

January 2, 1994

Dear Cousin Robert,

I was delighted to receive your quick response to my letter. For years I had pictured myself as a ship sailing on the sea of life without a chart to show from whence I came. One of my granddaughters has the privilege of having had 7 living grandmothers until she was 7 years old. While I had very little knowledge, as you could tell from my letter, of where the branches, let only the roots, of my family tree were located.

Upon receipt of your letter I located Cousin Coy Johnston in Sandy Springs, Ga. (I will add his address and telephone number at the end of this letter - in case you ever have need to steer another "Cousin".) We had an enlightening conversation, he is charming and quite alert for 88 years. He told me "William Johnston, etc." is no longer available in print, but he gave me a contact from whom I can order a copy on micro-fiche. He also told me of the booklet, "Two Centuries of Lawtonville Baptist", which can be ordered from Mary Eleanor Bowers.

I keep surprising myself as each new name appears in the past. Immediately upon reading the name "Rennie Sauls" the name of "Uncle Redmond Sauls" and his wife, "Aunt Esther" popped up as clearly as if I was seeing it written on paper. Over the holidays I went to visit with my mother's sister, Eugenia Nettles. Upon inquiry, Aunt Gene told me that she thought her grandmother's name was "Rennie Freeman". She was unaware of the relationship of Uncle Redmond, tho' she believed him to be a relative. This makes me believe that my information as to Synthia Freeman being my grandmother's mother is inaccurate. I'm wondering if "Freeman" might have been the name of great-grandmother's second husband. Especially since Aunt Gene said that Aunt Mary Lou, my grandmother's sister, eventually ended up living in the home of a Tom Freeman - not with her mother.

The name Richard Tyre was lurking in the depth of my subconscious. When I decided to start my search, I first looked up Great-Aunt Alice's funeral book, which Grandmother Rosa had given to one of my sons. In the book I found the names of Richard Tyre and Synthia Freeman listed as Alice's parents. I do not know who gave this information to the funeral home, therefore I have no way to confirm it.

I did not mean to imply to you that my grandmother had felt abandoned. (You probably read my sentiment between the lines.) My grandmother was a strong, plain-talking LADY, who met

adversity at the front door, prepared to do battle. If she were still among us, she would give me an immediate whollup for giving the appearance of having whined.

Grandmother's lot in life continued to be a difficult one, her first husband, Bud Lewis George, also a Carolinian, having gone to work one day and never reappearing, leaving her with 2 children, the oldest near 3. Not having the benefit of any formal education, she was still able to find herself a job rolling cigars, a trade she had learned while living in Ybor City, Fl., to support herself and the children. She took a great deal of pride in the fact that she had never "gone on the dole", and had managed to keep her family intact.

Grandmother married a second time to Samuel Edward Volks, he died shortly after my birth, 1935, leaving her with a 10 year old son. A short while after Sam's death, grandmother took the job as cook at St. Thomas' Home for Boys, here in Savannah, where she was held in high regard by the young men who lived there. Several of them kept in contact with her until her death in 1981.

In spite of never attending school, grandmother was able to teach herself to read, write, and "cipher". I think she must have invented the phonic system of reading and spelling as what she heard was what you got (phone-fone). Still I never received a letter from her that was not understandable. She was hard-working and unpretentious, always available to lend a helping hand, or a bowl of soup, to one in need.

She loved books, especially mysteries, cowboy movies, Gene Autry being the love of her life, her rocking chair, crocheting and children. She could rock a sick baby all night long and never complain about the lack of sleep. She was not a huggy grandmother, but showed her love by a squeeze on your shoulder, or a left over biscuit with butter and sugar on it. While at the same time she was not shy about administering instant justice to rectify any "criminal activity" on the part of kids. "Yes ma'am, no ma'am, please and thank you" were required of anyone capable of speech, and the fly-swatter was kept handy to enforce the rule. She taught the girls, and some of the boys, to cook, sew and do handwork. And even after she has been gone from us for 12 years the Grands, Greats and Great-Greats still speak of her as if we expect her to enter the room at any moment.

Grandmother was also some what ahead of her time when it came to raising children. She definitely was not an advocate of censorship. As a child I was allowed to read anything I wanted

to read. Grandmother's feelings were, "if she can't understand it she won't waste her time reading it". Consequently, I read "Gone With The Wind" in my 10th summer and became obsessed with that period of history.

She was also a great lover of trees and flowers, and was blessed with a green thumb. I do believe she could have grown a tree from a broomstick.

When I married and had children, there was Grandmother, who called herself "RETIRED", always available to help care for her great-grands. She raised them on the same platitudes she had taught her grands: "an honest days work for a day's pay"; "there is no disgrace in any honest work"; "if you are going to dig ditches, dig the best ditch possible"; "idle hands are the devil's workshop"; and most important, "sweep in front of your own door before worrying about the dirt in front of your neighbor's door". As a result of her teachings, we are a family of service to our fellowman workers, numbering among us an unusual number of caregivers, nurses and hospital workers, and several peace officers.

Now I must bring this letter to a close before it qualifies to become a book, but not before I order a copy of "Our Family Circle". Enclosed is my check to cover the same.

With best wishes for a Very Happy and Healthy New Year to you and "Cousin Cora", I am,

Sincerely,

*Cousin Jerry*

Jerry G. Ward

Coy Johnston  
4785 Cherrywood lane. N.W.  
Sandy Springs, Ga.

Ph # 404-255-7832

"William Johnston and His Descendants" on micro fiche:

Burnett Micro Fiche  
3891 Commando Drive  
Chamblee, Ga. 30341-1854

Ph # 404-445-6445

"Two Centuries of Lawtonville Baptist":

Mrs. Mary Eleanor Bowers  
Estil, S.C. 29918

1111 East 51st Street  
Savannah, Ga. 31404  
December 13, 1993

Rev. Dr. Robert E. H. Peeples  
8 Moonshell Road  
Hilton Head, S. C. 29928

Dear Dr. Peeples,

I am the oldest grandchild of Rosa Rebecca Johnston George Volks, born May 1, 1889 in Hampton County, S C., died November 14, 1981, cousin to Stella Ihly Henderson. My grandmother was raised in the home of her aunt, Rosa Rebecca Johnston Garvin and her husband.

Recently, I began the search to find my roots. I knew to start by finding Rosa Rebecca Hamilton and William Cuyler Johnston, though I don't know if this was my grandmother's grandparents or "Great Aunt Rosa", this quickly led me to Rosa Rebecca Johnston and James B. Garvin. This must be the right family group as I remember "Aunt Rosa" and "Cousins Frank, Willie, and Lena" from my grandmother's many conversations during my childhood. I, also, recall the name Catherine (O'Neil?) as being a relative, but I'm don't know the relationship.

My grandmother made reference to her memory of her grandfather wearing a military uniform while riding a horse, but she know he was not in the military at that time, but had been in the Civil War. I, also, seem to think he might have lost one of his legs, and that he died when my grandmother was 5 or 6.

Grandmother said that her father had died when she and her sisters, Alice (8/3/1891-7/31/1971) and Mary Lou (Mamie?), were very young, that her mother was leaving with a gentleman, who only wanted one of the children - Mary Lou, so she and Alice were placed with other family members. She never saw her mother again, being left only with a mental picture "of a pretty lady seated in a wagon with her youngest child in her lap, who never looked back". She next saw Mary Lou about 1947. Of course, the mother had died by that time, and I never heard any conversation concerning her. Therefore, I don't know whom she married, or where to begin to look for information concerning her.

Great-Aunt Alice married several times, lastly to John Dixon. They lived in Screven, Ga., between Jesup and Waycross, for many years. She had no children.

The 1870 S.C Census shows William Cuyler Johnston, wife Rebecca, with children, RICHARD (born 1853), William, Alice, and what I deciphered as Nathan, to be residing in Beaufort County, St. Lukes's Parish. I believe this to be RICHARD TYRE JOHNSTON, my great-grandfather, who was married to SYNTHIA FREEMAN, but, at this point, have been unable to substantiate my belief. Also, I've been unable to place "Great Aunt Rosa", whom my grandmother said she was attending at her death, on our family tree.

Since I thought Cousin Stella might have been in possession of some of my missing links, I contacted her son, Lindsey, Jr., who referred me to both you, as an expert on these family branches, and Anne Elizabeth Miller's book, "Our Family Circle". After reading the section of Ms. Miller's book on Landgrave Smith, which contains the Hamilton family line, I'm sure that I'm in the "right church", but am not positive that I'm in the "right pew".

If you have any additional information that might help me in my search, or advice on how I should proceed, I would appreciate hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Geraldine Gavin Ward