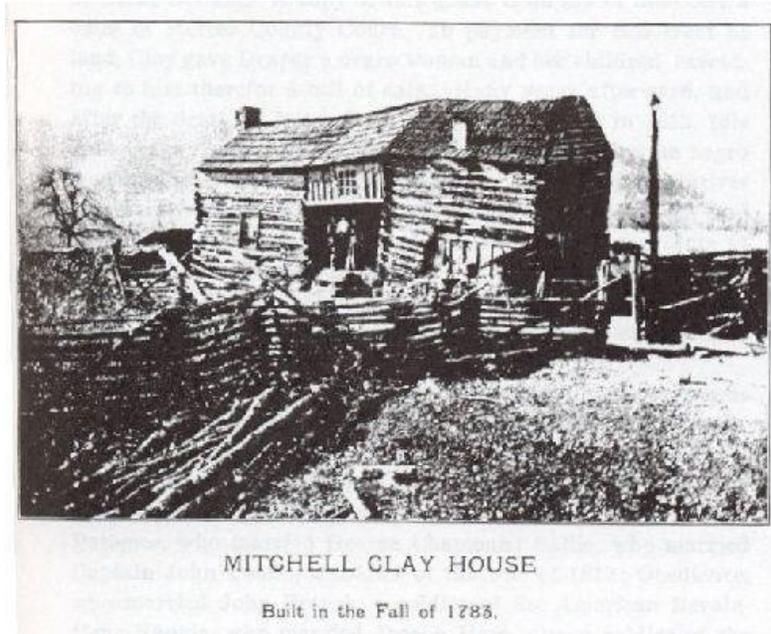


The Clay Family

Linda Cheeks Pittano



The Clays of Virginia and Kentucky, the descendants of their English ancestry by that name, emigrated to America and settled in Virginia prior to the American Revolution. One brother, the father of Henry Clay, of Kentucky, a Baptist minister, settled in the Slashes of Hanover; one, the ancestor of General Greene Clay, settled in Powhatan, and was the ancestor of General Oden G. Clay of Campbell County, Virginia. The one who settled in Franklin County was the ancestor of the elder Mitchell Clay, who came from Franklin to the Clover Bottom on the Bluestone, in 1775.

Mitchell Clay married in Franklin County, Virginia, in the year of 1760, Phoebe Belcher. In April, 1774, there was granted by Dunmore, the Royal Governor of Virginia, to Mitchell Clay, assignee of Lieutenant John Draper, 800 acres of land on Bluestone Creek, Clover Bottoms, then Fincastle County, Virginia, and Mercer County. By the terms of this grant Clay was required to take possession of this land within three years, clear so much per year, and render so much ground rent to the King of Great Britain. A copy of this grant is on file in the Clerk's office of Mercer County Court. In payment for this tract of land, Clay gave Draper a Negro woman and her children, executing to him therefor a bill of sale. Many years afterward, and after the death of Mitchell Clay, which occurred in 1812, this trade gave rise to two interesting law suits; one, by the Negro for their freedom, which they succeeded in establishing; and thereupon the representatives of Draper sued the executors of Clay and their sureties, recovering a large decree against them, resulting in the bankrupting of Captain William Smith and the estate of Colonel George N. Pearis, sureties of the executors of Clay.

Mitchell Clay and his wife had fourteen children, seven sons and seven daughters. The sons were Mitchell, Henry, Charles, William, David, Bartley, Ezekiel, the latter captured and Bartley killed by the Indians on Bluestone, in 1783. The daughters were Rebecca, who married Colonel George Pearis; Patience, who married George Chapman; Sallie, who married Captain John Peters, a soldier of the War of 1812; Obedience who married John French, a soldier of the American Revolution; Nannie, who married Joseph Hare, also a soldier of the American Revolution; Mary who married William Stewart, and Tabitha, who was killed by the Indians on Bluestone, in 1783.

From Rebecca, who married Colonel George Pearis, descended a family of Pearis of the New River Valley. From George Chapman and wife descended a numerous progeny, of whom Sallie married Hugh Jordan, of Giles County. From Mrs. Peters descended a large part of the family of that name now living in the New River Valley. From Mrs. French descended a numerous posterity, and among her descendants is Colonel James M. French, a distinguished lawyer and one of the bravest soldiers that drew his sword for Virginia in our Civil War. Mrs. Hare left no living descendants. Mrs. Stewart left a large number of descendants, many of whom are among the most respectable and prominent citizens of the County of Wyoming and adjacent territory.

After the destruction, in part, of the family of Mitchell Clay, on Bluestone, he removed to New River, purchased a farm which is now owned in part by Mr. J. Raleigh Johnston, opposite Pearisburg Station on N. & W. Ry. Co.'s railway line, and upon which he erected a dwelling house in 1783, which is still standing, a photograph of which will be seen on this page.

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