

Founding Chestnut Ridge: The Origins of Central West Virginia's Multiracial Community

A Senior Honors Thesis

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by

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Introduction: “A Clan of Partly Colored People:” The “Guineas” of West Virginia

For visitors to Philippi, West Virginia, the name Chestnut Ridge Road carries no significance. There is nothing to distinguish it from Main Street or Walnut Street in the minds of strangers to that small mountain town. For the people of Barbour County, however, Chestnut Ridge carries a connotation that few guests to the area can understand. Natives of the region recognize Chestnut Ridge Road, Kennedy Road, Croston School Road, and Norris Ridge Road as distinct from the rest of Philippi, home to the “Chestnut Ridge People,” the multiracial descendants of early European pioneers, free African Americans, and Native Americans.¹

Before the ancestors of the Chestnut Ridge People had been defined by the white community as a distinct outside group, they were individual settlers who, like frontier residents of European descent, had migrated westward in hopes of a better life. What set these men and women apart was their racial background. Some, like Henry Dalton, moved west after completing indentures that had resulted from their illegitimate “mulatto” birth. Others, like Hugh Kennedy, were descendants of multigenerational multiracial families that could be traced back to the seventeenth century. One, Wilmore Male, was an Englishman who chose to live as man and wife with his slave, Nancy.

These multiracial families’ difference from the white community gave them a shared experience. The Males and the Daltons quickly intermarried, the free black Hill family taught Henry Dalton’s children the trade of stonemasonry, and each ancestor of the Chestnut Ridge People provided support for others in the same position as themselves. The ties they created survived into the twentieth century.

¹ Avery F. Gaskins “CRP.” Message to the author. 13 Sept. 2009. E-mail.

Though they maintained close relationships among themselves, the ancestors of the Chestnut Ridge People did not live in an entirely insular community. Many individuals formed friendships with their white neighbors and partook in the activities of the white community. Their race was not an impediment to accumulating real estate or personal property. Nor did race prevent many from gaining respect in the wider community, especially as several of the men were Revolutionary War veterans.

Given the background of these first multiracial settlers and the levels of success experienced by many, several questions arise. How were people of mixed race treated on the frontier? Did their experience differ from that of the free black community that remained part of the Atlantic world? How was race defined on the frontier, especially in the case of individuals whose racial background was considered ambiguous? Were all of the restrictions placed on free blacks by lawmakers in the eastern half of the state enforced as stringently in the western half?

The available literature of the Chestnut Ridge community does little to address these questions. Most of what has been written on the group concerns only genealogy and fails to place individuals in a historical context. Almost all of this genealogical work avoids the issue of African heritage and, if it is addressed at all, denies such ancestry in favor of a solely Native American and European background. Additionally, the foundation of most genealogical accounts is community legend rather than historic documentation.

With the notable exception of Avery F. Gaskins, writers from other disciplines such as sociology who have dealt with the Chestnut Ridge People have also focused on legend rather than historical fact. John Burnell, for instance, examined in the 1950s the contemporary status of the group and touched upon speculations about their history without considering the issue in detail. When the community appeared in surveys like Brewton Berry's that considered multiple

multiracial groups in the United States, it was generally given little attention in comparison to better-known multiracial groups such as the Melungeons. Gaskins is the only researcher who has addressed the historical origins of the Chestnut Ridge People in detail.

Within the next five chapters, I will continue Gaskins's work decoding the true history of the group. I aim to provide a comprehensive history of the Chestnut Ridge community into the nineteenth century and place the experiences of the first multiracial settlers to the area in a historical context. The lives of the Chestnut Ridge People's ancestors cannot be considered outside of the era and location in which they existed or the prevailing racial attitudes that they encountered in the world around them. Considered together, the story of these multiracial settlers highlights the unique experiences of frontier life and the ways in which everyday interaction between whites and blacks could defy the standards for race relations set by lawmakers.

* * * * *

Questions about the racial background of the Chestnut Ridge People have created confusion and conflict in Barbour County for generations. During the first half of the twentieth century, their African American heritage led to community debates over "colored schools" and "whites only" stores and restaurants. The competing traditions of the Philippi whites and the Chestnut Ridge People fueled these disagreements. The white community believed the Chestnut Ridge People might be the survivors of Walter Raleigh's colony of Roanoke, descendants of De Soto's expedition, or the illegitimate offspring of Italian laborers who came to the area with the advent of the railroad. The most common legend among whites was that the Chestnut Ridge People were a "clan of partly-colored people " descended from a common English ancestor.²

² Brewton Barry, *Almost White*; John P. Burnell, *The Guineas of West Virginia*; Gaskins, "An Introduction to the Guineas"; William Harlan Gilbert Jr., *Memorandum Concerning the Characteristics of the Larger Mixed – Blood Racial Islands of the Eastern United States*; David Henige, "Origin Traditions of American Racial Isolates"; Hu Maxwell, *The History of Barbour County, West Virginia*, 310.

This legend led the white community to refer pejoratively to the multiracial Chestnut Ridge People as “Guineas” since at least the 1890s.³

To put the effects of such beliefs in an early twentieth century context, some members of the white community expressed their opinions in highly racist terms, saying that the Chestnut Ridge People were descended from “low class white and lower class niggers who mixed.” Attached to these attitudes was a distinct moral element, leading the quoted Philippi resident to assert that “low moral standards of both groups produced half-breeds who had equally low or lower moral standards, resulting in much sexual promiscuity.”⁴ The white community believed that, due to their distinct character, they could identify a Chestnut Ridge person at first sight. One resident of Philippi commented in the 1950s “I can spot one of those Guineas no matter where he is. I don’t know how I can tell he’s a Guinea, but I can spot him just the same.”⁵ Other members of the white community acknowledged that detecting a physical difference between themselves and the Chestnut Ridge People was often impossible. Still, in their eyes, a distinction had to be made. In this case, the basis for the distinction was the surname. To have one of the surnames associated with the group was to “be, ipso facto, a Guinea.”⁶

The Chestnut Ridge People responded to stories of African ancestors with their own oral traditions. Seeing the white community’s stories as the basis for prejudice against Chestnut Ridge People, the Chestnut Ridge community insisted upon a Native American background.

³ Though originally meant as a means of insult and exclusion, “Guinea” has evolved into a way among researchers to refer comprehensively to the early Chestnut Ridge community. When considering the last century, “Chestnut Ridge People” can be used accurately. Beyond that, however, the term can be misleading. The ancestors of the modern day “CRP,” were not confined to Chestnut Ridge. They were from the Atlantic coast of Virginia and Maryland, settling in various areas of western Virginia, such as Romney and Morgantown. Thus, when discussing the historical origins of the community, the term “Guinea” will be used instead of “Chestnut Ridge People.” The term is used only for clarification and entirely without the negative or demeaning connotations it once held.

⁴ Philippi resident quoted in Burnell, 34.

⁵ Ibid, 63.

⁶ Ibid, 64.

Although such ancestry still subjected them to racism, identifying themselves as Native Americans gave the Chestnut Ridge People an alternative to the category in which the white community had placed them. As Avery F. Gaskins puts it, though the Chestnut Ridge People still suffered from the effects of racism, Native American identity placed “them in another oppressed minority that in their eyes [had] more prestige.”⁷ Part of identifying with Native Americans, for many of the Chestnut Ridge People, was disassociating themselves from African American identity. Several residents of Chestnut Ridge in the 1950s separated themselves from concerns about Civil Rights by claiming racial discrimination “had a definite basis in ‘The Curse of Canon.’”⁸ Chestnut Ridge parents also refused to send their children to “Negro Schools” that had been organized for them, partly on the grounds that “the teachers were colored or of African descent.”⁹ As a result of these sentiments, many Chestnut Ridge children did not receive beyond an eighth grade education, since their parents seemed “content that their children receive only the minimum of education rather than have them attend Negro schools.”¹⁰

The tension between Native American and African heritage remains part of the group today. Modern genealogists have used the ambiguities of the historical record to advance the Native American position. Given the varied heritage of the group, their racial designations on old tax rolls and census records were sporadic and subjective. Adding to the difficulty of this inconsistency is the task of decoding the racial terminology of the time. The terms “Mulatto,” “Free Negro,” “Negro,” “colored,” and “free colored,” have all been applied to the ancestors of Chestnut Ridge People. The definitions of such terms have changed over time and it would be a

⁷ Gaskins “Identity/CRP Today.” Message to the author. 14 Oct. 2009. E-mail.

⁸ Burnell, 44.

⁹ Burnell, 86.

¹⁰ Burnell, 94.

mistake to apply modern notions of what each means to historical records. Even within the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the legal terminology of race continued to change.

As of 1705, according to Virginia law, a mulatto was “the child of an Indian, and the child, grandchild, or great-grandchild of a Negro.” In 1785, mulattos were reclassified as individuals with “one-fourth or more Negro blood.”¹¹ Thus, the term “mulatto” applied not only to the offspring of one African and one European parent, but to Native Americans as well. The term “colored” applied to anyone who was not white, leaving the “negro,” “mulatto,” and “Indian” of the 1705 law in a “racial and ethnic triumvirate of legal disability, linking the fate of all free people of African and Indian descent.”¹² Historical usage of terms like mulatto and Negro shows how legal ideals “clashed with the reality of a territory which included many different types of people, of all colors and different degrees of intermixture of European, American, African, and Asian.”¹³

Even within broad racial categories, some Virginians remained difficult to classify. Virginia’s 1705 and 1785 laws were contested by individuals who were not legally “mulatto” or “Negro,” but who were not accepted as white due to distant African or Indian ancestry. A Virginia act of 1833 tried to clarify the issue, though the resulting legislature made “no sense at all”: with satisfactory evidence, “any free person of mixed-blood resident within such County, not being a white person nor a free negro or mulatto,” would be granted “a certificate that he or she is not a free Negro or mulatto; which certificate shall be sufficient to protect and secure such person from and against the pains, penalties, disabilities, and disqualifications, imposed by the

¹¹ Jack D. Forbes, *Africans and Native Americans*, 195.

¹² Kathleen Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs*, 215.

¹³ Forbes, 65.

law upon free negroes and mulattoes, as free negroes and mulattoes.”¹⁴ Joshua D. Rothman, attempting to undo the tangled logic of the act, succinctly describes its implications. “The laws restricting free blacks and mulattoes applied to free blacks and mulattoes. Free people who were not black or mulatto should have automatically been exempt from the restrictions – because they would have been white. The ‘not a negro’ act of 1833 explicitly indicated that there were some people who were not black but who were not white either...Theoretically, then, some Virginians had been legally raceless.”¹⁵

The ancestors of the Chestnut Ridge People would have been among the legally raceless. Given the alterations to legal definitions of race, changing tides of public opinion, and the fluidity of day-to-day classifications, it is no wonder these individuals had a difficult time determining and then legally establishing their identities. The benefits of being classified as one race or another changed from situation to situation and decade-to-decade. This explains the evolution of identity on Chestnut Ridge. The relatively liberal attitudes of the early frontier and post - Revolutionary era disappeared and were replaced by narrowing religious definitions of morality, fear of free blacks and slave uprisings, and Indian removal. Scientific racism and Jim Crow weakened the position of and depleted the opportunities for this multiracial group.

Even after Jim Crow and the fights over the “colored schools” had come to an end, the Chestnut Ridge Community continued to see its Native American heritage as the most advantageous option. The push for Native American recognition increased in the latter half of the twentieth century. The 1970s saw the spread of research by Bernard Mayhle, a family genealogist keen on clearing any trace of African blood from his name. In his discussion of the ex-slave wife of Wilmore Male, an Englishman who was an ancestor of many Chestnut Ridge

¹⁴ Joshua D. Rothman, *Notorious in the Neighborhood: Sex and Families Across the Color Line in Virginia 1787 – 1865*, 211.

¹⁵ Ibid.

People, Mayhle only mentions that “it is not known whether she was of native Bahamian ancestry or not.”¹⁶ He avoids mentioning her African heritage altogether.

The recent popularity of genealogical research, aided by a multitude of new Internet sites on the subject, has led researchers to build upon Mayhle’s work. Personal genealogy pages on the ancestors of the Chestnut Ridge People have flourished. Often repeating Mayhle’s discoveries, many of the sites provide their own insights into the heritage of the group, always avoiding the question of African heritage. One site repeats an erroneous account from a 1930s newspaper article that stated that Wilmore Male’s wife, Nancy (also called Priscilla), was neither Bahamian nor African, but “a French servant woman, whether she was from France or from the French colony of Hayti [sic] we do not know.”¹⁷ The most blatant denial of African heritage is Thomas McElwain’s declaration that “there is no record anywhere of black slave or African ancestry” in the community.¹⁸

McElwain’s 1981 broad study of religion and legend, *Our Kind of People: Identity, Community, and Religion on Chestnut Ridge*, published by the University of Stockholm’s department for the study of comparative religion, maintains the position that, as the author puts it, “the only historically tenable position of the community” is that of “white and native American descent.”¹⁹ When discussing Nancy Male, McElwain only mentions that she was “half Indian,” adding that “it is unclear how an Englishman named Wilmore Male, a brick maker, acquired Priscilla [Nancy] Harris as wife.”²⁰ Nancy Male’s 1826 emancipation papers clearly

¹⁶ Bernard V. Mayhle, *The Males of Barbour County, West Virginia*, 10 A.

¹⁷ Judy Mayle White, “Ancestors of Judy Helena Mayle.”

¹⁸ Thomas McElwain, *Our Kind of People*, 37.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ McElwain, 38. Various oral sources state that Nancy’s maiden name was Harris, another common Guinea surname, but no evidence has been found to support the claim. In addition, the emancipation papers filed by Wilmore Male indicate that he referred to her as Nancy, rather than Priscilla, a name by which she is sometimes known in oral histories.

illustrate, however, that Wilmore “acquired” Nancy by purchasing her as his slave, which contradicts McElwain’s claim against slave ancestry.²¹

Though McElwain’s study makes no mention of the relationship, the author appears to have had invested interest in the subject. McElwain is a native of West Virginia, and recent genealogies of the Chestnut Ridge Community have linked the McElwain surname with nineteenth century Guinea settlers.²² McElwain is also deeply invested in the history of native West Virginia. He has published multiple studies on various Native American tribes and is involved in the attempt to revive the West Virginian Mingo language.²³ Given McElwain’s denial of the slightest trace of African ancestry, it is not surprising that Chestnut Ridge People point to his study above all others as the definitive history of their community.²⁴

On the notion of individual identity, McElwain admits that the situation is “complex.” “The first level is white. The local native, even in accepting membership in the community on the ridge, will tend to explain that the ridge people are white people, that their non-white identity is completely the fiction of the mainstream white community. On further inquiry most will reveal a belief in that fiction, and admit to slave origins. Some will reveal a knowledge of their true ancestry which is of course mixed mainly Indian and white.”²⁵ McElwain does not consider the possibility that when admitting to slave ancestors, the Chestnut Ridge People are not merely believing the “fiction” of the white community but drawing on their own family traditions that

²¹ Hampshire County, West Virginia Deed Book 25, Page 58

²² Helen Campbell, “The Forgotten Ancestors of West Virginia: Guineas,” 17 – 19.

²³ McElwain’s books include: *Mythological Tales and the Allegany Seneca: A Study of the Socio-Religious Context of Traditional Oral Phenomena in an Iroquois Community* (1978), *Semantic Variation and Change in Seneca Language and Religion* (1979), *The Archaic Roots of Eastern Woodland Eschatology* (1986), and *The language of Seneca Christianity as Reflected in Hymns* (1990). A biography of the author and information on the Mingo language project are available at <http://mingolanguage.org/authors.html>

²⁴ Dee Randall, “Dee Dovey’s Genealogy.”

²⁵ McElwain, 55.

include the story of Nancy Male. McElwain even contradicts his own confidence in the group's "true ancestry" when he includes the word "mainly" before "Indian and white."

When accessing historical records, the presence of non-white racial designations is acknowledged by many genealogists but altered and suppressed. It may be true that the group's ancestors were "listed on all available census' at one time or another as White, Mulatto, or Mulatto and later as White," but genealogists quickly add that they "have not found any designations on any census that any of [their] direct ancestors are enumerated as Black; tho one or a few are listed as F.N., a designation for 'Free Negro,' NOT 'Freed Negro'."²⁶ The specification of "direct" ancestors and the attempt to make the distinction between "Free Negro" and "Freed Negro" illustrate perfectly genealogists' need to assert predominantly Native American heritage while down playing any indicators of African background.

Even the treatment of the term "Guinea" has been altered to bolster the idea of Native American identity. A Barbour County historian, Hu Maxwell, wrote in 1899 that the name Guinea came from the "erroneous assumption that they are Guinea Negroes."²⁷ Indeed, since the eighteenth century, "Guinea" had been used as a "generalized slur" against African Americans. Recent researchers, however, have different ideas about the term's origin, ideas that support rather than clash with a Native American background.

Brent Kennedy, author of the hotly debated book, *The Melungeons: the Resurrection of a Proud People*, argues that the name Guinea comes not from the term's common eighteenth century usage in relation to the slave trade but from the fact that the Guinea coin was one targeted by Melungeon counterfeiters. Even if the name was related to the coin, it is more likely that the connection would be to the coin's function as a currency for the slave trade, not

²⁶ Randall, "Tri-Racial Laws, Issues, and Opinions."

²⁷ Maxwell, 310.

Melungeon counterfeiters. The idea that the name could be attached to Melungeons fits with Kennedy's endeavor to turn the Guineas into West Virginian Melungeons. Kennedy believes that "the Guineas have a history nearly identical to the Melungeons and are physically indistinguishable from them."²⁸ Apart from the fact that supposed physical similarities are not reliable evidence in distinguishing a common heritage, the two groups have distinct and dissimilar histories, as will soon become clear.

The case has also been made that "Guinea" is a corruption of the word "Allegheny."²⁹ This use of Allegheny, being a Native American word, offers another weak link to Native American culture. McElwain makes other tenuous links between the Chestnut Ridge People and Native Americans, including claims to knowledge of native hunting traps and "native remedies."³⁰ McElwain does not mention the fact that "the hunting culture of the frontier was a fusion of European and Indian practices," and the "techniques of the hunt...were borrowed from the Indians."³¹ Frontiersman even "dressed like their counterparts."³² McElwain does admit that the white community of Philippi was educated in native medicines. Native remedies are a part of traditional Appalachian culture. He maintains, however, that the Chestnut Ridge People's knowledge of these remedies is superior to white knowledge. McElwain also mentions the isolationist aspects of Chestnut Ridge culture, so it is not a stretch to imagine that their superior knowledge of the subject stems from a tendency to adhere to old ways rather than embrace new medicine and technology.

The ongoing fight for Native American recognition, including recognition from the federal government, culminated in the formation of the Allegheny Lenape tribe, ostensibly a

²⁸ Brent Kennedy, *The Melungeons: the Resurrection of a Proud People*, 34.

²⁹ Campbell, 17 – 19.

³⁰ McElwain, 48.

³¹ Warren R. Hofstra, *The Planting of New Virginia*, 24 – 25.

³² Ibid.

branch of the Lenape Indians that was chartered as a non-profit group in 1979. Many individuals with Chestnut Ridge surnames are members of the tribe, though how and on what basis these individuals have been inducted into the group is unclear. Outside of a monthly newsletter that includes mainly social notices, information on the Allegheny Lenape is scarce. The only available documentary evidence is the Ohio House of Representatives Resolution 155. Passed on July 8, 1999, the resolution indicated that the state recognized “the Allegheny Lenape Indians of Ohio.”³³ The fact that the resolution was passed in Ohio offers the most serious problem for the group’s claims. Native Americans appearing in family traditions were located in Virginia, not Ohio.³⁴

* * * * *

Though the resolution for state recognition of the Allegheny Lenape was based on weak evidence, does the historical record in general support a Native American background for the Guineas’ descendants? The answer, as modern day genealogists eagerly point out, is impossible to discern. Based on the ambiguous nature of eighteenth and early nineteenth century racial terminology, lack of documentation, and the presence of Native American slaves in early Virginia and Maryland, there is the possibility that one of the “mulattoes” in the records was part Native American.³⁵

Just because the idea is possible, however, does not mean that it is probable. Leland Ferguson, when considering the identity of the crafters of certain pieces of Virginian Colono Ware, took into consideration the fact that “Black slaves always outnumbered Indians by a large

³³ Journal of the House of Representatives of the One Hundred Twenty-Third General Assembly of the State of Ohio, Volume CXLVIII, 1168.

³⁴ For a more detailed account of Native Americans in family tradition, see the section on the Norris family, page 44.

³⁵ For more information on Indian Slavery in Virginia and Maryland, see *Pocahontas’s People* by Helen Rountree, and *Eastern Shore Indians of Virginia and Maryland* by Rountree and Thomas Davidson.

number on Virginia plantations.”³⁶ Like Fergusen, I would argue that, when it comes to the racial background of the Guineas, “the odds were in favor of the African Americans.”³⁷ The African population in or near European settlements was larger than the population of Native Americans either on reservations or living within white society, especially when one considers that the roots of the Guineas lie not in the Virginia frontier but the more densely populated counties of eastern Virginia and Maryland. This is not to say that there is no Native American heritage in the Chestnut Ridge community, only that it is significantly smaller than many would like to believe.

The real issue, however, is not if the Chestnut Ridge People are or are not descended from Native Americans. The problem at hand is one of perceived identity. Historically, the white population has labeled the Guineas in one way, while the Guineas have protested against the labels with folklore of their own. Overtime, the forces of racism on the community built a tradition of elaborating Native American identity while suppressing African heritage, sometimes to the point of ignoring it altogether. In 1790, by which time most of the Chestnut Ridge People’s ancestors had been or were involved in interracial relationships, no one would have questioned these individuals’ African heritage. The controversy that plagued the Chestnut Ridge community in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries was absent in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The earliest Guineas lived openly with wives of a different race, had children who were classified as mulatto, and willingly interacted with those of African, Native American, and white ancestry. No one in 1790 was protesting that they were not at least partially African. The white community, too, recognized and tolerated their multiracial neighbors. Many whites not only tolerated but accepted the Guinea families and were willing to befriend and in certain instances even protect and defend them.

³⁶ Leland Fergusen , *Uncommon Ground*, 46.

³⁷ Ibid.

The contrast between the open attitudes of the first generation of Guineas and whites alike and the racism beginning in the nineteenth century contributes more evidence for seeing the Revolutionary period as one of relative liberality. “The combined impact of the equalitarianism of the American Revolution and the evangelical revivals” led some whites to rethink the meaning of liberty and question the institution of slavery.³⁸ All of the Northern states had enacted at least gradual emancipation legislation by 1805, Methodist and Baptist leaders condemned slavery across the nation, and individual slave owners in the Upper South rushed to take advantage of new manumission laws in the last decades of the eighteenth century.³⁹ In this egalitarian climate, some of the ancestors of the Chestnut Ridge People, the Male brothers, entered into open interracial relationships on the Virginia frontier. The Males, as well as the other Guinea families, were not yet entirely rejected by the wider community. In the early decades of the new nation, the free black community was still growing and the Guineas were not complete anomalies in the social order.

The early history of the Guineas also speaks to the racial fluidity of the era. The ability of members of the free black community to “pass” for white has been generally acknowledged by historians and the possibility for free blacks to “become” white is even recognized by eighteenth century Virginia laws. The changes made to the legal definition of race between 1705 and 1785 “widened the category of whiteness” in Virginia.⁴⁰ What is not as widely seen are instances of white individuals being reclassified as free blacks. Yet, the move from white to black was one that could be made. Almost all of the Male brothers switched from white to black status as a result of their relationships with black women. The notion of race could be so contested and contradictory that racial identities could change from black to white and white to black. Finding

³⁸ Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 20.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 21 – 33.

⁴⁰ Rothman, 208.

their desire to remain with partners of a different race stronger than the pressure to remain white, many of the Male brothers effectively “became” black to those in their community.

The Males’ descendants likely bemoaned their ancestors’ willingness to cross racial boundaries, especially as the attitudes of their white neighbors became increasingly intolerant. As views about race changed, so did willingness to acknowledge the true identity of the early Guineas. When the white community could no longer accept them, the descendants of the Guineas found it harder and harder to accept themselves. Made in response to times of intense prejudice, the Guineas undoubtedly thought they were defending themselves in the face of rampant discrimination. But just as attitudes about race changed from the era of the group’s origins to the era of Jim Crow, racial attitudes are again changing – and have been changing for several decades – in the United States. It is time not to cast aside every last vestige of Native American identity, but to cling with equal pride to the rich African heritage the group possesses.

The goal of this paper is to create a comprehensive history of the Guinea community that considers all elements of the group’s background. The information revealed within has been uncovered by using Guinea oral tradition and cross-referencing it with historical records.⁴¹ The result of this research is the history of an early multiracial community as told through the lives of its founders. Four of the community’s early families will be considered; each one’s story offers a unique look into the origins of this multiracial community and the social pressures that brought its members to the frontier.

⁴¹ The oral tradition used most extensively is that of Bill Peat Norris. Norris was the storyteller of the Chestnut Ridge community. Besides folklore, he was also an author of poetry that dealt with issues facing his community. References to “tradition” or “oral history” are references to the legends of Norris, as reported to the author by Avery F. Gaskins, Associate Professor of English Emeritus at West Virginia University, who studied Chestnut Ridge folklore extensively in the 1970s. The other oral tradition utilized is a transcript of a speech summarizing the history of the Chestnut Ridge People. The speech was given at a meeting of the Melungeon Heritage Association on July 25, 1997 by Joanne Johnson Smith and Florence Kennedy Barnett.

In Chapter One I consider the life of Wilmore Male and his relationship with his slave Nancy. The Males' experience offers a closer look at the fluidity of race and the many ways in which it was defined. Definitions of race varied based on an individual's social and familial relationships, economic status, and who was doing the defining. The climate of the Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary eras – which nearly coincided with the frontier period of Western Virginia – also affected perceptions of race.

Chapter Two delves further into the frontier experience and explores the issue of Native American identity. The legends surrounding Sam Norris and his Native American ancestry are considered in detail for factuality as well as their broader implications for group identity. Chapter Three continues the discussion of racial definition and identity by looking at the lives of the Gustavus Croston and his descendents.

The experiences of children defined by the courts as illegitimate mulattoes are considered in Chapter Four. The life of Henry Dalton, one such child, is examined. Dalton's journey starts in the world of the Chesapeake, goes through indentured servitude, and ends on the western frontier. By looking at Dalton and his children, the multiracial community's level of interaction with the white community and its institutions is highlighted, as well as the significant success achieved by several of the offspring of the first settlers. Racial identity is again considered in relation to the relative ease with which Dalton was able to function within white society.

Chapter Five takes the history of the Chestnut Ridge People into the latter half of the nineteenth century. The later story of the community is one marked by less success and declining opportunities as the racial attitudes of the white community hardened. Definitions of race continued to change and narrow as the century progressed, and none of these changes helped advance the position of the Chestnut Ridge People.

Through the examination of these prominent Chestnut Ridge families, it has been possible to determine what is folklore and what is historical fact. When no records were available, research from related areas has been applied when possible. Some pieces of Guinea history remain a mystery, irretrievable to even the most ardent researcher, leaving room for speculation. The trivialities of the story, however, are not at the heart of this paper. Historian William H. McNeill makes the case for the need for “an ecumenical history, with plenty of room for human diversity in all its complexity,” while acknowledging that “historians can only expect to be heard if they say what the people around them want to hear – in some degree. They can only be useful if they also tell the people some things they are reluctant to hear – in some degree.” The research included in the paper aims to elevate the consideration of each element of Guinea heritage – African, Native American, and European – to an equal level, with hopes of creating McNeill’s “consciousness of a common past,” that “powerful supplement to other ways of defining who ‘we’ are.”⁴²

⁴² William H. McNeill “Mythhistory,” 4 – 5.

I. "My Negroe Woman Nancy:" Race and the Male Brothers

When Wilmore Male, Senior, stepped aboard an English ship bound for Maryland in the late eighteenth century, he knew his life was about to change. He must have had hopes for new opportunities and improved fortunes in the British colonies. Wilmore undoubtedly wished for a better life for himself and his family, a life that would be different from his own. While Wilmore accepted the changes his children would face, he likely could not have imagined just how powerful those changes would be. Wilmore's children began their lives with all the rights of free Englishmen, but by the time of their deaths, they would be labeled "free negroes" or "mulattoes" and have only the restricted rights of America's free black population.

Family and local histories place Wilmore Senior's birth in England.⁴³ Guinea folklore also gives the senior Male a role in the Jacobite Revolution. According to this tradition, Wilmore was a general in the army (which one is not specified) who "killed his subordinate for disobeying a direct command."⁴⁴ Deciding to flee before he was prosecuted, Wilmore had his relatives place him in a barrel with basic supplies and an axe. Once on board a ship destined for the colonies, he broke his way out of the barrel with the axe. The ship eventually docked in Maryland and Wilmore was free. There is really no way to prove or disprove this theory. Chronologically, it may have been possible, as the last stages of the Jacobite uprisings took place in 1746. However, there were no officers with the surname Male at the battles of Culloden and Falkirk, and the tale

⁴³ See *The Males of Barbour County* by Bernard Victor Mayhle and *Mayle-Male-Male Family Kinship: Four Generations of Descendants of Mary Elizabeth Male nee Cockit* by Glenn W. Barnett, II. Genealogies by Barnett place Wilmore senior's birth on May 26, 1714 in Dover, Kent, England. Though there are birth records of Males in that region, I have been unable to find definitive evidence linking this family of Males either to Kent. Barnett also gives Wilmore's wife's name as Mary Elizabeth Cockitt, but I have been unable to corroborate this, as well.

⁴⁴ Avery F. Gaskins "About Wilmore Male." Message to the author. 20 Aug. 2009. E-mail.

contradicts other family traditions.⁴⁵ For instance, two Male genealogists, Glenn Barnett and Bernard Mayhle, argue that Wilmore Senior arrived in America with his wife in 1770, twenty-four years after the Jacobite Revolution. Barnett and Mayhle even argue that Wilmore's three eldest children were born in England, but the traditional story makes no mention of a wife or children.

The most likely scenario is that, sometime in the mid eighteenth century, Wilmore (and probably his wife and children) came to America through Baltimore before 1768. Wilmore's signature can be found on a 1768 petition for the removal of the Baltimore County seat to Baltimore. The couple had at least eight children, six boys and two girls. Of the six boys, the fate of one son in particular is vital to the history of the Guineas. This son is Wilmore Male, Junior (to whom I will from now on refer to as Wilmore Male, versus Wilmore Male, Senior).

Wilmore's birth can be estimated at around 1756 based on census records and military pension files. In the 1840 Census, Wilmore was listed as 84 years of age. In an 1818 court appearance, Wilmore stated his age as 60, but in another appearance in 1820 as 66. His birth year made Male old enough to serve in the Revolutionary War. Wilmore enlisted, according to his later recollection, in either late 1776 or early 1777 at a place known as Parris's Marsh, Berkeley County, Virginia. The lieutenant of Captain Joseph Mitchell's Company, Robert White, was with him when he signed up and was placed in the Twelfth Virginia Line. Wilmore continued to serve with the Twelfth Virginia for at least 2 years, since he was present at the Battle of Monmouth in 1778 and the attack on Stony Point in 1779.⁴⁶

By 1782, Wilmore had returned to his family, now located in Hampshire County, Virginia. Hampshire County, situated in the Eastern panhandle of modern day West Virginia

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Pension number 38171 Mail, Wilmore

along the borders of Maryland and Virginia, had been formed in 1754.⁴⁷ 7, 346 people lived in Hampshire County by 1790, 454 of which were slaves. Like most of its surrounding counties, Hampshire's slave population was small compared to that of eastern Virginia. The Virginia census of 1782 included Wilmore and his family as one of the majority of white settlers in the county. Wilmore was presumably included as one of eleven whites and zero blacks living in a household with Wilmore Male, Senior.

According to oral tradition, soon after his arrival in Hampshire County, Wilmore Male married Nancy, the daughter of "a slave girl brought to this country by a Frenchman from the Bahamas by the name of Marquis Calmes" and a Cherokee Indian.⁴⁸ As fanciful as the tale sounds, it is mostly true. Living not far from the Male family in 1782, on the same census list, was the Marquis Calmes. The Calmes were a French Huguenot family who had immigrated to America in 1726.⁴⁹ Several Calmes were present in Hampshire County by the late eighteenth century and appeared in the Hampshire County records numerous times, whether they were buying and selling land or serving as witnesses for neighbors' wills.⁵⁰ The family held a respected position within the community, given the Marquis' appointment in March 1788 as Colonel of the county. Within a year, Marquis had been nominated for the position of sheriff and lieutenant, as well.⁵¹

Though the Calmes' presence in Virginia is clear, it is equally clear that the Calmes never resided in the Bahamas. The Bahamas, however, remain a persistent part of stories about Nancy's mother and inevitably raise the question of Nancy's race. Nancy, as has been

⁴⁷ Otis K. Rice, *The Allegheny Frontier*, 26.

⁴⁸ Mayhle, 10.

⁴⁹ "Marquis Calmes."

⁵⁰ For Calmes acting as witnesses, see Will Book Number 2, pgs. 161 – 162, 177, and 244 – 246, Hampshire County Court House, Romney, West Virginia. For land transactions, see Deed Book 1, pgs. 246 – 247 and Deed Book 13, pgs. 605 – 606, Hampshire County Court House, Romney, West Virginia.

⁵¹ Vicki Bidinger Horton, *Hampshire County Minute Book Abstracts 1788 – 1802*, 11 – 26.

mentioned, is traditionally described as the daughter of a Cherokee and a slave from the Bahamas. Genealogists are quick to point out that “it is not known whether she was of native Bahamian ancestry or not.”⁵² Here again appears the clear trend of evading the question of African ancestry.

While the question of paternity is essentially unanswerable, the traditions about Nancy’s mother offer some clues. The Bahamas, like Virginia before the American Revolution, was an English colony involved in the slave trade. Nancy’s ancestors could have been captured from Africa, sent to the Bahamas, and eventually sold to slave traders in Virginia. African slaves had been present in the Bahamas since around 1648 and by 1744 had reached about one thousand.⁵³ It is also possible that Nancy was partially descended from natives of the Bahamas since, among the many slaves arriving in North America who did not come directly from Africa but from the Caribbean, there was mixture between African slaves and the indigenous population.⁵⁴

Whatever her background, Nancy was in Virginia and was probably a member of the Marquis’ household by 1782. That year, Marquis was the head of a household with 2 white and 12 black souls. It is certain that the Calmes, to corroborate family tradition, not only lived in the vicinity of Wilmore Male but also owned slaves. Interestingly, Property tax lists for 1787 (presumably after Nancy had left the Calmes’ plantation) show Calmes with only eleven slaves.

It is also certain that Wilmore and Nancy lived as man and wife. In 1826, in Hampshire County, Virginia, Wilmore filed Nancy’s freedom papers. At some point, Wilmore had purchased Nancy. It is not clear when, from whom, or under what circumstances the purchase was made. If oral tradition, which has been fairly accurate up to this point, is to be believed, Wilmore purchased Nancy from Marquis himself with the stated intention of marrying her.

⁵² Mayhle, 10 A.

⁵³ Gail Saunders. *Slavery in the Bahamas 1648-1838*, 1 – 3.

⁵⁴ Jack D. Forbes, 192.

Family genealogies often state that Wilmore and Nancy were “married” in 1784, which would have been legally impossible, given the laws against interracial marriage.⁵⁵ If Nancy had a light complexion, it may have been possible for the couple to marry in another county where their identities were unknown, but it is more likely that they simply began living together in the manner of husband and wife around 1784.

Wilmore and Nancy’s relationship, as well as the circumstances of their meeting, are impossible to discern. Wilmore could have encountered Nancy, among other places, in town, on the road, at his father’s home, or at the Calmes’ plantation. He could have been drawn to her immediately in a romantic or sexual way, or he could have purchased her with the intention of keeping Nancy as a slave and seen their relationship develop. The possibilities for Nancy’s emotions are equally numerous. Nancy may have loved Wilmore, she may have hated him and had no choice in the matter, or she may have endeavored to use the situation to her advantage. The fact remains that “in the early national and antebellum South, many if not most incidents of interracial sexual intercourse can only be described as rapes.”⁵⁶

The language of Nancy’s emancipation provides few clues for determining the nature of her relationship with Wilmore. The document reads, “Be it known to all to whom it may concern that I Wilmore Mail of the county of Hampshire and Commonwealth of Virginia do by those present liberate emancipate and forever set free from and after the day of my death my negroe woman Nancy on condition that she remain with me during my (illegible) life in the quality of my wife. (Illegible) I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal this 6th day of May in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty six.”⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Mayhle, 10 A.

⁵⁶ Rothman, 19.

⁵⁷ Hampshire County, West Virginia Deed Book 25, Page 58

Several contradictions stand out in the emancipation paper. First, the date the emancipation was made seems indicative of the couple's relationship. By 1826, Wilmore was in his seventies and, for the time period, of a considerable age. The two would have lived together for at most forty-two years and had at least six children together. Why had Wilmore not freed Nancy before? Nancy may have received, for a slave, special treatment while she was with Wilmore but once she received her freedom neither she nor her children had any incentive to remain beyond love for Wilmore and the care he provided for them. If the love and care in the relationship were lacking, Wilmore may have felt that Nancy would leave him the first opportunity that arose once she had been freed. If she left as his slave, he still had legal sway over her and could make efforts to locate and reclaim her. In 1826, Nancy would have been almost as old as Wilmore (pension records put her at about four years his junior), and Wilmore could have considered her less likely to leave her longtime home.

Wilmore's attempt to control Nancy is also apparent in the phrase "on condition that she remain with me during my...life in the quality of my wife." If not at the time of his purchase, Wilmore did eventually render Nancy's freedom conditional. Even though Nancy was over sixty in 1826, Wilmore still seems to have feared being abandoned after she became free. Speculation hints at the relationship not being either harmonious or entirely consensual if Wilmore waited until he thought he might die and even then stipulated that Nancy was free only if she continued to live with him as his wife.

On the other hand, Wilmore did not have to free Nancy at all. Thomas Jefferson freed his children by Sally Hemmings individually but never freed Hemmings. Nancy might have insisted upon her eventual freedom over the course of the years and, anticipating his own death, Wilmore finally acted. The two might have entered into some sort of verbal agreement stipulating the

terms of her emancipation. Or, Nancy may never have insisted upon her freedom and Wilmore emancipated her out of concern for her safety after he could no longer protect her. Wilmore might have feared that, upon his death, his estate would be sold to settle his debts and, as his slave, Nancy would be sold as well.

Wilmore most likely acted primarily with concern for his children. Children took the status of their mother in Virginia. Had Wilmore never freed Nancy, their offspring would have been considered slaves. Their ownership could have transferred to Wilmore's kin after his death, and his family may have freed Nancy and her children, as Jefferson's daughter freed Hemmings, but Wilmore apparently did not want to take that chance.

Perhaps the most stunning part of Nancy's emancipation is Wilmore's willingness to profess to the court, at a time when interracial marriage was illegal, his desire to live with Nancy as husband and wife. Interracial sexual relationships were not uncommon in early national Virginia, but were "open secrets ... only dangerously scandalous if widely publicized."⁵⁸ Wilmore and Nancy's relationship was probably common knowledge among their neighbors as a topic of gossip, but a public declaration by the subject of scandal was something different.

Wealthy white plantation owners often juggled two families, their publicly acknowledged "white family" and the family they created with enslaved women. The key to respectability in the community was public denial of the existence of any but the white family. Jefferson never openly acknowledged his relationship with Hemmings or the children they had. Without such secrecy, interracial relationships could easily become "the ultimate weapon for anyone with an ax to grind against a white participant in interracial sex."⁵⁹ By living openly with Nancy as his wife, without the pretense of a white family, and by openly affirming the sexual nature of their

⁵⁸ Rothman, 31.

⁵⁹ Ibid

relationship, Wilmore opened himself to public criticism and ostracism from the community. When Ralph Quarles, a fellow Virginian, freed his slave Lucy Jane Langston in 1806 and began living openly with her, he was subject to such social exclusion.⁶⁰

Of course, Quarles was also one of the largest land holders in Louisa County, Virginia. Wilmore, as far as can be determined, was not that wealthy. In 1784, he possessed one barn and zero dwellings.⁶¹ Tax rolls for the same year attribute one cow and one horse to Wilmore. In 1787, the only Wilmore Male listed on the tax list had 1 horse and one cattle, as well. Some of his neighbors in the same year, to put Wilmore's status in perspective, had up to 70 cattle and 40 horses, a four-wheeled chariot, or a four-wheeled post chaise. One advantage Wilmore did have was that he owned his own land.⁶² His finances had worsened by 1798, when he and four others were summoned by the county court "to show cause if any they can why the overseers of the poor shall not bind out their children according to law."⁶³ There is no further mention of Wilmore's children, so he must have been able to persuade the court to let them remain with him. Yet, the court's warning makes it evident that Wilmore's family, like many "free colored" families, was "economically marginal, due in part to the sheer difficulty of functioning in a heavily prejudiced white system."⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Ibid, 43.

⁶¹ The 1784 Census lists Wilmore Male as having ten white souls living with him and two other buildings, with Wilmore Male, Senior, having two white souls and one other building. I am arguing that this is an error. In 1782, Wilmore Male, Senior, had eleven whites living with him. Logically, after his son moved out, he would have ten people in his home, while the newly independent Wilmore would have fewer (in this case, two, potentially solidifying the 1784 date for Nancy's entrance into the Male family). For this reason, I am considering the census listing for Wilmore Male, Senior, as the true information for Wilmore Male, Junior.

⁶² In 1795 Wilmore purchased a tract of land in Hampshire County from Thomas Healy for 3 pounds that adjoined a tract he or his father already owned. Hampshire County Deed Book 1 Page 234 Hampshire County Court House, Romney, West Virginia

⁶³ Horton, 97.

⁶⁴ Rountree and Davidson, *Eastern Shore Indians of Virginia and Maryland*, 181.

Another indicator of his social position is his family's lack of slaves. According to the 1782 census, Wilmore's father was not a slaveholder. This is particularly interesting in light of Wilmore's future relationship with an enslaved woman. While holding no slaves does not make the Male family fundamentally opposed to slavery, it does mean that Wilmore did not grow up in a home where he viewed African Americans as his or his father's property. It also makes Wilmore's purchase of Nancy more peculiar. Having left his father's home between 1782 and 1784, Wilmore was just starting out on his own. He almost certainly possessed less money than his father. If his father had never felt he was in the position to buy slaves, even if only one, why did Wilmore? Why spend the money on a slave to work a small farm with only one horse and one cattle? In 1784, Wilmore lived on a farm adjoining his father's. If he needed help with cooking and mending his clothes, his mother and sisters lived right next door. Did Wilmore indeed purchase Nancy out of affection for her?

Looking at another case of an interracial relationship in Virginia helps to highlight the economic aspect of Wilmore's position. David Isaacs was a late 18th Century immigrant to Charlottesville, Virginia, from Germany. Isaacs became a successful businessman in the town and entered into an equally successful relationship with Nancy West, the daughter of a white man and his former slave. The two enjoyed a lasting relationship of over forty years that produced seven children. West worked as a baker and lived separately, just out of town, with her children for most of her relationship with Isaacs. Then, in 1819, she moved in with Isaacs in downtown Charlottesville. West began buying and renting land as well as continuing to operate her bakery out of Isaac's store. It was around this time, in 1822, that the citizens of Charlottesville brought their first case against the couple, charging them with "umbraging the

decency of society and violating the laws of the land by cohabitating together in a state of illicit commerce as man and wife.”

The charge was placed over twenty years after the birth of West and Isaac’s first child. Their relationship was not a new development to Charlottesville citizens. What was new was West and Isaac’s living arrangement, where they very visibly presented themselves in the middle of town as a legitimate family. The situation had changed in other ways as well. West was accumulating money and valuable real estate. The couple’s new visibility was an important factor in the charges, but it is impossible “to discount the significance of Nancy West’s improved economic position.”⁶⁵

Nancy West became a formidable figure when she increased her land holdings and made her residence in downtown Charlottesville. Perhaps Wilmore Male’s very lack of wealth worked to his advantage. He was located on Virginia’s western frontier and subject to the scrutiny of fewer people. He, as West had done before charges were brought against her, lived outside of a major city. Wilmore and Nancy posed no threat to the community; they were not members of the gentry and thus not held to the same social code nor looked upon in the same manner as a wealthy couple would have been. Jefferson would have faced far more serious consequences had he admitted to his relationship with Sally Hemmings than Wilmore Male did when he emancipated Nancy.

Still, Wilmore’s actions could not have been without repercussions. His neighbors must have treated him somewhat differently after he began residing with a former slave. Male may have had to sacrifice friends, social position, and potentially even family connections. One friend, at least, seems to have remained constant. Robert White, the lieutenant with whom Wilmore had enlisted in the Revolutionary War, resided in the same county as Wilmore at the

⁶⁵ Rothman, 65.

time of his pension application. White continued to support Male in his claim and, after White's death, his son John (who was also the clerk of court and witnessed Nancy's emancipation papers) followed his father's wishes in assisting Wilmore. When Wilmore's pension certificate was destroyed in a fire in 1838, John White wrote to Washington on his behalf, revealing that he felt "much interested for him, as he is one of my father's recruits who was with him when he was wounded."⁶⁶ After Wilmore's death sometime in 1841, the younger White wrote again to Washington to be sure that officials knew that Wilmore left behind a widow and children. He made no mention of their race.

Outside of Robert and John White, one thing Wilmore had to sacrifice was his status as a white man. There is no evidence to contest the Male family's Anglo ancestry and the tradition of their English heritage is perhaps the longest enduring piece of recorded folklore from the community, dating to at the latest 1899. The 1768 signature of Wilmore Male, Senior, on a political petition also indicates that he was a free white male and probably a landowner. Tax records for the period are less revealing, since, in general, "from 1783 to the early 1800s no race is given for free persons – all are classified (for tax purposes) as 'white-tithable.'"⁶⁷ There are some exceptions to this rule. Wilmore appeared in the Hampshire County personal property tax lists from 1785 until 1797 (excluding 1796, for which he was not listed) as white. As previously noted, this may not be evidence of how outsiders perceived Wilmore after his relationship with Nancy. However, in the same time period, there were individuals whose race was noted. For instance, in 1793, there was a listing for "Moses, a free black." 1795 rolls included Moses Okin, Tom, and Will, all free blacks. In 1796 John Copsy appeared as a "negro over 16." The same is true for Hampshire County court records. In the 1798 summons, no race is attached to Wilmore's

⁶⁶ Pension number 38171 Wilmore Mail

⁶⁷ Forbes, 199.

name despite the fact that, in the court sessions for the previous month, two individuals, Rachel and Bristol, were specifically described as free blacks.⁶⁸

On 1797 tax rolls, Wilmore was added to the list of people designated as free blacks, but returned to having no race indicated for the years 1798, 1799, and 1800. What happened in 1797 to change Wilmore's status? The answer may have something to do with the identity of the man making the list. Until 1797, all the tax lists that Wilmore appeared on were taken by George Beall. A new individual, Arjalon Price, recorded the information for 1797. In 1798, Wilmore returned to George Beall's list, and then to the list of G.W. Price for the next two years. The abrupt and short-lived change in Wilmore's racial classification can testify to the fact that race was "determined mostly by [an individual's] neighbors."⁶⁹ When skin color, family history, or living situations seemed unusual or indeterminate, a person's community associations, character, and economic status could be deciding factors in racial designation. Being white did not merely have to do with a light complexion, it depended on if "marriage partners were all from white families," if one "performed specific acts showing they bore no allegiance to the slave community," and "evidence of reputation."⁷⁰ Community opinion about interracial families was crucial to their status, but "those understandings were not always commonly shared."⁷¹ George Beall may have classified Wilmore as white because he had known Wilmore's father or was on friendly terms with Wilmore himself. For whatever reason, as long as Beall was in control, Wilmore was counted as white.

Arjalon Price did not share Beall's understanding of Wilmore's situation. To him, it seems, if Wilmore was married to a black woman, he would be listed as black, as well. A man

⁶⁸ Horton, 97.

⁶⁹ Rothman, 210.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 214

⁷¹ Ibid, 215.

who shared Price's understanding recorded the next tax record for Wilmore in 1805. Wilmore continued to be listed as other than white through 1815. In 1805, Wilmore was listed as a free mulatto for the first time. The term mulatto was "an entirely descriptive category legally indistinct from black," and could encompass a large range of skin tones and heritage.⁷² Legally, a mulatto was the "child of an Indian, and the child, grandchild, or great grandchild of a negro," according to a 1705 Virginia act. This definition remained in use until 1785 when it was enacted that a mulatto was anyone with "one-fourth or more Negro blood." This remained in place until 1866. So, by the terminology of the era, it would have been correct to label Wilmore and Nancy's children as mulatto, but not Wilmore.

Yet, due to his association with Nancy, it appears that Wilmore was seen in his white or not-white society as not white. In 1806, he appeared as a "F. Negro." Wilmore was described as a "free mulatto" in 1809, 1810, and 1811. Wilmore relocated to Monongalia County sometime in 1813 and appeared on the tax rolls there as a "man of color" in 1813 and a "FN," or free negro, in 1815. Wilmore was also classified as "colored" in 1817 in Randolph County.

Change in racial status in relation to taxes appeared in eighteenth century Virginia law, but affected only white women living with black men. An act of the 1723 Virginia Assembly ordered that "the wife of any free Afro-Virginian or Indian man be accounted tithable," making "the white wives of these men...black women in the eyes of the law."⁷³ While this act did not affect Wilmore legally, the rationale behind it forever altered his social position. Wilmore's classification as a "free negro" as early as 1806 may explain his willingness to openly proclaim his relationship with Nancy. By 1826, its effects were already in place.

⁷² Ibid, 205

⁷³ Brown, 218.

Wilmore's race, independently, was not ambiguous. His association with Nancy made it that way. When Wilmore appeared in court to testify to his Revolutionary service, there was no mention of his race. Looking at the documents alone, there was nothing unique or extraordinary about Wilmore's case. He was simply a former soldier fallen on hard times with a wife, Nancy, and a 16-year-old son named George who helped on the farm and was a "tolerable good hand, considering his age."⁷⁴ Wilmore was never referred to as colored, negro, nor mulatto in his or his neighbors' testimony. No specifics were included about his family situation. The lack of attention paid to his wife's race was probably due in part to those present at the time of his testimony in 1818 and 1820: his old lieutenant Robert White and, acting as the clerk of courts, White's son John. Others involved in Wilmore's claim also did not mention his race. David Gibson took testimony from Wilmore and Samuel Brady in 1838 in regard to the accidental burning of Wilmore's original pension certificate and recorded no comments on the man's race or his family's race.

In fact, the words "race" or "colored" were not even present in Wilmore's files until 1933, when an inquiry was made by a Miss Betty Allman of Clarksburg, West Virginia, about the records of "Wilmore Male (colored)." A.D. Hiller, the assistant to the administrator, sent her copies of the file as well as the note "there is no statement as to whether or not he was a colored man." Off to the side of the typed letter, however, was the handwritten note, "In 1840 list this soldier is listed as colored." The author of this notation is a mystery and its purpose, as well as the reasons for Allman's inquest, remains one as well. However, it would not be surprising if it somehow involved the racial discrimination and rumors that still plagued the Male family in the 1930s.

⁷⁴ Pension number 38171 Wilmore Mail

The 1840 record to which the note referred was a portion of the 1840 Census that included a special list for Revolutionary War veterans. Wilmore was again located in Hampshire County. His neighbors, with the exception of one family, were listed as white. Wilmore's household contained 2 "free colored persons," one female over 55 and under 100, and one male over 55 and under 100. He also appeared on the list of "pensioners for Revolutionary or military services," as "Wilmore Male (Colored)." His age was given as 86.

Wilmore Male died sometime after the 1840 census and before February of 1841, when John White wrote to Washington on Nancy and her children's behalf. Wilmore left behind a newly free woman named Nancy who had lived with him as his wife for over half a century, as well as four sons and two daughters. The date of Nancy's death is uncertain, though it appears she died before the time of the 1850 Census. She never applied for an increase in pension, perhaps because she felt she did not need it, because she soon died, or because of what would ensue had the pension office discovered her race.

Wilmore Male's story ends up being strikingly similar to the tale told in Guinea legends. Yet, it continues to be met with much skepticism. Kennedy treats the Males as one of a number of "later intermarriages with non-Melungeon families," though it is clear that the Males were among the first multi-racial families in the area and not latecomers who can be included as an after thought. It is equally clear that the Male family has no tradition of Portuguese heritage. Even beyond the 1840s, when changing "social and racial contention...created an entirely new atmosphere" for people of non-white status, the Males never claimed a Portuguese ancestry to "escap[e] their predicaments."⁷⁵

One of Kennedy's most vitriolic critics, David Henige, offers his own interpretation of the Male story. Henige, a bibliographer in African Studies and Anthropology at the University of

⁷⁵ C. S. Everett "Melungeon History and Myth."

Wisconsin – Madison, discredits the Wilmore Male legend, describing it condescendingly as “a genealogy worked out by ‘educated’ Guineas.”⁷⁶ Henige fails to mention the finer points of the story, not adhering to the way the tradition is most frequently told. He describes Wilmore (without directly naming him) as an “Englishman of noble birth” and Nancy as a “west African woman,” when, traditionally, no mention of Nancy being from Africa is made (as has been seen, many genealogies are quick to point out that she may not have been African at all but a native of the Caribbean). In Henige’s opinion, “families with surnames identical to those of the Guineas were recorded in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in New York, Pennsylvania, and western Maryland... This all suggests that the ancestors of the Guineas of today gradually moved westward until they reached their present location in the 1840s and 1850s.” Land and census records show that the Males, as well as the Croston, Dalton, and Norris families, were already in Virginia by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, making it impossible for them to have been in New York, Pennsylvania, or Maryland at that time, not to mention predating by forty to fifty years Henige’s proposed arrival time of the 1840s and 1850s.⁷⁷

Henige does not deign to mention that the “Englishman of noble birth” was not the only Male to arrive in America. By not naming Wilmore specifically, he cannot differentiate between Wilmore and Wilmore Senior. While Wilmore’s tale may be the most detailed of the family, not mentioning his seven siblings would be neglectful. They, too, contributed to later generations of families designated as Guinea.

Wilmore’s marriage to Nancy appears to have had ramifications for more than himself and his children. His brothers were affected as well. Legends about Wilmore’s siblings are scarce in comparison to his histories, perhaps because Wilmore’s actions would have the severest

⁷⁶ David Henige, “Origin Traditions of American Racial Isolates: A Case of Something Borrowed,” 202.

⁷⁷ Dates for the Males’ arrival have been noted in the previous section. For exact information on the other families listed, see pages 44-45, 62, and 75.

impact on his direct and indirect descendents. His brothers' wives (save one) are traditionally regarded as white. While no mention of race is made in reference to the Male brothers' wives in the historical records, the identity of some makes their racial classification open to speculation. For instance, the identity of the wife of Wilmore's only elder brother, William Male, may have put William in a similar position to Wilmore.

William was allegedly born in England, as well. It is safe to assume that William was included in the eleven whites in the 1782 Virginia census in Wilmore Senior's household. Yet, William appeared occasionally in records as a mulatto or a free person of color. This could be due to William's relationship to Wilmore or to his own wife. Also named Nancy, the mother of William's children was not legally his wife – at least not in 1798. On November 19, 1798, the Hampshire County Court charged William Male for “living in adultery” with Nancy Jones.⁷⁸ No race was specified for either individual, but it is likely that Jones was of mixed race. Multi-racial families with the last name of Jones can be found in eighteenth and early nineteenth century records for many Virginia counties, including York, Lancaster, and Orange.⁷⁹ Several Jones can be found under the “free negroes and mulattoes” lists of counties neighboring Hampshire and Randolph.⁸⁰

From 1792 to the early 1800's William was listed fairly consistently on the Hampshire County tax rolls, often next to Wilmore or their other brother, Richard. No mention of William's race was made until 1803 when, as in 1804 and 1812, he was listed as a free mulatto. In 1816, William began to appear on Randolph County tax rolls. In 1821 he was listed as “MCR.” In 1828

⁷⁸ Horton, 100.

⁷⁹ Paul Heinegg, *Free African Americans of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Maryland, and Delaware*.

⁸⁰ Hardy County: George Jones in 1804, Randolph County: Ruben Jones in 1813, 1814, 1829 and Wesley Jones in 1829, Frederick County: Michael Jones in 1794, Nelson Jones in 1798, 1801, 1802, William Jones in 1800, and Henry and Isaac Jones in 1802.

and 1829 William was found under the “Free Negroe” list. William, like Wilmore, may have experienced a change in how outsiders viewed his race due to that of his wife.

Nancy Jones had apparently already died by the time William made his will in 1847. In his will, William mentioned between 175 and 178 acres of land specifically, as well as “the land that was laid off for” Nimrod Dalton.⁸¹ The same section of the will illustrated that, by this point, the Males and Daltons had a close relationship, as his daughter Mary had married the aforementioned Nimrod Dalton. Not only did William allow Nimrod to occupy his land, he also willed seventy-five acres to Mary (adding that he wanted “them to receive it and live in peace”), and “a piece...that is between three and five acres” to John Dalton. William amended his will around a month later and added that one-dollar each should be given to four of his grandchildren. William appears to be the only early member of the Guinea community (at least of those who appeared in court for wills, deeds, or related matters) who was literate, as his name appeared at the end of the will without the “X” and “his mark” required for his two witnesses, John and Henry Dalton.

Preceding William in death was the next eldest Male brother, Richard. Richard was probably born around 1760 in England.⁸² He joined William in receiving the disapproval of Hampshire County officials; Richard appeared in the same 1798 charge for living in adultery with “Rody [Rhoda] Emmery.”⁸³ Rhoda’s identity is a mystery, but she was likely familiar with the Males through a relative (probably a brother), Hezekiah Emmery (Emory). Hezekiah was a friend of another early Guinea settler, Gustavus Croston, who had known Croston since childhood. Based on census records, Hezekiah appears to have been white. This means Rhoda

⁸¹ Will Book 1, page 23, Barbour County Court House, Philippi, West Virginia

⁸² Mayhle, 12. Again, I have been unable to find documentation relating to Richard’s birth. The only information available is family tradition, which consistently places the three eldest children’s births in England.

⁸³ Horton, 100.

was likely not living adulterously with Richard because she could not marry him due to her race, but for some other reason. No mention of race is made in the adultery charges. What is strange is the fact that Wilmore is excluded from the charge. Wilmore was living with Nancy by 1798; why was he not included? Was he still keeping up an image of Nancy being his slave? Perhaps Nancy's former owner, Marquis Calmes, was able to use his position to exert some influence on Wilmore's behalf. He was lieutenant of the colony at the time and had agreed to Wilmore's purchase of Nancy, potentially with knowledge of Wilmore's intentions.

Richard's racial classification on tax rolls provides no clue as to the cause of his changing status. He appeared as white on tax rolls until 1813, showing up three times in Hampshire County and nineteen times in Randolph County between 1782 and 1829. In 1813, Richard was listed as a "malator" and from there on as either a "mulatto," "man of color," or "free negroe." He and his family were also listed under "free colored persons" on the 1840 census of Randolph County. Since Rhoda was most likely considered white, Richard's status must have been affected by his brother's relationship with Nancy.

Deeds and tax rolls illustrate that Richard was the wealthiest of the Male brothers. He was the only brother to own over four horses, which he did in 1817 and 1822. Tax rolls show him with at least two horses from 1809 to 1829, most often owning three, several times five, and once seven, horses. Barbour County deed books are further evidence of Richard's wealth. Richard must have accumulated land throughout the early nineteenth century, because he was frequently selling pieces off to relatives up to his death in 1845.⁸⁴

Richard's will was presented and proved in July of that year, two months after it was signed. In contrast to the Overseer of the Poor's threats to Wilmore, Richard owned a substantial amount of land, livestock, and material goods, which is evidenced by the fact that he went to the

⁸⁴ See Barbour County Deed Book 1 pages 54-55, 351-353, and 358-359.

trouble of writing a will at all. According to his will, Richard desired that enough of the “perishable part” of his estate be sold that would pay his debts and funeral costs. He then left his home and land to Rhoda, as well as “the third part of the crop of corn and wheat which John Talbert is to raise.” Richard seems to have either rented part of his land to Talbert or paid him to work a certain tract of land. The said land was located “on the west side of the river” and had been “formerly owned and occupied by Wilmore Male.” In the 1840 Census, Talbert was living next to Wilmore Male and Hezekiah Male, Richard’s sons. Talbert appeared again in the will as being due seven bushels of corn for repairing a fence. The fact that Richard paid an outsider who did not possess a characteristic Guinea surname to do his handy work rather than doing it himself or requesting one of his sons or another relative to do repairs for free suggests Richard’s stature.

A substantial amount of livestock was also referenced in the will. Richard mentioned specifically three horses, two cows, and one heifer. He also referred generally to “all the sheep” and “also the hogs,” which were left to Rhoda. This may not have been the full extent of Richard’s horses and cattle, as he left three of his children “the remaining part of my estate, both personal and perishable.” Outside of livestock, Richard willed to Rhoda all “household and kitchen furniture.” Monetary amounts mentioned include one dollar to Richard Male, Junior, and forty dollars “arising from the profits of the land when sold,” to his son George.

Richard appointed his son Aaron as his executor. Interestingly, Richard had as witnesses not individuals of other multiracial families, but two white men, Thomas Proudfoot and John Kelley. Proudfoot was present in the 1830 and 1840 Virginia Censuses in Harrison County. He appeared as the white head of an eleven-person household in 1840. More can be discerned about Kelley, due to his presence in the 1850 and 1860 Virginia censuses. Kelley was a wealthy white farmer with real estate estimated at 1,000 dollars in 1850 and 2,500 dollars in 1860. His personal

estate was valued at 557 dollars in 1860. Richard's involvement with wealthy white landowners contradicts McElwain's belief that the Guinea individual "had less economic power and he did not fully comprehend the class system with which he was confronted in his dealings with white settlers."⁸⁵ Richard may have had less economic power than Proudfoot and Kelley, but he had more economic wealth than some of the whites in the county. More importantly, he comprehended the class system enough to use wealthier men's economic power to his advantage. Richard, quite unlike McElwain's description of the Guineas as "not being equipped with competitive mentality in the colonial sense," appears to have competed quite well. Richard's position is described well by Kathleen Brown when she speaks of free black men (or, in this case, men who were socially considered to be black) with land who "transcended racial definitions that denied them white male gender privileges and became men in the eyes of the white community" due to the black men's "economic support" of their families.⁸⁶

In contrast to the white associations of Richard, in another of the Male brothers, James, can be found a situation more similar to Wilmore's. James Male, born around 1761, forsook the lifestyle of farmer that all of his brothers had chosen and instead turned to the wilderness. Family tradition maintains that James "was a hunter and trapper who traveled the mountains between what is now the Morgantown area of Monongalia County, out to the territory of Ohio" in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁸⁷ The frontiersman scenario for James is plausible for a number of reasons, one of which is the western location that all of the Male families inhabited. Another is the very lack of documentation available about James. Outside of oral history and the presence of his descendants in later times, James is practically nonexistent in the historical

⁸⁵ McElwain, 56.

⁸⁶ Brown, 227.

⁸⁷ Mayhle, 13.

record. He did not appear in any census, and appeared on tax rolls only six times in Randolph County, where he was listed twice as a “man of color.”

James purportedly married “the daughter of an Indian Scout for the United States Army.”⁸⁸ She is described as being either Cherokee or Delaware. Unfortunately, there is no record of her name or her ancestry; was it her father who was Cherokee, or was it her mother? Were both of her parents Native American? If more of her identity was known, it could be possible to examine army records for the period. Assuming that James’ role as a hunter and trapper is correct, it would not have been unusual for him to marry a woman of native descent, since “virtually all Europeans who traded in Indian country for any length of time took Native wives.”⁸⁹

James’ wife’s identity would contribute to his racial classification. Early Virginia tax rolls commonly classified individuals of Indian ancestry as either mulatto, free colored, or free negro, and almost never as Indian, continuing the trend to “identify two broad classes of people: white and non-white”.⁹⁰ James’ wife and children were not African, but they were also not white, so they became ‘colored.’ In addition, it was probably not difficult for others of European descent to designate James as something other than white, since many considered “the fur trader too close to Indians in appearance and outlook.”⁹¹ A person such as James, who became too friendly with Indians, easily became “suspect, tainted in accent, body language, and other ways by intimacy with people...now branded savage foes.”⁹²

Many of James’ children did not remain in Virginia, founding a ‘second’ Guinea settlement in southeastern Ohio. Throughout the nineteenth century, other relatives, both distant

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Theda Purdue, *Mixed Blood Indians: Racial Construction in the Early South*, 15.

⁹⁰ Forbes, 199, 65.

⁹¹ James H. Merrell, *Into the American Woods*, 93.

⁹² Ibid, 94.

and close, would travel north to join James' family in the Ohio Valley. James' son John appears to have been the first to settle in the area, acquiring land before 1842. He appeared in the 1850 Census as a mulatto farmer with real estate valued at 150 dollars and personal estate at 300 dollars. John's brother Adam was also an Ohio landowner by mid-century, as was John's son George William, who made a handsome profit of 1, 200 dollars of a land sale he made in 1867.⁹³

At least part of the land the Males purchased was in Wesley Township of Washington County, an area associated with the relatives of Guinea families. Though they share a common heritage, the Ohio portions of Guinea families soon evolved into their own unique community. Many members intermarried with other multiracial families that are not to be found in the West Virginia group, such as the Tates, Burkes, and Tablers. Due to the distinct evolutions of the two communities throughout the nineteenth century, I have not included any more information about the Ohio settlement in this study, but it is a subject that needs further investigation. For the purposes of this paper, I will remain on the subject of the West Virginian Male brothers.

The youngest Male brother, George, proves to be an enigma due to the identity of his wife. George married Margaret Pritchard, who has been described by Bernard Mayhle as the daughter of Rees Pritchard.⁹⁴ Rees Pritchard appeared in the earliest Hampshire County tax rolls as a man of middling means. By 1789 he had apparently increased his social stature and began serving on the Grand Jury of Inquest of Hampshire County.⁹⁵ By 1810, two other Pritchards, both named John, as well as Rees' son Rees Jr. were also present in the county. The connection between Margaret and any of these Pritchards remains unclear.

⁹³ For land records concerning John, see Deed Book 34, page 371, Washington County Court House, Marietta, Ohio. For records about Adam Male, see Washington County Deed Book 47, page 229, and Deed Book 49, page 417. Transactions made by George Male can be found in Washington County Deed Book 48, page 483, and Deed Book 64, page 496.

⁹⁴ For a more detailed examination of the Pritchard family, see pages 127-128.

⁹⁵ Horton, 30-41.

George was born around 1775 in America and married Margaret around 1798. He, like his brothers, began as a white male and changed racial classification. George, however, was listed as white until 1822, a much longer period than his brothers. Wilmore's race was given as white until 1797, William until 1803, and Richard until 1813. George even appeared as white on tax rolls in the same counties and at the same time that his brothers were labeled as mulatto or colored. This is an especially interesting development considering the potential identities of his wife. If Margaret really was the daughter of a socially respected white man, their marriage may have influenced George's race. If Margaret, however, was not the daughter of Rees, George's prolonged white status in comparison with his brothers becomes even more curious.

One potential explanation is the family tradition that "George's family and his descendants seemed to become separated from his brothers and their families who lived across the Tygart River."⁹⁶ Though the reasons for this separation are given as unknown, it is not difficult to imagine the rift being due to the effect of racism on the family. Perhaps George and his family kept their distance in an effort to win back a white status. George was the only Male brother not to name at least one of his children after one of his brothers. Despite Richard's white associations and relative wealth, he apparently had no qualms about naming one of his sons Wilmore. George did. Clearly, however, the forces of racism and gossip were too strong, and George's place on the "free colored persons" list was cemented by the 1840 Census.

Three more children are attributed to Wilmore Male, Sr. and his wife. No documentation survives to support their existence, but Elizabeth, John, and Sarah are traditionally listed as members of the second generation of Males in America. Elizabeth and Sarah are thought to have married, while John "migrated west for parts unknown."⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Mayhle, 15.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 13 D.

By the mid nineteenth century, two generations of Males had made their home in Virginia. The life that they had known in England, and even in Maryland, was forever changed by the brothers' willingness to cross the era's racial boundaries. For whatever reason, despite the rifts that may have occurred between them, the majority of them stayed where they were and made no attempt to start over in an area where their actions – or their family's – were unknown. The remaining Males and their descendents exhibited a solidarity that would continue into the twentieth century and come to include a host of families faced with the same struggles as their own.

II. “The Norris Race:” the Legend of Sam Norris

Sam Norris is in many ways the quintessential founder of the Guinea community. His life and the legends surrounding it encompass the essence of the Chestnut Ridge story: the ambiguity of race and the struggle to establish identity. The descendants of Sam Norris claim that their forefather is of Native American ancestry, but Sam’s ancestry is unclear. Born in the middle of the eighteenth century, Sam lived in a fluid frontier world that would change drastically during the lives of his children. For them, Sam’s ancestry took on a vital importance that Sam probably could not have imagined in 1770. For Sam’s descendants, his identity was not personal but public, and would determine their place in race conscious nineteenth century society. The basic facts of Sam Norris’s life were transformed into community folklore that represented what the Chestnut Ridge People wanted their neighbors to believe about them. Years of racism and the alterations and elaborations that accompany oral history forever changed Sam’s story into the staple tale of Chestnut Ridge identity.

The origin of the Sam Norris legend is unclear. Unlike Wilmore Male, Sam made no appearance in early regional histories. His tale seems to have gone unrecorded until sociologists and historians showed interest in the community in the mid-twentieth century. Then in 1952, sociologist John Burnell included the bare bones of the legend in his master’s thesis at the Ohio State University. Burnell gathered his information about Norris from the Chestnut Ridge People while conducting research in Philippi.⁹⁸ Much of this information appears to have come from Bill Peat Norris, a direct descendant of Sam. Bill Peat, a poet and always an entertainer, saw himself as the storyteller of the community and willingly shared Chestnut Ridge traditions with researchers. In the 1970s Avery Gaskins and Barry Ward from West Virginia University worked

⁹⁸ Burnell, 44 – 46.

with Bill Peat extensively and provided the best record of the Sam Norris legend, including the slight inconsistencies with which it was told.⁹⁹

Establishing a date for the beginning of the legend is impossible, other than to say it originated before the 1950s. Bill Peat Norris indicated that he had learned his family history from listening to his older relatives. Bill Peat's grandfather, Alexander, was still alive during Bill Peat's childhood, and it is likely that Alexander was the source of many of the Sam Norris stories. Alexander was the grandson of Sam, and may have gotten his information from the hero of the legend himself. Whether or not the story Sam told is the same story told by Bill Peat is unclear. Judging from the inconsistencies among modern versions, the legend has probably been altered according to the teller and the situation.

The effects of Jim Crow must have made Sam's descendants perceive his legend as carrying more and more weight. Throughout the early twentieth century, the importance of Sam Norris seems to have continued to grow. In 1952, Burnell observed that "it would seem that this family has exerted special energy to have themselves seen as Indian."¹⁰⁰ The trend has not stopped, and Sam is seen to be as essential today as he was a hundred years ago. The legend surrounding his life has been presented at conferences, posted across the Internet, and taken as historical fact by many descendants.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ See Gaskins, *An Introduction to the Guineas* and Ward, *Coagulating into Clans: Poetry and Identity in a Mixed – Blood Community*. Much of the author's information regarding the Norris legend has come from the personal records of Dr. Avery F. Gaskins, many of them copies of documents written by Bill Peat Norris and given to Dr. Gaskins.

¹⁰⁰ Burnell, 45.

¹⁰¹ Sam Norris was included in a presentation given at the First Union of the Melungeon Research Association in Wise, Virginia, on July 25, 1997 by Joanne Johnson Smith and Florence Kennedy Barnett. The legend is also featured prominently on Internet genealogy pages. For example, <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~rosadove/DeeDovey%27sPage/dortpage.htm#The%20next%20three%20articles>

Before analyzing Sam's story, it is important to read the tale in an unadulterated form.¹⁰²

The legend of Sam Norris begins with his grandfather, William Norris, an Englishman. William had three children, two sons and a daughter named Betsy. The family settled near what is today Morgantown, West Virginia. Sometime before 1750, William "caught" a seventeen-year old Indian boy named Sam. Sam had been traveling with a group of Indians (described as either Cherokees or Delawares). After his capture by William, Sam worked on the Norris farm in some sort of servitude that seems similar to slavery. One of Sam's duties was to "go and get the cows" in the evening, a duty he shared with William's teenage daughter, Betsy. It soon became apparent that Betsy was pregnant, and the father was Sam. Betsy's brothers took Sam into the woods and killed him for his transgressions. William, furious, disowned Betsy and removed her from his will. Betsy gave birth to a son in 1750; she named him Sam Norris after his father.

It is not clear how Betsy survived for the next fourteen years. Judging by the reaction of her father and brothers, it is unlikely she stayed on the Norris farm. No mention is made in the legend of what transpired between 1750 and 1764, the year John Gaul, a fellow frontiersman, left Morgantown for Hacker's Creek to prove a land claim. Gaul is not directly described as the man who raised Sam, either as an adopted son or a servant, but that is the impression that is given from the circumstances under which Sam associated with Gaul. Gaul took Sam with him to Hacker's Creek in 1764 and at some point gave Sam a piece of land adjoining his own on which Sam started a farm. Betsy later followed her son to the area. Upon arrival, Betsy marked off a large tract of land across from Sam's farm by hand and applied to the government for a deed. Betsy estimated that she had around 750 acres, when, in actuality, she had 1, 625 (or 1,600)

¹⁰² This is a version that the author has put together from various accounts, including those of Burnell, Gaskins, Ward, Norris, McElwain, and Edith McCartney (found at the above web address). A strong attempt has been made to include as many elements of the story as possible while still maintaining cohesiveness. For a complete and unedited version of the legend, as told by Bill Peat Norris, see Appendix C.

acres. Some kind of “trouble” arose over this discrepancy, and Betsy lost some of her land, but paid ten dollars for the deed and put it in Sam’s name.

At this point, one version of the legend mentions that “Betsy [went] back to Morgantown and [got] married.” This is a change in the traditional telling of the legend that will later prove significant. Most accounts of Sam no longer include any information about his mother but move on to tell about his wife. Sam met his wife sometime after his move to Hacker’s Creek. Called Pretty Hair, she was a Delaware with “long, beautiful, flowing black hair.” Sam built a cabin in the area, and he and Pretty Hair began a life among the Native Americans in the region. Sam and Pretty Hair apparently identified themselves with the Native Americans over the Europeans, as Sam is told to have watched from his porch as a band of Pretty Hair’s tribe attacked the Hacker’s Creek settlement, killing several.

The couple had eight children before Pretty Hair died and Sam married a second time, to “an Ambler woman,” who was white. He apparently had no children from his second marriage. Sam died in 1844 from a hemorrhage of the lungs. In a final heroic nod to the mythical persona of Norris, the hemorrhage is said to have resulted from over exertion after the 94 year-old Sam traveled by horseback to court a much younger woman (with whom he had stayed until four o’clock in the morning). Sam was buried in the Norris graveyard, beside his two wives, where a large gum tree stands atop his grave.¹⁰³

Though a rich and valuable piece of folklore, the historical inaccuracies in the story bring its validity into question. The circumstances surrounding Sam’s birth are the most implausible part of the account. William Norris, Sam’s grandfather in the legend, did exist and live in the Morgantown area in the eighteenth century. William had a daughter named Elizabeth, who was

¹⁰³ Bill Peat Norris said alternately that Sam was buried next to the gum or that the gum tree grew out of his grave.

often called Betsy. Born in 1729, William Norris sold his land in what is now Washington, D.C. in 1772 and headed west with his wife, Lorena Collier, and two female slaves. They lived first in a cabin in Cheat Neck, Monongalia County, where they survived an attack by a mountain lion thanks to the quick thinking of one of the enslaved women, who wounded the animal with an axe. The family worked towards a more comfortable home and, on April 17, 1781, William laid off 400 acres of land in the county.¹⁰⁴ Though in the right place, William appeared too late in the eighteenth century to have captured a Native American boy before 1750. At the time of Sam's birth around Morgantown, William Norris would have still been in the other half of the state.

Complicating the legend even more are the lives of William's five daughters, Elizabeth, Mary, Vilinda, Martha, and Charity. Elizabeth was born on January 5, 1771 while the Norris's were still in the eastern part of Virginia. The woman who is supposedly Sam's mother was born approximately twenty-one years after his 1750 birth. Elizabeth, once in Monongalia County, married George Baker, a Revolutionary War veteran from Pennsylvania, in 1789. The couple had twelve children; the first, Margaret, was born in 1790.¹⁰⁵ Clearly, there is no way that Elizabeth Norris could have been Sam's mother.

Trouble also arises in the matter of the land claim that Betsy (whoever she may be) made around 1764. There is no record in the Monongalia or Barbour County deed books of a land purchase in either Betsy's name or Sam's. The only Norris listed in *Sims Index to Land Grants in West Virginia* is David Norris. Similarly, no Sam or Betsy is to be found in *Cavaliers and Pioneers: Abstracts of Virginia Land Patents and Grants Volumes I – VIII*, which covers the

¹⁰⁴ John Baker, "History of Baker and Norris Family."

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

beginning of the colony into the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁶ The only record to be found featuring a name from the Sam Norris legend is William Norris's 1781 purchase of 400 acres.¹⁰⁷

Several points are often made in defense of the legend. The first is that William Norris's will contains no mention of Elizabeth, supposedly proving their estrangement. William's will does indeed leave out Elizabeth, but this alone is not reason to believe the omission was meant to slight Elizabeth. Even supposing it was, there are countless other reasons why William could have left out his daughter besides her having an illegitimate Native American son. More likely, William knew that his daughter was the wife of a reasonably affluent man and needed no further economic support. William does mention Elizabeth's son, John Norris Baker, to whom he leaves his land after the death of his wife.¹⁰⁸ By mentioning his grandson, William by default acknowledges Elizabeth. It would have been assumed that, should Elizabeth fall upon hard times, her son John could support her and allow her to live on his inherited land.

The presence of Cherokee and Delaware tribes in the area has also been mentioned to support the tale's veracity. While plausible, this is circumstantial evidence that, considering the other facts, doesn't lend much to the cause of the legend. Along this same line is the assertion that Bill Peat Norris spoke the Delaware language fluently. Not witnessed by Burnell, Gaskins, or Ward, this claim was first made by Thomas McElwain and has been repeated since. The evidence for Bill Peat's knowledge of the language is thus weak, especially since such a skill would be beneficial to illustrate to all researchers.

¹⁰⁶ Joanne Johnson Smith and Florence Kennedy Barnett claimed during a presentation at the Melungeon Association's First Union in 1997 to have found Sam's land grant settlement. Other than this, no one has claimed to locate the document. The author has been unable to obtain a copy or see record of the settlement.

¹⁰⁷ Baker, "History of Baker and Norris Family."

¹⁰⁸ Monongalia County Will Book 1, page 361-362.

A striking trend appears through examination of the Sam Norris legend. For all its faults and implausibility, it includes no fictional characters. Though taking the wrong actions in the wrong time, William Norris, Elizabeth Norris, and John Gaul did exist. The legend cannot align names with dates or places, but it does show that its creator knew the history of the area and may have even been familiar with the people involved. The William Norris family would have been well known in the area due to their financial status. Elizabeth may have been especially visible since her husband owned real estate in Morgantown and worked as a gunsmith.¹⁰⁹ They were the ideal family with whom to claim association: respectable, financially sound, and white.

What then is to be said of the real Sam Norris? He does not appear in written record until 1787, leaving his birth and ancestry a mystery. He may have been Native American, but he was not the grandson of William Norris. Sam may have been African American or, as has been the case with many early Guinea settlers, his ancestors might have been the offspring of multiracial couples from eastern Virginia. Keeping this in mind, it is prudent to examine the case of a biracial child who appears in Fairfax County, Virginia court records.

On June 17, 1760, Ann Norris confessed to the court that she had given birth to a “base born mulatto child” named Samuel Norris. The next month, the court ordered that Ann be sold for five years and Samuel be bound to Ann’s mistress, Ann Jenkins.¹¹⁰ The details of Ann Norris’s punishment tell a great deal about her status. Had Ann been an indentured servant, she would not have been sold but had years added onto to her indenture to compensate Ann Jenkins for the time she was unable to work due to the pregnancy, as well as to punish her. Had Ann been a slave or a free black woman, her case would not have reached the court in the first place.

¹⁰⁹ Baker, “History of Baker and Norris Family.”

¹¹⁰ Heinegg, *Free African Americans of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Maryland, and Delaware*.

Her punishment indicates that Ann was a free white woman, likely poor, who was in the employ of Ann Jenkins.

From that point on, Ann and Samuel Norris of Fairfax County disappear from the records, unless this Samuel Norris is the same one who appears in Hampshire County in 1787. Could this be the case? A ten-year difference in age difference does not appear in the census records, given the age brackets in which heads of household were placed. Sam's original gravestone, if he had one, has not survived. That leaves no record for his precise age outside of oral tradition.

An interesting coincidence is the name of Ann Norris's mistress, Ann Jenkins. The Jenkins were numerous in the Monongalia and Hampshire County area. Bartholomew Jenkins lived on land adjacent to William Norris. Bartholomew was a substantial landholder, who owned 1,561 acres in 1799.¹¹¹ Bartholomew and his family migrated to Monongalia County from Prince George's County, Maryland, which shared a border with Fairfax County, Virginia, before the existence of Washington, D.C. Six of Bartholomew's children were born in Prince George's County and baptized in the Anglican church of King George's Parish.¹¹² His last child born in Prince George's County was Margaret, born in 1772. Bartholomew was present when William Norris patented his land in 1781.

There is even an Ann Jenkins on the same 1787 tax list as Sam Norris. An Ann Jenkins was also mentioned in the 1785 will of Jacob Jenkins.¹¹³ Ann's relationship to Jacob is unclear, but she does not appear to be his wife or his daughter, as all of these family members are identified. Another Ann Jenkins was named the "widow and relict and administratrix" of Joshua

¹¹¹ Melba Pender Zinn, *Records of the Monongalia County District Courts Volume 1*, 279.

¹¹² Helen W. Brown, *Prince George's County, Maryland, Index of Church Registers 1686 – 1885 Volume 1*, 34.

¹¹³ Larry G. Shuck, *Hampshire & Hardy Counties, (W)VA Abstracts*, 4.

Jenkins in June 1789. This Ann, widowed two years after the tax list and four years after Jacob Jenkin's will, cannot be the same independent head of household from 1787, leaving open the possibility that Ann Jenkins left Fairfax County and took Sam west with her.

If this Ann Jenkins is the same Ann Jenkins to be found in a Fairfax County will from 1754, she would have had little reason to stay in the county, especially if other relatives were moving west. Ann Jenkins was the executrix of the 1745 will of Thomas Jenkins.¹¹⁴ Ann was likely Thomas's wife, considering her position as executrix. The death of a husband would also explain why Ann, instead of a male head of household, was included in Ann Norris's court records. Had there been a husband in the house, Sam would have been bound to his mother's master, not her mistress.

Having both left behind the same area of the country for the frontier, the Jenkins and Norris families remained closely intertwined throughout the years. William's youngest daughter, Charity, married Bartholomew's son, Enoch Jenkins.¹¹⁵ Both Charity and Enoch had been born in Prince George's County. Another of Bartholomew's sons, Bartholomew Jr., married Nancy Baker, the daughter of Elizabeth Norris and George Baker. If Sam did have connections with the Jenkins of Monongalia County, it would have put him in close proximity to the Norris family. Once free from servitude, his first hand knowledge of prominent local residents would have helped him to create a different past for himself, even if it was only to claim half Native American instead of African identity.

Discussion of Ann and Samuel Norris, given the available data, can only be conjecture, but it is a question that deserves further investigation. Until further research can be done, Sam Norris remains a mystery. Considering the time period in which he lived, it is not even possible

¹¹⁴ J. Estelle Stewart King, *Abstracts of Wills and Inventories, Fairfax County, Virginia 1742 – 1801*, 3, Fairfax County Will Book A-1, Pg. 114-117.

¹¹⁵ Baker, "History of Baker and Norris Family."

to affirm that Sam Norris was his real name. Norris may have been a name adopted in an attempt to align himself with the white families of the area. As Ira Berlin has shown, many newly freed slaves “borrowed the name of some local notable, more often than not a slaveholder,” in hopes that “they could capitalize on the close connections with whites it suggested.”¹¹⁶ William Norris was not only notable but came to Monongalia County with at least two slaves. Sam’s life is thus open to interpretation, full of possibilities but no facts until 1787.

What about Sam’s wife in the legend, Pretty Hair? In the case of written documentation, Pretty Hair is even harder to substantiate than Sam. There is no record of her, but then there is no reason why there should be. As a Native American woman living on the frontier, Pretty Hair would not have found herself signing deeds or paying taxes. Since Sam did not serve in the army and left no will, there is no way to prove her existence by these routes, either. The presence of Native Americans, including Delaware, in the area is unquestionable but, as mentioned before, circumstantial.

If nothing else, Pretty Hair gives the family a more substantial link to the Delaware tribe than any other ancestor, bolstering the efforts of Sam’s descendants to achieve Native American recognition via the Allegheny Lenape tribe. Not even the legend of Sam Norris points consistently to Sam’s father being Delaware. Just because there is no evidence against the existence of Pretty Hair, however, does not mean that there is any evidence for it. The best support for Pretty Hair comes from the strong oral tradition of Native American ancestry. Whether this tradition is based on Pretty Hair, a different source of Native American ancestry, or the desire to escape discriminatory laws aimed at African Americans is unclear.

Sam first appeared consistently in the records of Hampshire and the surrounding counties after 1787. That year, he was listed on Hampshire County’s tax list as residing with no white

¹¹⁶ Berlin, 52.

males above 16 and under 21, no blacks, no cattle, and 1 horse, mare, colt, or mule. Judging from this, it is clear that Sam was born before 1766. Sam continued to appear on Hampshire County tax rolls through 1799, and then again in 1801, and 1803 to 1805. He was listed as a mulatto only once in Hampshire County, when he appeared as a “mulat” on the 1801 tax list. On Randolph County lists, he was listed more frequently as mulatto, beginning in 1813. He was also classified as “Free Black,” “Colored,” and a “Man of Colour.” Later, in the 1820s, he was included on the county’s list of “Free Negroes and Mulattoes.”

Sam’s sons met the same fate in tax and census records. Judging from the 1810 census and males with the surname Norris in subsequent censuses, Sam had at least four sons. In that year, his household contained two males under ten, two males between ten and fifteen, and one male forty-five and over. There were also four females in the home, two under ten, one between twenty-six and forty-four and one over forty-five. The fates of the daughters are hard to establish, but the sons can be located until, in some cases, the 1860s.

Though their ages are inconsistent from census to census, the eldest of Sam’s sons was probably William Norris, born around 1791. William appeared first of Sam’s sons as a head of household on tax lists. He was included with his father among the “Free Negroes and Mulattoes” of Randolph County, and was designated mulatto in censuses. William is unique from his brothers in that he worked as a stonemason rather than a farmer. It is likely he learned this trade from the prominent stonemasons within the multiracial community, the Hills or Daltons. Given their relatively small size in the early nineteenth century, a sizeable proportion of the Guineas found work as stonemasons.

William was apparently quite successful at his trade, especially considering the fact that he had started out with relatively little. His father had been one of the men called with Wilmore

Male by the Overseer of the Poor in 1798. By the time of the 1850 census, he owned around 1,500 dollars in real estate. This was more than triple the amount of the real estate held by his three brothers combined. William's sons Alexander (Bill Peat's grandfather), Ephraim, and William, who were all between eighteen and twenty-four in 1850, were also listed as stonemasons.

The next eldest brother, Samuel Junior, found little success in Virginia. Born around 1793 and married to a woman named Phoebe, Samuel Junior owned no real estate in 1850. Designated a mulatto, he was located in District 5 of Barbour County and had five children living with him, all adults. His household also included a one-year-old-boy named Isaac Newman and a twenty-one year old woman, Genatta Collins. Both individuals had characteristic Guinea surnames and demonstrated a trend in the community that was becoming more apparent by the middle of the nineteenth century.

Many Guinea households of the time period were home to more than the nuclear family. While sometimes unrelated boarders, both from within the community and without, it was often the extended family that was included in the home. This frequently took the form of unmarried daughters and their children living with their parents, as well as adult siblings or occasionally divorced relatives. Patterns of large familial households and births to unwed mothers were also found in Chesapeake free black communities, from which many Guinea settlers likely came. Since multiracial couples were denied the right to marry, offspring of these couples came to be identified with legal illegitimacy and were thus socially marginalized on racial and moral grounds. In cases of illegitimacy, which often occurred over several generations, "legally speaking, maternal ties were considerably more important than paternal ties." In the Guinea community, the legal implications appear to have carried over to social practice, since

illegitimate children usually remained with their mother or maternal grandparents, especially if the mother married or remarried. Additionally, many Guinea children of unwed mothers took their mother's surname, which in some cases, such as Henry Dalton and his children, reflected "the conditions under which an earlier generation attained its freedom."¹¹⁷

In this instance, Isaac Newman was probably the grandson of Samuel Junior through one of his daughters. This is supported by the fact that Isaac was still with Samuel and Phoebe in 1860. Having had little luck with accumulating property in Virginia, Samuel had relocated to the related multiracial community in Southeastern Ohio by 1860. He, his wife, and Isaac were living with his son William, who claimed 325 dollars of real estate and fifty in personal property in Barlow Township, Washington County, Ohio. Sixty-six year-old Samuel helped run his son's farm. Interestingly, while Samuel Junior had been considered mulatto in Virginia, he, his wife, and William were listed as black in Ohio, though Isaac was still labeled mulatto.

Samuel Junior's younger brother, James, also moved to Washington County, but experienced no change in racial status. Considered mulatto in Virginia, James retained that status in his new community. James was around sixty-two by the time he moved to Ohio. He had a wife, Anne or Anna, who was around ten years his junior. Together the couple had at least eight children. Seven of these were born in Virginia, where James was listed on the 1850 census. Also living with the family that year in Barbour County was Sarah Norris, aged twenty-eight, and Emily Norris, who was only a month old. Since Anne was in her late thirties at the time, she could not have been Sarah's mother. Perhaps Sarah was one of James's unidentified sisters who had moved in with her brother to make raising her daughter alone easier. If she was his sister, their father had died by this time and Sarah could not have gone to Samuel, Senior, for help.

¹¹⁷ Brown, 198, 205.

Sarah and Emily did not travel with James to Ohio. He moved sometime before 1855, as his youngest son, Isaac, was born in the state. Whereas James owned no property in Virginia, by 1860 he owned fifty dollars worth of real estate and ten dollars of personal property. Still a farmer, James was assisted in his work by two teenage sons, while two teenage daughters helped their mother raise the youngest sons, ten and five year old John and Isaac.

James's youngest son was probably named after the youngest of Samuel Senior's sons. Isaac Norris, born around 1806, first appeared on the census in 1830. Isaac was the only of Samuel's children to be labeled black on a Virginia census. He was also the only Norris brother besides William to own land in 1850, when his real estate was valued at 400 dollars. Either he was a widower at that point or his children's mother had left him, since no adult female was present in the household, though Isaac did have five children ranging from ages seven to seventeen. Unfortunately, Isaac disappears from census records after 1850. He must have died relatively young.

The elder Samuel Norris died before any of his sons, sometime between 1840 and 1850. His wife had died prior to 1840, since Sam was listed as living alone on the list of "Free Colored Persons" on the census of that year. Oral history places his death in 1844. Listed only as between fifty-six and one hundred in 1840, his age at his death is indeterminate. According to Bill Peat, Sam's grave was identifiable by the presence of a gum tree. Sam likely had no gravestone at the time of his burial, though one had been erected by the time Burnell visited the site in the 1950s. What Burnell saw, however, was not an ordinary grave. An indentation had been chiseled into the stone so a small piece of paper could be inserted and then covered by glass. Burnell recorded the typed paper as saying:

"Sam Norris -- B -- 1750 D -- 1844

Sam Norris, the Forefather of the
Norris Race
Borned at Morgontown 1750 His Father
Sam An Indian His Mother Betsie A
English Woman Come to Hacker Creek
Seventeen Sixty Four Married Pretty Hair
Deloware Indian...
...Died In the Road At the Welch
Cemotary At Four O’Clock in Morning
Eighteen Forty Four”¹¹⁸

Burnell described the insertion of this paper into the stone as having happened “within recent years.”¹¹⁹ The informal obituary was effectively a shortened version of the legend. Leaving out some of the details, it makes clear several key points to the story. Namely, the description goes out of its way to establish Sam’s ancestry. His mother was English and his father was an Indian, as was his wife. Rather than elaborate on Sam’s accomplishments, character, or living relatives, his descendents went out of their way to define Sam’s life in terms of race. The frequent use of racial terms in the short passage is striking. It is even goes as far as describing Sam as the forefather of the Norris “race,” as if to say that the Norris family was neither white, black, Native American, nor perhaps even the same as other founders of the Guinea community such as Wilmore Male and Henry Dalton. The Norris family appears here as a group distinct from any attempts at established racial classification.

This analysis may not be that different from how Bill Peat Norris viewed himself and his family. While relating the history of his ancestors, Bill Peat noted “Now you find ten 10 differen[t] races of people in Barbour County, Taylor County, W.V.A. and at Cutler and Zanesville, Ohio, that people has wondered who they was and where they came from. You find they hang tog[e]ther and are very percurley [peculiar].”¹²⁰ While the Anglo-Americans around

¹¹⁸ Burnell, 45.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Bill Peat Norris Papers.

him were content to divide people into three races, and in some cases only white and “colored” or “negroe,” Bill Peat saw the Chestnut Ridge People’s many heritages as creating at least ten races. For Bill Peat, race may have been closely related to family name. For instance, in the same writing, he mentions the “Kennedy race.”¹²¹ Despite heavy intermarriage between the families (Bill Peat acknowledged that these “races” “hang together”), the presence of women of different surnames who married into the family does not seem to be of importance. Even if the families shared many ancestors, each was given a unique identity.

Given the information it includes, the insertion of this brief biography into Sam’s grave illustrates the Norris family’s attempts at self-definition and their desire to express this definition to the white community. The decision to achieve this goal via Sam’s grave coincides with another important element in the community’s folklore outside of race: death. The exact time and place of Sam’s death are meticulously recorded. In his genealogies, Bill Peat Norris assigned special significance to how each of his relatives died. For instance, “Ad Norris, father of John Norris and Bill [Norris]...met death by a log rolling over him,” while “Wash Norris met death by Newmonie Fever.”¹²²

Burial places were often included as well. “The first Croston to be in Barbour County...is buried in the Ike Kennedy graveyard at Chestnut Ridge” and “Samuel [Kennedy] is buried on Simpson Creek in the Tim Mayle graveyard.”¹²³ The graves of Bill Peat’s forefathers were treated as sites of communal importance. Evidence of concern over proper memorials can also be found in the wills of Chestnut Ridge families from the early twentieth century. The 1908 will of William Dalton included instructions for the will’s executor to erect “at my first wife’s gravestone and at my grave, proper marble tomb stones to cost no less than fifteen dollars and

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

properly inscribed with the name, age, &c.”¹²⁴ In 1910, John W. Croston specifically mentioned his desire for a “monument of the best artistic style” to be placed at his and his wife’s grave.¹²⁵ Considering the thought put into burial, the placement of Sam’s biography on his gravestone was a solemn and meaningful gesture.

Yet, an even greater testament to Sam’s life was to come. When McElwain visited the community in the 1980s, he recorded the same inscription but claimed it was “engraved” on the tombstone.¹²⁶ There are several possible explanations for this. Perhaps Sam’s descendants had purchased another marker for Sam’s grave with an official engraving rather than a typed paper. Or, McElwain may have altered his description of the biography’s form in hopes of making the information look more substantial. McElwain attempted to use this alleged inscription as evidence for the truth of the Sam Norris legend, claiming, “Norrises have, for a number of generations, referred to the tombstone of Sam Norris.”¹²⁷ In his description, Sam’s grave is neither recent nor altered; he makes it appear that the grave has always had an engraving, inferring that the information included was recorded soon after Sam’s death. By attempting to date the engraving close to Sam’s lifetime, McElwain strives to present the engraving as the foundation of a historical truth.

Even in matters of death and burial Sam’s legacy is a volatile issue. While many genealogists report the legend and refer vaguely to historical records as evidence, none have been able to provide concrete documentation in support of their claim. Research for this paper has uncovered no deeds, wills, land grants, census records, or tax lists that would lend credence to the Sam Norris legend. On the contrary, the account falters immediately upon review of the

¹²⁴ Barbour County Will Book 2, page 330

¹²⁵ Barbour County Will Book 3, page 110.

¹²⁶ McElwain, 37.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

available documentation. The very basis of the legend, the presence of the Norris family in western Virginia prior to 1750, is proven faulty. Though historical records can disprove one account of Sam's past, they unfortunately do not contain enough evidence to provide a definitive one.

III. “By Occupation a Planter:” the Life of Gustavus T. Croston

In 1803 the Monongalia County Court paid seven people for their services in constructing the Monongalia County courthouse and its offices. Among these seven was William Croston, who was acknowledged for “re-fixing” the conductor (or downspout). William was part of the multiracial community of western Virginia and the grandson of one of its founders. Though the county commissioners may have been unsure about William’s ancestry, they apparently had no questions about his skills. They called on William to solve a problem that another man had failed to remedy. Due to his neighbors’ views about race, William was probably not at the peak of frontier society, but he did earn respect for his hard work and talent. William was an example of the opportunities that the frontier could afford. His family members were not always so lucky, sometimes facing dramatic changes in their fortunes. Their experiences showed that, in matters of racial discrimination, hard work was not always enough for success.

William was the grandson of Gustavus D. Croston, who appeared mysteriously in Hampshire County in 1787. Croston is not a name found often in early Virginia or Maryland, and Gustavus does not appear to have been included in government records before the late eighteenth century. Add to that a lack of detailed legends and Gustavus Croston’s arrival in Hampshire County becomes even more curious. The study of Croston’s origins thus reveals little in regard to his attempts at establishing a racial identity. Though his story may not contribute much to the understanding of racial attitudes on Chestnut Ridge, Gustavus’s life is significant for the number of children it produced. His presence in the area contributed substantially to the growing Guinea population.

Family traditions about Croston also highlight what may be the only use of racial “euphemisms” in the community. The Crostons are often considered Dutch or “Black Dutch”,

and Gustavus is occasionally referred to as the son of a Dutch sea captain.¹²⁸ Much like the Melungeons used the term “Portuguese” to escape prejudice against people of African or Native American descent, the phrase “Black Dutch” referred to “remote (but still perceptible) African-American and/or American-Indian ancestry.” The term “Black Dutch” originated in the late nineteenth century in the upper south, and may be related to the trans-Appalachian epithet for Native Americans, “Black Ducks.” Quotations from as early as 1854 described the “Black Dutch” as individuals with “‘mixed-blood’ heritage.”¹²⁹

It is ironic that a term originally meant to obscure Native American ancestry would be used by a group that today appears so dedicated to proving such a heritage. Given the term’s varied meanings, however, it is not safe to say that the Crostons were trying to hide only Native American heritage. The term may have been used as a defense against accusations of African ancestry, as well. Outside of being “Black Dutch,” the most famous tale about Gustavus relates the time he walked to Richmond to obtain an increase in his Revolutionary War pension in his older years.¹³⁰ This story about Gustavus’s past leads to the best source of information about his life, his pension records.

In an 1820 statement about his Revolutionary War service, Gustavus testified that he was around sixty-three years old, placing his birth around 1757. This date is close to family traditions that say he was born in 1755. Gustavus provided the pension office no information about his birthplace. In later census records, two of his sons said that their father had been born in Maryland. According to his account in his pension files, Gustavus (who was also known as Travis) enlisted in Newport, Maryland, supporting his sons’ claim. Enlisting in Newport places

¹²⁸ Bill Peat Norris Papers; Johnson Smith and Kennedy Barnett, “The Guineas of West Virginia.”

¹²⁹ Everett, 370, 388.

¹³⁰ Avery F. Gaskins “Warner Pritchard.” Message to the author. 02 Sept. 2009. E-mail; Bill Peat Norris Papers.

Gustavus in the same general area as Henry Dalton, Warner Pritchard, and (potentially) Sam Norris.¹³¹

Though Gustavus could not recall when he enlisted, it must have been near the beginning of the war as he reenlisted twice. He first served three years under a Captain Hambleton, enlisted a second time under Lieutenant James Harper and was then placed under the command of Captain Archer in the Virginia line, where he enlisted for a third time when his second term was complete. Gustavus named no specific battles, but mentioned that he was stationed for a time at Petersburg until Colonel Green took command and “marched them to the south.”¹³² Gustavus continued to serve until the end of the war and was discharged in Alexandria, Virginia.

In December of 1787, Croston was granted 100 acres of land by the United States government. His move to Hampshire County may have predated this grant, however, as he was already listed as a taxable resident of the county in 1787. He continued to appear on Hampshire County tax lists, along with Sam Norris and some years Wilmore Male, until 1800. He reappeared in 1804 and for the years 1807 through 1812, excluding 1811, was listed with two tithes. Not once during these years was he referred to as anything other than white, though Wilmore Male was included on the same list as a free mulatto for three of those years. When race was mentioned with his name in 1813, his household included “two free people of color.” In the 1830 census, Gustavus was included at the bottom of the page with other individuals with

¹³¹ Hezekiah Emory (likely the brother of Richard Male’s wife), stated in his pension testimony on Croston’s behalf that he had known Gustavus around fifty years. Given that Gustavus was in his sixties at the time, this meant that Hezekiah would have known Gustavus as a child. Three Hezekiah Emorys were listed in the 1820 – 1840 censuses. The first two, from Surry and Frederick Counties, remained in their respective areas throughout the twenty-year span. The final Emory disappeared from Jefferson County after 1830 and was replaced by an Hezekiah Emory in Hampshire County. Since these dates are substantially after Gustavus’s childhood, however, it is safer to consider Maryland his birthplace.

¹³² Pension Number 39379, Gustavus Croston (or Crosston, Crosten).

Guinea surnames. When census forms included a section for free black residents in 1840, Croston was listed among them.

After receiving 100 acres of land and owning three horses in 1787, Croston's luck seems to have declined. In 1798 he no longer owned any horses, and he did not have one again until 1805. In 1798, the Overseer of the Poor summoned him regarding the binding out of his children.¹³³ By 1809, however, he could once more claim three horses and his circumstances improved. Croston's fortunes changed again in his old age. Sometime around his sixty-sixth year, in 1823, Gustavus informed the pension office that, though "he [was] by occupation a planter," he was "not able to know" the "blessings" of his work "in consequence of a strain in his hand and his having broken the rim of his abdomen."¹³⁴ Undoubtedly in pain, he requested an increase in his pension. Neighbors, including Wilmore Male and Hezekiah Emory, testified that he was "an honest man and worthy of credit" who had for some time been "considered a very poor man." Croston himself reported that he had only a "small lot of land, 'tis poor" and it "offered him nothing more than a home." The better part of the acres he had once owned, presumably a portion of his 100 acres, Croston claimed had "been taken from him by a [illegible] title."¹³⁵ Unfortunately, the word proceeding "title" was written over several times and is now unreadable, leaving no clue as to why his land was taken.

The seizure of his land may have had something to do with his growing debt. Two inventories of his property were made during his efforts to gain a raise in pension. The inventories are undated, but judging from the other records they were taken after 1820. Croston owned more in one inventory than the other. On one list, he claimed two cows and three calves, one sow, eleven sheep and six lambs, two old ploughs, two pots, one gun, three scythes, ninety-

¹³³ Horton, 97.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

two acres of land, some grain, and two horses. These items were valued at 385.25. The other list, possibly a supplement to the first or a later inventory, contained one sow, one sheep, one calf, one “Barshea” plough, four old hoes, three axes, one old gun, three scythes, two pots, one Dutch oven, two buckets, one old wheel, one churn, two blankets, one item valued at thirty cents that is illegible, and one handsaw. In addition to the items he owned, however, the inventories also included the money he owed. His debt came to around seventy-three dollars and was owed to six people, including the sheriff.¹³⁶

In his statements to the Justice of the Peace in 1822 (which were recorded by none other than John White), Croston stated that he had seven children, all but one of whom were fully-grown. While Croston’s story may lack details compared to the other men in this study, he does not lack descendents. Also unlike most of the men discussed, Gustavus had children who lived into the 1880s, providing valuable information on the more detailed censuses of the late nineteenth century. Even then, there is still no evidence for the identity of the mother or mothers of Gustavus’s children. No reference to a wife is made in his pension records, other than the comment that he left behind no widow after his death.

Due to inconsistencies in ages listed on the census, some of which varied up to nine years, determining exact birth dates is impossible. The eldest of Gustavus’s sons was most likely John Croston. John was born sometime between 1790 and 1800, probably around 1792. He was listed as a head of household in Hampshire County in 1830 and 1840, and then in Preston County in 1850. In 1828 and 1837, John had purchased a total of 119 and $\frac{1}{4}$ acres in Hampshire County from Christopher and Magdalena Keats and Isaac and Elizabeth Delaplaine. The land he purchased in 1837 was adjacent to land he already owned, as well as to his father’s land. In 1843, however, William Heiskell sold all of that land on John’s behalf, probably precipitating his move

¹³⁶ Ibid.

before 1850.¹³⁷ That year, in Preston County, his age was given as sixty-one. The entire family, which consisted of a wife named Elizabeth and two children, was considered mulatto. John, like his father, ran a farm that was worth around 400 dollars.

By 1860 his address was listed as Philippi, indicating a move towards the present Chestnut Ridge area. His given age in 1860 was sixty-eight. His wife appeared as seven years younger than in 1850, indicating that John may have remarried another Elizabeth. Another significant difference was his total lack of real estate. John no longer farmed his own land but worked as a farm laborer for someone else. He could claim only eighteen dollars worth of personal property. Also living in the household were four people with the surname Ramsey. The eldest, Armistead, was nineteen years old and also listed as mulatto. There were three younger Ramseys, as well as a Susannah Croston, aged three, potentially the second Elizabeth's daughter. The identity of the Ramseys is unclear. The eldest was too young to have been the father of the younger three. Perhaps the Ramseys were John's grandchildren, living in a situation similar to that found among the Norris families.

John was like his father in another way; his fortunes were always changing. Within ten years, he had accumulated 300 dollars worth of real estate and 700 dollars of personal property. Listed as age 78, John was farming again. He also had a new group of children living with him. Susan, now fourteen, was still with the family, but the four Ramseys had disappeared. The only Ramsey present was another Armistead, this time aged two years. Beside Armistead's name was the note "raised by Croston." There were also two new Crostons. One, William J., was eight. If he had been born when Elizabeth was fifty, she could have been his mother. The other, Harriet A. Croston, was eighteen years old and had not appeared on the 1850 or 1860 census with John and Elizabeth, suggesting she may also have been a grandchild.

¹³⁷ Hampshire County Deed Book 26 Page 268, Deed Book 32 Page 319, Deed Book 37 Page 356.

The second eldest child of Gustavus was either Thomas D. Croston or James Croston. Thomas gave his age in 1860 as 65 and in 1870 as 75, giving him a fairly consistent birth year of 1795. He appeared as an independent householder in the 1850 census, when he was living in Barbour County and running a farm valued at 1,000 dollars. His wife, Nancy, and their children were all considered mulatto. In 1860, his post office address was in Philippi, and his wife had died. His real estate had grown in value and reached 2,000 dollars, with 919 in personal property. Three sons helped him run his farm, while two teenage daughters and an unidentified 30-year-old Mary Croston (who had not been on the 1850 census with Thomas) worked as domestics.

Mary was likely the Polly Croston who appeared in Thomas's household in 1870. There was only one other person in the home, a new, younger Croston named Thomas. If Polly was Thomas's second wife, the younger Thomas may have been her son. Or, he could have been a grandchild. Thomas D. still owned a substantial amount of real estate worth 1,800 dollars and 500 dollars in personal property. After 1870, Thomas D. no longer appeared on the census.

The other contender for second eldest son, James, was listed as 60 years old in 1850 but only 63 in 1860. James had been appearing on the census in Hampshire County since 1840. That year, James's household contained three "Free Persons of Color," one adult male and two children, and one white female between thirty and forty. This woman, likely the mother of at least two of his children, may have been the Elizabeth Wommick who lived with James in 1860. Elizabeth's race appears to have been written first as mulatto but then erased and left blank. Another Elizabeth, this time with the last name Croston, was aged thirteen, listed as mulatto, and was likely Elizabeth and James's daughter. Since Elizabeth was considered white, it would have been impossible for her to marry James and her surname would still have been Wommick. The couple's daughter, however, could take her father's name.

Also living with James and the two Elizabeths was a fifty-year old woman named Mary Jefferson, whose race was left blank. Her relationship to James is unclear. Judging from the way the household was listed, with Elizabeth Wommick under James, Elizabeth Croston under Elizabeth Wommick, and Mary Jefferson under Elizabeth Croston, it is more likely Elizabeth Wommick was Elizabeth Croston's mother than Mary Jefferson. Mary may have been a boarder, since James did own 200 dollars worth of real estate.

By 1860 both Elizabeth Wommick and Mary Jefferson had disappeared. James had moved from Barbour County back into Hampshire near the North River Mills area. He continued to farm, having accumulated 500 dollars in real estate and 190 in personal property. His daughter, now 25, helped run the household. Another woman, Mary Barnes, age 55, was listed at the bottom of the household and may have been a boarder as well.

Brothers William and Charles followed Thomas and John in age. Again, which brother was actually older is debatable. William was born sometime between 1800 and 1807. He, like James, lived at different points with at least two white women. In 1840, he, his son, and presumably the mother of that son were all listed under the "free colored persons" section. The woman he was living with in Hampshire County in 1850 may have been the same woman in the 1840 census. Her name was Catharine, and her age was listed as 30 while William's was 50. Both, as well as four children, were considered mulatto.

A Catharine was living with William again in 1860, but this time she was listed as white. Aged 38 years, she was probably the same woman as in 1850, especially since William's age was given as 53. The change in her racial status is unaccountable, but it may have something to do with the sudden rise in William's fortunes. After owning 400 dollars worth of real estate in 1850, he owned 2,900 dollars worth ten years later, as well as 985 dollars in personal property.

William's finances declined somewhat by 1870, when he had 2,000 dollars in real estate and 500 in personal property. Then, he was listed as 70 years old. Catharine was no longer in the household, and the only remaining son was 19-year-old Charles, who helped run the farm. Also present in the home was George Deaver, an 80-year-old white retired farmer. Deaver had been acquainted with the Crostons for a number of years; he, as well as William and Mary and Alexander and Nancy Deaver, sold 44 acres of land to James Croston in 1827.¹³⁸ Deaver was probably living with William as a boarder, but in 1880 the only other person living in William's home was not his boarder but his employee. Fifty seven year old Nancy Kidwell was listed as William's "help." In a moment reminiscent of Richard Male hiring an outsider to do repairs on his farm, Nancy Kidwell was listed as white.

Charles continued this trend of association with white women. In 1840, Charles's household contained a diverse group of people. Charles was the one "free colored" male between 24 and 36, and the four "free colored" children under ten were likely his sons. The only adult female in the house was a 20-30 year old woman who was considered white. In addition to her, a white male between 50 and 60 lived with Charles. Though it is not certain, the adult woman was likely the mother of Charles's four children, while the older white male was her father. Since Charles was listed as the head of the household, he owned any property and had some sort of authority over the other man. A father-in-law living with his daughter's family would have been subordinate to the householder, though it is possible that the white man and woman were boarders.

Mysteriously, Charles Croston disappears between 1840 and 1870. The Charles that appeared in 1870 and the one that appeared in 1880 may or may not be the same. The Charles from 1870 was born in 1805 and was married to a woman named Polly. A Charles and Polly

¹³⁸ Hampshire County Deed Book 26 Page 29.

Croston sold their share of inheritance from Travis D. Croston's land to William Croston in 1846.¹³⁹ In 1880, a Charles born in 1814 appeared with a wife, Mary, who was ten years older than Polly Croston should have been. Both Charles were in Barbour County and were listed as mulatto, so they must have had some relation to the Charles Croston of 1840 and may in fact both be the same man.

The youngest of Gustavus's sons, named Travis D. Croston in honor of his father, was born around 1810. He was the head of household for the first time in 1840, when he was living with a wife and five daughters. By 1850 he was in Barbour County with a wife, Mary, and ten children, the oldest of whom was twenty. Though he gave his occupation as a farmer, Travis had no real estate. This was probably due to debt he had incurred over the years. For instance, Travis owed his brother William 150 dollars in 1846. He transferred his interest in his father's land to brother James in November of that year for one dollar. James was to sell the land and give the proceeds to William if Travis had not paid off his debt, including interest, in two years. If Travis did return the money to William, the entire indenture was to be null and void.¹⁴⁰

Three other Crostons worth mentioning were present in Virginia censuses during the first half of the nineteenth century. The first, Nancy Croston, may have been one of Gustavus's daughters, or she may have been the widow of a different Croston. Listed as a head of household for the first time in 1850, she was living in Hampshire County at age 62. She had 100 dollars in real estate and was joined by a John Croston, presumably a son, who worked as a carpenter. Nancy's 100 acres probably consisted partially of the 39.2 acres of land James Croston sold to her in 1846 for twenty dollars. No relationship between James and Nancy is specified, but the

¹³⁹ Hampshire County Deed Book 39 Page 460.

¹⁴⁰ Hampshire County Deed Book 39 Pages 387-389.

land adjoined the land held by Gustavus Croston's heirs, suggesting that some of Nancy's 100 acres may have come from that tract.¹⁴¹

Both Nancy and John were listed as mulatto, but the other three members of the home had no race included. The first, Samuel Emory, was forty-five and was probably a relation of Gustavus Croston's long time acquaintance, Hezekiah Emory. Kathleen Brown has shown that "long-lasting unions between free black and white individuals occasionally resulted in interracial households and families."¹⁴² This seems to be the case of the Croston and Emory families. Hezekiah Emory's association with the Crostons was likely how Rhoda Emory came into contact with the Males, and almost certainly how Nancy Croston formed a relationship with Samuel Emory (whatever the nature of that relationship may have been).

The other two women listed, Ann and Eliza Turner, were aged twenty-five and eighteen and had no occupation listed. These two individuals may have been Nancy's boarders. Only Samuel Emory remained with Nancy in 1860. Nancy owned 150 dollars in both real estate and personal property. By listing his occupation as farming, Samuel may have meant that he helped Nancy with what land she had. This time, Samuel was listed as white, while Nancy was still labeled mulatto.

The other two Crostons of note were actually listed as "Croftons." Living in Randolph and Tucker Counties, a substantial number of mixed race Croftons appeared on Virginia censuses after the 1840s. The first, Noble T. Crofton, was first a resident of neighboring Randolph County before he moved onto the Hannahsville area of Tucker County around 1860. At age forty, Noble was likely a grandson of Gustavus Croston who had reached adulthood before his name could appear as a member of one of Gustavus's sons' households. Another

¹⁴¹ Hampshire County Deed Book 39 Page 460.

¹⁴² Brown, 238.

Crofton in the area was named “Traf,” potentially a corruption of “Trav” or “Travis.” Also listed as a mulatto, “Traf” was thirty years old and living in District 2 of Tucker County in 1860. Given his name, “Traf Crofton” was also likely a grandson of Gustavus Croston.

Together, Gustavus and his at least seven children represent the diversity of experiences to be found among the free black community in the first half of the nineteenth century. Some, such as William, overcame economic disadvantage to turn “the increasingly formalistic legal climate, which offered protection to established free male property holders, to their advantage.”¹⁴³ Though facing legal discrimination based on race, William’s 2,000 dollars of real estate offered him a measure of security that even inherently racist laws dared not touch. Others, like James, continued to defy both laws and social norms by crossing racial boundaries to form apparently successful relationships with white women. On the other hand, some, like Gustavus Croston himself, could not sustain their tenuous position in a community controlled by white families. Yet, whether economically stable or not, all of the Crostons interacted with the white community to a degree that contradicts McElwain’s picture of a confused, insular native society barricaded against all influence from white society. In fact, like the other early Guinea settlers, the Crostons showed a familiarity with white institutions that allowed several of them great success.

¹⁴³ Ibid, 225.

IV. "A Base Born Child:" Henry Dalton's Fate

The history of Henry Dalton highlights the link between the late eighteenth century Guinea community and the seventeenth and early eighteenth century free black communities in the Chesapeake. The son of a white servant woman and an African or Native American man, Dalton's fate was the consequence of newly racialized legal restrictions on female sexuality. After 1662, women were an important factor in establishing the institution of slavery. Since Virginia law stated that a child's status depended on the status of the mother, the prospect of white women having children by African men threatened to destabilize the system by making "it possible for white women to disconnect slavery from race."¹⁴⁴ The solution to this problem, in the eyes of Virginia lawmakers, was to further criminalize sexual relationships between races, specifically in regards to white women. While "very few white men were prosecuted for interracial sexual misconduct during this period," the rate of white female servants on trial for interracial sex grew from ten percent of servant bastardy cases in the 1680s to thirty percent by the 1700s.¹⁴⁵ Henry Dalton's life was fundamentally altered by these laws' application not just to his mother, but also to him.

Family genealogies concerning Henry did not include his birth to an indentured servant until recently. Traditionally, Henry was recognized as the first of the Daltons in central West Virginia and a Revolutionary War veteran.¹⁴⁶ The advent of Internet genealogy research has brought a new element to the Dalton story, that of Henry's illegitimate birth to Ann Dalton. Family historians now believe that Ann "was an indentured servant of Jane Martin, an

¹⁴⁴ Brown, 187.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 198-99.

¹⁴⁶ Avery F. Gaskins "Ann Dalton." Message to the author. 11 Sept. 2009. E-mail.

Innkeeper.”¹⁴⁷ Upon extensive examination, it appears that the traditional folklore has survived in an accurate form, while the accuracy of the new additions is hit and miss.

The Ann presented by recent genealogies as Henry’s mother was an English woman who was transported for an unknown crime to the colonies in 1750.¹⁴⁸ Ann was indentured to the innkeeper Jane Martin of Maryland, wife of a Captain Martin. Immediately before or soon after her arrival in America, Ann gave birth to an illegitimate son. Jane Martin reported Ann to the courts and the son, Henry, was labeled mulatto and bound to the Pruitt family. Much of the later information in Ann’s saga proves correct, but the story’s foundation – Ann’s identity – is faulty. The Ann Dalton who was convicted in England (henceforth referred to as English Ann) and the Ann Dalton who appears in Maryland records (Maryland Ann) cannot be the same person.

Prison records from Devon, England show that English Ann was committed on August 6, 1749 by the magistrate, J. Bulteel, Esq. Her crime was the theft of twenty-two shillings and some silver buckles from a cupboard that she had broken into.¹⁴⁹ English Ann was held at Bridewell Prison until Michaelmas Sessions, when she was turned over to the keeper of the High Gaol. She was tried at the Castle of Exeter on March 16, 1750 and sentenced to transportation to Virginia.¹⁵⁰

Maryland Ann first appears in court records in America in Prince George’s County, Maryland. March Court records from 1750 include the note, “We the grand jurors for the Body of Prince George’s County, Do present Ann Dorton for having a Base born child by information of Jane Martin.”¹⁵¹ Here it becomes clear that English Ann and Maryland Ann cannot be the same person. English Ann was not tried until the middle of March, not giving her enough time to

¹⁴⁷ Johnson Smith and Kennedy Barnett, "The Guineas of West Virginia."

¹⁴⁸ Randall, "Henry Dorton."

¹⁴⁹ Devon Quarter Sessions Order Book QS/1/19 1745 - 1758

¹⁵⁰ Transportation Bond QS/129/50

¹⁵¹ Prince George’s County Court Records, MSA C1191-25 Pg. 128

arrive in Maryland by the March court sessions, even if she was transported the day of her conviction and her illegitimate child was reported the moment Ann stepped off the boat. Curiously, the informant to the courts was Jane Martin, the woman to whom Ann was allegedly indentured. While Jane Martin did exist and had some sort of contact with Ann, the source of the belief that Ann was indentured to her is unclear.¹⁵² The brief court record in no way defines Jane's relationship to Ann, let alone insinuates that Ann was bound to Jane. If Ann were the indentured servant of Jane, the court probably would have recorded that information.

Nor is Jane mentioned again in the documentation available on Ann. In reality, Henry and Ann are not even mentioned in the same document, but it is safe to say that the Henry Dalton in August Court 1750 records for Frederick County is the same "base born child" in Ann's records. The entry reads as follows: "Henry Dalton a Mulatto aged (as 'tis said) six months the eighth day of September next is by the court here bound to Samuel Pruit and his assigns until he arrives to the age of thirty one years and the said Samuel Pruit in Court here obliges himself to give the said Henry Dalton at the expiration of his time of servitude Freedom Dues according to the Custom of the Country."¹⁵³ September is six months after March, the month of Henry's birth. This record even lists the exact date, the eighth. Had Henry been English Ann's son, he would have been born while she was still imprisoned, before her trial. Yet, records made no mention of a child that was born to the prisoner or its fate.

The August Court 1750 record is the first mention of Henry Dalton's race. He is designated mulatto at only five months of age, a considerably younger date than when Wilmore Male is first referred to as mulatto. The "(as 'tis said)" note is intriguing. Does it refer to Henry's

¹⁵² Attempts have been made to contact the author of one of the more detailed accounts of Ann's relationship with Jane. Unfortunately, the author could provide no evidence to back up any of the claims made. Randall, Dee. "Ann Dalton." Message to the author. 11 Sept. 2009. E-mail.

¹⁵³ Frederick County Court Judgment Record, MSA C810-2 Pg. 52

age, or to the description of him as mulatto? If it refers to his being mulatto, it implies that Henry, his mother, or both, appeared white. The “’tis said” could have been inserted because the father’s identity was unclear and the court was acting on the word of a third party. If Ann had been a slave, she would not have appeared in court at all for having an illegitimate child, as “the children of slave women were neither legitimate nor illegitimate, no matter who the father was.”¹⁵⁴ Similarly, if Ann was a free black, she was unlikely to appear in court, since “the laws said nothing about black women who had illegitimate children by white fathers.”¹⁵⁵ If Ann was considered mulatto, she may have appeared in court, but her record would not have included the binding out of her son, since “the 1723 law mandating that the children of mulatto servant women should serve until the age of thirty or thirty-one did not require formal indentures.”¹⁵⁶

It is likely that Ann was the white party of the union that produced Henry Dalton, making the father either black, Indian, or mulatto himself. It is impossible to determine any background beyond that. Though establishing paternity had been important in colonial courts in the seventeenth century, this importance was waning, regardless of the father’s race. In Virginia, “only 12 percent of the [bastardy] cases between 1700 and 1750” listed the father’s name, “a far cry from the 57 percent average of the preceding half-century.”¹⁵⁷ Laws against sexual intercourse between white women and black men extended to Indian men, as well, illustrating how whites “treated black, red, and intermediate shades of brown as interchangeable. Even the offspring of a mixed Indian and white couple were defined as mulattoes.”¹⁵⁸ The punishment for such intercourse was formidable for the women involved, whether free or indentured. Indentured women had time added to their term of service in order to compensate their master for lost work.

¹⁵⁴ Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery – American Freedom*, 336.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Brown, 233.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 200.

¹⁵⁸ Morgan, 329.

Free women were fined fifteen pounds. If payment could not be made, the woman was to be sold for five years.

The fate of the offspring of a white woman and black, Indian, or mulatto father was decided by the courts, as well. Multiracial illegitimate children were ordered to serve until age thirty or thirty-one, versus twenty-four year indentures ordered for illegitimate white children.¹⁵⁹ In Henry's case, he was bound at six months of age to Samuel Pruitt for thirty-one years. The fate of Ann Dalton remains unknown. As of now, no record of her punishment has been found. This suggests that Ann may have died in childbirth, before any fines or sales could be made. Whether Ann lived or not, she was not allowed to raise Henry. His master saw to that.

The man to whom Henry was indentured was named Samuel Pruitt. Pruitt was about fifty years of age when Henry was bound to him, and married to Elizabeth Hucker (Hawker). Once in Pruitt's employ, Henry would have traveled to what is now Montgomery County, Maryland, close to the border of the District of Columbia, where Pruitt's 20-foot home was located as part of the "Easy Purchase" tract of 900 acres of land. "Easy Purchase" was located along the Anacostia River. Pruitt also owned two other tracts, located in both Frederick and Prince George's counties, "Amsterdam" and "Poplar Thicket". The most important piece of information, as far as Henry's story is concerned, is Pruitt's ownership of a 50-foot tobacco warehouse, indicating that he probably "bought and sold tobacco raised by other planters."¹⁶⁰ Henry thus was raised in a world surrounded by the growing of and profiting from tobacco. He may have worked with tobacco himself, or he may have been employed mainly in the Pruitt household, suggested by both his age and descriptions of him as Pruitt's "man-servant."¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Brown, 197

¹⁶⁰ Katherine Cox Gottschack, *Pruett and Allied Families of Maryland*.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

Samuel Pruitt died in April of 1760. At only ten years of age, Henry's situation changed once more. In his will, Pruitt left his entire estate (including Henry) to his wife, Elizabeth. If Elizabeth were to die before the end of Henry's servitude, he was to be transferred to Pruitt's adult son, Samuel, Jr.¹⁶² Elizabeth Pruitt quickly remarried, this time to John Riddle.¹⁶³ With Elizabeth's marriage, Henry's master became Riddle.

It is unclear what happens between this point and the Revolutionary War. Somehow, by 1777, Henry was located at Redstone, near Brownsville, Pennsylvania. Henry's term of servitude should have ended in 1781, yet he enlisted as a soldier in the Revolution from Brownsville. Perhaps Riddle released Henry from his bond early. Henry may have purchased the last years of his servitude, but four or five years was a considerable amount. It was not uncommon for a servant to give up "his freedom dues in return for an early release."¹⁶⁴ Freedom dues – the "custom of the country" referred to in the August 1750 court records – were legally enforceable dues, such as corn and clothing, to be given to a servant at the end of his servitude.

For whatever reason, Henry was in Pennsylvania at the time of his enlistment. He was placed in Captain Ford's company and sent to Fort Pitt, where his company was placed under the command of Virginia Colonel John Gibson. Henry was soon transferred again, this time to Captain Foreman's company. Foreman and his men were ordered "to a fort at Grave Creek, on the Ohio River, twelve miles below Wheeling. Upon arriving there, [they] found the fort burnt, and [they] commenced a march back to Wheeling along the bank of the river."¹⁶⁵ During this march, in the narrows of Grave Creek, the men were "attacked by about seventy Indians, and Captain Foreman and twenty of his men were killed," but Henry survived and "made good his

¹⁶² Donna Valley Russell, *Frederick County, Maryland Wills 1744 – 1794*, 29.

¹⁶³ Gottschack, *Pruett and Allied Families of Maryland*.

¹⁶⁴ Morgan, 223.

¹⁶⁵ Pension file S 5362 Dorton, Henry.

escape back to Wheeling and in ten days after, he went with others to bury the dead, putting fourteen in one hole and seven in another.”¹⁶⁶ After returning to Fort Pitt, Henry’s term ended, and he went home to Redstone. Sometime in 1778, he was drafted again for six months’ duty and again sent to Fort Pitt. During this time, Henry’s regiment, once more under Colonel Gibson, marched to a branch of the Muskingham River, the Tuscarawas, where they built Fort Lawrence. Discharged before Christmas, Henry, for one reason or another, “removed back to the place of his birth, and in the month of May 1781 he was again drafted near Bladensburg in Maryland in Captain Cross’s company of militia.”¹⁶⁷ It was around this time, in June of 1781, that family genealogies place his marriage to Eleanor Russell.¹⁶⁸ Leaving his new bride behind, Henry departed Bladensburg that month for Annapolis. A week later, he and the seventy-five other men in his company marched through Virginia toward Falmouth. They halted once they had reached “a place called the Savannah below Yorktown and [were] there stationed with five other companies under General Smallwood to keep the enemy from retreating from Yorktown.”¹⁶⁹

After the surrender of Cornwallis, Henry and his company were discharged from service. He returned to the Bladensburg area and remained there for around nine years. It may be that his wife, Eleanor, was also born in the area. Given Henry’s status as a mulatto, it is likely that he would have married someone of the same racial classification. There was a mixed race Russell family present in Prince George’s County at the time of Henry’s birth. The earliest records of this family are of James Russell, “a ‘mallatto’ belonging to Mr. Notley Rozier,” who “petitioned the Charles County court for his freedom on 13 March 1721, setting forth that he was the son of

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Mayhle, i. Mayhle states that his marriage was on June 4 of 1781. If their marriage did occur on this date, Henry would have still been serving in the militia at the time, since he enlisted in May and served until after Cornwallis’ surrender (October 1781).

¹⁶⁹ Pension file S 5362 Dorton, Henry.

a white woman and had reached the age of thirty one.”¹⁷⁰ In 1729, he was involved in a legal dispute in Prince George’s County with John Pritchett (Pritchard).¹⁷¹ It is possible that Eleanor was the daughter of one of his at least five children.

Based on Henry’s pension testimony and his first appearance on county tax lists, the Daltons first moved to Monongalia County, (West) Virginia, in 1791. That year, Henry is listed with one tithe on the list of Thomas Chipps. The next year he had gained a horse but still no racial classification. Excluding 1793, 1795, and 1808, Henry appeared consistently on Monongalia County lists into the 1820s. His race was not specified until 1810, when he was listed as a “man of colour.” When professions began being included on the lists in 1820, Henry was given as a farmer. It is probable that this was the occupation he held throughout his lifetime.

Despite census and tax recorders’ choice to label Henry as colored or mulatto, actions of the District Court of Monongalia County showed some were willing to treat Henry as a white man. On April 1, 1802, Henry filed a complaint against John Howell, Jr., for trespass, assault, and battery. Howell was summoned by the court to answer Henry’s complaint. In the end, Henry asked the case to be dismissed as his witness, David Swingler, was “removing down the Ohio.”¹⁷² The significance of the case is not whether Howell was guilty or not, but the fact that the district court would permit Henry to file a complaint against him. Evidence points to Howell as a white man. The name Howell is not found on the “colored” tax lists of Monongalia County.

¹⁷⁰ Charles County Court Records K-2:236, quoted by Heinegg on <http://www.freeafricanamericans.com/Palmer-Rustin.htm>

¹⁷¹ Russell’s wife, Mary (also referred to as mulatto), was the servant of John Pritchard of Prince George’s County. Russell’s master, Rozier, and Pritchard both gave their consent for Russell and Mary to be married. Pritchard apparently regretted his decision once Mary’s children were born, and complained to the courts about the cost of keeping the children and the labor lost while Mary cared for them. Russell testified to have paid Pritchard 3,000 pounds of tobacco for their maintenance and protested against Pritchard requiring any more. Russell also protested the fact that Pritchard began forbidding him to see his wife. The courts, however, decided in Pritchard’s favor as well as ordered the couple’s three children be transferred to Russell’s care.

¹⁷² Zinn, 220.

Neither is the name Swingler, suggesting that Henry was on good terms with his white neighbors. For Swingler to have been a witness to the crime of trespass, he would have to have been at the Dalton home. Dalton's relationship with Swingler can be seen as an example of Ira Berlin's point that, "in isolated rural backwaters, whites and free blacks alike turned away from the hard life of scratching at the soil and hunted and fished together."¹⁷³

The 1802 case is a curious one, since "every state, except Delaware, barred free negroes from testifying against whites in court."¹⁷⁴ Why did the district court allow Henry to file a complaint against a white man? Perhaps the ethics of the frontier were in some ways different than even their own state laws. For many on the frontier – and in this case, potentially those serving on the district court – "law was the often implicitly shared assumptions of people living in small communities that put a premium on the defense of individual reputation and family honor."¹⁷⁵

The Dalton family was the most likely of the Guinea families to utilize the functions of white society, such as the court system. Whereas Wilmer Male and his son appeared in court records once for delinquent taxes, the Daltons appeared more frequently and voluntarily.¹⁷⁶ Henry, especially given his racial status, did not have to take Howell to court. He must have had some confidence that the representatives of the county would take his complaint seriously. Henry also brought to court a stray mare that he had "taken up" so it could be examined. The mare was valued at 35 dollars, and the incident was recorded in the court minutes.¹⁷⁷ Given Dalton's

¹⁷³ Berlin, 260

¹⁷⁴ Berlin, 96.

¹⁷⁵ Peter S. Onuf and Andrew R.L. Cayton, *Midwest and Nation*, 72.

¹⁷⁶ Wilmore and Wilmore, Jr., were listed among those delinquent in paying taxes in 1813. The records can be found in Volume 9 of Zinn's *Records of the Monongalia County District Courts* series, page 349. The Daltons were also occasionally listed on the delinquent list of the county, as seen in Volume 9 pages 201 and 350.

¹⁷⁷ Zinn, *Records of the Monongalia County District Courts Volume 9*, 197.

fraternization with the white community, especially his use of the local courts, it is hard to accept without qualification McElwain's view that the Guineas were isolated from the white community. While this may have been true for the Chestnut Ridge People at the time of McElwain's study, it does not appear to apply to the earliest generations of the community.

Financially, Henry seems to have accrued money over time. After being entirely without livestock or owning only one horse throughout most of the eighteenth century, his situation improved by the early nineteenth century. He owned three horses in 1810 and 1812, more than any other free black or mulatto individual for those years. It is unclear exactly how many children Henry and Eleanor had to support. Based on tax rolls and census records, Henry had at least five sons. The eldest, Levi Dalton (born around 1783 in Maryland), first appeared on his own in 1805. Sons John and Henry Jr. appeared in 1810 and 1812, respectively. The 1810 Census showed Henry with two males at or below ten years of age, two males between ten and sixteen, one male between sixteen and twenty six and one between twenty six and forty-five. The one male who was forty-five and above was Henry himself. There were also three females between sixteen and twenty-six, one between ten and sixteen, and one (Eleanor) above forty-five. Since there was no indication of relationships between the household members, it is impossible to tell if the younger members were all Henry's children or some were grandchildren. Henry had at least two more sons that appeared in census and court records, Nimrod and Bethuel. At least two daughters can be identified, Anne and Polly. Bernard Mayhle acknowledges that "other history writers only contribute 3 and others 4 sons to Henry," but believes that Henry had "at least six sons and five daughters."¹⁷⁸

Levi pursued the career path of his father and was consistently listed as a farmer in census and tax records. He married a woman named Hannah and lived in the Morgantown area

¹⁷⁸ Mayhle, i.

of Monongalia County until his death sometime before 1870. By the end of his life, Levi had accumulated 800 dollars in real estate and 150 in personal property. Unlike their elder brother, John and Henry Jr. learned the trade of the stone masonry and were listed as such on tax rolls in the 1820s. It is likely that they were apprenticed to members of the Hill family. The Hills, who were also listed as “free negroes or mulattoes,” had been in the county since 1798. Whether it was the cause or the effect of their brothers’ occupation, sisters Ann and Polly both married Hills. Ann married James Hill and migrated to the Guinea settlement in Washington County, Ohio, where James was listed in the 1820 census. Polly married William Hill and remained in Monongalia County.

Outside of his occupation, Henry Jr.’s fate is hard to establish through historical record. He ceased to appear in censuses after 1830. His wife’s name, according to tradition, was Elizabeth. Henry, along with brothers John and Levi, supplemented their incomes by collecting bounties on wolf scalps. Henry registered four in 1813, Levi one in 1811, and John an impressive seven for both 1812 and 1814.¹⁷⁹ Late in paying taxes in 1812, Henry is listed without a racial classification, even though several others are listed as “colored.” These individuals, William Hett, James Hurst, and Peter Culbeson, were not part of the Guinea community at the time, so the Daltons’ familiarity may have afforded them a bit more acceptance. However, Henry Jr. and Sr., as well as Levi, are included as men of color in the same type of list for 1815.¹⁸⁰

Henry Jr.’s brother John eventually turned from stone masonry to farming. Monongalia County court records show that John took an active part in the local economy. In a note to the county clerk from John B. Wheeler, miller, John was included among several individuals who owed him money. John’s debt was 50 cents and, unlike many of the others, was to be paid in

¹⁷⁹ Zinn, *Records of the Monongalia County District Courts Volume 11*, 48.

¹⁸⁰ Zinn, *Records of the Monongalia County District Courts Volume 9*, 201, 350.

money rather than wheat.¹⁸¹ He also incurred a debt to James Jeff for 15.84 in 1811.¹⁸² In these records, no mention is made of John's race. Nor are his or his family's race mentioned in the court's road crew assignments in 1806.¹⁸³

According to his will, John owned land "lying on the waters of Sandy Creek" in Monongalia County.¹⁸⁴ The writing of John's will, in its treatment of monetary and family matters, stands against popular stereotypes of Guinea families as lazy and irresponsible. His will shows a deep concern for the well being of his wife, Mary, and their children. Mary was not referred to without the accompanying word "Beloved." She was left all of John's estate after the payment of funeral expenses and debts. After Mary's death, the estate was to be divided equally among John's fourteen children. His concern extended to the choice of his son Henry's wife, Melinda. Apparently not trusting Melinda, John specified that if Henry should be the first to die, his portion of his father's estate go not to his wife but to Henry's children. Here, another aspect of John's logic is highlighted. He desired the money not to go directly to the children but not to be simply held for them, either. John stated that he wished the money to be "put out on interest" and payable to his grandchildren when they were of age.¹⁸⁵ John directed the same to be done with money arisen from a sale of some of his personal property (whatever portion Mary saw fit).

One of the witnesses to John's will, proved in Barbour County in 1855, was his brother Bethuel. Bethuel was born around 1797 or 1800 in Virginia. He worked throughout his life as a farmer.¹⁸⁶ Bethuel does not appear as the head of his own household in the census until 1840. He initially married a woman named Nancy Whitehair, but appears to have remarried a much

¹⁸¹ Zinn, *Records of the Monongalia County District Courts Volume 7*, 55-56.

¹⁸² Zinn, *Records of the Monongalia County District Courts Volume 8*, 282.

¹⁸³ Zinn, *Records of the Monongalia County District Courts Volume 9*, 201.

¹⁸⁴ Barbour County Will Book 1 Pg. 108

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Bethuel's age, as listed on census records, varies from census to census. For 1850 his age is given as 53, but for 1860 it is 67. The 1870 census lists his age as 70.

younger woman, Christina, by 1860. He was listed as living with a woman named Susan, age 24, in 1870. Given that he also had a young daughter named Susan, this Susan must have been a third wife. By that point, he owned 800 dollars worth of real estate and his personal estate was valued at 500 dollars. Bethuel died sometime before the 1880 census, leaving behind at least seven children.

The remaining brother, Nimrod, as has been shown, married Mary Male. By 1847 Nimrod had at least seventy-five acres of land to his name, that willed to him by his father-in-law, William Male. For a time period when “most heads of household owned a farm of 50 to 200 acres or soon expected to acquire one,” Nimrod was not any worse off than many around him.¹⁸⁷ He may have owned additional land prior to inheriting William’s. The last census Nimrod appears in is 1840, where he is listed on the “free colored persons” side with his wife, two younger females, and four younger males. Since Nimrod was alive in 1847 but cannot be found in 1850, he presumably died within those three years.

The wills and census records concerning the first two generations of Daltons in Monongalia (and what was later Barbour) County defy the picture of the Guinea as a poverty-stricken, idle individual who would occasionally resort to theft. While some individuals associated with the group (such as Wilmore Male) were clearly not as comfortable as many of the Dalton brothers, their economic situation sheds no light on their character. If anything, monetary hardships were probably the result of community prejudice. William Dalton’s will in particular contradicts McElwain’s assertion that the Guineas believed in a “subsistence economy” rather than the white’s “status economy.”¹⁸⁸ Dalton, like William and Richard Male, had enough money beyond what was needed for subsistence to be concerned with writing a will.

¹⁸⁷ Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America*, 19.

¹⁸⁸ McElwain, 56.

William also displayed a clear interest in preserving that extra money and was well enough informed in the practices of the white community's economy to make use of a bank. In his eagerness to make the Guinea community practitioners of a "native" lifestyle, McElwain fails to give many of the members their due. It is clear that some of the early Guineas were able to use resources of the white community to their advantage, whether the whites of the area intended to include them or not.

Records for the Daltons also stand against assumptions made by Kennedy and Henige. The Daltons clearly had their origins in Maryland in the mid-eighteenth century and were located in Monongalia County far prior (in 1791) to Henige's proposed 1840 arrival date. The Dalton story also seemingly contradicts folk traditions about the family being descendents of Native Americans and French trappers. On the other hand, it is true that the identity of Henry Dalton's father is impossible to discern, leaving room for speculation about his background.

The evolution of the Daltons is, in some ways, an illustration of the history of race in early America. The Dalton story touches upon the desire of white males to control "sexual access to white women [as a] means of asserting white male power over people of color and over white women," and the punishment that ensued for woman and child.¹⁸⁹ Henry experienced the liberation from indentured servitude based on race to freedom and its associated economic hardships. He participated in the American Revolution and fought for a new nation, even if he was not to become one of its privileged members. Henry and his children lived in a world racial ambiguity, a world of freedom but not equality.

¹⁸⁹ Karen Woods Weierman, *One Nation, One Blood: Interracial Marriage in American Fiction, Scandal, and Law, 1820 – 1870*, 45.

V. “The Appearance of What is Called in This Part of the Country a Guinea.” The Chestnut Ridge People

In March of 1907 a special examiner from the United States Bureau of Pensions arrived in Philippi, West Virginia. The special examiner, Charles Carter, was conducting an investigation into the marriage of Elvira Male Minerd. This investigation would effectively become an inquest of the Federal Government into the history and status of the Guinea community in Philippi.

Elvira came to the attention of the Bureau of Pensions after she attempted to collect a widow’s pension due to the service of her late husband, William Minerd. Minerd had served in Company E of the 17th West Virginia Infantry from February 23, 1865 to June 30, 1865. Since he had served at least ninety days and suffered from complications from a case of the measles he had contracted while in the army, Minerd was granted a pension in 1890. While his rheumatism, eye disease, and heart condition worsened, Minerd’s mind also began to trouble him. He was admitted to the West Virginia Hospital for the Insane in Weston, West Virginia, on September 22, 1905. Minerd died less than a year later, on March 28, 1906, at age 64. Elvira was left with five minor children, no source of income, and persistent “female troubles” that left her bed-ridden for weeks at a time.¹⁹⁰

From the beginning, Elvira faced nothing but trouble in her attempt to secure her widow’s pension. One problem was that Minerd had already married and divorced a distant cousin of Elvira’s, Margaret Male, prior to his marriage to Elvira. The Bureau of Pensions required a marriage certificate and proof of Minerd’s divorce. Then, there were discrepancies between the children’s birth dates that Elvira listed from memory and the dates kept in one of her doctor’s personal records. The largest problem by far, however, was the fact that, as far as the

¹⁹⁰ Pension of William Minard, File Number WC-624-367

Bureau of Pensions knew, “the soldier was a colored man and there [was] no evidence in the case that the widow [was] a colored woman.”¹⁹¹

Since the 17th West Virginia was a white regiment, it is unclear how the Bureau of Pensions discovered that Minerd was considered colored. Perhaps this information accompanied notice of Minerd’s death from the West Virginia Hospital for the Insane, as he appeared in their records as “William Minard (Colored).” Since Elvira could not be Minerd’s legal widow if she was white and he was “colored,” a special examination was ordered. What began as an inquest into “Legal Widowhood” soon became a full-blown investigation of race.

Upon arriving in Philippi, Carter became aware of the area’s multiracial community. He informed his superiors that the claimant had “the appearance of what is called in this part of the country a ‘guinea.’ There is a large race of these people in this section and they are mostly related...they are regarded here as a mixture of white, indian, and negro blood, with enough white blood that they might pass for white people. They are accorded only the privileges of other colored people, however.”¹⁹² In an attempt to prove these rumors, Carter gathered a group of witnesses from whom he could collect testimony. All together, he heard from ten individuals, as well as three local medical boards and the superintendent of the West Virginia Hospital for the Insane.

The first to testify was the claimant. Elvira acknowledged that she was “called colored.” Her “ancestors were not all white people,” but she did not know of any of her “ancestors who were full-blood colored people, nor who were full-blood white people.” Her father, Anderson Male, mother, Louisa Male, and grandfather, John Male, were also considered “colored.”

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

Her husband, who had gotten a divorce after “his first wife took another man,” was also “known as a colored man,” though, “when he was out from home he passed for a white man.” Minerd was evidently successful at this, since he had joined a white army regiment. Minerd had come from Pennsylvania in the mid 1840s with his parents, Jacob Minerd and Ruthie Adams, who were also “known as colored people.”

As proof, Elvira offered the word of “any of the colored people in Philippi,” of whom she did not know of any who were “not related to [her] or to [her] husband.” Carter took Elvira’s advice and questioned Sarah Wright, William Minerd’s sister, about the matter. Wright stated, “I am colored. That is what we always went by.” She seconded much of what Elvira had said, adding that her father was “a white man – a Dutchman,” while her mother “was called colored.” Other than saying that Ruth Adams’s father was Indian, she reported that she did not know where her “colored blood” came from.

Elvira’s relatives were also called to testify. Her father, Anderson Male, was a farmer who was around 64 years old. He, like Minerd, has been a soldier in the Civil War; he had been “a soldier in the last draft in Barbour County.” Anderson may not have been afforded the “privileges” of a white man by white West Virginians, but they were more than willing to draft him into a white regiment. Anderson knew how the white community perceived him and his family. He told Carter, “They call us Guineas.” Anderson said his grandfathers had both been called “mustis,” (likely a different pronunciation of “mestis” or “mustee”), while his grandmothers had been known as Irish.¹⁹³ Though unsure, he thought his “grandfathers were free

¹⁹³ The use of “mustis” in this context is intriguing and supports oral traditions that say James Male “married” a Native American woman. Anderson Male’s father was John Male, son of said James Male. Though Anderson claimed both of his grandmothers were Irish, there appears to have been some general confusion in his genealogical testimony that makes such information suspect. An interesting addition to this is the fact that all fifteen Males present in Preston County, Virginia, in 1860 were listed as Indian,

born.” Seeming to tire of questions concerning racial perceptions of his ancestors, Anderson tried to end the conversation quickly by reporting that “my father used to pay an extra dollar of tax, called the ‘free-nigger tax.’”

Another witness, William Norris, also relied on legal restrictions to prove racial status. He told Carter that, due to the fact that the Males were generally recognized as “colored people,” “none of the family was allowed to go to school.” Miner’s children were also “not allowed to go to school with white children.”

By the end of his investigation, Carter was convinced that both Miner and his widow were “colored,” and that they had been legally married with five underage children. Elvira was awarded her widow’s pension, and Carter headed back to Washington, D.C., to inform his superiors about the unusual “race” of people he had discovered in the hills of West Virginia.

While his pension files may have been unique, William Miner’s Civil War experience was shared by several others of the Guinea community. The Guineas had three general responses to the Civil War, as far as can be discerned from the available evidence. Most of the Guinea population seems to have taken little active interest in the war. They likely had their sympathies (Burnell reported in the 1950s that the majority of the Chestnut Ridge People were Republicans), but they did not enlist in the Union Army.¹⁹⁴

Of those more inclined to decisive action, only Union supporters can be proven to have joined the army. Around twenty-three soldiers with the surnames Croston, Dalton, Male, and Norris can be identified.¹⁹⁵ A number of these men, as Anderson Male’s case shows, may have

though Indian was not yet an official option for race on census forms. However, these records should be considered carefully since they are so few and only occur in Preston County.

¹⁹⁴ Burnell, 84.

¹⁹⁵ Charles M. Croston (17th WV Inf., son of William Croston), Thomas Croston (3rd WV Cav., son of William Croston), Berry Dalton (3rd WV Cav., relationship is questionable), Charles Dalton (3rd WV Cav., relationship is questionable), Daniel Dalton (5th WV Cavalry), Isaac Dalton (9th WV Inf.), Robert

been drafted. Others appear to have identified with the Union cause, enlisting immediately in regiments that were created in 1862. The regiment with the largest number of soldiers with these four surnames was the 17th Infantry, the same regiment William Miner was a member of. Formed late in the war, the 17th spent their less than a year of service guarding railroads and performing garrison duty. The majority of regiments that Guinea soldiers served in did not see much combat. Even work off the battlefield, however, could be dangerous, as the case of Thomas Dalton of the 4th West Virginia Cavalry points out. The 1890 Veteran's Census showed that Thomas had his "leg mashed" during the war. There were notable exceptions to the regiments that saw little action. The 1st West Virginia Cavalry, in which George Male and William H. Dalton served, fought at Gettysburg and campaigned under Pope and Sheridan in Virginia. Thomas Croston's regiment, the 3rd West Virginia Cavalry, was also at Gettysburg and fought with Pope and Sheridan.

The Norris family is conspicuously absent from both Union and Confederate regiments. Those with the last name Norris that served in West Virginia cannot be positively identified as descendents of Sam Norris. The two names that do match those of known Norris family members, Isaac and William, belong to individuals who had migrated to Ohio. While the Norris family may not have served either side militarily to a great extent, some supported Confederate sympathizers in the area.

Dalton (7th WV Cav.), Solomon Dalton (17th WV Inf.), William H. Dalton (1st WV Cavalry), Thomas Dalton (4th WV Cavalry), Andrew Male (7th WV Inf., Anderson Male?), Andrew Jackson Male (1st WV Inf.), Daniel Male (7th WV Inf., son of Jesse Male), George J. Male (1st WV Cav.), George S. Male (1st WV Cav.), George W. Male (17th WV Inf.), Jonathen Male (17th WV Inf., son of Reese Male), Nelson Male (17th WV Inf., son of Reese Male), William H. Male (5th WV Cav.), William R. Male (17th WV Inf., widow Alcinda Male), Isaac Norris (1st WV Infantry, identity in question), William Norris (14th WV Inf., identity in question). Six additional soldiers from WV, both Union and Confederate, with the surname Norris were proven not to be associated with the Guinea community.

Alexander Norris, grandson of Samuel Norris and ancestor of Bill Peat Norris, made a special effort to aid politician Samuel Woods. Woods was a resident of Barbour County and a powerful politician who attempted to use his influence in favor of secession. Incidentally, he called his estate “Guinea.” “Guinea” was located across the Tygart River from the Norris family. When Alexander Norris heard that Woods’s home was about to be raided by Union supporters, Norris rowed across the Tygart to warn the family.¹⁹⁶ The basis for the alliance between these two very different men is unclear. While it is possible that a friendship may have developed (perhaps Alexander did some work as a stonemason on the Woods estate), it seems more likely that Woods offered paternalistic support to Norris, seeing this support as a sort of charity. As for Norris, his actions can be interpreted as an overt attempt to publicly show support for the cause of white Southerners while dissociating himself from the “black Republicans.”

Across the Ohio River, in the second Guinea or “Cutler Indian” settlements, support was strong for the Union cause. Ohio enlistment in the Union Army is worth discussing in contrast to the situation in the new state of West Virginia. Two regiments of the United States Colored Troops raised in Ohio were populated by descendants of Guinea settlers. Both were part of the mine explosion at Petersburg. One, the 5th United States Colored Troops, was organized in 1863, soon after the army allowed the formation of black regiments. Though no Ohio Males served in the 5th, the regiment did contain two Norris descendants and one Dalton. A total of 45 soldiers with surnames associated with the Guineas fought with the 5th. Fifty-one served with a second regiment, the 27th United States Colored Troops.¹⁹⁷ Both the Harris and Hill families contributed

¹⁹⁶ Gaskins, “Woods.” Message to the author. 28 Oct. 2009. E-mail; Burnell, 49 – 50.

¹⁹⁷ Charles S. Wesley, “Ohio Negroes in the Civil War.” Some of the families who fought for the 5th and 27th were not present in West Virginia. Additionally, sixteen surnames were considered when examining the roster for the previously mentioned regiments. In West Virginia, only the Crostons, Daltons, Males, and Norris were included in the count. The reason for the difference is the relative ease of positively identifying members of the 5th and 27th United States Colored Troops, which would include no enlisted

a large number of soldiers to the cause. Eighteen members of the Harris family enlisted in the 27th and 16 in the 5th, while eleven Hills enlisted in each regiment.

More important than the numbers is the act of joining a regiment designated “colored.” The nearly 100 men mentioned above had probably never been enslaved, but were willing to give up their lives and face the possibility of capture and enslavement to fight for the Union. The Ohio Guinea community may not have had the ability to join a white regiment, while the West Virginians did not have a black regiment formed nearby. It is also possible that some of the men in the Ohio troops were originally from West Virginia. Still, how likely would the West Virginia Guineas be to volunteer for the Colored Troops? In some cases, like the Norris family, it seems extremely unlikely. On the whole, and perhaps due to its different composition of families, the Ohio group seemed more willingly to identify openly with their African heritage.

The Civil War was fought over issues that mattered to and deeply affected the Guinea population, both in Ohio and West Virginia. Matters of race had divided the nation just as they had torn apart early Guinea families. The Civil War came at a time of transition in the community, a fact that William Miner’s pension files illustrates well. Some traditional ways of life for the Guineas remained, while other aspects of their existence were visibly changing.

The sense of community among the Guineas was still strong, and perhaps solidifying. Elvira Male told Carter that she or her husband were related to anyone considered “colored” in Philippi, and that they would be able to testify to her status as “colored,” as well. Elvira mentioned a network of others on whom she relied. Some, like her father Anderson, were closely related, while others, like one of her midwives, Minerva Kennedy, were seen as distant cousins,

men who were considered white. The West Virginia regiments, on the other hand, were white, and it was often impossible to distinguish between, for example, a Kennedy of solely European descent and a Kennedy that belonged to the Guinea community. The sixteen surnames considered in Ohio were: Adams, Barnett, Burke, Collins, Croston, Dalton, Harris, Hill, Kennedy, Male, Newman, Norris, Parsons, Pritchard, Singer, Tabler, and Tate.

but still family. All of the people Elvira referred to lived in or around Philippi. In the 1790s, the Guinea settlers had been more spread out: some in Hampshire County, some in Monongalia, and Henry Dalton only recently arrived from Maryland. While the term “Chestnut Ridge People,” remained a bit of an exaggeration – there were Guinea communities in Barbour as well as Taylor Counties, and a number of Daltons continued to live in Monongalia County – a move towards consolidation had occurred. More importantly, a trend to identify with Philippi that would later provide the group the name “Chestnut Ridge People” was taking place.

Considering Elvira’s view of all of the multiracial people of the area as being related, the more fluid sense of family that remained in the community is not surprising. Instances like those in the Norris and Croston families, where grandchildren or single mothers stayed with their grandparents, continued to exist. A good example of this was William Miner’s family. In 1880, William was living with his parents again. Joining him was his brother, John, and one of John’s children. Also present was Stephen, the illegitimate son of William’s sister, who took his mother’s surname and continued to be raised by his grandparents until adulthood. Stephen’s mother married a Kennedy and had several more children.

Ironically, one of the main constants was the diversity of experience to be found in the community. Henry Dalton’s fortunes had been quite different from Gustavus Croston’s at the end of his life. Such inconsistencies between individuals continued to exist. Alexander Norris, for instance, left a three page will in the Barbour County Courthouse in 1917, while Franklin and Isaiah Male described Elvira as in “destitute circumstances.”¹⁹⁸ Anderson Male, Elvira Male Miner, William Miner, and William Norris all signed their name with an “x.”¹⁹⁹ William Miner’s nephew Stephen, George Male, and Jonathan Male, on the other hand, were able to

¹⁹⁸ Barbour County Will Book 3 Page 254-256; Pension of William Miner

¹⁹⁹ Pension of William Miner

write. Given the restrictions on education available to Guinea children, there must have been an older literate element in the community that could teach some to read and write.

Migration to and from the central West Virginia area continued and in fact increased as the twentieth century progressed. William Miner's various pension documents were filed in a variety of different places. His first application was filled out in Barlow Township, Washington County, Ohio, another affidavit was taken in Athens County, Ohio, and one form was sent from Barbour County, West Virginia. There was still a definite link between the communities in the two states. The ability to find familial support in Ohio no doubt comforted the growing number of Guinea workers who found work in industry in Akron and Canton, Ohio during and after World War II. Still, migration for employment reasons, or even the ability to escape discrimination, was not always enough reason to stay in Ohio if it meant being away from family. Many industrial workers eventually returned home, while some maintained permanent residences in West Virginia to which they returned every few weekends.²⁰⁰

Discussion of industrial jobs highlights one major shift in the Guinea community. Henry Dalton, Gustavus Croston, Wilmore Male, and Sam Norris, as well as most of their friends and relatives (with the notable exception of the stonemasons) had been farmers. New forms of employment began to appear towards the end of the nineteenth century. Outside of factory work, there were other reasons to migrate across the Ohio River. William Miner had gone to Ohio for an extended period of time to work on a railroad. Others found work in the mines in Athens County, Ohio. One did not need to go to Ohio to find employment in a coalmine, however. Guinea individuals, especially in Taylor County, worked in the mines at Galloway, and a number of Philippi residents traveled to the mines as well. Females seeking employment in the 20th Century most often found work in the homes of wealthier white families, a trend that may have

²⁰⁰ Burnell, 74 – 77.

stretched back to the nineteenth century when Thomas Croston's daughters were listed on the 1860 census as domestics.²⁰¹

Attitudes appear to have been in transition as well. None of the testimony for Elvira Minerd contained any detailed knowledge of ancestry (of course, this may have had something to do with the situation in which the questioning took place). Elvira not only claimed to be unaware of any completely colored ancestors, but also admitted to knowing of none who were completely white. Sarah Wright did not know exactly where her "blood" came from. Though they knew no specifics, both women readily stated that they were "considered colored," even admitting that this was how they saw themselves. Though Wright did mention "Indian blood" and was more eager to attribute "Africa blood" to Elvira than to herself, there seemed to be none of the blatant denials of African heritage that came later in the twentieth century. While there was something of a disconnect from the facts of the past, no one told Carter, as they did Burnell, "you can go to the court house and you'll never find on record that any of us was every slave" or "asserted that their origin was white and that all their forbearers had been white."²⁰²

The most obvious shift in attitude came not from the Guineas but from the white community. The contrast between Wilmore Male's pension application and William Minerd's is remarkable. Not just Male, who was of European descent, but also Henry Dalton and Gustavus Croston successfully received pensions without one word about their race. All three men recounted their Revolutionary War experiences, had their character considered, and (especially in the case of Croston) their finances examined. Yet, everyone involved in the cases, whether the clerk of courts or the people giving testimony, failed to mention anything concerning the

²⁰¹ Burnell, 72-73; Pension of William Minerd

²⁰² Pension Record of William Minerd; Burnell 47.

applicant's racial classification. By the time Carter arrived in 1907, race was not just mentioned, it was the foremost issue at hand.

This narrowing of racial attitudes could not have come at a worse time for the Guinea community. Part of their success, and the reason they had migrated to western Virginia in the first place, was undoubtedly the atmosphere of the frontier. By coming to western Virginia, Guinea families could find more land and fewer people familiar with their pasts. Settlement was less dense, social structures were still being established, and community organization was at a minimum. For a time, these conditions served them well. Though they still had to pay the tax mentioned by Anderson Male, Guinea families owned land, accumulated money, interacted with legal and financial institutions, and fraternized with – and sometime married into – white families.

The problems that faced the descendants of the Guineas were in some ways not race specific. Cheap, available land became harder to find as more and more people moved west, eventually provoking some to continue their migration. The Guineas decided to stay, however, and had to face the prospect of no longer having vast amounts of land open to them. Gustavus Croston's estate is a good example of the consequences of the diminishing availability of land. When Nancy Croston purchased land from James Croston, the deed indicated that Gustavus's land had been divided up into nine parts. According to his pension records, Gustavus had less than a hundred acres at his death. Not much land would have been left to divide between the children of whoever inherited each ninth. As mining companies began purchasing vast tracts of land in the 1920s, even more land disappeared.²⁰³ Of the farms Burnell saw, most were small and

²⁰³ Gaskins, "The Copper Rig," 58.

used for subsistence farming. They were also mostly located on the poor, rocky soil of Chestnut Ridge.²⁰⁴

Other disadvantages were distinctly based on race. As William Miner's pension file makes clear, the children of Guineas were not permitted to attend school with white children, and in some cases this may have meant not attending school at all. As more children became educated as the twentieth century progressed, this put the community at a distinct disadvantage. The Chestnut Ridge People were turned away from some jobs due to the racist practices of the people who did the hiring. This restricted workers to small-scale agriculture, coal mining, domestic employment, and, if they were willing to travel, industry. In the middle of the twentieth century, Burnell observed only a "very few" school teachers, one tavern owner, and two small grocers among the Chestnut Ridge People.²⁰⁵

Lack of profitable employment led to the most infamous enterprise of the Chestnut Ridge People, making moonshine. Yet, as Avery Gaskins has shown, the community did not take moonshine making lightly. It may have been illegal, but moonshine was a source of pride to its manufacturers. In the Chestnut Ridge community, there was a "tradition of passing recipes and equipment from father to son."²⁰⁶ Making moonshine was not just a quick way to make a profit, but a matter of tradition. The majority of moonshine activity occurred not on Chestnut Ridge but around Meriden in Barbour County or West Hill in Taylor County, both communities associated with Chestnut Ridge People. Between 1937 and 1941, 46 out of 47 Chestnut Ridge People who were arrested for making moonshine used a copper rig, whereas only one out of three white moonshine manufacturers used this superior sort of equipment, which preserved the flavor and

²⁰⁴ Burnell, 72 – 73.

²⁰⁵ Burnell, 72.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, 63.

quality of the liquid.²⁰⁷ Copper equipment was not only more expensive but more difficult to maintain. Even so, a copper still that had been built in the early 1800s was still used by the Chestnut Ridge People in the late 1930s.²⁰⁸

Though Chestnut Ridge People who made moonshine took pride in the superior quality of their work, the white community did not always look on it kindly. As their chances for economic and educational improvement lessened, so did the Chestnut Ridge People's social standing. Though never at the top of society, men like Henry Dalton and his children, as well as several of the Male brothers, had associated with wealthy white neighbors and had likely been viewed with a sense of respect in light of their successful farms and stable family situations. When farming became less successful and race became more of an issue, prejudice against the Guineas solidified. The association between interracial relationships and illegitimacy, and thus sexual promiscuity, consolidated with heightened racism and distaste for the poor to form a powerful stigma against Chestnut Ridge People.

Bill Peat Norris exhibited a clear recognition of outsiders' views of the Chestnut Ridge community in his poems. He identified strongly with the poor, writing, "The poor man's son inherits a world of woe," while "the rich man's son inherits lands/and piles up silver and gold." In a train of thought similar to McElwain's, Bill Peat equated the modern conditions of the Chestnut Ridge People with the lifestyles of their ancestors. He mused, "the life we are living, they did live." In reality, though not the "rich man's son" of Bill Peat's poem, the early Guinea settlers had lived in much more comfort and with greater social mobility than their descendants could have hoped for. Bill Peat and McElwain both wanted to describe the past Guineas with present circumstances, which certainly is not an accurate way to look at the community.

²⁰⁷ Gaskins, "The Copper Rig," 61.

²⁰⁸ Ibid, 63.

Both were also eager to make the Chestnut Ridge People only Native American and European in heritage. It is ironic, then, that Bill Peat referred proudly to a phrase supposedly written by Sam Norris (but likely of his own creation) that said, “by birth there is no strangers or forners or discrimination among the human race – but by nature we make ourselves a forner and a discriminator against our own princible.”²⁰⁹ Perhaps in these words was a tacit recognition that the Chestnut Ridge People had alienated themselves from one part of their heritage. Equally apparent was a criticism of the attitudes of the white community that had undoubtedly motivated the manipulation of the Chestnut Ridge story. The history of the Guineas in West Virginia had started out with promise, optimism, and a measure of acceptance. The chances offered by the frontier had since disintegrated into the wildly unjust “white trade only” world of Philippi in 1952 that lead so many Chestnut Ridge People away from West Virginia.²¹⁰ Though restaurant signs enforcing segregation have disappeared, the stigmatization of the Chestnut Ridge People, as well as the related community in the supposedly more liberal Ohio, still lingers. It seems that Sam’s – or Bill Peat’s – message is as vital today as it was at its creation.

²⁰⁹ Gaskins, “An Introduction to the Guineas,” 235; Burnell, 38.

²¹⁰ Burnell, 100.

Appendix A: Associated Surnames and Variant Spellings

Adams

Barnett

Collins

Croston (Crosston, Crosten, Crossten)

Dalton (Daulton, Dolton, Dorton)

Goins (Goens, Goings, Gowen)

Harris

Hill

Kennedy (Canada, Canaday, Canady, Canida)

Male (Mahle, Mail, Maley, Mayhle, Mayle, Mayles, Meale)

Minerd (Minard, Miner, Minert, Minor)

Newman

Norris

Parsons

Pritchard (Prichard, Pritcherd)

Appendix B: Related Genealogies*

Children of Wilmore Male I

1. Wilmore Male, Senior
 - 1.1 Wilmore Male II = Priscilla "Nancy"
 - 1.2 William Male = Nancy Jones
 - 1.3 Elizabeth Male
 - 1.4 Richard Male = Rhoda Emmery
 - 1.5 James Male
 - 1.6 George Male = Margaret Pritchard
 - 1.7 John Male
 - 1.8 Sarah Male

Dalton Genealogy

1. Ann Dalton
 - 1.1 Henry Dalton = Eleanor Russell
 - 1.1.1 Levi Dalton = Hannah
 - 1.1.2 John Dalton = 1. Clara Newman 2. Mary
 - 1.1.3 Ann Dalton = James Hill
 - 1.1.4 Polly Dalton = William Hill
 - 1.1.5 Henry Dalton Jr. = Elizabeth
 - 1.1.6 Bethuel Dalton = 1. Nancy Whitehair 2. Christina 3. Susan
 - 1.1.7 Nimrod Dalton = Mary Male

Children of Samuel Norris

1. Samuel Norris
 - 1.1 William Norris = Anna
 - 1.1.1 Alexander Norris
 - 1.2 Samuel Norris Jr. = Phoebe
 - 1.3 James Norris = Anne
 - 1.4 Isaac Norris

Children of Gustavus Croston

1. Gustavus Croston
 - 1.1 John Croston = Elizabeth
 - 1.2 Thomas D. Croston
 - 1.3 James Croston = Elizabeth Wommick
 - 1.4 William Croston = Catherine
 - 1.5 Charles Croston

- 1.6 Travis D. Croston = Mary
- 1.7 Unknown Croston

Children of Bartholomew Jenkins

- 1. Bartholomew Jenkins = Mary
 - 1.1 Catherine Jenkins
 - 1.2 Daniel Jenkins
 - 1.3 Enoch Jenkins = Charity Norris
 - 1.4 Bartholomew Jenkins Jr. = Nancy Baker
 - 1.5 Margaret Jenkins
 - 1.6 Amelia Jenkins

Children of William Norris

- 1. William Norris = Lorena Collier
 - 1.1 Elizabeth Norris = George Baker
 - 1.1.1. Nancy Baker = Bartholomew Jenkins Jr.
 - 1.2 Mary Norris = Hayes
 - 1.3 Vilinda Norris = Nabors
 - 1.4 Martha Norris = DeVault
 - 1.5 Charity Norris = Enoch Jenkins

* These are not complete genealogies. Only information mentioned within this study has been included.

Appendix C: The Legend of Sam Norris

The following are three versions of the Sam Norris legend told by three different descendents.

The first account is part of a speech given by Joanne Johnson Smith and Florence Kennedy Barnett at the Melungeon Research Association's First Union at Wise, Virginia on July 25, 1997.

The second is a version of the legend found online by another of Sam's descendents, Edith McCartney.²¹¹ The third "version" is actually two separate stories told to Dr. Avery F. Gaskins by Bill Peat Norris.

1. According to our oral history, Sam's mother was an English girl named Elizabeth Norris. She was the daughter of William Norris of Monongalia County, Virginia who also had two sons. William Norris captured a young Cherokee boy traveling north with a party of Cherokees--the Draper Manuscripts state there was a party of Cherokees traveling in the area about this time. William named the boy Sam. Elizabeth, who was called Betsy, and Sam had to go get the cows in the evening, and guess what? Betsy got pregnant. As the story goes, Betsy's brothers took Sam into the mountains and killed him.

I do know that William Norris had two sons and a daughter named Elizabeth. I have a copy of his will and he left Elizabeth out. Of course we know why. Betsy gave birth to a son in 1750, and she named him Sam, after his father.

In 1764, Sam left the Monongalia County area with a family by the name of Gaul. They went to the present county of Barbour, West Virginia. Betsy followed and hacked off approximately 1,625 acres of land. She thought she had 750. She got a deed and put it in Sam's name. I have

²¹¹ McCartney, "Norris Family History."

found the land grant settlement which is in Sam Norris' name. Sam had lost about 600 acres of the land according to the grant.

While here, Sam married a Delaware woman named Pretty Hair--also according to the Draper Manuscripts and the Horn Papers there were Delaware living in the Morgantown region at this time. Sam and Pretty Hair started their family on what was later called Hackers Creek, named after a white man who had settled there by the name of John Hacker.

2. An Englishman by the name of Norris caught an Indian boy from a tribe of Indians that had come from the Allegheny Mountains going west. Norris named the Indian boy Sam. The Englishman had a daughter who's name was Betsy. Betsy and the Indian boy Sam would go get the cows everyday, and Betsy gave birth to a Indian child, and she named him Sam Norris after his father. The child named Sam, his mother an Englishwoman and his father a Indian, was born in 1750 in Morgantown. Betsy had two brothers and I guess they killed the Indian who was the father of Sam Norris. In 1764 Johnnie Gaul left Morgantown, and came to Hacker's Creek. Sam Norris the half Indian and half English boy came with him. Betsy followed her son Sam but Sam wanted to stay on in Hacker's Creek.

Betsy marks a stone where the Meridian West Virginia Company Store stands today along the Tygart Valley River and then she goes on to Kelly run and drives a stake by the Creek then hacks the sides of the trees till she comes to the top of the Fridley Ridge the highest hill in Barbour Co. She then turns North and hacks the side of the trees till she comes to where the Felton School House is today. She turns West and hacks the trees till she comes to the Tygart Valley river again and marked a rock at Fox Hall then she follows the river till she comes to her starting point at Meriden. She figures she had 750 acres of land in the survey. She goes to the government and gets a deed (for which she paid ten dollars) In Sam Norris's name, her son.

There was trouble after this over this land for there was about one thousand six hundred and twenty

five acres in her survey. Sam lost about 600 acres of it. Betsy goes back to Morgantown and gets married. Her two brothers settled along Booths Creek. Sam Norris takes him a Delaware Indian named Pretty Hair as his wife and builds him a cabin and starts his life with the Indians.

The Gauls that came with Sam was mighty stout men and got along with the Indians without any trouble. They were very peaceable people and lived to a ripe old age. They were also hard workers, and they were like the Norris race, in that they didn't increase in family very fast.

Sam Norris born 1750 died 1844 and is buried in the Norris Cemetery, Barbour County, WVA.

Sam was the father of William Norris born September 25, 1786 died 1870 and is buried in Taylor's Drain Cemetery, WVA. Sam was the Grandfather of Alexander Norris born September 26, 1825 died 1906 buried Norris Graveyard. Sam was the Great Great Grandfather of William Norris born September 6, 1886 died 1978 being 5 generations back to Sam Norris.

3. Here is some history of the Indians. I think is in portment to me and you now. 1749 when my fore father was captured at Morgon town he was asked how old was he and he said 17 suns. In wich made him to be borned 1732. He new of no God, but he said had been taught there was a better hunting ground that and Indian went to after he died. Now the question has been asked by many of us sence we have received a little education. Was the Indian the first man to live in American. My fore mother who was named Prettie Hair lived in Ohio a long Mad River and stated there was some people lived there at one time and they called them big knife in wich was giants 15 hands high. They would a been seven and one half feet high. And them piles of dirt is still there today here is some of there writeing that was found in one of there graves or rather mound of dirt in wich no one has been able to read to this day.

This Sam Norris that was borned at Morgantown, 1750, and who was half Indian, half English; I tolded he married Pretty Hair. She died and he married a woman by the name of Ambler. I have no record of what her first name was, this was her last. She died also, and they buried her in the Norris Graveyard, and this was the startin' of the Norris Graveyard in Barbour County. And he, I forget, he was near a hundred years old. He was acourtin' a woman at Supple Springs, Chestnut Ridge. And right where the Welsh Graveyard is today (he stayed with her 'til four o'clock in the mornin') and he was aridin' a horse comin' back down to below Meriden where he lived, and the history state that both lungs busted, and he fell off his horse, dead. He was near, he was up in ninety, and he was buried in the Norris Graveyard, and they is a gum tree come up on his grave and it stands upon it today, an awful big gum tree, but there his two wives got little stones just above the tree for anybody to see.

Appendix D: The Writings of Bill Peat Norris

The following writings are taken from several typed documents Bill Peat Norris gave to Dr. Avery F. Gaskins in the 1970s. They include discussions of family history as well as Bill Peat's original poetry. The documents were typed in all capital letters and some words are particularly faint and impossible to read. They have been transcribed here as close to their original form as possible (excluding use of capital letters). No changes have been made to spelling or punctuation.

1. Now you find ten 10 difference races of people in Barbour County Taylor County W.V.A. and at Cutler and Zanesville Ohio that people has wondered who they was and where they came from you find they hang together and are very percurly people now I will give the names of the father of the most of these [illegible] and where they came from and where they are burre burried at The first one of the 10 races to come near Philippi W.V.A. was Joshaway Newmon he settled on Middle Fork River they was Irish by blood they was very peacable people

The next to come near Philippi was Samuel Norris he came 18 1764

The next to come was the Halls [Hills] we have no correct date of his coming

The next to come was the Miners you will find his record in this history the next to come was the Croston the first Croston to be in Barbour County came from Cheat River a mighty mighty man in strength and sie size his wife I no not here name I gess his is buried in the Ike Kennedy grave yard at Chestnut Ridge

The first Pritchard to be a long the Tigers [Tygart] Valy River came from Mare Marryland I no not his wifes name it seams he was the father of seven children mostly girls he got killed by 4

horses running a way with him [illegible] crossing Marryland and he is burried at Alton a
Marryland

The first Collins to [illegible] from Cheat River they was 3 brothers there mother was a
Flanington and a Gaul one Collins went to Ohio and one came to [illegible] Tygers River Valle
near Philippi and the other one went toward Cumberland M.D. Wash Collins came the one that
came near Philippi was a [illegible] man if he herd a noise that appered to be strange he would
run and hide eaven if he had to jump out of the winow he is burried in the Alex Norris graveyard
near Philippi W.V.A. he was Irish by blood

There was 3 difference sets of Daltons I no not where they came from

Some of them was Indian and French by blood

The Harris was full blooded Indians

The first Kennedy that came to the Tigers Valle River name was Samuel Kennedy he came from
Canada he was a Dutchman he had 2 sons ones name Sam Kennedy named after him one of his
sons went to Ohio and Sam and is the father of the Kennedy race in Ohio Sam stayed at Philippi
and is the forefather of the Kennedy race in Barbor and Taylor County W.V.A.

Samuel Kennedy married and Isener a Irish woman Samuel is buried on Simpson Creek in Tim
Mayle grave yard

2. W.A. Norris a man of sorrow and woe

We are the same that our fathers have been)_

We see more things than our fathers seen)_

But we drink the same stream and see the same sun)_

And run the same race that our fathers run)_

The rich mans son inherits lands
And piles up silver and gold)
His stomach craves for dainty foods)
And pleasure every where he goes)
But his banks can brake)
And his factorys can burn)
And his wealth take wings like the morning)
Charity from him seldom comes)
But if he gives to some poor firm)
Its only a fals profet he happened to lern)
The poor man sons inherits a world of woe
And he piles up nothing to be catched by fire
He knows quite well the sad storrie will be told)
That six foot of earth has inherit there souls)
The poor mans son lot was to sow)
And the rich mans son to reap it with woe)
So they [illegible] like the flowers and weeds)
That withers a way to let others succeed)
So multitudes comes even those we behold)
To repeat every tale that has often been told
The thoughts we are thinking they maby thought)
From the death we are shrinking)
They did shrink)

The life we are liveing they did live)
But from them it went to the God that give)
Hope and pleasure and pain)
Was mingled to gather in sun shine and rain)
Tears and smiling followed each other a while)
But like lightning and a break of the wave)
They both passed from life to the grave)
Oh why should mortal man be proud)
For the wise and foolish)
From the bloosson of health)
To the paleness of death)

3. I was borned September the 6 1886 bout the same age of you. I have two sisters, my father and mother is dead. Now I am telling you somthin I bet you have herd your father talk a bout many times, things that happened long a go. There is and Indian trail right by my house that came from the Cumblern Mountions and crossed Cheat moni mounition then crossed Tigers Vallie River cllost to where the great Tigers Valie Dam is bilt. It's the trail that leads from the Atlantic and goes west. Now where this trail crosses Tigers River on the east on was and Indian camp, and thr the west side the river on a hill is and other camp. All they are left is a large pile of stone. Some people says the ndians burried there treasure there when they left. The people don't move the stone to see what is under neath them. My fore fathers never built such things with rock: they was the Deloware Indian. My wife's fore fathers being of and other tribe of Indians they bilt them to but what for we don't no. Some of my wifes people new where the led mines

was near where I live but they never would tell, but go get led and seel it to the people. Now that great treasure cant be fond. To day. I will send you some pictures from the east of some of the mountions and rivers in the east I beleave you would like to see them.

I just read in a paper a bout some preachers cent to the Indians to preach to them and they reported severel Indians is joining church. They said one Indian lady or rather they ask one lady what she would beleave and she replied she would beleave what she told would tell here.

Now religion is one of the greatest thing that all man kind should have in this world, but Jesus worned us all to be carful and a wair of fals prophets in the last days. Here is two passage of the Bible I think reaches to all man kind. Eye hath not seen nor ear herd neither hath entered into the heart of me man the things wich God hath prepared for them that love him. Now all races and creeds has made them churches, gave them a name, but if they was asked to prove by the Bible that there church is the true church they would fail. For there hant but one God and he says no more will he rite his laws on table stones but in the hearts of men.

How great it would be if we all would just obey the sermon on the mount that was preached by Jesus in Mathew. The 24 Chapter. It dont cost us nothing to serve a true and a liveing God and to serve live in peace.

4. The fore fathers and mothers of A. W. A. Norris and who they was

First Samuel Norris is borned at Morgon town W :V :A :1750 . Died 1844 : from hemorage of the lungs and is buried at the Norris grave yard b a gum tree his first wife was a full blooded Deloware Indian his second wife name was Ambler a white woman Sam died June 4 William his oldest son borned September 25 1786 married Polie Newmon Irish by blood her mother was a Martenie James Norris his brothers name married Any Male a full blooded Deloware Indian

second wife name Annie Dalton one half Indian Willmer his son married Eavie Jane Collins here
 mother was a Flanington Willmer age at death 87 years old when he died Marry Jane his
 daughter married David Norris the son of Alexander Norris gran son of William Norris great
 gran son of Samuel Norris the father of all of the Norris Alexander Norris married Betsie Male
 here father was one third Indian here mother was little Nellie Dalton half Indian Half French W.
 A. Norris the son of David Norris and Marry Jane Norris being the 5 fith generation from Samuel
 Norris though David Norris and Marry Jane Norris age of all the Norris race Samuel 94 years.
 James 85 years Willmer 87 years MarryJane age unnowen William 84 years Alexander 82 years
 David 55 years what all the Norris died with Samuel hemorage of the lungs William by T.B.
 Alexander by lock bowls David by measles James by old age Willmer by old age Marry Jane by
 typhford feaver Eavie Jane by old age Bettsie by T.B. The oldest Norris lived to be 104 years old
 here name was Sall died at Marrieattie [Marietta] Ohio never was marrid but the mother of 7
 sons in Marrie Attie Ohio this is the names of the first Norris on the Tigers Valie River 1750
 Bettsie Norris the mother of Samuel Norris had 2 brothers at Morgontown V.A. one of them
 went to Doderidge County and settled there and one went to Boose Creek and settled there and
 all of the Norris in this part of W.V.A. Sprang from Betsie and here 2 brothers Betsie Male the
 daughter of Iserel Male gran daughter of Willmore Male the first male said his wife Persiler
 Harris was three quarter Indian and was a dwarf in size and Willmore lived to be a bout one
 hundred and eight years old when he died here is the names of the first people as races a long the
 Tigers Valie River when they came on it. First Male && Willmore Male && Samuel Kennedy
 && Tom Croston && Samuel Norris Steve Newmon && or Richard Newmon && Warner
 Pritchard && John D Coss && The place where they are burried Willmore Male burried
 NelsNewmon grave yard Samuel Kennedy Tim Males grave yard Simpson Creek Tom Croston

Welch grave yard Chestnut Ridge && Samuel Norris burried Norris grave yard Hackers Creek

John D. Coss burried Richard Newmon burried on the Midle Fork River some where grave

unnowen

Appendix E: A Note on Associated Families

A number of families intermarried frequently with the Croston, Dalton, Male, and Norris families in the 18th and 19th Centuries. Many of these families appear to have had ties with multigenerational multiracial families from Maryland and Virginia. Since they are not the focus of this study, the notes on these families are general and rather brief.

Adams Family: The Adams were not among the earliest Guinea settlers. They appeared first in western Virginia around the 1850s, when Ephraim Adams was listed in Taylor County in the 1850 Virginia Census. With him were his wife, Sarah, and two grown children, Samuel and Elias. Everyone in the family was born in Virginia, save Sarah, who was born in Pennsylvania. No race was listed for the family. Another Adams present in the area in 1850 was Ruth Adams, wife of Jacob Miner and mother of William Miner. In Monongalia County, Ruth was listed as a mulatto.

A familial relationship is likely between Ruth and Ephraim because, in 1860, Ephraim's family and Ruth's family were neighbors in Preston County, Virginia, as well as the family of William Adams. Since Ephraim was in his 70s at the time, he may have been Ruth and William's father. Ephraim, Jacob Miner, and William's wife Mary were listed as Indians, while everyone else was considered mulatto. The adult males in the family worked as farm laborers.

There were no Ephraim Adams to be found in Virginia in 1840 that were in the correct age range. There was, however, an Ephraim Adams of the appropriate age in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, which neighbors Fayette County, Pennsylvania and the Virginia border. A residence in Somerset County would have given opportunity for Ruth Adams and Jacob Miner to meet. In 1840, the family was considered white.

The veracity of Native American identity is hard to discern. In William Miner's pension testimony, both Elvira Male Miner and Sarah Miner Wright claimed that Ruth Adams's father was Native American. William Norris described the Adams "race" as "quite dark."²¹² The surname Adams can be found in Maryland and Virginia in connection to other "free colored" families.²¹³

Barnett Family: The first Barnetts to live in the area associated with Guinea settlement were not in Virginia but Ohio. James and Patsy Barnett lived in Washington County, Ohio, in 1850 but had been born in Virginia. James worked as a cooper. Though there were several Barnetts listed as white in related West Virginia Counties, no black or mulatto Barnetts appeared until 1870, when Ransom and Ann Barnett lived in Mill Creek in Berkeley County. Several other Barnetts that may have been related lived around White Sulphur Springs and in Monroe County. Still, this is relatively far away considering the position of other related families at this time. Not until 1900 did James Barnett, age 25, appear in Hampshire County. Listed as black, he had been born in West Virginia and worked as a blacksmith. His wife, Mary W., had been born in Ireland. In Monongalia County that year, there was a Richard Barnett who had come to work in the coalmines from Texas. In the earlier 19th and 18th Century, the surname Barnett could be found among the free black population of Albemarle and Amherst Counties, Virginia, and to a lesser extent, Henrico County.²¹⁴

²¹² William Miner Pension File

²¹³ Heinegg, *Free African Americans of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Maryland, and Delaware*.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

Collins Family: According to Bill Peat Norris, there were three Collins brothers who migrated to western Virginia and southern Ohio. The Collins who settled around the Tygart River Valley was a man Norris referred to as “Wash Collins,” or George Washington Collins. Norris claimed that the Collins descended from “a Flannigan” and “a Gaul” (Gaul being the surname of the man who brought Sam Norris to Hacker’s Creek in the legend). George Collins first appeared in the West Virginia area in 1815 when he was listed on the Hardy County tax list. He was described as a mulatto, while his household included “1 white tithe” and “1 Free Negro.” Since the white wives of African Americans were taxable, it is not clear whether George or his wife was the white tithe. George appeared in Hardy County again in 1816, then in Randolph County in 1818, where he continued to appear more or less regularly. Also listed in Hardy and Randolph Counties were William and John Collins, likely George’s sons.

George Collins appeared on the 1820 and 1830 Censuses in Randolph County. In 1840 he appeared in Preston County with a household of 12 “free colored persons,” all but two of whom were female. In 1850, back in Randolph County, he was 70 years old (placing his birth around 1780) and unemployed. He listed his birthplace as Virginia and was considered mulatto. Living with him were six other individuals with the surname Collins. The eldest, Kepaline, was 39 and was presumably George’s daughter, and perhaps the mother of the five Collins children ages eighteen and under who were also present in the home. He appears to have died before 1860.

Considering where the Collins family was before 1815, there was a George Collins listed on King and Queen County tax lists in 1799 and 1813. In both King and Queen and neighboring King William Counties, multiracial Collins were numerous. George Collins was likely related to these Collins or to one of the other multiracial Collins in Maryland and Virginia documented by

Paul Heinegg in *Free African Americans of North Carolina, Virginia, and South Carolina* and *Free African Americans of Maryland and Delaware*.

Goins: The first Goins in the area were “Henry Goins and mother,” who were listed on Hardy County tax lists in 1807. In 1810 Henry and Michael were listed, in 1811 Henry and “widow Goins,” and in 1812 Henry, Michael, and Mary, suggesting that Mary may have been both “widow Goins” and Henry’s mother. Henry Goins was listed in Hardy County in the 1820 Virginia Census, as were Michael and “Shedrick” (Shadrack) Goins. In Monongalia County tax lists, Jacent and Joel Goins, “men of color,” appeared in 1816. “Jaraon” and Joel Goins were listed in the 1820 Virginia Census in Monongalia County. By 1830, Baldwin and Jonas “Goings” had joined the Goins in Hardy County. Henry “Goens,” though considered a “free person of color” on tax lists, was listed as the head of a white household with three members in Hardy County in 1840. Shadrack was also considered white, while the other family members were no longer in the county. Goins were also present in Loudon County, Virginia, as early as 1787.

The Goins in western Virginia were almost certainly related to what was by the early 1800s the large multiracial Goins family that had first been recorded in Virginia and then extended to Maryland, both of the Carolinas, Louisiana, and Tennessee. The name was originally spelled Gowen, and can traced back to Michael (Mihill) Gowen of James City and York County, Virginia in the mid 17th Century. Michael Gowen was the “negro servant” of Christopher Stafford before earning his freedom in 1654. Interestingly, there are a number of Shadrack Goins noted by Heinegg in his study of early free black communities. One Shadrack Goins was taxed in Powhatan County, Virginia from 1791 to 1797.²¹⁵

²¹⁵ Heinegg, *Free African Americans of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Maryland, and Delaware*.

The name Goins does appear in the Melungeon community of Tennessee. A Shadrack Goins was the head of a household there in 1810. Though the Goins of West Virginia and Tennessee were likely somehow related, it was not in the sense that Kennedy presents in his research.²¹⁶ By the early 1800s, the Goins had been in America for over 100 years and the two groups would have been too distantly related for the West Virginia Goins to be some sort of sub-group of the Melungeon Goins.

Harris Family: the Harris family is regarded by many descendents of Chestnut Ridge People as Native American. Bill Peat said they were “full blooded Indians.”²¹⁷ Joanne Johnson Smith and Florence Kennedy Barnett referred to Peter and Billy Harris, two Cherokee Revolutionary War veterans. A Peter and Billy Harris served in the Revolutionary War, but they were Catawbas. Still, regardless of tribal affiliation, Smith and Barnett stated, “we do know they were Native American.”²¹⁸

The first of the Harris family to be in the area was not William or Peter, however, but John, who was listed as “a free black” on 1805 Hampshire County tax lists. Amos Harris appeared in 1805, as well, and was listed as a “F Negro” with two tithes and two horses. John appeared again in 1807, but then disappeared from the county. Amos continued to be listed (though in 1809 as Amos Harrison, before again becoming Amos Harris in 1810) and appeared in the 1810 Virginia Census in Hampshire County. No Peter or William Harris can be found in or around Hampshire County prior to 1826, when William Harris was listed as a taxable resident of Randolph County. William Harris was still in Randolph County during the 1830 Census. By 1850 William had moved to Athens County, Ohio, where he continued to live with his wife

²¹⁶ Kennedy, *The Melungeons: Resurrection of a Proud People*.

²¹⁷ Bill Peat Norris papers

²¹⁸ Johnson Smith and Kennedy Barnett, “The Guineas of West Virginia.”

Rhoda into the 1880s. In 1880, he was 72 years old and listed as mulatto. He farmed with the help of his sons, save Thornton, who had been wounded in the Civil War and collected a pension. Rhoda was listed as having consumption.

Hill Family: Bill Peat was unsure about the arrival date of the first Hills. The family came to western Virginia sometime in the late 18th Century. James and John Hill appeared in Hampshire County in 1797, then in Monongalia County in 1798, 1800, 1805, and 1806. William Hill, “a man of colour” was listed for the first time in Monongalia County in 1810. William and James reappeared in 1811 with Joseph Hill. As has been noted, the Hills intermarried early with the Daltons and had been trained in stonemasonry. There were several Hills listed as free blacks or mulattoes in early Virginia and Maryland, including in Prince George’s County, MD.²¹⁹

Kennedy Family: The first Kennedy in Hampshire or Monongalia Counties was Thomas Kennedy, who was listed in Hampshire County in 1782 with one tithe, two horses, and three cattle. Other Kennedys also arrived in Hampshire County in the 18th Century, namely Samuel Kennedy in 1790 (though Bill Peat considered him the first Kennedy in western Virginia, he was actually the second), Hugh Kennedy in 1793, John Kennedy in 1797, and Moses Kennedy in 1797. James Kennedy appeared in Monongalia County in 1785 and was followed by William Kennedy in 1788. Thomas Kennedy was charged in 1789 by the Hampshire County Court for “retailing spirituous liquors by the small without license.”²²⁰

Multiracial individuals with the surname Kennedy were numerous in 17th and 18th Century records from the Chesapeake. Paul Heinegg linked a Hugh Kennedy from Sussex

²¹⁹ Heinegg, *Free African Americans of North Carolina, Virginia, and South Carolina and Free African Americans of Maryland and Delaware*.

²²⁰ Zinn, *Records from the Hampshire County Court Minute Book 1788-1791*, 27.

County, Virginia to the Hugh Kennedy present in Monongalia County in the 1810 census with an eleven-member household. Hugh Kennedy from Sussex County was born around 1757 and was the son of Hugh Kennedy, Senior, also from Sussex County. Hugh Senior died in 1775 and the Sussex County court bound out his several, unnamed, orphan children. Some of the Kennedys in Monongalia County were likely children or grandchildren of Hugh, Senior. Whatever the specifics, Hugh Kennedy, Junior, had clear links to Monongalia County and thus the Kennedys of that county were almost certainly linked to those of Sussex County.

Minerd Family: Like the Adams family, the Minerds did not arrive in western Virginia until the mid 19th Century. Jacob Minerd and Ruth Adams appear to have been the first Minerds in the area. As has been mentioned, the Minerds were considered at least partially Dutch and were said to have come from Pennsylvania.²²¹ Census records prove that Jacob Minerd was originally from Pennsylvania. He was listed as “Jacob Y. Minerd” in Salt Lick Township, Fayette County in 1840. By 1850, the family had reached Monongalia County, where Ruth and the Minerd children were considered mulatto. Jacob had no race listed, but the original record appears to have had the letter “M” erased beside Jacob’s name. All of the Minerd’s children were born in Pennsylvania, except for the two youngest, five-year-old Sarah and one-year-old Mary. The 1860 Census record for Jacob Minerd, this time from Preston County, is also curious. 47-year-old Jacob was designated “Indian,” while his wife and children were considered mulatto. In 1880, the Minerds were living around Grafton in Taylor County, West Virginia. Jacob was listed as 66 years old. Both he and his wife were labeled white, while their four children and two grandchildren were considered mulatto. Ruth said her parents had been born in Virginia; Jacob said his had been born in Pennsylvania.

²²¹ William Minerd Pension Record

Minerd genealogist Mark Minerd has documented the presence of the German Minerd family in Pennsylvania and believes that Jacob Minerd may be a grandson of Jacob and Maria Nein Minerd, both of whom were the children of German immigrants. Jacob's first farm was on the border of Fayette and Somerset County, Pennsylvania, within two miles of Jacob and Maria Nein Minerd.²²²

Newman Family: The first Newman in Hampshire County was "Baziel" Newman, who was listed as a "F. Black" on the 1813 tax list. James and Elisha Newman lived in Randolph County, Virginia in 1812 and 1826, respectively, and George Newman, as well as one slave over sixteen, appeared in Loudon County in 1803 and 1805. Ely Newman also appeared in Loudon County in 1806 and Peggy Newman appeared in 1813.

There was a Basil Newman in Loudon County in the 1820 Virginia Census, and F. Basil Newman appeared in the same county in 1830. Elisha was listed as a resident of Randolph County, Virginia, that year and in 1840, when he was included at the bottom of the census record along with several of the Male and Norris families. "Bazel," as well as Henry and Benjamin Newman, were still in Loudon County in 1840.

In 1850, Elisha was listed as a 51-year-old farmer living in Barbour County. He owned 1,000 dollars worth of real estate. Elisha and his seven children were considered mulatto. No wife was present in the household. Elisha could not write, but he could read. At sixty years of age, Elisha was living around Philippi with three of his children. He was still a farmer and had accumulated 1,500 dollars in real estate and 284 in personal property. Three of his children lived with him; daughters Sally Ann and Cinda worked as domestics.

²²² Mark Minerd, "Jacob Minerd, Sr."

Also present in the county were Timothy and Elizabeth Newman, who in 1870 owned 4,760 dollars of real estate and 741 dollars of personal property. Sixty-six year old Timothy was a farmer. Both were listed first as mulatto, but the letter “w” was written above the “m” by both of their names. Timothy had lived in Harrison County, along with Isaac Newman and Samuel Kennedy, in 1840. All were listed as “Free Persons of Color.” Timothy then appeared in Barbour County in 1850 with Elizabeth, two children, and 800 dollars in real estate.

The Newmans seem to have been connected from fairly early on with the Tate family of the Cutler, Ohio, area. One Tate present in early Westmoreland County, Virginia was Newman Tate, suggesting that Tate’s mother or other ancestor may have been a Newman. Thus, an eastern Virginian origin is likely for the Newmans.

Parsons Family: John Parsons was the first Parsons in the Chestnut Ridge area. He appeared on Monongalia County tax rolls beginning in 1811. When the listing included an occupation in 1820, Parsons was included as a blacksmith. He was listed as a “man of color” or “Free Negro” for most of the years between 1811 and 1821. Parsons was also included in the Monongalia County census in 1830, 1840, and 1850. In 1850, Parsons was no longer a blacksmith but a farmer. He was seventy-five years old, listed as a mulatto, and married to a woman named Elizabeth. The couple had three sons living with them and 1,800 dollars in real estate. Parsons indicated that he had been born in Virginia, as had his wife.

An Elizabeth Parsons gave birth to at least three “mulatto” children in Prince George’s County, Maryland between 1722 and 1726.²²³ One of these children may have been a grandparent of John Parsons.

²²³ Heinegg, *Free African Americans of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Maryland, and Delaware*.

Pritchard Family: Bill Peat Norris said the first Pritchard in the area came from Maryland.²²⁴

This first Pritchard is traditionally regarded as Warner Pritchard.²²⁵ Warner was listed in the 1830 Monongalia County, Virginia, census alongside John Parsons. In 1840, Warner and his family were listed among the “Free Colored Persons” in the same county. Though Pritchard was not to be found in 1850, his relatives, including a son or grandson named after him, were present in Taylor County. The family, listed as “Partchard,” included thirty-two-year-old Ruth, twenty-two-year-old Warner, and eight younger Pritchards who were probably Ruth and Warner’s siblings, judging from their ages. All were considered mulatto.

Recent genealogists have made an attempt to connect Warner to Reese Pritchard, a relatively influential frontier settler of European descent or to another early western Virginia family, the Pricketts.²²⁶ However, there is no evidence pointing towards such a connection in either case. Reese Pritchard had been on Hampshire County tax lists since 1782 and recorded some of the tax lists on which early Guinea families were included. In the 1810 Hampshire County census, Reese, as well as his son Reese Junior, were listed.

Warner first appeared in Monongalia County in 1819 along with the Daltons and John Parsons. He appeared again in 1820 and 1821 and was listed as a farmer. No other Pritchards were mentioned in tax records for the 1810s or 1820s, save “free Jacob that did belong to Thomas Pritchard” in 1815. The presence of “free Jacob” poses the question of whether or not Warner was also a slave who was freed shortly after Jacob. On the other hand, some family tradition refers to Warner Pritchard moving to Monongalia County from Prince George’s

²²⁴ Bill Peat Norris Papers

²²⁵ Avery F. Gaskins, “Warner Pritchard.” Message to the author. Sept. 3 2009. E-mail.

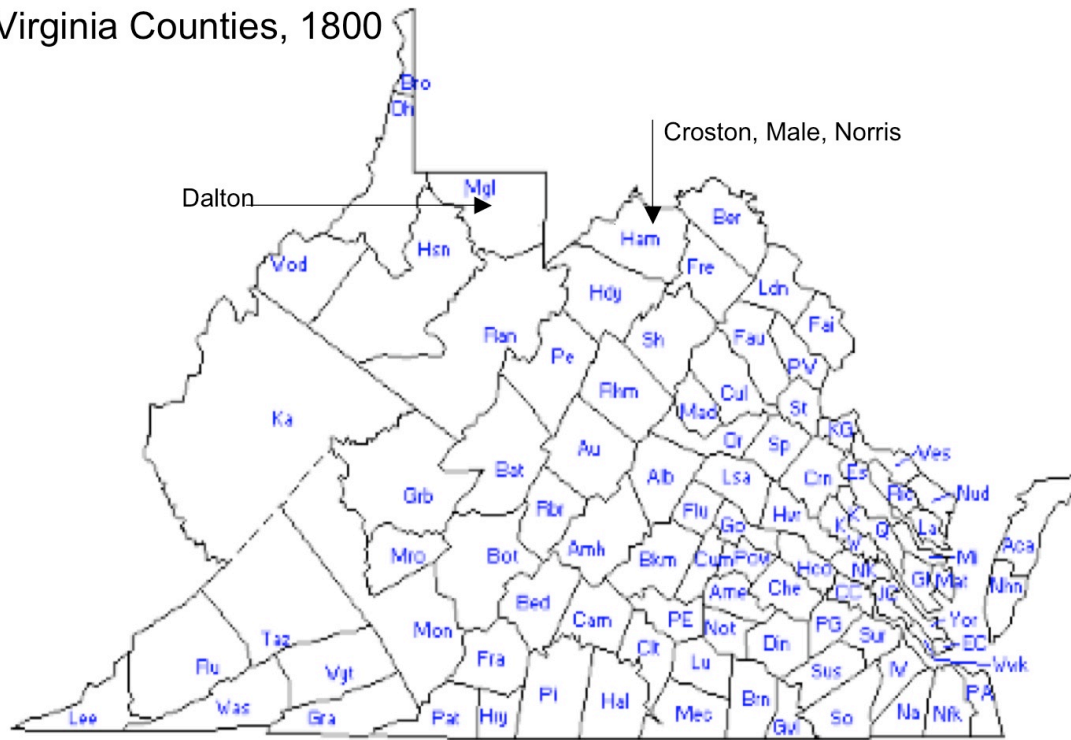
²²⁶ Ibid.

County, Maryland, potentially giving him origins in the early free black community of the Chesapeake.²²⁷

²²⁷ Ibid. If Warner were indeed from Prince George's County, it would place him in close proximity to several other Guinea settlers. A birthplace in this county would also call into sharper question the relationship between the Maryland Russell family (into which Henry Dalton married) and the Pritchard family that had enslaved some of those Russells (see page 82).

Appendix F: Maps

Virginia Counties, 1800



Chesapeake Origins of the Chestnut Ridge Community

Current state borders and counties



1. Prince George's County, MD: place of Henry Dalton's birth 1750
2. Montgomery County, MD: site of Samuel Pruitt's plantation 1750s
3. Baltimore County, MD: Wilmore Male, Senior, signed petition 1760
4. Fairfax County, VA: birthplace of Samuel Norris, son of Ann Norris 1760
5. Berkeley County, WV: Wilmore Male enlisted in the Revolutionary War 1776/1777
6. Prince George's County, MD: birthplace of six of Bartholomew Jenkin's children before 1772
7. (Part of what is now) Washington, D.C.: site of William Norris's land prior to his move to Monongalia County
8. Charles County, MD: Gustavus Croston enlisted in the Revolutionary War 1776/1777
9. Hampshire County, WV
10. Fayette County, PA (about 200 miles NW of Hampshire County, PA): Henry Dalton enlisted in the Revolutionary War 1776/1777

Chesapeake Origins of the Chestnut Ridge Community

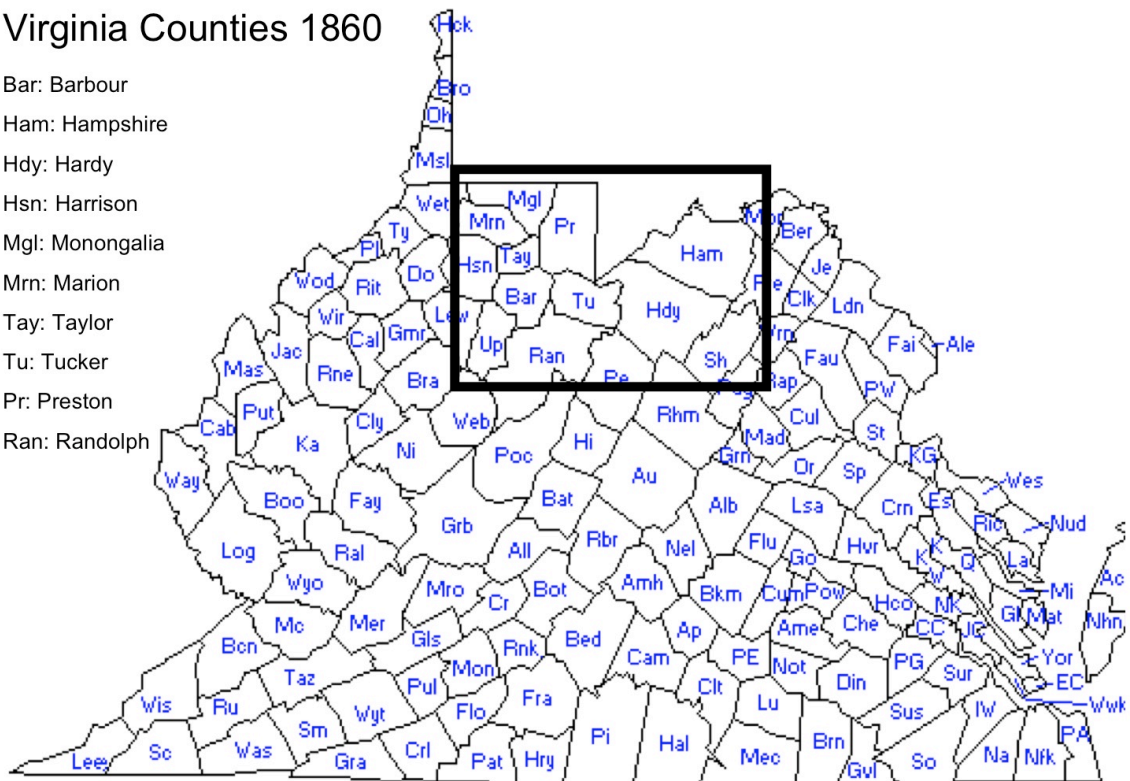
1803 state borders



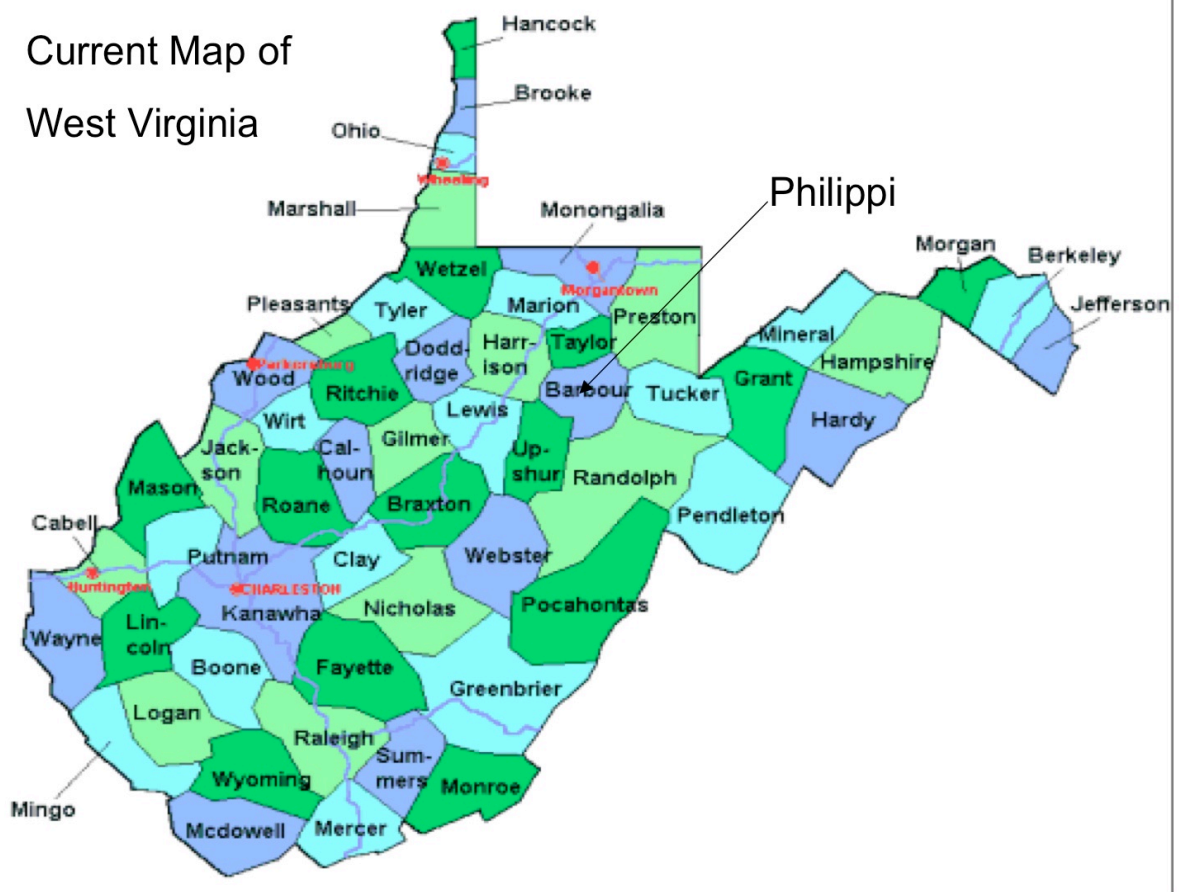
- Prince George's County, MD: place of Henry Dalton's birth 1750
birthplace of six of Bartholomew Jenkin's children before 1772
- Montgomery County, MD: site of Samuel Pruitt's plantation 1750s
- Baltimore County, MD: Wilmore Male, Senior, signed petition 1760
- ▲ Fairfax County, VA: birthplace of Samuel Norris, son of Ann Norris 1760
- ✦ Berkeley County, WV: Wilmore Male enlisted in the Revolutionary War 1776/1777
- ◆ (Part of what is now) Washington, D.C.: site of William Norris's land prior to his move to Monongalia County
- ✿ Charles County, MD: Gustavus Croston enlisted in the Revolutionary War 1776/1777
- ★ Hampshire County, WV
- ▲ Fayette County, PA: Henry Dalton enlisted in the Revolutionary War 1776/1777

Virginia Counties 1860

Bar: Barbour
 Ham: Hampshire
 Hdy: Hardy
 Hsn: Harrison
 Mgl: Monongalia
 Mrn: Marion
 Tay: Taylor
 Tu: Tucker
 Pr: Preston
 Ran: Randolph



Current Map of West Virginia



Primary Sources

Manuscripts

Annapolis, Maryland

Maryland State Archives

Frederick County Court Judgment Records

Prince George County Court Records

Fairfax, Virginia

Fairfax County Courthouse

Will Books

Marietta, Ohio

Washington County Courthouse

Deed Books

Morgantown, West Virginia

Monongalia County Courthouse

Deed Books

Will Books

Romney, West Virginia

Hampshire County Courthouse

Deed Books

Will Books

Sowtown, Devon, England

Devon Record Office

Gaol Calendar

Quarter Session Books

Philippi, West Virginia

Barbour County Courthouse

Deed Books

Will Books

Washington, D.C.

National Archives

Civil War Pension Records

Revolutionary Pension Records

Private Manuscript Collection of Dr. Avery F. Gaskins

Bill Peat Norris Papers

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