Absalom Arrington

VIRGINIA PIONEER | GEORGIA PATRIARCH

A Narrative of Arrington History
-Virginia to Georgia-
1650 - 2014

by

John Mitchell Arrington
DEDICATION

This Book is dedicated to my beloved childhood sweetheart and my wife of fifty-six years, Shirley Currier Arrington. During this time, she has supported my wild ideas, tolerated my “high strung” behavior, and has stood beside me during our toughest times. This book is as much as part of her as me.

John “Mitch” Arrington
March 2014
PREFACE

Two questions haunted my imagination when I was twelve years old living in LaGrange, Georgia, “Who were my ancestors? Where did they come from?” I knew that I had descended from five generations of Arringtons in Heard County, Georgia. The earliest was said to be a fellow by the name of Absalom Arrington.

Vague rumors had existed for decades, spoken by the older folks in Heard County. They had been told by their parents and grandparents that a fellow named Absalom Arrington had come from a place in Virginia called ‘Franklin’. This made sense. The county seat of Heard County is the town of Franklin, Georgia.

Living in Lynchburg, Virginia in the early 1960s, I spent months and months searching for a reference to Absalom Arrington in the town of Franklin, Virginia which is located near Virginia Beach. No such reference was ever found there.

In 1968, I was planning a camping trip in the Blue Ridge Mountains. As I studied a map of the area, something jumped out at me: printed on the map, two counties away and only 50 miles from my home were two words: Franklin County.

Shortly thereafter, I drove to Rocky Mount, Virginia, the county seat of Franklin County and entered the court house. The court clerks were
very helpful in those informal days. I asked the clerk if she could find any information on Absalom Arrington. In a few minutes, she returned to the table where I was sitting and laid an old, faded piece of paper in front of me. I picked it up and was stunned! There, in my hands, was the original 1817 marriage bond giving permission for Absalom Arrington and Jane Cochran to get married. Absalom’s father, John Arrington, had signed it with his “X”. This was the proof that I had been looking for all those years proving that the Heard County Absalom had indeed come from Virginia.

The rest is history. I conducted additional research, wrote a brief research paper and in 1969, send copies to the Atlanta Archives and to libraries in Heard County Georgia, Franklin County Virginia, and the Jones Memorial Library in Lynchburg Virginia. An explosion of Arrington genealogical research occurred thereafter, particularly in regard to ancestors in Heard County and their descendents adding greatly to our knowledge of Arrington genealogy. Two family researchers even wrote and published books. Yet very little continued to be known about Absalom and his family.

Although this book spans Arrington history from the 1650’s to 2014, it is mostly about the lives of Absalom and his family in Virginia from the time he was born in Amherst County until he left Patrick County to relocate in Georgia. It’s about the great obstacles he faced in living and raising a family in a wilderness mountain frontier and
how fortunate we are that he and his family were tough enough to survive.

In this book, less emphasis is placed on ancestors living in Heard County, Georgia. Some of my distant relatives have already done an excellent job in providing information about the Arrington family once they reached Heard County. Much information is now available regarding the many branches of our family emanating from there.

After Absalom leaves Virginia, the storyline of this book continues to trace his descendants and the ancestors of my immediate Arrington family line in Heard County through the transition from farming to factory work. Finally, it traces my childhood journey, during the Great Depression, to my new home in Central Virginia only thirty or so miles from where Absalom Arrington was born in 1798 in Amherst, County (or that portion of Amherst County that is now Nelson County near the village of Arrington, Virginia).

The book ends with a speculative discussion of our Arrington heritage before America and the scientific role that DNA is now playing in answering this question.
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CHAPTER 1
APPALACHIAN PIONEER LIFE IN THE EARLY 1800’s

Absalom and Jane could not have imagined the challenge that was facing them. Wilderness survival in the 1817 Appalachian Mountains was to be a daunting task for these two young teens in love. Assignment to this time and place was their destiny, and their success or failure depended mostly on the two of them: their determination, their knowledge, their skills and pure luck.

They were essentially cut off from civilization. Important news “of the times” from back east would have been slow to arrive and perhaps of only passing interest to a young couple dealing with the more immediate challenges of daily survival. Yet events were unfolding in the larger world around them that would someday impact their lives:

James Madison was finishing out his term as the fourth President of the United States.

The War of 1812 between the United States and the British had recently ended in 1815.

Thomas Jefferson had started work on Poplar Forest, his summer home, located on 4800 acres in what are now the Bedford County suburbs of Lynchburg, Virginia, fifty miles to the east.
Napoleon Bonaparte and his family had just been imprisoned and exiled from France forever.

The previous year, 1816, had been the "Year Without a Summer" in the northern hemisphere causing immense suffering in the northeast, wiping out crops, and causing thousands to die in the United States. Mount Tambora in Indonesia had erupted in 1815 and by 1816, volcanic ash had clouded the atmosphere around the globe very likely affecting the growing season in Franklin and Patrick Counties.

Pioneer life on the Appalachian frontier in southwestern Virginia in the early 1800's could best be described as difficult, harsh and even brutal by today's standards. Basic subsistence was a day-to-day challenge, especially during the winters.

Towns were distant and thus inaccessible in the mountains and foothills. The village of Rocky Mount in Franklin County was in its infancy. Primitive roads were nothing more than "rutty" trails making travel virtually impossible during the winter. Because of a lack of good roads, commerce was almost non-existent requiring the pioneers to devise, make, grow or barter much of what they needed to survive. For example, they made their soap from hog fat and wood ashes and had learned from the Indians how to gather sap from the maple trees to make sugar. Barter between families was very common and necessary since money was quite scarce on the frontier. Barter also allowed families to share each other's unique skills for profit and strengthened the community as a whole.
From the earliest years, children were taught to contribute to the welfare and survival of the family. By the time they were thirteen or fourteen, both males and females possessed most of the skills necessary to survive in the wilderness.

Mothers passed knowledge and skills down to their daughters at an early age. Responsibility of the wives and daughters included taking care of the babies, housecleaning, spinning yarn, weaving cloth, sewing, making clothing, fetching water from the spring, milking the cow, building fires and cooking. Other tasks included planting and tending vegetable gardens, making sugar from the maple trees, tending chickens, curing meat, and gathering wild fruits, berries and even plants for medicinal use. Wives tended the sick and even helped the men in the fields during the planting and harvesting seasons. Sickness, particularly during the winter, was common and existing medicines were mostly unavailable or ineffective. Many children died at birth due to a lack of sanitation and proper medical care. Sometimes, for the same reasons, wives died while giving birth to their children. “Blue babies” were not uncommon.

Wives in the 1817 wilderness were overworked, undernourished and had to be really tough to survive.

Mothers conducted what we now call home school. They were responsible for the “education” of the children since there were no schools. If mom could read and write, she taught the children how to
read and write. Books were scarce and hard to come by. Yet the book found in almost every household was the family Bible since most of the settlers in Franklin County were Christians. The Bible was often the repository for family records; i.e., names, births, deaths, etc.

Fathers taught their sons to hunt the deer, bear, and wild turkeys abundant in the Franklin County forests and to trap small game such as beaver, rabbits and squirrels. Sons learned to skin and slaughter their kill salvaging everything: the meat for food and the skins for clothing and other items of need. Fathers taught their sons proper use of everyday tools such as knives, hatchets and axes, necessary to survive in the wilderness. Sons were taught at an early age to become good marksmen, not only for hunting, but also to protect the family from predators such a wolves, coyotes, bobcats, mountain lions, bear and predators of the two legged kind. Boys learn to chop down trees, dig up stumps, clear land, cut firewood, plow, seed, tend and harvest the “cash” crops such as corn and tobacco. They learned to repair the wagons, plows, and other equipment since they were isolated and often without access to blacksmiths. And of course, they gained the knowledge and skills necessary to build log cabins, their family’s primary shelter from the elements.

Generations earlier, in the sixteen hundreds and upon arriving from Europe, many Virginia pioneers did not own land nor have the money to purchase land. They started their life in Virginia as sharecroppers, working the land for wealthy absentee land owners. While still in
England, some who did not have money for the ocean passage to the new world “sold” their services and became indentured servants for several years to pay for their passage across the Atlantic. In just a few short years following arrival, they worked hard, their indentured service ended, and they began to profit from the raising and selling of horses, cattle, sheep, pigs and turkeys. Living frugally, they began to accumulate a modest “nest egg” which allowed them to eventually buy their own land, usually small parcels.

Most were farmers. From the earliest years, their major source of income was the growing of tobacco. Tobacco had long been in great demand in Britain and the Europe. Thus, tobacco had become the dominant cash crop in Virginia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries providing an income stream for most pioneering farmers who had come to own land.

Compared to today’s standards, these people over several generations had lifted themselves from the ranks of the poor to what we would now roughly consider to be the “working middle class”.

Such was the case of the early Arrington settlers arriving in Franklin County Virginia at the beginning of the nineteen century. Upon arriving in the County, they purchased land, cleared it, and began farming tobacco as their parents had done for generations earlier in counties to the east.
The population density in Franklin County was sparse in the early 1800's. Neighbors often lived far apart and seldom saw each other on a daily basis. Most of the family’s time was spent working. In the evenings when the work ended, the family had to provide its own entertainment which included sharing stories of that day’s activities around the supper table while they consumed a typical meal of greens, fatback, cornbread and occasionally whatever meat might be available. Bible reading, more storytelling including word-of-mouth fables and ghost stories, and singing typically occurred after dinner. They arose early each morning to begin their chores and went to bed early each night.

Most Franklin County settlers were Christians and attended church service when possible. Sometimes they traveled incredible distances to attend church since there were few churches in the County in the early 19th Century. Not only was church attendance necessary for worship, but also was the sole center of social activity, the primary place of contact with their neighbors, a place where young people met and flirted, and was a source of news about others and the outside world.

The “bottom line” is that the early settlers in Franklin County Virginia, those arriving around 1808, had to be totally self-sufficient; i.e., they had to depend on themselves, their own knowledge and their own skills to survive.
Life on the Virginia frontier had not changed much over the previous hundred years. The evolution of pioneer life was aptly described by Phillip Lightfoot Scruggs in his book, *The History of Lynchburg, Virginia 1786 -1946*.

He informed his readers that, in the 18th century, the newer colonists had to migrate westward into the hill country. This included indentured servants who had served out their time. The larger more established planters continued to acquire large tracts. They had learned from experience that their golden crop, tobacco, quickly depleted the soil's fertility due to reckless agricultural practices. When a field became depleted, they would abandon it and start a new one.

He further pointed out that this westward movement, over the years, traced the path of streams, rivers, and creeks upward through the rising hills and into the mountains. These movements were motivated by reports and rumors from explorers, hunters, trappers, and militiamen who were driving the Indians from their native lands.

Finally, Mr. Scruggs emphasize the fact that these men had to be very hardy because they had to do all the work themselves. They had no slaves or indentured servants to assist them in clearing the forests and building homes. Therefore, these trailblazers had to have possessed many skills and had to have been very experienced. They knew what to expect and what to do.
Getting married was a bold and scary endeavor on the 1817 frontier. Young couples, after initially receiving assistance from both of their parents and siblings, embarked alone on the journey of life, facing major challenges, hopefully surviving, raising a family, and carving out their place in history.

Such was the case of an underage couple in Franklin County, Absalom Arrington and Jane Cockran. He was nineteen years old. She was only sixteen. They must have loved each other very much and must have had the courage to “go it alone” at such an early age. Girls often married very young, but their future husbands were usually older, in their twenties, seasoned and experienced when their vows were exchanged.

There was a problem with Absalom and Jane’s marriage. Virginia law required the father of the groom to give written permission allowing the son to marry if he was under twenty-one years of age. As a matter of fact, the father was required to obtain and pay for a surety bond authorizing such a marriage.

Absalom’s father, John “Jack” Arrington, must have been convinced that Absalom was mature and skilled enough to get married, take care
of a family and venture out on his own with his new bride. He must also have taken into consideration the maturity and readiness of Jane Cockran by "signing on" to such a marriage. Sparse clues suggest that the Arrington family and the Cockran family were neighbors, knew each other well, shared similar values including religion, and were "on par" financially.

So John secured a surety bond of permission for the marriage. (This bond is still on file in the Franklin County courthouse in Rocky Mount, Virginia).

Both Absalom and Jane had descended from a long line of pioneering Americans, the ancestors of both reaching back to the 1650's, only two or three generations following the establishment of the Jamestown Colony in 1607.

The following appear to be the most universally accepted ancestors of Absalom Arrington and Jane Cockran

**ANCESTORS OF ABSALOM ARRINGTON AND JANE COCKRAN (COCHRAN)**

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<th>Jane's Ancestors</th>
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<td>Jane Cockran (Cochran)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Birth: 1798 Amherst Co, VA</td>
<td>Birth: Unconfirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death: Abt 1872 Heard Co, GA</td>
<td>Death: Unconfirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married: 22 Sept, 1817 Franklin Co, VA</td>
<td>Father: Isham Cockran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife: Jane Cockran (Cochran)</td>
<td>Mother: Sarah Rakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father: John Jack Arrington</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mother: Susanna Ann Bowling</td>
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John Jack Arrington
Birth: 1768 Amherst Co, VA
Death: 1849 Patrick Co, VA
Married: Aug 8, 1796 Amherst Co, VA
Wife: Susannah Ann Bowling
Father: F. Kneaves Arrington
Mother: M. Prisilla Goddard

F. Kneaves Arrington
Birth: Apr 22, 1749 Goochland Co, VA
Death: Amherst Co, VA
Married: 1756 Amherst Co, VA
Wife: Prissilla Goddard
Father: F. William Arrington
Mother: Mary Susanna Donnelley

William Arrington
Birth: Abt: 1698, 1700, 1718
Death: 1749 Goochland Co, VA
Married: 1738 Virginia
Wife: Mary Susanna Donnelley
Father: Samuel Arrington
Mother: Jane Quacker / Susanna Wilson

Samuel Arrington
Birth: Abt 1670-1675 Goochland Co, VA
Death: 1731 Goochland Co, VA
Married: 1729
Wife: Jane Quacker / Susanna Willson
Father: William Arrington
Mother: Jane

William Arrington
Birth: 1650 Virginia
Death: 1699 Goochland Co, VA
Wife: Jane
Father & Mother: Unknown

Isham Cockran
Birth: 1713 Henry Co, VA
Death: 1860 Patrick Co, VA
Married: Mar 1795 Patrick Co
Wife: Sarah Rakes
Father: F. Edward Cockran
Mother: Mary Polly Edwards

F. Edward Cockran
Birth: 1740 Franklin Co, VA
Death: July 1816 Franklin Co, VA
Married: 1763 Franklin Co, VA
Wife: Mary Polly Edwards
Father: F. Samuel Cockran
Mother: Mary Clarity Spencer

F. Samuel Cockran
Birth: 1710 Loc. Unknown
Death: Unknown
Married: Unknown
Wife: Mary Clarity Cockran
Father: Matthew Cockran
Mother: Martha Patsy Hooper

Matthew Cockran
Birth: Abt 1680 Surry
Death: Abt 1713 Virginia
Married: Mar 24, 1731
Wife: Martha Patsy Hooper
Father: John R. Cockran?
Mother: Unknown

Absalom’s father, John, had migrated from Amherst County to Franklin County when he purchased land there in 1808. John had been born in Amherst County in 1768 and was married in Amherst on August 8, 1796 to Susannah Ann Bowling. John and Susanna had four children.
born in Amherst County: Absalom in 1798, Elizabeth in 1799-1801, Lewis in 1800-1803 and Samuel in 1806. They had four more children after they moved to Franklin County: Edward in 1811, John, Jr., in 1812, Leroy in 1814, and Mary Jane in 1820.

Their home place in Amherst County was probably near the village of Arrington which had been settled by, and named after John's father, Kneaves Arrington, and William Arrington. In 1807, Nelson County was formed from a part of Amherst County and the village of Arrington became part of Nelson County. The community of Arrington is located 3 miles east of US Route 29, thirty-two miles north of Lynchburg, Virginia, home of the author.

Author's Note: In her booklet entitled, The Village of Arrington, Dorothy Lee Bowling Giles states, "William and Nevis Arrington, settling in the old Amherst in the 1700's are said to be forerunner of the village (Marmon pg. 65 in Seaman, ed.1989)"

Extensive research for this book indicates that "Nevis" and "Kneaves" were one in the same. "Kneaves" is well-documented in Amherst County records. "Nevis" documentation cannot be found except for one brief reference in the Geographic Reference Library stating his birth date as 1749 and his marriage date as 1756, one of which has to be in error since there are only seven years between his birth and marriage. The documented birth and marriage dates of Kneaves are identically the same, including the error.
In the 1700’s, few people could read and write. Most communication was verbal. The two spellings, Nevis and Kneaves sound almost the same when pronounced. When names were written by others, the sound of the pronounced name was sometimes misspelled and therefore written incorrectly.

By 1857, the Orange and Alexandria Railroad Company located its north-south route in the Arrington area stimulating growth and creating a community of activity. The community of Arrington reached it economic peak in the early 1900s. A nearby soapstone quarry shipped its goods from Arrington to points all around the world. A large tobacco warehouse was built in Arrington. Farmers hauled their hogsheads on the wagons to the warehouse for storage until they were later shipped to distribution locations. A cold storage building was built in Arrington the 1920s. Apples were stored and internationally marketed from this facility. Beef Cattle were shipped by rail to various market destinations. During its prime, Arrington boasted several general stores, a poolroom, a barbershop, a hotel, and a taxi service pulled by mules.

Like so many communities in the United States, Arrington fell into decline starting during the Great Depression. Today, it is a sleepy little residential community off US Route 29 south of Lovingston in Nelson County, Virginia.
John Arrington, Absalom’s father, had to have learned a lot about tobacco farming from his father and grandfather in Amherst County. The Amherst County settlers had become very successful in growing tobacco in the late 1700’s but had a major problem in getting it inspected for market. State inspection required transporting their harvest to Richmond, a distance of more than 100 miles. Amherst County was connected to Richmond by the James River which was the best way to transport tobacco to Richmond, but the farmers needed an inspection station close by. The following is an excerpt from a Legislative Partition (partitioning the Virginia Legislature) on file at the Library of Virginia:

October 23, 1788: The inhabitants of Amherst County (at this time Amherst County included present day Nelson County as well) partitioned for the establishment of tobacco inspection on Nicholas Cabell’s land just below the mouth of Swann Creek on the James River. It was inconvenient and expensive to send tobacco to Richmond for inspection. Signatures: Clough Shelton, Saml. Winfrey, J, Breckenridge, Chas. Davidson, David Pattison, and 156 others.

One might inquire as to why John “Jack” Arrington would leave the relative comfort of Amherst County in 1808 and venture 150 miles southwestward along the eastern slopes of the Blue Ridge Mountains. John apparently had an earlier talent and source of income. Tradition says that he first came to know the mountains of Franklin and Patrick Counties through his means of earning a livelihood. Marie Kontz Arrington on page 73 in her book, Least We Forget, stated that Absalom’s father was sometimes called “Jack” and was a buyer and/or
“driver” of livestock for the market in Richmond, Virginia. Roads were limited and parts of the mountains were difficult to reach except by horseback or on foot. Buyers of livestock came to these remote areas to purchase from the homesteaders and drove the animals on foot to the market in Richmond, Virginia, where they were sold.

Moving from homestead to homestead buying livestock, John must have made many friends and become quite familiar with the landscape as he traversed Franklin and Patrick counties in those pioneering years. His familiarity with the two counties would have made it much easier to “pull up stakes” in Amherst County, haul his family and personal effects in wagons, and drive his livestock 150 miles southwestward along the eastern slopes of the Blue Ridge Mountains to his new home in Franklin County.

Author’s Note: John Arrington was living in Amherst County Virginia when he married Susannah Bolling on August 8, 1796. He did not buy property in Franklin County until 1808. The prevailing thought of Arrington researchers has been that Absalom and his siblings were all born in Franklin County. This is very unlikely. John, Susannah and four of their children would have had to have lived with someone else for 10 years for this to be true. Therefore, it is almost a certainty that Absalom, born in 1798, his sister Elizabeth, his brothers Louis and Samuel, born before 1807, where all born in Amherst County. The remaining children, Edward, John Jr., Leroy, and Mary Jane all the came along after 1810 and were likely born in Franklin County.
CHAPTER 3
THE FAMILY

Starting a marriage as teenagers is challenging today, but can you imagine how difficult it was in 1817? Where did they live? What did they eat? How did they earn an income? How did they stay warm in the wintertime?

Absalom Arrington and his new bride, Jane Cochran had to have received help from their family and perhaps from their neighbors in starting their new married life. As far as a place to live was concerned, there were only three options: 1. Live with their parents. 2. Live with another family. 3. Live in their own small cabin. The more likely scenario is that their families and perhaps their neighbors came together and built a small, one-room cabin for them. This probably happened prior to their marriage.

Their cabin, made of logs, would have been very basic: a door, maybe one window or perhaps two, and a fireplace. The fireplace would have been used for cooking as well as for heat in the winter. In later years they would build a separate building for the kitchen to minimize the danger of the house catching on fire. At first, the floor may have been a dirt floor. Furnishings would have been modest and mostly homemade. Lighting at night would have been provided by oil lamps, fired by lard, pine pitch, beeswax and other animal fats. Occasionally they probably used candles. The popular kerosene lamps with the clear
glass globes had not yet been invented and would have been a major improvement in their life decades later.

The cabin was likely located on a small clearing on the land belonging to Absalom’s father because no records show that Absalom yet owned land. He could have worked with his father in growing tobacco and likely would have received a small cut of the profits.

There were two things that any young frontiersman considered vital to success: a strong woman by his side and a piece of land to call his own. Absalom had the first but he had to work hard a few years and save his money to obtain the second.

Our knowledge of Absalom’s success in the later years teaches us that he must have had several ways to earn income as a bread winner. He was primarily a farmer but secondarily a frontiersman. Undoubtedly he knew how to hunt, trap and tan hides. Beaver and muskrat fur were in demand at the time.

As a youngster he may have collected wild turkey eggs, hatched them, put them in cages and raised them. Raising horses, cows, sheep, goats and pigs was a common enterprise in those days and an excellent way to earn money. He could have sold his animals to the “drivers” who came around each year buying up livestock to take back to Richmond to the market. He may have had special connections with the drivers since his father, John, had earned his living as a driver years earlier.
Absalom and Jane could have raised, sold and bartered vegetables from a vegetable garden and apples from their orchard as the trees grew larger and began to produce.

Absalom may have been an avid hunter. His earliest rifle was likely a flintlock muzzleloader later upgraded to a caplock muzzleloader (the most advanced rifle at the time) which he would have used to slay deer in the Franklin County and Patrick County forests (shotguns had not yet been invented and would not come into common use for another forty years). If he killed more wild meat that his family could consume, he could sell or barter the surplus.

And lastly, Absalom may have developed personal skills needed by his neighbors and was able to sell/barter his labor to others, plowing or blacksmithing for example.

He had to have done some of this because we know that Absalom and Jane were very successful in raising a large family over several decades. This included the purchase of land along the way.

* * * *

Three years after their wedding, Jane delivered their firstborn child: Nancy. Nancy was to become the first of nine children. The last to join the family was Sarah. Nancy had reached the mature age of 20 when Sarah was born in 1840.
Because of her age compared to the other children, one could easily assume that Nancy filled the role of "assistant mother" as the family matured. The enormous burdens faced by mother Jane on a daily basis would have made this a certainty. On 14 January in 1841, at a mature age for the times, twenty, Nancy finally relinquished her duties caring for her siblings and married Foster James.

Nancy was the firstborn. One year later, Susan was born. Absalom was probably getting nervous by this time. He needed boys, several boys to help him with the massive manual labor required to feed, shelter, and care for a large family.

He was not disappointed. On the 20\textsuperscript{th} of October in 1825, Isham was born. Two years later, John was born; then Daniel on 10\textsuperscript{th} of January in 1830. The birthing process did not stop there. In 1832 Charles was born; then Marshall in 1836; and finally David in 1838. Absalom now had his "army" to meet the challenges faced in a "world" that required extensive manual labor and great physical strength to survive and prosper.
CHAPTER 4

THE HOMESTEAD

The Virginia counties of Amherst, Bedford, Franklin, and Patrick all have one thing in common: moving from one to the other, they traverse southwestward along the eastern slopes of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Starting on the western boarders in these counties and moving eastward, the terrain transitions into rolling foothills.

Franklin County, where John Arrington settled and bought fifty acres of land in 1808, is the least mountainous of the three consisted mostly of rolling foothills. John’s property was located in this rolling terrain on Chestnut Creek about 10 miles north of Rocky Mount, the county seat of Franklin County.

Patrick County is the most mountainous of all the counties with peaks exceeding 3000 feet and featuring steep cliffs and drop offs into hidden valleys and “hollows” on the eastern side of the Blue Ridge. Some of the most rugged mountain terrain exists in Patrick.

When Absalom and Jane were first married in 1817, they probably had little or no money. They must have worked hard and saved hoping to achieve Absalom’s vision of owning his own land. Living on a rented or borrowed portion of father John’s land would have allowed
them to save, yet they must have dreamed and talked frequently about that day in the future when they could be independent, free and totally on their own.

As 1831 approached, could rumors have been drifting out of Patrick County about pristine, virgin land for sale at a bargain price? Would such rumors have tempted Absalom to travel to Patrick County to explore and see for himself if these rumors were true?

Just across the border into Patrick County, only 25 or so miles as the crow flies from John Arrington’s farm in Franklin County, was a place; a place so unique that Absalom’s heart must have raced when he first laid eyes on it; a place where the clear, fast flowing Smith River had already cascaded in multiple waterfalls out of the steep mountain passes and was rapidly winding back-and-forth through the rolling hills. The moment he saw it, he must have known that this was going to be his family’s Garden of Eden!

Here for sale was fifty acres located along the northern banks of the Smith River stretching northward toward the County line.

Bordered on the east by Turkey Crook Creek, and proceeding several hundred feet upstream along the banks of the Smith River, this land must have been not only beautiful but also rich in natural resources. The Smith River could supply all the native trout, smallmouth bass, and fresh water clams a family might need. The land itself would have
been saturated with the pleasant smell of Dogwoods, Redbud trees, and Virginia Creeper blooming profusely in the springtime. Wild persimmons, nuts from the hickory and walnut trees and acorns from the oaks would have supported an abundance of small game, and then there was the ever present Chestnut tree, tall, overlooking the entire property, just waiting for someone to utilize its magnificent resources.

The Patrick County Historical Society's book, *History of Patrick County Virginia*, quotes from the journal of Captain J. F. D. Smythe, a British Army officer, recorded during his journey exploring the Smith River basin in 1774. Although Captain Smythe's exploration took place 57 years before Absalom Arrington purchased land there, Smythe's journal provides a vivid description of what Absalom must have encountered when he first arrived.

"The low land on the Smith River and Reed Creek is indeed excellent, but narrow; the high grounds and hills being very near the river on each side are exceedingly rocky and sterile; the roads and paths are as bad as can be conceived; and the houses and plantations are very indifferent indeed; but there is a great abundance of game, such as deer, bears, some panthers, wildcats, otters, raccoons, opossums, wild turkeys, and all kinds of squirrels. The growth of timber on the land is very great. Large trees are abundant along the shores of the rivers. The soil is of a deep black color, and rather light, but exceedingly deep and liable to be flooded.

The high land, as I have already observed, is very rough, rocky and poor; and abounds with the valuable plant, or rather root, of ginseng, which in China is accounted a specific for almost gold. Here, it sells for about a shilling sterling per pound."
The inhabitants and Negroes likewise find and dig great quantities of snake root, which they sell for nearly as much as ginseng, which is exported to Europe, being sent by land carriage to James River, where it is shipped, and British manufactures (products) are taken in exchange for all of this as well as for all of their commodities at very advanced prices. They also sell great numbers of deer skins and furs; but the principle of their exports are hogs, which they raise in great numbers, and drive them in droves of one, two, three and five hundred together to the falls of the James River, and Roanoke, and to the more popular parts of the country as well as the seaports. Some few black cattle are also brought from this part of the frontier, but in no great numbers. Deer skins, dried and cured, sell for about a shilling sterling per pound. Raccoon skins about six pence each; otter skins about two or three shillings each; beavers, etc., and proportion.

Their hogs they sell alive for about 12 shillings per hundredweight if bought there; if driven down the country, they cost about 20 shillings. Black cattle sell nearly for the same price. Venison is exceedingly cheap; generally about a half a crown for a whole deer, exclusive of the skin.

There is also a quantity of tobacco cultivated here, which is almost all carried to the James River, and sells there for sixteen, eighteen, or twenty shillings per hundredweight. They make very little wheat, and used still less; the general price of wheat there at home is about half a crown a bushel.

But the great support of the country is Indian corn, upon which they subsist themselves, their Negroes, their horses, and fatten their hogs after they are in good plight by feeding on acorns in the woods, which are always called mast in America. Indian corn is measured by what is called “The Barrel”, or five bushels, and the price four shillings and sixpence per barrel.”

Many of the landowners in this area owned large parcels of land, typically 200 – 400 acres. John and James Ingram, who lived in this lower Smith River area, were probably among them.
Not far from Absalom’s farm, James Ingram operated a ferry across the Smith River near the Patrick County- Franklin County boarder. This would have provided Absalom access to the remainder of Patrick County.

In the month of October 1931, Absalom Arrington purchased this land, his family’s future homestead, fifty acres more or less, for the sum of $70 from James Ingram.

Winter would soon be approaching that October; not a good time to be traveling back-and-forth between Franklin and Patrick counties trying to convert his newly purchased virgin land into a homestead and ultimately a working farm.

Absalom and Jane’s children were still young at the time. Five had been born by then and their ages were eleven, ten, six, five, and one, all too young to be of much help in their new adventure.

It is logical to assume that Absalom and his family continued to live on his father’s land through the winter and even longer while Absalom (and perhaps others volunteering to help him), traveled back-and-forth beginning the process of clearing land and building a cabin.

What challenges did Absalom face in preparing their new homestead? The first, of course, was the slow, backbreaking process, of clearing land. How did the settlers go about doing this? They used what they
had to work with, axes and crossbow saws to cut down each tree, probably about waist high above the ground.

Felling the tree was one thing. But removal of large stumps was another: a long and arduous process. Each stump had to be dug up by hand with a pick, pry bar, and shovel. Workers had to dig down at least 18 inches to be below plow depth. Once the roots of a tree were exposed at that depth, axes were used to sever them. A chain was then wrapped around the top of the stump, the other end hooked to the plow team of horses, and "levered" out of the hole. If the tree was large, additional workers would have helped by using long wooden poles to assist in prying the stump out of the hole. Workers would then haul dirt from high ground and fill the holes. Finally, they would burn the stumps and even some of the trees.

Removing a large stump could easily have required the effort two or three men a whole day. One can see that clearing land in those days was not measured in hours or days or perhaps not even months, but instead years. The conversion of 50 acres of land from virgin forest to farmland could easily have taken more than 10 years depending on the makeup of the land. Remembering that tobacco quickly depleted the nutrients in the soil, clearing of land could have been a never-ending process.

Absalom's success would have depended on how well he utilized the natural resources on his land and how effective he was at farming.
Perhaps his single most important natural resource was the American chestnut tree. In the early 19th century it was the most common and most important tree species in the eastern United States. The American chestnut tree was very vigorous and could out compete most of the forest trees for the nutrients in the soil. Variation in sizes found in the forests also added to their value, ranging from saplings to trees as large as 10 feet in diameter and up to 100 feet in height.

The American chestnut tree had many uses. It was somewhat light but strong and was easy to work. The trees served as ideal building logs for cabins and were also used to make shingles for the roof. Chestnut trees were commonly used to make split rail fences and furniture and burned well as firewood. This wood was extremely durable outdoors because of the high concentration of tannic acid that resisted rotting.

The chestnut tree was also America’s major source of tannin, used for tanning leather. Settlers would fell large trees, peel the bark off, flatten it, and load it on the wagons as high as it could be stacked and take it to market. The left over trees were burned or often left to rot.

Chestnuts where also a great food source for the pioneers themselves. The nuts were usually gathered by the wagon load as they ripened and fell off of the trees in the fall. They were enjoyed by adults and children alike, both raw and roasted and were used as feed for the horses, cows, and pigs. Chestnuts had high nutritional value setting them
apart from other nuts. They were easy to store in root cellars and could last most of the winter.

*Author's Note:* In 1800, approximately one in four hardwoods in the Appalachian forests were American chestnut trees. Around 1900, Japanese chestnut nursery stock, infected with a fungus, was imported into North America. The American chestnut tree had no resistance to this blight resulting in a wide-spread die-off. Within forty years, nearly all of the estimated four million American chestnut trees were gone from the eastern United States. One of the greatest resources in American history disappeared in just a half century. Over the last fifty years, efforts have been made to create a fungus resistant hybrid and plant saplings that will survive and prosper in North America.

Other "cash" resources likely found on Absalom's land were Snake-root and Ginseng, both in demand in China, Europe, and even the United States for medicinal purposes. This was an enterprise that the whole family could participate in: digging up these plants found only in a few places around the world, plants that flourished under the dense forest canopy in Patrick County.

DESCRIPTION OF THE HOMESTEAD

By 1845, much had changed in the "world" of Absalom and Jane Arrington.
Numerous griss mills were operating on the rivers and streams of Patrick County. Nearly all families grew their own corn and wheat. They took their harvest to the griss mills where it was ground into meal and flour. Pay received by the millers was a portion of the grain. They would normally receive a gallon of grain for each bushel they processed. Rake's Griss Mill was somewhat convenient since it was only a mile or so upstream from the Arrington homestead.

During the 1840s, lumber mills had started up in Patrick County. Trees were now being sawed into planks and boards. Construction of homes, barns and other buildings were beginning to take on a new look. With the arrival of the lumber mills came the commercial demand for trees, a new source of income for the farmers.

What was the Arrington Homestead like in 1845? No definitive record exists. Attempts to explore the property today would be thwarted by a lake created by the Philpot dam, built during the Great Depression in the 1930s, the backwaters of which now cover much of Absalom's property.

Yet there is much history and many clues about life along the eastern slopes and foothills of the Appalachian Mountains remaining with us today. With this information and the historical records of Patrick County, we can surmise with some degree of accuracy how Absalom's family, like other people of his time and place, lived.
In 1845, Nancy was married and had left home four years earlier. Susan, age 24, could also have been married, but no such record exists. Isham was now 20, John was 18, and Daniel was 15, all able-bodied men providing much of the labor to operate the farm. Charles was 13 and would soon be able to carry a man’s load. Marshall was nine and David was seven. Little Sarah was only five.

Absalom would have originally built his one-room cabin on a hill overlooking the beautiful Smith River to avoid periodic flooding along the river bed, particularly during the springtime thaw. By 1845 he and his boys would likely have expanded their house from the original one room to two or three rooms to accommodate his large family of both boys and girls. A new kitchen would have been added, a separate building 15 or 20 feet from the main house as was normally the case in those days. House fires, more often than not, resulted from cooking.

Although the north side of Patrick County was not known for tobacco, Absalom almost certainly farmed it, for it was in his blood, his father’s blood, and all the generations before them. He has learned how to cure tobacco as a child and thus would have had a tobacco barn made of logs for curing. Tobacco, sold both locally and exported out of the County could have been a major source of income for his family.
Like most men of his time and place, Absalom probably enjoyed the use of tobacco. A few men smoked pipes. Cigarettes did not exist at the time. Most men chewed tobacco: twist and plug. All public buildings including the courthouse and churches provided “spittoons” for convenience of the men.

To make “twist” of tobacco, cured leaves were soaked with licorice, honey, molasses, and spices to add flavor and to make the leaves stick together when it was rolled up and twisted. The more popular “plug” tobacco started with the same ingredients but was placed in a press and squeezed until a solid about a half-inch thick was formed. It was then cut into rectangle bars, wrapped in paper, and was labeled with the maker’s brand.

Tobacco had a “down” side. It depleted the soil in just five or six growing seasons which required periodic clearing and planting of new fields.

All farmers in the remote areas of that day grew their own corn and even wheat for their own consumption. It is safe to assume that the Arrington family did this too.

Farmers had to have a way to preserve food and the hilly terrain was ideal for the simple solutions of the time. It would have been almost impossible to survive without some way to do this.
Springs furnishing clear, healthy water were abundant in the mountains and hilly country of Patrick County. Absalom's spring was probably no more than 100 yards from the house. He may have dug out a small cave-like place around the spring, and closed it in with a log shelter thus creating a spring house. Such a spring house could have been used to preserve perishables such as milk, butter, and eggs during the warm summer months.

If Absalom had no spring house, he definitely would have had a root cellar dug in the side of a hill under the shade of the forest canopy and enclosed by a shelter made of logs. A door would have discouraged animals from getting inside. The root cellar would have been used to store the harvest of apples and chestnuts preserving them for family use throughout much of the winter.

Preserving meat would have been crucial in 1845. Undoubtedly Absalom had a smokehouse which was the primary way to preserve meat in those days. This would have included pork from the slaughter of hogs and also beef and venison. He could have even preserved fish which would have been abundant in the Smith River, a short distance from his house.

Milk would have been important for the children and for cooking; therefore, they must have had at least one milk cow, maybe more. Although a small farmer with a limited amount of land, Absalom might have been raising a few head of cattle. He certainly would have
been trying to breed and increase the number of horses he owned. Horses were critical to both transportation and work in those days. Both horses and cattle required enclosed pastures surrounded by split rail fences.

Hogs reproduced fast and were no doubt an expanding commodity on Absalom’s farm. They would have provided lard for cooking, grease for lighting, fatback, bacon, and ham to eat. Successfully breeding and raising them would have meant a substantial addition to their income.

In the beginning, hogs were allowed to run free in the nearby forests feeding on chestnuts and acorns. In the fall, they would be rounded up and placed in pens. The homesteaders placed earmarks on their hogs and pigs so they could distinguish them from those of their neighbors much like the cattlemen branded their herds in the West.

Absalom did not own slaves. He was a small farmer and probably could not afford them. He and his four teenage sons probably provided adequate labor for a 50 acre farm. Also, Patrick County history indicates that some of the small farmers were opposed to slavery. Only a few of the farmers who owned large amounts of land at that time were documented in the U. S. census as owning slaves.
The majority of Absalom’s farm would have been planted in tobacco, corn, and some wheat. The family also would have maintained a nice garden to provide vegetables for the family.

Upon arriving in Patrick County, many settlers learned that the soil and terrain were ideal for growing apples. No doubt Absalom and his family must have planted apple trees early in the development of their homestead. When the trees matured and began bearing fruit several years later, they would have provided the family with a welcome addition to their diet. Apple cider must have been a family treat in the fall and winter months.

What did these settlers do for clothing? Early on, they made everything they wore. Much of the men’s clothing was made from animal skins. On the other hand, clothing for women and children was made of wool. Some of the settlers raised sheep. They carded and spun yarn in their homes and wove cloth from the wool. If the women of the household were not doing this, they were bartering what they had of value for the cloth they needed. Every young girl was taught to sew. Once they had the cloth, they used handmade patterns, cut the cloth, and sewed it into clothing.

DANGER FROM WILD PLANTS

In those days they were surrounded by woods and in close proximity to all the native plants that grew in the rich virgin soil. Some were
good plants, edible or useful for medicinal purposes. Yet many of them were very dangerous. A standing rule from the time toddlers were able to speak and listen would have been, “Don’t put any plants in your mouth”.

Among the plants that were fatal if ingested, some in small quantities and some in larger, were:

**Virginia Creeper** - severely toxic; possibly fatal.

**Rhododendron/Mountain Laurel** - severely toxic; extremely dangerous even in small quantities; leaves, blossoms and nectar.

**Jemson Weed** – toxic; potentially fatal in large quantities.

**Poison Hemlock** - severely toxic; extremely dangerous even in small quantities

**Horesnettle** - toxic; potentially fatal in large quantities.

**Wild Cherry Leaves and Twigs** – toxic; cyanide created when crushed.

**Nuts of the Buckeye Tree** (sometimes mistaken for Chestnuts); toxic.

**Baneberry** - toxic; potentially fatal in large doses.

**Red and White Mulberry** - unripe berries and milky sap: hallucinogenic.

**Wild Mushrooms** - many were toxic; some fatal and some hallucinogenic.

Other plants were dangerous if they touched the skin, even the tough skin of the hands and feet. They included Poison Oak and Poison Ivy,
Poisoned Sumac, Trumpet Creeper, White Parsnip, Wood-nettle and many more plants including the “Icky Eight” of the Appalachians.

Since the family, including the children, spent much of their time outdoors, it is amazing that our ancestors survived in the wild.

*Author’s Note: Most of these plants are still common today in the protected national forests along the Blue Ridge Parkway. Those interested in the description of each plant can find a host of information on them by simply “googling” their names on the Internet.*

**DANGER FROM WILD ANIMALS**

What would it have been like to walk through the thick forest surrounding Absalom’s house in the spring of 1845? The tall, massive Chestnut trees would have formed a canopy over the Oaks, the Hickory trees, and the Maples. The sun filtering through thin spots in the canopy would have illuminated the blooming Dogwood and Redbud trees in the spring. Occasionally, thickets of blooming Mountain Laurel would have made the going tough. Yet the pleasant aroma drifting through the air, coming from the blooming flora, would have been mesmerizing.
Rustling of leaves might have been heard directly ahead. Quietly watching, one might have seen a flock of turkeys scratching for worms in the moist ground cover.

A ledge of massive rocks might have been seen in the distance. Approaching, a familiar rattling sound could have been heard. There, basking in the morning sun, an Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake may have been coiled, irritated by the approaching sound.

An unmistakable growling sound could have shaken the forest. There, standing on top of the outcrop of rocks might have been the carnivore that was second only to man on the food chain in Patrick County: a Mountain Lion.

On the return trip, one might have come across a large black bear recently having emerged from winter hibernation and fearlessly ready to protect her two young cubs from the threat of anyone coming close.

Dangerous you say? The muzzleloader of 1845 would have allowed one immediate shot. Reloading was time-consuming and would not have provided enough time to avoid an attack.

* * * *

A few wealthy people moved into Patrick County in the mid-1800’s. One such person was George Hairston II. He was a great uncle of the
Confederate General J.E.B. Stuart and was a graduate of Princeton University. In 1836, he built a plantation house on the south bank of the Smith River several miles downstream from Absalom’s place which he christened “Hordsville”. He started an iron mining operation on Goblintown Creek, later to become known as Union Furnace Iron Works. Iron was both mined and smelted at a place on the Smith River which is now covered by the backwaters of Philpott Lake. Union Furnace Iron Works continued to produce iron well beyond the Civil War. For many years, George Hairston II served in the Virginia State Senate.

Author’s Note: The Union Furnace Iron Works was located in an area now known as Fairystone State Park. Even today, staurolite crystals, known as “fairystones” are found there. Most of the staurolite had crystallized in the form of crosses. There is a legend that fairies once lived in the area. When they heard that Christ was crucified, their tears crystallized into crosses. The legend says that good luck comes to those who carry these crosses. Down through the years, many important people have carried them as good luck charms including several presidents. A few residents in the area today polish the fairystones and ship them to gift stores throughout the country and overseas. These stones do not seem to exist anywhere else.
RELIGION

Church played a major role in the lives of Patrick County settlers in the nineteenth century. They worked hard six days a week and, according to the Scriptures, rested on the seventh day; well, almost rested. Most attended church, a major undertaking. Several hours travel by wagon was often required to reach the church. Then, services could last for two hours or more. Another hour or two could easily have passed socializing. And finally, they endured the trip back home. Obviously, church attendance in those days was an all day affair.

Although there is no written documentation, Absalom and his family were likely Primitive Baptists since it dominated the religious landscape in Patrick County at the time. Absalom’s father, John, was known to be active in Primitive Baptist Church. Absalom and his family probably attended Charity Primitive Baptist Church located about seven miles south of his farm. Charity Primitive Baptist Church, organize in 1778, is the oldest church in Patrick County.

What were the beliefs and practices of Primitive Baptists? Baptist Churches were first established in Virginia in the 18th century. As is the case in most denominations, dissension among members existed from the beginning. The traditional Baptists were very conservative in their beliefs. They were against having “Sunday School” and were not interested in supporting foreign missions. They didn’t feel that their ministers needed training nor needed to be paid. Other members disa-
greed. The unhappy members finally broke away and formed a new denomination known as Missionary Baptists. The “old” church members and their Elders came to be known as Primitive Baptists. In the 19th century Primitive Baptist membership exceeded all other denominations combined in Patrick County.

Primitive Baptist worship was based literally on the King James Holy Bible. They did not believe in missions and were not evangelical. Consequently, they did not solicit members, but instead, preach the Scriptures to those who were drawn to the services. Membership in the church resulted from attendees being moved by the Holy Spirit and publicly expressing their love for and allegiance to Jesus Christ.

Primitive Baptists were opposed to the use of musical instruments in the services and any other modern “devices” inside the church building. The congregation was segregated; men sat on one side and women on the other.

There were no planned sermons. Several ministers, known as “Elders”, would share in the service, leading a song or speaking from the Scriptures as led by the Holy Spirit.

Like all Christian churches, the Primitive Baptists held communion, but it was old-fashioned and very simple. Elders would break small pieces off a common loaf and offered it to each member. The blood of Christ, wine, was served from a common cup passed to each member.
Those attending the service had to be members of the church to take communion.

Primitive Baptists originally believed in baptism by immersion only in rivers and creeks. They would not accept people by transfer from other denominations even if they had been baptized by immersion.

Absalom’s younger brother, Samuel, was destined in later years to become a leader in the Primitive Baptist Church in Patrick County. In 1855 he was ordained as an Elder at State Line Primitive Baptist Church and was thereafter referred to as Elder Samuel Arrington. State Line Primitive Baptist Church is just across the North Carolina line and not far from Samuel’s home on Dobin’s Mountain in southwestern Patrick County. Elder Samuel went on to be a leader in establishing other Primitive Baptist Churches in Patrick County.
By 1848, seventeen years after purchasing his virgin land, Absalom’s farm was probably fully developed. All the fields would have been cleared and all the construction, including the house, the barns, and fences would have been completed. Life would have settled down to a routine, much easier than the earlier years.

At this stage in their life, Absalom and Jane should have been relatively comfortable. They were 50 and 47 years old. One can imagine how they would want to live out their life here in the serenity of their familiar surroundings, eventually leaving their farm to their children when they passed.

But this was not the case. Absalom was planning to turn their lives upside down. He was planning to pull up stakes and move his family and all of his belongings 500 miles south to an unknown place in western Georgia and start over again.

On December 12, 1848, Absalom placed his “X” on a deed, recorded in the Patrick County Courthouse, and sold his property to John Newberry for one hundred and fifty dollars.
Why would Absalom and his family make the decision to do such a radical thing? There are no facts or even clues to suggest why. One can speculate by asking questions:

1. Had his farm become depleted and nonproductive due to the growing of tobacco?
2. Did a disease epidemic scare them away?
3. Were they tired of the tough mountain winters in Patrick County and were lured by the milder climate in Georgia?
4. Was the price of land in Georgia so cheap that they could not resist relocating?
5. Had Absalom’s family developed a major conflict with others in Patrick County?
6. Was there some secret unknown reason that drove them away from Patrick County or attracted them to Georgia?

We will probably never know.

* * * *

Absalom would have had to sell his property before he could leave the area. He would not have been able to complete such a transaction from a distance of 500 miles.

Absalom sold his land in December 1848, but it would have been too difficult to travel that winter. So in the late spring of 1849, he and
members of the James family must have loaded their belongings in wagons and headed south toward Georgia.

We know that Absalom arrived at his destination in Heard County, Georgia because he is documented the following year in the 1850 United States Census as living there.

THE TRIP SOUTH

The Arrington family and the James family faced a long and arduous trip south. Ahead was five-hundred miles of poor roads and even trails they had to conquer. Undoubtedly, they took the eastern route south rather than the western which would have required crossing the Appalachian Mountains.

The eastern route would have taken them southward out of Patrick County on what is now U. S. Highway 220 and into North Carolina to Greensboro. In Greensboro, Highway 220 intersected a major north-south road, now US Highway 29. Following the path of Highway 29 to Atlanta, they would have turned westward and traveled to Heard County, located on the border of Alabama.

* * *

The Arrington and James families probably traveled in covered wagons much like the pioneers who went out West. The wagons were
made of wood and had a tongue that was connected to the front wheels so the wagon could turn. The tongue of course, was lashed to the horses.

Wagons were fitted with wooden hoops, called bows that were bent in an arch from one side of the wagon to the other. A canvas was pulled across the hoops to keep out the rain, wind, or the sun. Pioneers waterproofed the canvas by rubbing oil on it. Inside the wagon, hooks were hung from the wooden hoops. These hooks could be used to hang guns, clothes, milk cans, tools, and anything else needed. Usually, a bucket of grease was hung under the rear axle. The wheels required lubrication periodically to keep them turning smoothly.

The wagons would have carried most of the supplies, including water and food, to survive the journey. A small amount of room inside the wagon would have been set aside for two or three people. The remaining space would have been occupied by personal effects being transported to their new home.

Riding inside a wagon would have been a shaky, noisy proposition. The wagons bounced up and down along the rough roads and trails. Pots and pans, hanging from above, would have rattled and clanged together constantly.

Except for the toddlers and babies, Absalom and his family would have walked beside or behind the wagons much of the time. The wag-
ons would have been heavily ladened, and they walked to reduce the weight and burden on the horses.

Their milk cow and sometimes a saddle horse would have been lashed to the back of a wagon. Much of the time, these saddle horses would have been ridden near the wagons by members of the family providing periodic relief from walking.

Travelers would have hunted on the journey to supplement their supply of food. More than likely, they received assistance from families that lived along the routes they traveled. Pioneers had a tradition of helping each other that way.

On many days, the Arrington and James families would have traveled only 10 to 15 miles. Some days when the weather was bad and the road was muddy, they could have traveled as little as one mile. If they averaged 10 miles per day on their trip, it would have taken them fifty days, approximately two months to complete their journey. Traveling by automobile today, such a journey can be completed in just 12 hours.

What was life like on the journey? The travelers would have had to get up in the dark each morning to prepare for that day's travel. They would have had to make a fire, make breakfast, feed their livestock, reload the wagons and hitch the horses before getting underway. At the end of each day's journey, women would have had to fix supper.
and the men would have settled the livestock down for the night. After supper, they would have sat around the fire, sang songs and told stories. Occasionally they would have slept inside the wagons but they also would have slept under the wagons, in tents, and sometimes under the stars.

During the trip, the children were not just playing. They had chores. These included milking the cow, fetching water, helping mama cook, washing dishes, shaking out the quilts and blankets, and fetching wood for the fire.
Prior to the 1820’s, the land in the western part of Georgia which is now Heard County was occupied by the Creek Indian Nation, one of the largest tribes in America. The Creeks were mostly peaceful and were very organized in their municipal and governmental matters.

The United States government and the state of Georgia wanted the land occupied by the Creeks as well as the Cherokees further north, so they made treaties with the Creeks regarding their land. They wanted to open up these lands making them available for settlement by the white pioneers.

In the Treaty of New York of 1790, United States Government guaranteed the Creek Nation a large territory covering most of Georgia and Alabama. The Government betrayed the Creeks by failing to enforce this treaty.

In 1802, in a compact with the federal government, the State of Georgia sold all of the Creek (Muskogee) land in Georgia, land they did not really own, to the United States Government for $1,230,000. In return, the federal government promised to “extinguish” all the Indians as soon as possible.
The bounty lines drawn by the Treaty of New York were betrayed twice before 1812. Essentially, the treaty was not worth the paper it was written on.

During the War of 1812 between the British and America, the Creek Nation split into two groups. The upper Creeks sided with the British and the lower Creeks, who were more friendly, sided with the United States, resulting in the Creek Civil War of 1813-1814. The lower Creeks lost their land to the upper Creeks during their civil war.

Remembering that the surviving Creek Nation where those that had sided with the British and against America, leaders in both the United States Government and the State of Georgia wanted to drive them westward to Indian territory in Oklahoma.

President Andrew Jackson authorized the Indian Removal Act of 1830 by signing it. The United States Government used the Treaty of Echota in 1835 to justify this removal. This treaty authorized the forced removal of all the Creeks and 17,000 Cherokee Indians from their southeastern homeland.

Under orders from President Jackson, the U.S. Army, assisted by the Georgia Militia, begin enforcement of the Removal Act. Creeks and Cherokees were forcefully rounded up in the summer of 1838, marched on foot and hauled in wagons to the Tennessee River, transported up the Tennessee River on barges through the Ohio and Mis-
sissippi rivers and marched to Oklahoma Territory. Many were held in internment camps awaiting their fate. It is estimated that more than 4000 died from hunger, exposure, and disease on this journey. This event has come to be known as “The Trail of Tears”.

By 1830, many of the white settlers had befriended their Creek neighbors. Intermarriage between the two had also begun to occur. When the white settlers heard that the army troops and the militia were coming into their area, they hid their Indian friends or at least informed them that the soldiers were coming and the Creeks disappeared into the forest until the military had left. Also, Creeks who had married white settlers were exempt from expulsion. Consequently, some Indian families remained in Heard County.

THE GEORGIA LAND LOTTERIES

Starting in 1805 and ending in 1835, the state of Georgia conducted land lotteries. Qualifying citizens could register for a chance to win plots of land that had recently been occupied by the Creek Indians and the Cherokee Nation. Holders of the winning tickets had to pay a fee which depended on the size and location of the property won.

Heard County had been occupied by the Creek Indians for centuries. They lost some of their land in the 1821 lottery, but the 1827 lottery signaled the end of the Creeks in Georgia.
The land lotteries set off major land speculation and some criminal activity in the State. Most of the plots of land varied from about 200 acres up to 490 acres. Winners could keep the land, sell it in whole, or divide it into smaller parcels selling each.

No doubt the land lotteries created great interest on the part of Georgia citizens. “News of the day” traveled slowly but also very far. Pioneers in nearby states, who were looking to purchase good land at a good price, surely heard about all the land suddenly available in Georgia.

Absalom Arrington moved south to Georgia more than a decade after the last Georgia lottery. Since he was not a Georgia citizen, he could not have participated in the lottery. On the other hand, numerous winners of the lottery had no intention of occupying their land, but instead, sold it to others. This created a land sales boom that lasted for several decades.

One of the mysteries concerning Absalom Arrington is whether or not he would have bought land in Georgia “sight unseen”. Would he have sold his comfortable farm in Virginia, and risking everything he owned, moved to a place he had never seen? Although very speculative, Absalom may have made an earlier trip on horseback to Georgia to check out the area and may even have made arrangements, in advance of moving, to purchase land there. At the very least, perhaps he had a friend or relative who was highly trusted and who had checked
things out in Georgia beforehand. There is rumor that members of the James family visited Georgia at an earlier time. We have no facts, but responsible people in 1849 as well as today would not take such a major risk and would not gamble everything away in “one throw” of the dice.
Unfortunately, the Heard County Courthouse burned to the ground in 1893 and most of the County records were lost. Piecing together other clues, long-term heard County researchers associated with the Arrington family such as Linda Eller in Lanett, Alabama, and Mary Florence Word, now deceased, who lived in Carrollton Georgia have provided many details about the Arrington ancestors in Heard County.

Mary Florence Word published a book many years ago entitled, Absalom Arrington, Some of His Descendants. It is with great sorrow that this author was unable to obtain a copy of her book and thus, utilize any of her wonderful information other than a letter received from her in the 1960's.

In a letter dated April 20, 1975, Linda Eller informed this author that she was compiling information for her book entitled, the Genealogical History of Heard County, Georgia. Whether or not the book was ever published is unknown.

Since the primary purpose of this book is to enlighten the readers about the life of Absalom and Jane Arrington in the mountains of Virginia, no effort is made herein to describe in detail their lives in Heard County Georgia.
In 1973, this author, who was 41 at the time, drove to Athens, Georgia and picked up a distant male relative, also interested in his heritage, who was several years younger. The two of them drove the Heard County, looking for the old Arrington home place near the town of Franklin where Absalom and his family had settled.

With unbelievable luck, they found the home of Daniel Arrington’s 86-year-old granddaughter (Daniel was Absalom’s son). She lived in a neat two-story white farmhouse sitting on a hill just off the paved road.

Preparing to write this book, the author was unable to find his notes taken on the trip, a devastating loss. However, the priceless interview with Daniel’s granddaughter and vivid images experienced near her home are forever burned into the author’s memory. Having lost his notes, the author does not remember the granddaughter’s name. For purposes of discussion, let’s call her Susan.

THE AUTHOR’S INTERVIEW

I asked Susan if she remembered her grandfather. She answered “no” and said she barely remembered him as a small child.

I asked her if she could tell us anything about her grandfather, Daniel. She answered “yes”. She informed us that her mother, Mary Ann (Arrington) Brown, Daniel’s only female child, had told her many stories
about her father, Daniel. For example, Mary Ann had told her that shortly after she was born, her father joined the Confederate Army and was gone almost 3 years. Mary Ann further told her that on the day Daniel returned from the war dirty in his tattered clothes and long beard, she was afraid of him and did not want him to pick her up.

Susan did not stop there. She continued to reveal stories that Daniel had told her mother, Mary Ann. Daniel was eighteen or nineteen years old when he left Virginia with his father and mother, Absalom and Jane Arrington. Contrary to what one might assume, the Arrington and James families didn’t just stay forever in Heard County upon arriving. As soon as the families were settled, some of the men made the five hundred mile trip back to Virginia to fetch the remainder of their personal effects. When they arrived back in Virginia, they were greeted by their hunting dogs. One hundred or so miles into North Carolina on the original trip down, the hunting dogs had disappeared. The dogs had traced their path back to Virginia to their home in Patrick County and awaited their master’s return.

The author’s conversation continued with Susan:

I asked Susan if anyone knew where Absalom had settled and built a home upon arriving from Virginia. She surprised us by replying in a slow but clear voice colored by a Heard County southern dialect, "Yeah. I know whur hit is. Look out the winda yonder. Hit’s up in
them woods beyond the pasture and crick. You can find the remains of the ole’ farmhouse if you want to hike in them woods.”

“How far is it”, I asked

“Bout a quarter-mile” she replied. “Just go down tha hill through the pasture, crossed the crick, climb the fence and walk into the woods. You will see the ole’ roadbed windin’ hits way up to hill. Hit’s at the top of the hill”

It was a warm day in February. The sun was shining brightly. My buddy and I took her advice. Although we were dressed in suits, we walked through the sloping pasture down to the creek. We rolled our pants above my knees, took off our shoes and socks and waded across the creek. We then climbed the fence and put our shoes and socks back on. Upon entering the forest, we saw the old roadbed that Susan had described. Turning to the left, we walked up the old winding roadbed. At the top of the hill, maybe 100 yards or so from the creek where we had started, and basking in the sunlight under a canopy of tall trees, was the remains of an old pioneer farmhouse. The logs had long since rotted and disappeared. But the foundation rocks were lying there showing us what the house must have been like. The main part of the house was small, perhaps two rooms. Ten feet or so from the main part of the house was the rock foundation of a smaller structure. It had been the kitchen. Beside the kitchen was a large pile of rocks, the remains of a large fireplace and chimney for cooking.
I was overwhelmed with emotion as I stood silently and viewed the scene, almost in tears. At that moment, I was looking back in time over one hundred and fifty years! I stooped down beside the pile, picked up a dark gray flat rock a little small than a dinner plate, and placed it in my bag. It has since been one of my most prized possessions and rests in a glass case prominently displayed in my home.

We took photographs of the remains of the old home place before leaving. Then we made our way back down the old roadbed, across the fence and creek, and up through the pasture back to Susan’s house.

After telling Susan goodbye and departing, we drove to the Old New Hope Cemetery where Daniel and other Arringtons are buried. He had died in 1891. Daniel was buried beside his son, J. D. Arrington, in an unmarked grave.

On October 3, Daniel married Permella Jane Vowell. Her family had come from North Carolina where she was born in 1828. She died in 1891, the same year as her husband, Daniel, and is buried in Old New Hope Cemetery.

Daniel likely followed the tradition of previous generations of his family and farmed for a living. Yet he had another occupation. Stories handed down to his descendents suggest that he was also a blacksmith. The 1860 U. S. Census of Heard County listed Daniel’s occu-
pation as a blacksmith. He may even have served as a blacksmith in the Confederate Army.

The Heard County Tax Digest of 1871 lists Daniel Arrington as being a land owner. He had 141 1/2 acres valued at $700. His property was located in the 12th District of Heard County and was designated as Lot# 80. This land is now called the Joe Arrington place. It is located between Texas and New Hope Church in Heard County, Georgia.

Daniel and Permella Jane had four children:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Birth Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Anderson Arrington</td>
<td>November 17, 1855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Ann Arrington</td>
<td>March 8, 1857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson Davis Arrington</td>
<td>August 13, 1860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Riley Arrington</td>
<td>December 29, 1862</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The author's great grandfather was William Riley Arrington, one of Daniel's children. Little is known about him except that he farmed for a living.

William Riley married Mary Francis Paschal and they had four Children: Jeff, John, Eva and Benjamin Franklin Arrington, the grandfather of the author.

The author never saw his great grandfather, William Riley Arrington but has a personal memento handed down to him: William Riley's walking cane. The cane is about thirty inches long with a carved, flat-
tened ball about two inches in diameter on the top. The cane tapers to about \( \frac{3}{4} \) inches in diameter at the bottom. Carved in three dimensional fashion, a snake is coiled around the cane almost from top to bottom. A six inch long lizard rests beside the snake. Scales are carefully carved on both reptiles. Carved in \( \frac{3}{4} \) inch letters down the cane is "William R. Arrington. The "R" is carved backwards in mirror fashion."
Perhaps more than anything else, the growth of cotton fueled the expansion of white settlers into West Georgia. After the cotton gin was invented in 1793, cotton was in great demand and became a highly profitable crop.

The economy was firmly entrenched in agriculture in the 19th century Southeast. Yet the area was not exempt from the development of a new cotton yarn and cloth industry as the years passed.

Fuller E. Callaway was born in Lagrange Georgia in July 1870. At the age of 18 he established a chain of five and ten cent stores using borrowed money. Later he opened the Callaway Department Store which became the leading department store in Lagrange.

In 1895, at age 25, Callaway started the first modern textile mill in Lagrange: Dixie Mills. Textile manufacturing had become “all the rage” in the New South. In order to raise capital, Callaway auctioned off directorships to anybody that would buy $5000 worth stock.

Local people, who had been working in the fields, were hired as employees. They were people of principle although some were poor. Callaway made sure that the little mill was managed in humane fashion.
A period of explosive “mill fever” swept to the south after 1880 and eventually led to the domination of the national textile industry by the Southern States during the 20th century. During this time, number of textile mills in the South grew from 161 in 1882 to 731 in 1910. In the beginning, the Southern States were home to only 21% of the nation’s textile mills. As of 1910, the South claimed 60% of all U. S. mills.

LaGrange, Georgia, located in Troup County, was just a few miles south of Heard County.

The development of the cotton textile industry in LaGrange was typical of this industry’s growth throughout the South particularly from 1890 through 1920. Additional mills such as Dunson Mills cropped up in LaGrange.

Each mill created its own little world, self-contained communities developed by the textile mill owners to provide housing for a large workforce. Houses were built surrounding each mill and became known as “mill villages”. It has been said that when the 20th century arrived, 92% of Southern textile families lived in the mill villages.

Their daily lives of mill workers were totally invested in their village environment. It was not just a place where they worked and earned a living, but also where men and women fell in love, got married, raised the children, and finally retired. The mill village neighborhoods of LaGrange provide many examples of mill housing and its evolution.
In no other American industry throughout the country was this integrated “work, shop, and live” concept so apparent.

These houses were rented to employees, the nicest to members of supervision. As late as 1945, many of the village neighborhoods which were visited by the author still looked nice.

In the early days, the employees receive their pay in a cash envelope. Payroll checks did not exist. In addition to the village houses, there were sometimes stores owned by the mill. Employees could purchase goods on credit, and along with the rent, it was subtracted from their pay before payday.

* * * *

Benjamin Franklin Arrington, son of William Riley, was the grandfather of the author. Benjamin had spent most of his life working in the cotton mills. By 1945, he had risen to a supervisory level at Dunson Mills and lived in a nice mill village house there. He initially married Effie Mitchell but she died when his oldest son, George William (Bill), was only three months old. He later remarried and his new wife was known by the children and grandchildren as “Mother Claude”.

The author with his parents made the trip from Virginia to Lagrange many times in the 1940’s to visit his grandfather, Ben. He remembers his grandfather, “Ben” as a short but stately, well-dressed, gray haired
gentleman, pleasant but always serious and never smiling. The author remembers his step-grandmother, Mother Claude, as a serious woman who also never smiled. She liked to sit on the front porch and with a small homemade brush, dip snuff and use the brush to organize the snuff-dipping process.

When the author and his family made their last trip to LaGrange, Grandfather Ben had retired and built a small home on the outskirts of town. After retiring, Ben spent most of his time working in and enjoying his large vegetable garden.

Ben’s only sister, the only daughter of William Riley and the Great Aunt of the author, Eva, had a warm personality and was very kind to the author when he was a small child. She had married into the Golden family who owned a farm outside of Lagrange. Eva had a son only three or four years older than the author who later became a dentist.

The author dearly loved to visit the Golden family farm when he went to Lagrange. It was here that he had his first opportunity to “call in” the cows, feed the chickens, and ride the ponies.
CHAPTER 9

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

For several generations, the Arrington families had worked hard, farmed and maintain their status as working middle class Americans. Benjamin Franklin Arrington had made the transition to manufacturing rising to supervisory status and thus continuing this working middle class tradition.

Benjamin’s oldest son, George William better known as “Bill”, the father of the author, was born in 1905. He never knew his real mother. She died when he was three months old. Benjamin took Bill out of the six grade at 12 years old, and put him to work picking up quills off the spinning room floor of a cotton mill. Bill’s pay envelope went to his father. He never saw money for his labor as a child. Bill’s lack of formal education would hang over him like a threatening shadow throughout his life.

Bill married Ruby Lee Hatfield in the late 1920’s. Shortly after their marriage, the Stock Market crashed in 1929 and thus began the Great Depression, the worst economic period in the history of America. This horrible period was to last for more than 10 years well into World War II. By 1932, factory workers throughout the United States, including the author’s father and mother, were suffering. There was very little work, only the most basic food to eat, and housing became unaffordable. In just three or four short years this Arrington
family, like so many others throughout the country, had dropped from the working middle class into the ranks of the poor.

In his own words, the author continues the story in the first person:

As a small child, I did not realize I was poor. I had no frame of reference and everything seemed normal to me.

My father and mother were cotton mill workers. Contracts for cloth were few and far between during the Depression. A mill would receive a contract for so many yards of cloth. When the contract was filled, the mill often shut down until another contract was signed. Sometimes the shutdowns, meaning no work, would last for weeks.

Although my father only had a sixth grade education, he was a "go-getter". He would hit the rails with hobos riding in empty railcars to another cotton mill town in search of job for him and my mother, one that would hopefully last several months. If the mill eventually ran out of work, he would find another place to work and live.

Consequently we would move from one mill village to the next in the states of Georgia, Alabama and South Carolina. I changed schools in the first grade four times. The mills were usually surrounded by company owned "mill" houses. My dad always seemed to be able to secure a mill village house for us.
Although more than half a century ago, I still have vivid memories of those houses. Most of them had fallen into ill repair. There was running water: a cold water faucet on the back porch. Always outhouses: no indoor plumbing. A village in Pelzer South Carolina even had "quadraplex" outhouses: four outdoor toilets under one roof (no sound insulation). Trucks came around periodically and pumped the sewage out. When the trucks came, everyone sniffed mothballs to cover the stench (it is amazing that anyone is still alive).

My mother covered all the floors with linoleum purchased at the Woolworth's. These rugs were always smaller than the rooms, leaving the planked floors exposed around them. The floors were always painted an ugly brown. And you could see the ground underneath the house through the wide cracks in the floor. These mill houses, with much of the white paint peeling off, were supported by thin brick pillars, sometimes crumbling, anywhere from 2 feet to 4 feet off the ground and were open underneath.

Each room usually had one twisted electric wire hanging from the ceiling in the center of the room with a lone light bulb and a string pull switch at the end. Only the living room was heated, usually with an oil or coal stove in the center of the room. We slept in cold bedrooms with homemade quilts piled on top of us.
My mother had a kerosene kitchen stove to cook on. I remember watching her light the wicks with a wooden match as I watched the flame slowly making its way around the circle of the wick.

Mother would sometimes make a small table for the bedroom or bathroom out of an orange crate. She would use furniture thumb tacks to attach oil cloth (purchased at the dime store) on the top and around the outside of the orange crate. Our family probably moved so often that much of our rough furniture was left behind each time we moved.

When I was little, I liked our food: biscuits, sweet milk gravy and fatback for breakfast; collards, potato stew, perhaps some tripe and a hoecake for supper. A meal of fried chicken, potatoes and “cush” was an occasional treat on Sundays. And yes, we did have hot dogs then. It would be amiss to fail to mention that fast food first came on the scene during this era: cans of potted meat, Vienna sausage, sardines, and canned pork and beans!

Securing and preparing the chicken was a major undertaking in those days. As a small child, I would go with my mother to the grocery store to get a live chicken. The white and gray speckled chickens were cramped up in their wooden cages waiting for the slaughter. The store clerk would get a paper bag and tear a hole in the corner of the bottom of the bag. He would then ask my mom to pick out a chicken, and she would point to one. He would crack the door of the cage, reach in and

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grab the legs of one of the chickens, pull it out of the cage, hang it upside down, slide the bag over the chicken first bringing the legs up through the hole in the bag, finally tying the legs. Next came my job: carrying the upside down live chicken home, dangling from my hand by its legs.

My mother had no qualms in ringing the chicken’s neck. Of course I watched in amazement as the chicken flipped and flopped and flapped its wings for another several minutes. She would then chop off the chicken’s head, gut it, scald it in hot water, pick the feathers and “wah la” a chicken was then ready for flour, seasoning and the skillet . . . just like going to the super market today!

I wore bib overalls all summer with no shirt and no shoes. I usually had only one pair of shoes, high tops, for that rare need in the summertime and for winter wear.

My toys were my imagination. String was important. It was almost everything when it came to making toys. I could make a horse by tying string around the end of a stick. I could make a bow and some arrows with several sticks and some string. And, of course, I could make a kite with some old news paper, glue made out of flour, some sticks and some string. What kid could ask for more?

My mother usually worked full-time as a weaver in the cotton mills. My dad started off as a loom fixer and after several years became a
“second hand”, basically what would be considered a floor supervisor today.

With little formal education, my father continued to improve his work situation through networking. He would do a good job for one of his bosses, and then either he or his boss would move on. This happened over and over again during the Depression until he was connected to a network of people working in cotton mills throughout Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina.
In 1943, during World War II, my father accepted a job as a foreman with Dan River Mills in Danville Virginia, for the first time breaking out of the deep South. Within a period of several years, he received multiple promotions ultimately becoming the Superintendent of Weaving for the Riverside Division of Dan River Mills. For the first time he found himself personally competing with college graduates at the management level.

His lack of formal education negatively affected his self-confidence causing him to eventually leave Dan River Mills and secure a management job in a Knoxville Tennessee cotton mill which lasted less than three years. Management responsibilities were taking an enormous emotional toll on him, so he decided to remove himself from management arena and find a quiet job as a loom fixer somewhere. He told me in later years that he wanted to settle down and allow me to finish my schooling in one place.

He found a job for himself and mom outside the textile belt in a small cotton mill located in Lynchburg, Virginia, a city of 50,000 people. Lynchburg was a manufacturing town, but not a cotton mill town. Families associated with the cotton mill there normally lived on “cotton hill” and were referred to as “cotton heads”.

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I started my Lynchburg schooling in the eighth grade. It was here that I first became aware that we have a social class system in the United States. Keeping in mind the fact that my father had returned to the laboring class as a cotton mill mechanic and my mother as a factory worker, our household budget was small requiring us to live in poor neighborhoods. For the first time, many of the students in my classes were from the upper-middle-class and the wealthy. In order to pay for my lunches at the Robert E. Lee junior High School, I had to endure the embarrassment of having my fellow students observe me washing dishes while they casually ate lunch and socialized. I didn’t have money to pay for my lunch. Only destitute students worked in the lunch room.

Anxious to improve my station in life, I set a steady course upward and vigorously followed it. I found better and better part-time jobs as I progressed through high school. I studied hard, earned excellent grades, stayed on the honor roll, pursued an academic curriculum and was 10th academically in my graduating class of 256 students. I was on the Student Counsel, President of the Science Club, President of the Honor League, held the lead in the senior play and worked as the school photographer.

Upon graduation, I was honored as the top all-around student in my high school through the Fourfold Rating of the National Honor Society, and received three full-time college scholarships. I chose a schol-
arship to the Naval Academy at Annapolis because it was a great school, and just as importantly, everything was free.

I became socially and culturally cleaned up and “polished around the edges” while attending the US Naval Academy in Annapolis Maryland. I interacted with students from every state in the Union, traveled abroad, interacted with dignitaries at foreign embassies, learn to speak “Yankee” English while retaining my southern dialect when needed. Plebes at the Naval Academy received training in social behavior including proper dining behavior, proper greeting including those of the opposite sex, dancing, and other social niceties.

I secretly married my high school sweetheart, Shirley Currier, at the end of my junior year at the Academy. Unfortunately, our marriage was discovered and I was required to resign with an honorable discharge from the U.S. Navy. As a sidebar, my sweetheart and I have now been happily married for 56 years.

Upon resigning, I was 12th in my class of 850 midshipmen. For this reason, I was offered a full scholarship to Northwestern University by the Western Electric Company. Accepting the scholarship would have required that Shirley and I relocate to Chicago Illinois. I was sure that we would not be happy in Chicago, so I returned to Lynchburg in the spring of 1958.
Shirley finished college and found a job teaching in Lynchburg in the fall of 1958 while I completed the last year of my education at Lynchburg College with a degree in Physics. Most of my Naval Academy credits in engineering were accepted into the Physics curriculum by Lynchburg College. From a practical standpoint, I ended up with a hybrid degree in Engineering Physics.

After college, I worked for Fortune 500 companies as an engineer and Shirley and I eventually started our own company manufacturing heavy equipment for the nuclear, mining, and chemical industries. CENFAB ultimately employed 60 craft and management personnel and served industries in France, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Israel, England, Bolivia and the United States.

In 1979 the policies of President Jimmy Carter, a Naval Academy classmate, drove the prime interest rate to 21%, thus shutting down all available sources of work for CENFAB. After operating at a loss for a year, the decision was made to close the company. Shirley and I lost our entire estate, including our beautiful home, with the exception of about $30,000.

With this small nest egg, we moved south to our old vacation paradise, Myrtle Beach South Carolina. Shirley quickly obtained a job teaching and I began the process of developing a new career.
I acquired real estate license but the real estate market was depressed at that time. I then entered the restaurant business at the beach as an Assistant Manager quickly gravitating to the position of General Manager in a nice upscale restaurant in Surfside Beach. This, along with good networking and a stroke of luck, led to me to the position of General Manager over one of the largest oceanfront resorts in Myrtle Beach. All of this occurred over a short period of four or five years.

While managing the oceanfront resort, I was approached by the local community college requesting that I teach courses in hotel management at night. So I started teaching. My teaching “gigs” grew from one class per semester to two, then three and so on. My student evaluations were excellent and the college offered me a full-time teaching position in the Hotel Restaurant Management Program contingent upon completing a Masters Degree in Business Management. I accepted the teaching position and completed my graduate degree in two years while I was teaching. One year later my dean received an offer to direct a program at a four-year university and he accepted. The community college leadership was caught off guard and as a result, offered me the position as Dean. I served as Dean of the Hotel/Restaurant Management Program for a period of approximately 10 years.

Three years prior to my retirement, two things happened:
Coastal Carolina University, located near Myrtle Beach, asked me to assist in the startup of a new tourism major. They asked me to start teaching courses immediately (with the permission of my community college president) so they could get their new program off the ground as soon as possible. So while still teaching at the community college, I also began teaching next door in the Wall School of Business at Coastal Carolina University.

Shortly thereafter at the community college, I was promoted to Assistant Vice President of Academic Affairs with six college programs under my domain. I was no longer required to teach in the classroom, but I continued to teach at Coastal Carolina University. One year later, in the year 2000, the death of my father-in-law required that my wife and I retire and move back to Lynchburg Virginia to care for her mother.

Upon returning to Lynchburg, we built our home on 43 gated acres in a remote area outside of Lynchburg which we named Stonegate. We designed our new home around our Myrtle Beach lifestyle with a spacious interior, lots of ceramic tile, light colors, a large in-ground swimming pool with surrounding deck and gazebo, and a gorgeous view overlooking a four acre lake. It was a wonderful place to live except for the long distances to hospitals, stores, restaurants, etc.

By 2010, our declining health required that Shirley and I move into the city (she has Parkinson’s disease and I have numerous problems in
my spine and knees). So we purchased a comfortable home in the Wyndhurst Village of Lynchburg (near everything) designed and built in 2006 for disabled people.

It is almost unbelievable that our current home, less than a mile from Poplar Forest, Thomas Jefferson’s summer home, is built on what was part of the original 4800 acres Jefferson inherited from his father-in-law. More importantly our home is only 32 miles from the site of our 1750-1800 Arrington ancestors in Amherst County. This would include Absalom, who, contrary to popular belief, was born in Amherst County instead of Franklin County, Virginia.

I had completed the long journey from Georgia back to Virginia where it had all begun more than 200 years earlier by pure coincidence. What a small world!
CHAPTER 11
BEFORE AMERICA

The author of this book first started research on the Arrington family in 1968. At that time there was no Internet, no Google, no cell phones and no free long distance telephone service. Research was difficult, stressful, and slow going. Detective work primarily consisted of visits to courthouses and libraries supplemented by US mail and limited long-distance phone calls.

The author proceeded with research until all options were essentially exhausted. In 1969, he published his limited findings in a booklet entitled *West Georgia Arrington's* by John M. Arrington. A copy of this booklet was sent to the Georgia Archives in Atlanta. Additional copies were sent to various libraries in Georgia and Virginia. Availability of the limited information in this booklet stirred up considerable interest on the part of others who wanted to know about their Arrington heritage, thus starting a trend of Arrington family research by numerous other people. At least two of these folks have published valuable books on the subject since then.

New communications technology today, including the Internet, has made it much easier to investigate and share information about one's ancestors. Consequently, in the last several years much information has been added to our knowledge base about our Arrington ancestors.
Perhaps the most difficult “nut to crack” is to confirm where we came from before America. Utilizing the sparse information available, Mary Koontz Arrington best describes where we came from prior the 1650s in her book *Least We Forget*, published in 1974 as follows:

The surname Arrington is English in origin. During medieval history surnames began to develop as a means of more accurately identifying persons and families. They were derived from parent’s given names, occupations, individual talents, landmarks, physical characteristics of the country where they live, personality traits, location of residence, etc.

Sources this writer has examined list Arrington as a person who came from a place called Arrington which is a village in Cambridgeshire, England. Family researchers of the Arrington name say there is an old Arrington manor house still in existence near London, England.

Unless someone discovers a previously unknown passenger ship’s manifest, listing by name, Arringtons traveling from Europe to the New World in the 1600s; i.e., there will never be a *definitive* connection to the old world in the Arrington family tree.

One has to be reminded that reading and writing in America among common men only became universal in the late 19th and early 20th centuries with the advent of schools. Prior to that time most commu-
nication among the everyday folks was “spoken English”. Even as we conduct research today on our American ancestors in the 18th and 19th centuries, we frequently discover different spellings and even “X’s” to represent the Arrington name.

There is another issue that makes it extremely difficult for one to track one’s English heritage. Most people are not aware that the English language changed radically during the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries, including spelling, pronunciation, construction and other elements of the language. For anyone seriously interested in the history and development of the English language, the author urges him to purchase and study a 36-lecture educational course entitled, “The History of the English Language”. Thirty-four 30 minute lectures trace the English-language as a dialect of Germanic speaking peoples to the state of American speech of the present day. As the lecture’s progress, one comes to appreciate the radical changes that occurred in our language over a relatively short period of time. This course is available on DVD from “The Teaching Company”, www.teach12.com.

So, is the belief that we Arrington’s came to the Americas from England in colonial times simply an educated guess based on circumstantial evidence? For the most part, yes. A host of common sense clues have supported this theory; nothing else. Until recently, in the last five years, new technology has stepped forward with hard evidence. This technology is DNA.
ARRINGTON DNA

In October 2013, John M Arrington, the author of this book joined the GENO 2.0 DNA project sponsored by the National Geographic Society. At that time, there were over 600,000 participants in this research project which evaluates both “Y” chromosome and mitochondrial DNA for males. A test kit was ordered, his mouth was swabbed, and the samples were sent to the test center. Results were received in January 2014.

The GENO Project compares the DNA results of each participant with 150,000 “markers that identify historic and prehistoric populations with the same DNA characteristics and traces the multiple paths of these populations out of East Africa starting about 60,000 years ago. (genographic.nationalgeographic.com)

Based on DNA characteristics, world prehistoric populations are divided into a number of geographic categories. The results of John Arrington’s DNA test are as follows:

43% NORTHERN EUROPEAN

This 25,000 year old component of his ancestry is found at highest frequency in northern European populations—people from the UK, Denmark, Finland, Russia and Germany in our reference populations. While not limited to these groups, it is found at lower frequencies
throughout the rest of Europe. This component is likely the signal of the earliest hunter-gatherer inhabitants of Europe, who were the last to make the transition to agriculture as it moved in from the Middle East during the Neolithic period around 8,000 years ago.

37% MEDITERRANEAN

This component of his ancestry is found at highest frequencies in southern Europe and the Levant—people from Sardinia, Italy, Greece, Lebanon, Egypt and Tunisia in our reference populations. While not limited to these groups, it is found at lower frequencies throughout the rest of Europe, the Middle East, Central and South Asia. This component is likely the signal of the Neolithic population expansion from the Middle East, beginning around 8,000 years ago, likely from the western part of the Fertile Crescent.

19% SOUTHWEST ASIAN

This component of his ancestry is found at highest frequencies in India and neighboring populations, including Tajikistan and Iran in our reference dataset. It is also found at lower frequencies in Europe and North Africa. As with the Mediterranean component, it was likely spread during the Neolithic expansion, perhaps from the eastern part of the Fertile Crescent. Individuals with heavy European influence in their ancestry will show traces of this because all Europeans have mixed with people from Southwest Asia over tens of thousands of years.
When our ancestors first migrated out of Africa around 60,000 years ago, they were not alone. At that time, at least two other species of hominid cousins walked the Eurasian landmass: Neanderthals and Denisovans. Until recently, the universally accepted theory was that Cro-Magnon man destroyed the less advanced Neanderthals. In the last several years the complete Neanderthal geno profile was completed by extracting and processing DNA from a tiny Neanderthal finger bone. Surprisingly this information tells us that these two branches of the human tree made love, not war. The Neanderthals were simply absorbed into the general population. Almost all non-Africans share a small percentage of Neanderthal DNA.

THE BOTTOM LINE

When one compares the combinations and percentages of John Arrington’s reference populations noted above with geographic locations in today’s world, the closest fit or match is the United Kingdom, the British Isles.
SOURCES
AND
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
(In No Particular Order)

- Patrick County, Va. Historical Society - Historical information
- Heard County, Ga. Historical Society - Historical information
- Amherst County, Va. Historical Society - Historical information
- Nelson County, Va. Historical Society - Historical information
- *History of Patrick County, Virginia*: Patrick County Hist. Society
- “Least We Forget” by Mary Marie Koontz Arrington
- Betty A. Pilson - Patrick Co. deeds, marriage and death records
- John Reynolds - Invaluable help in coordinating Patrick Co. info.
- Letter with information from Mary Florence Word, Oct. 10, 1984
- Letter with information from Linda S. Eller, April 20, 1975
- *The Village of Arrington* by Dorothy Lee Bowling Giles
- United States Census Records, 1790 thru 1870
- *The History of Lynchburg, Virginia* by Phillip Lightfoot Scruggs
- Patrick Co. Franklin Co., Amherst Co, and Heard Co, Tax Records
- Ancestry.com - genealogy searches
- Library of Virginia - Historical Information
- Jones Memorial Library, Lynchburg, Va. - Historical information
- Genographic.com – The GENO 2.0 DNA Project
- Genealogy.com – The Arrington Family Genealogy Forum
- Woolwine Vol. Fire Department – Patrick County History
- Newberry.org – Virginia Historical Counties
- LaGrangeGa.info/history – LaGrange and Troup County history
- TextileHistory.org – Cotton mill history

Page 22: Last Line. Wife’s surname spelling should be “Bolling” instead of “Bowling”.

Page 23: Second paragraph, third line should read, “Kneaves Arrington and John’s older brother, William Arrington.

Page 34: First word in last paragraph should be “some” instead of “many”.

Page 37: Seventh line from top should read 10 feet in circumference rather than 10 feet in diameter.

Page 65: Last paragraph, replace the word “Absalom” with “Daniel”.