

Sorting Saturday: Wiley Anderson Murrell and Genealogy Emails



Richmond Enquirer, 12 March 1840, County Committees, Vol. 36, No. 102, Page 4, Col. 1, via VirginiaChronicle.com. (Click to enlarge.)

[Roberts Family, Murrell Family](#) (Click for Family Tree)

After decades of research, a printed mention of the elusive Wiley Anderson Murrell (1806-1885) has finally been found!!

It was a serendipitous find, as I was sorting through emails.

We have a marriage bond plus censuses in Botetourt County, VA, Roseville IL, and Prairie City IA for Wiley A. Murrell, but never a mention in a newspaper or other document found online-until now. We do not know the names of his parents nor siblings. We know nothing about his life before he married at age 28, except that he was born 3 February 1805 per the family bible. And we have not found an obituary. So it has been very frustrating. (Genealogists understand.) Until now.

Sometimes I think I get too many genealogy emails, so have been sorting through to determine which ones duplicate information and can be unsubscribed from, and which have been productive enough to want to keep reading. I decided to go ahead and click on some of the links in the *Elephind.com* newsletter- I have found some information from their

site previously, and it is a genealogy/newspaper search engine so more specific than Google. I am so glad I decided to take the time. They had the Virginia Newspaper Project (VNP) featured, so searching for one of my most elusive ancestors seemed the thing to do late in the evening. (Genealogists understand.) It took a bit of clicking on the *VirginiaChronicle.com* website- not super easy to use overall, but I got 30 hits using "Murrell" as my search term and setting the date filter to 1787 (their earliest paper) to 1850, when I knew he was already in Illinois.

Skimming down the page, the fourth hit included "Wiley A. Murrell"!! Oh my- I was so excited I could hardly breathe, afraid the words on the screen would go away. (Genealogists understand.) Could this be "our" Wiley? There actually are more Murrells than I ever thought there would be, especially in Virginia, and 'Wiley' was apparently a common name- probably short for 'William.' So I was hoping against hope that it would be the right man, especially since it was a Richmond, Virginia paper, and we know that after 1832, when he married, he lived about 170 miles away, in Botetourt County.

But there it was:

"Wiley A. Murrell."

The 12 March 1840 *Richmond Enquirer* included a list of County Committees appointed at the Democratic State Convention on Feb. 22 1840. There was a Botetourt Central Committee with 12 men listed, and then a "Committee of Vigilance" with ~143 members. Down that list was "Wiley A. Murrell." That had to be him! Right name, right county, right time period.

er, Joel Burger, Martin McFerran, David Burger, Jno. Morgan, Christian Graybill, John Shafer, Martin Peck, John Spegle, Peter Hammon, Wiley A. Murrell, James Riddle, Wm. Peck, Jas. A. Murrell, Sam'l Nottzinger, Henry M. Slusser, Christian H. Moomaw, Miles Biggs, John Simpson, Samuel Burger, Abraham

Richmond Enquirer, 12 March 1840, Botetourt County, Vol. 36, No. 102, Page 4, Col. 2, via VirginiaChronicle.com. (Click to enlarge.)

Trying to be calm and analytical was hard as I was inspired to do the Genealogy Happy Dance. (Genealogists understand.) I won't, however, describe that here as one could never 'unsee' how pathetic that would be with my 3 left feet.

I knew I needed to be looking at the other names on the committee for familiar names- Elizabeth Shown Mills' **FAN** (**F**riends, **A**ssociates, **N**eighbors) Club, to help me make sure I had the right Wiley. Sure enough, there was a name that clicked- Andrew Obenchain/Obernshain. The name sounded familiar, but at first I could not find it in my tree. Looking at the Honts family information compiled by the late George E. Honts, III, however, I realized that Wiley's wife, Mary Magdalen (Honts) Murrell, was Andrew's sister-in-law, as he had married Mary's sister, Elizabeth B. Honts (1809-1881). So maybe we need to add a "C" to the FAN Club- for "**C**ollateral kin." (Includes in-laws, cousins, etc. who are not a direct ancestor but related. Not as catchy an acronym though.) There are Coffmans listed on this Botetourt committee too- the mother of Mary and Elizabeth was Catharine (Coffman/Kauffman) Honts (1784-1867).

There is also a "Jas. A. Murrell" listed- perhaps a brother, father, uncle, cousin?

So it is very highly likely that this is the correct Wiley A. Murrell.

Wow. Oh wow. (Genealogists understand.)

So sort your data, emails, papers, etc. on a regular basis, and stay up to date with what is newly available online and in archives. You never know what you will find.

Coming up: more about Wiley A. Murrell and the Committee of Vigilance.

Notes, Sources, and References:

1. *Richmond Enquirer*, March 12, 1840, Volume 36, Number 102, Page 4, Column 2 @ Virginia Newspaper Project, Virginia Chronicle, <http://virginiachronicle.com/cgi-bin/virginia?a=d&d=RE18400312.1.4&srpos=4&e=-1787-1850-en-20-1-txt-txIN-Murrell—#>
2. Murrell Family Bible- see our series beginning at <http://heritageramblings.net/2014/02/09/sentimental-sunday-murrell-family-bible-part-1/>. Wiley's birth record is shown in Part 2.
3. *The Descendants of Jacob Hons/John* by George E. Honts III, Fincastle, Virginia, 1999. Available only from the Botetourt (VA) Historical Society, <https://bothistsoc.wordpress.com>.

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