

## **SOME JACKSON COUNTY MYTHS AND LEGENDS NEED A SECOND LOOK**

**by Ann B. Chambless**

**It is never easy to refute long-held local myths and legends. Traditional stories were easier to accept before the modern era of digitized records. Today, historians and researchers can easily locate documentation via the internet, libraries, and federal government agencies such as the Library of Congress, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, U. S. Congressional Records, Government Land Office (GLO), the National Archives as well as university archives, church records, court house records, and historical and genealogical societies.**

**One Jackson County legend that needs a second look (based on records that were not readily available when the history of Jackson County was published 70 to 100 years ago) is the legend regarding the date Henry and Catherine (Branner) Derrick came to Jackson County and helped found Woodville, Alabama.**

**Page 12 of John R. Kennamer's HISTORY OF JACKSON COUNTY states that Henry Derrick came to Old Woodville in 1815. However, Mr. Kennamer did not cite a source for this statement which has since proved to be unrealistic for the following reasons:**

**1. Henry Derrick married Catherine Branner on March 27, 1809, in Sevier County, Tennessee. In Catherine (Branner) Derrick's nephew's CASPER BRANNER OF VIRGINIA AND HIS DESCENDANTS, George Casper Branner wrote that his Aunt Catherine (Branner) Derrick's first two sons were born in East Tennessee. George Branner Derrick was born on January 14, 1816, in Jefferson County, Tennessee, and Maston D. Derrick was born on April 25, 1819, in Jefferson County, Tennessee. He also recorded that Henry and Catherine Derrick "lived for the first ten years of their marriage in East Tennessee (1809-1819,) but in the Spring of 1819 they moved to Alabama, going by boat down the (Tennessee) River to Gunter's Landing. They had several children at that time."**

***NOTE by ABC: The Derricks had 3 daughters and 2 sons born between 1810 and 1819 in East Tennessee. At the time of the 1850 and 1860 Marshall County, Alabama censuses, George B. Derrick told the census enumerator he was born in Tennessee (1816) and in the 1880 census his children told the census enumerator that their father was born in Tennessee. All Derrick family researchers who have posted Henry Derrick's family on Ancestry.com show that George B. Derrick was born in 1816 and Maston D. Derrick was born in 1819, both in Jefferson County, Tennessee. Therefore, this is further proof that the Derricks did not arrive in Alabama until 1819, after the birth of these two sons in Tennessee.***

**SOME JACKSON COUNTY MYTHS AND LEGENDS NEED A SECOND LOOK (Continued)**

**The Branner family historian also stated: "They (Henry and Catherine (Branner) Derrick) settled first on the south side of the Tennessee River three miles south of Gunter's Landing. IN THE FALL OF THE SAME YEAR (1819) THEY MOVED TO JACKSON COUNTY, 21 miles north of Gunter's Landing where they spent the rest of their life."**

**NOTE by ABC: The Cherokee land that became Jackson County was ceded to the U.S. government on February 27, 1819, and Jackson County was created on December 13, 1819, one day before Alabama was admitted to the Union.**

**Jefferson County, Tennessee records also offer proof that Henry and Catharine Derrick were still in East Tennessee until 1819.**

**2. Documents found in Bureau of Indian Affairs records provide reasons why Henry Derrick would have been reluctant to move on Cherokee land before the Cherokee Treaty of 1819. The records show that between 1801 and 1819 it was necessary for a white man to have a pass signed by the government appointed Cherokee Indian Agent in order to legally pass through or spend time in any part of the Cherokee Nation. The Bureau of Indian Affairs records show that most of the passes issued were for four months to six months or less.**

**From 1801 to 1823 Col. Col. Return Jonathan Meigs was the agent to the Cherokees. During Meigs' tenure, he kept a record of all passes issued to white men who wanted to pass through the Cherokee Nation or ply their trade among the Indians. Some men who had special skills, such as blacksmiths, were invited onto their land by the tribe. Other passes show that men were careful to obtain passes, as many received a pass to travel by boat on the Tennessee River to destinations such as Natchez, Mississippi, and New Orleans, Louisiana. In all the documents for passage through the Cherokee Nation, the phrase *"they conducting themselves in conformity to the Laws for regulating intercourse with the Indian Tribes & for preserving peace on the frontier"* appears. In those passes granting permission to remain in the Cherokee Nation, the phrase *"provided there shall be no objections made by the Indians"* is used. All passes were issued at South West Point (near present-day Kingston, Tennessee) except for a very few early in 1801 that were issued at Tellico. All passes were signed by Return J. Meigs (unless otherwise noted).**

**SOME JACKSON COUNTY MYTHS AND LEGENDS NEED A SECOND LOOK (Continued)**

**Two examples of a pass for a white man to work in Northeast Alabama:**  
**(1) Samuel Norwood has permission to live in the Cherokee Nation at the place of John Rogers for the term of six months from the present dates & may pass & repass occasionally to visit his friends during the term above mentioned . . . 27 June 1803**

**(2) Thomas Imely is hereby permitted to work a Salt Petre Cave in the Cherokee Nation on the waters of Crow Creek for Capt. John Bengé a Cherokee as long as the circumstances of the Country shall justify the right of the said Bengé in occupancy of said cave. November, 1816**

**There were also many intruders who attempted to settle illegally and had to be removed by the agent. The Bureau of Indian Affairs records contain several examples showing Return J. Meigs had to send troops to forcibly remove white intruders without a permit from Indian land. The following letter is one example: 9 March 1810 *Several families have intruded again on Indian lands. Some have been said to be determined to hold their ground.... A small detachment will march on Monday next to remove them. I shall go with the detachment & expect to effect the removal without difficulty.* Return J. Meigs.**

**As late as March 1819, intruders were still being removed from the Cherokee lands. On March 25, 1819, the U.S. Secretary of War wrote the following to Cherokee Indian Agent:**

**"Sir, Major General Andrew Jackson has been instructed to remove the intruders in the Cherokee Lands, on a requisition from you for that purpose, should it be found necessary. You will make out a list of the intruders and require their departure within a fixed period and you will select some of the most wealthy and influential from among them for prosecution under the Act of the 30<sup>th</sup> of March 1802 and the supplementary Act of the 29<sup>th</sup> of April 1816."**

**SOURCE: Page 591, TERRITORIAL PAPERS OF THE UNITED STATES, Volume XVIII, compiled and edited by Clarence Edwin Carter published by the Government Printing Office in 1952.**

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The facts outlined above in Section 1 and Section 2 provide documentation of when Henry and Catherine (Branner) Derrick actually settled in Jackson County in the Old Woodville area as well as reasons Henry Derrick chose to wait until the latter part of 1819 to do so.

**NOTE:** The full text of the history of the Branner Family can be read at:  
[http://www.archive.org/stream/casperbrannerofv00bran/casperbrannerofv00bran\\_djvu.txt](http://www.archive.org/stream/casperbrannerofv00bran/casperbrannerofv00bran_djvu.txt)

**Based on George Casper Branner's record of Henry and Catherine Derrick's arrival in Alabama and the place of birth of their sons given in census records, Woodville was established in late 1819 and early 1820 after Jackson County officially became a part of the new frontier in North Alabama, on December 13, 1819.**

**The second Woodville legend that needs a second look is that the town was named named for Richard Wood who married Ann Laymon. However, the Woodville post office was established in 1823, approximately 10 years before Richard and Ann Wood moved from Tennessee to Woodville, AL. Richard Wood, Jr. and Ann (Laymon) Wood were enumerated in the 1830 Sevier County, Tennessee census and do not appear in the Jackson County, Alabama census until the 1840 census.**

**In the 1830 Sevier County, Tennessee census Richard Wood, Jr. was age 20 - 30. His wife was the same age, and they had one daughter under 5 and one daughter, age 5-10. In the 1840 Jackson County, Alabama census Richard and Ann (Laymon) Wood were both 30-40, and they had three daughters whose ages were given as 10-14. Two of their daughters can be traced after their marriage via the 1850-1880 Jackson County censuses. To date, no information has been found about the third daughter, and it is possible that she died young between 1840 and 1850.**

**The 1850-1880 Jackson County censuses show their daughter Martha Jane (Wood) Sublett was born in 1829 in Tennessee and their daughter Lydia (Wood) Scruggs Flowers was born in 1831 or 1832 in Tennessee. The 1880 census recorded Lydia's age as 48 (born in 1832) in Tennessee.**

**Richard Wood, Jr. was the son of Richard and Fanny Wood, Sr. Richard Wood, Sr. was a Primitive Baptist minister in Sevier County, Tennessee from 1785 until he died in 1831. A great deal has been written about his life, as he established the Forks of Little Pigeon Baptist Church in 1789 and his name appears in their church minutes almost every month for 40 years. Ann (Laymon) Wood was the daughter of Daniel and Anna Sarah (Jones) Laymon, Sr.**

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**Daniel Laymon, Sr. was also a Primitive Baptist minister in Sevier County, Tennessee. He served as the minister of Bethel Baptist Church from 1820 until the third Saturday of July 1846. per Bethel Baptist Church minutes. Ann (Laymon) Wood's oldest sister was Lydia Ann Laymon; most likely she was the namesake for Richard and Ann (Laymon) Wood's daughter, Lydia (Wood) Scruggs Flowers.**

**Tennessee census records and church minutes offer a new timeline for the founding and naming of Woodville, Alabama. It behooves all who provide both written and oral historical accounts to document their stories. \_\_ HISTORY WITHOUT DOCUMENTATION IS MERELY MYTH.**

**POSTMASTERS at WOODVILLE, ALABAMA , from its establishment in 1823 through 1936 based on research of William (Bill) Page via microfilm:**

**September 23, 1823 William Hainey ( Wm. Hainey was elected Clerk of the County Court of Decatur County on September 5, 1822.)**

<b>August 15, 1826</b>	<b>Hiram Ross</b>	<b>April 19, 1883</b>	<b>John F. Bishop</b>
<b>October 29, 1829</b>	<b>Henry Derrick</b>	<b>Nov. 25, 1884</b>	<b>George R. Hodges</b>
<b>September 1, 1834</b>	<b>Alfred Moore</b>	<b>April 20, 1889</b>	<b>Robert F. Lawing</b>
<b>March 18, 1836</b>	<b>John Gillenwater</b>	<b>Aug. 7, 1893</b>	<b>George R. Hodges</b>
<b>January 9, 1840</b>	<b>William H. Fowler</b>	<b>June 23, 1897</b>	<b>Emmett Woodall</b>
<b>January 7, 1841</b>	<b>Seaborn I. Rountree</b>	<b>May 7, 1910</b>	<b>John R. Kennamer</b>
<b>March 13, 1844</b>	<b>Migginson Loving</b>	<b>Aug. 7, 1934</b>	<b>R. Elywn Page</b>
<b>July 2, 1845</b>	<b>Seaborn I. Rountree</b>	<b>April 24, 1936</b>	<b>Mrs. Ruby Evans Page</b>
<b>October 4, 1850</b>	<b>Albert G. Clopton</b>		
<b>May 25, 1851</b>	<b>James H. Stephens</b>		
<b>July 19, 1852</b>	<b>Joel P. Ledbetter</b>		
<b>September 4, 1854</b>	<b>Robert P. Mackey</b>		
<b>September 22, 1855</b>	<b>Clement C. Shelton</b>		
<b>December 11, 1856</b>	<b>Joel P. Ledbetter</b>		
<b>September 21, 1858</b>	<b>Robert P. Mackey</b>		
<b>January 16, 1860</b>	<b>John J. Dillard</b>		
<b>December 31, 1860</b>	<b>Jasper N. Matheny</b>		
<b>January 25, 1866</b>	<b>Mrs. Mary Evans</b>		
<b>August 5, 1867</b>	<b>John Wright</b>		
<b>February 14, 1870</b>	<b>office discontinued</b>		
<b>June 1, 1870</b>	<b>William P. Gynn</b>		
<b>March 23, 1874</b>	<b>John A. Brown</b>		
<b>May 14, 1875</b>	<b>Andrew J. Wann</b>		
<b>February 6, 1879</b>	<b>David A. Thomas</b>		
<b>February 1, 1881</b>	<b>Frank Bishop</b>		
<b>November 7, 1881</b>	<b>George R. Hodges</b>		
<b>February 3, 1883</b>	<b>Ira G. Wood</b>		