dad.

Both their cabins sat close to the main road leading from Raleigh County Court House to Logan County Court House. The road was known as the "Logan Turnpike." This section of road is known today as "Fairview School Road," and is left of West Virginia Route 99. Dickey's cabin site would later be known, to his descendants, as the "Tater Patch." Today, this spot is owned by Kim Hall; George Jr.'s cabin site is owned by Eddie Severt. There are no improvements on either spot today.

George Jr. was getting up in years in the late 1840's and started selling off his land. Until this time, Dickey owned no land of his own. On August 30, 1849, he purchased 100 acres of his Dad's Land Grant for \$200. This would be the only part of the original 500 acre Land Grant to stay in the Snuffer family, and only then, until the depression. Dickey eventually built a two-story log house on this 100 acre tract and moved his family there. Four years later, on April 20, 1853, he bought 75 acres that joined his property from Francis Granger, a New York land speculator, for \$70.

Winds of change were blowing through the country in the 1850's; winds that would lead to Civil War. There was a change in Dickey's home as well, as three boys were born in the decade of the 50's. Dickey was not a slave owner and boys were an asset to any family, especially those with farms. In this period of time, he also witnessed the death of both his parents. His mom, Ailsey, on March 8, 1855, and his dad, George, Jr., followed on November 25, 1858. When George Jr.'s last will and testament was probated on January 3, 1859, Dickey was left \$5.00.

No one knows for sure what side Dickey favored during the Civil War, if any. There is no record of him ever owning slaves, nor any record of him ever serving in the military. He did, however, have several family members, including three nephews that died fighting for the South.

The first known established church in Raleigh County, the Coal Marsh Missionary Baptist Church, was formed on October 29, 1836, only five miles from where Dickey lived. But, neither he nor any of his family members were listed on the first membership roll. In 1812, there had been a church established in present-day Wyoming County, Guyandotte Baptist Church, but that would have been 20 miles from Bolt, which was a long way in that day. Dickey was raised Pennsylvania Dutch, so maybe his family worshipped in each other's homes as a Family of Believers.

After the war, Dickey started expanding his real estate holdings and during the 1870's, enlarged it to 1,746 acres. He bought a tract of land known as Wilson Abbot Lot #2, which at one time had been part of the Rutter-Etting Survey of 174,673 acres, from three Beckley businessmen: Joseph Carper, Henry Gillespie and the "heirs" of Jacob Harper. Jacob Harper had been Dickey's brother-in-law before his murder in 1864 by

Confederate soldiers. Jacob was a schoolteacher and was noted for his kindness to the poor and made no difference between Union and Confederate families. He had married Dickey's sister, Elvira, on January 1, 1836.

On July 11, 1881, tragedy struck Dickey's family when his oldest child, Emiline, died at the age of 37. She had been married to George P. Lemon only 10 ½ years. Instead of burying her across from the "Tater Patch," where his Mom and Dad had been buried, he started another graveyard above his home on the 100 acre tract he had bought from his Dad. This graveyard is active and still in the Snuffer family.

By August 7, 1891, Dickey was getting up in years and started dividing his farm between the kids. All of his children had stayed loyal to him after marriage and helped him work the farm. He sold his three boys; Cyrus, Russell, and Lewis a tract of land containing 727 acres for \$1,000 and other valuable considerations. That was a good price considering the quality of land they received. Today, this property lies within the Earl Ulrich and Ruth York farms. In the same deed, Dickey reserved George Lemon, his widower son-in-law, 75 acres where he was residing and 100 acres where Rebecca Calloway, his daughter, was residing.

He sold two tracts of land outside the family. One was sold to Azel Fork, a Hinton businessman, containing 600 acres. It was all that portion of the Wilson Abbot Lot #2 lying South of Guyandotte Mountain. The other tract was sold to Abram Smith, and contained 109 ½ acres. It was located on the waters of Maple Meadow Creek.

Christina would sign no more deeds. Dickey's wife of 50 years passed away on January 7, 1893, at the age of 80. Her death was attributed to complications of old age! He buried Christina beside their daughter, Emiline.

Some 18 months later, on August 27, 1894, at the age of 73 years old, Dickey married again, this time to a woman 26 years his junior, Sarah Jane Gunnoe Wesley. Her husband William Wesley had died some years before. Dickey and Sarah didn't live together very long, if any. The story goes that Dickey turned his back to Sarah on their wedding night. The next morning she walked out of the hollow and didn't come back. But yet, on April 10, 1909, when Dickey's estate was being decided, Sarah received \$100 for her entire interest.

By the summer of 1902, Dickey was putting the finishing touches on dividing the farm. On August 26, he deeded Rebecca the 100 acres he had reserved for her, plus 88 more for a total of 188 acres. Today this land is part of Paul Trump's farm, and a certain section is still known as the Becky Calloway Place. Three days earlier, on August 23, Dickey deeded Russell 62 acres, more or less. It was part of the 75 acre tract he had bought from Francis Granger and a part of the 100 acre tract he had purchased from his Dad. This part of the original land grant would stay in the family until the Great Depression. Today, it is part of the Earl Lubich Farm. There was never more mentioned about the 75 acres that had been reserved for George Lemon, his dead daughter's

husband. That plan may have died with Christina nine years earlier, or maybe George remarried and moved away. Either way, he was left out of the picture.

After the finishing touches, Dickey had 113 acres left of his farm, plus his house and out buildings. By 1904, Dickey's health was failing along with his eye sight, and he couldn't keep house any longer. This is the story that has been handed down through the family.

Dickey went to his son, Russell, and told him if he would move in with him and take care of him until he died, he would let him have everything he had left. Russell turned him down and told him to talk to John R. Farmer, and his wife Elize. Elize was the daughter of Cyrus Snuffer, Dickey's brother that lived on Stephens Branch. Dickey talked to them and they worked out an agreement.

Dickey sold everything he had to them for \$500, and he reserved the right to remain on and control the land being sold during his life. And further consideration that John R. Farmer agreed to maintain and support him, as far as his individual wants are necessary, during the remainder of his life.

John and Elize did what they said they would do and took care of him until his death on April 25, 1908. His obituary stated, "Mr. George Snuffer, familiarly known by older citizens of our county, as "Uncle Dickey," died at his home near Bolt post office last Saturday morning at the ripe old age of 87 years. His death is attributed to diseases incident to old age. He had been blind several years.

"Mr. Snuffer was one of the first settlers of this county, and was one of its most respected citizens. He raised a large family, and had many other relatives. Among those surviving of his immediate family are Cyrus, Lewis and Russell Snuffer, all are well-known and respected citizens of this county. The funeral occurred Sunday afternoon, interment taking place in the family burying ground."

Dickey left no Last Will and Testament and after his death, his agreement with John Farmer was contested, but to no avail. John and Eliza had stepped forward and helped an old man in need and they were rewarded by the Court letting the agreement stand. John Farmer did have to pay Sarah Jane \$100 for her interest in the estate, as before mentioned.

Dickey's 113 acre home place would eventually be known as the John Dunn Place. Just recently, the home site and two acres surrounding it came back into the Snuffer family. This two acres and the Graveyard is the only part of George Snuffer, Jr.,'s original 500 acre Land Grant still in Snuffer control.

There were the live and times of George "Dickey" Snuffer, son of George Snuffer Junior and Ailsey Huff.

Sources:

1. Tombstones in George Snuffer Family Cemetery, Bolt, West Virginia
2. Montgomery County, Virginia Deeds, Book H, page 251
3. Fayette County, West Virginia Surveyors Record #1 Book 1, pg 11
4. Numerous entries in Raleigh County, West Virginia Deed Book.
5. Raleigh County, West Virginia Death Register 1853-1902
6. Raleigh County, West Virginia Marriage Records 1850-1895
7. "The Wood Files," George Snuffer III Family Chart
8. Tombstones in Cyrus Snuffer Cemetery, Bolt, West Virginia
9. Raleigh County Birth Records 1853-1884
10. The Snuffers by Jim Wood
11. Interview with Cleat Acord in 1998
12. Fayette County, West Virginia Deeds, Book D, pg 152
13. Raleigh County, West Virginia Deeds, Book B, pg 67
14. Raleigh County, West Virginia Death Register 1853-1902
15. Raleigh County, West Virginia Wills, Book 1, pg 17
16. Raleigh County History by Jim Wood
17. Wyoming County History by Mary Bowman
18. Raleigh County, West Virginia Deeds, Book B, N, and C
19. Raleigh County, West Virginia Marriage Records, Volume 4
20. Interview with Carol Worley Johnson in 2004
21. Raleigh County, West Virginia Deeds, Book 30, 41, 42 and Y
22. Interview with Ruth York on several occasions
23. Raleigh Register Newspaper – Thursday, April 30, 1908
24. Picture of George 'Dickey' Snuffer and second wife, Sarah Jane Gunnoe Wesley