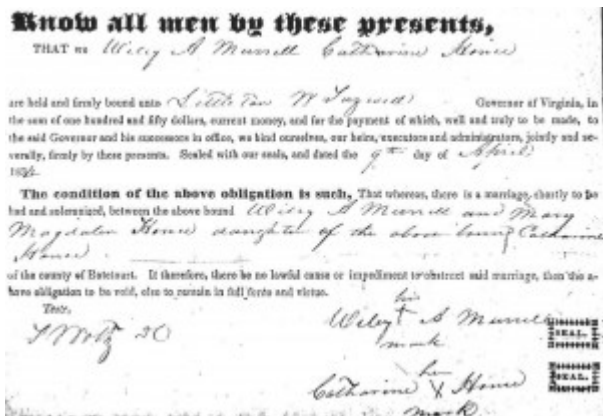


Mystery Monday- The Murrells of Virginia and Iowa



Wiley A Murrell and Mary Honce Marriage Bond, 09 Apr 1834. [Click for larger image. See footnotes for transcription.]

Sometimes we family historians have to just realize that the information we seek may no longer be available, or maybe was never available. That is tough to accept for most of us, so we beat our heads up against the proverbial brick wall. We rejoice in any minute clue, and try to look at the negative data in a positive way. We keep hoping to learn just one more tidbit about our elusive ancestor...

Wiley Anderson Murrell (Murrill, Merrell, etc.) is one of my most frustrating brick walls. He was born 03 Feb 1806 in Virginia, a time when record keeping and record survival was not optimum for genealogists. We have been unable to determine his parent's names, where his parents were from, siblings, or exactly where he was born in Virginia.

Some of the only Virginia documentation that has been found concerns the marriage of Wiley. There was a marriage bond with Catharine Honce, promising a marriage between Wiley and her daughter, Mary Magdalen Honce; the bond was signed on 09 April 1834. Mary's mother signed the bond- unusual for the time- because Mary's father, Henry Hons/Johns (1773-1864) had moved

to Tennessee with his (to be) second wife, Elizabeth Firestone, their child, and some of Mary's siblings. The family had been unstable- Henry demanded that his daughter Mary go with him as well as all the other siblings, but Mary refused and hid from him when he came to get the other children. (Henry Hons/Honce/Johns is another long story for future posts.)

The *Murrell Family Bible* states that Wiley and Mary were married "March the 10 1834." This date corresponds with Dodd's *Early Marriages: Virginia to 1850*, which also states that Jacob Carper, a Methodist Episcopal minister, presided, and that Mary was the "d of Catharine who also gives surety."

Wiley A. Murrell is found in the 1840 US Federal Census in Botetourt, Virginia, with ages and gender of others in the household indicating probably Wiley, Mary, and 3 children (2 girls and a boy); Wiley was a farmer. The *Murrell Family Bible* records that one of these children, Mary Catherine Murrell, born 18 Sep 1839, "departed this life in the yr of our Lord & Savior November the 6 1846 age 7 years 1 month & 12 days."

In 1850, Wiley A. "Marrell" was again listed in Botetourt Co., Virginia, in the Western District (District 8) as a farmer and living with his wife Mary and their children: Elizabeth, age 15, John H[enry], 13, William [Anderson], 9, James E., 8, and Ann E[lisy], age 5. There was no value listed for real estate owned, so he may have been renting the land, and it was noted that he was over age 20 but "cannot read & write." In 1850 there were also many Murrills listed in the nearby Bedford Co., VA census, but no clues of how they might be related to Wiley.

The family moved to Greenbush, Illinois per their son William A.'s obituary in 1856, or 1853 to Roseville, Swan Twp., Warren Co., per family oral history and the obituary of daughter Elizabeth Ann (Murrell) Roberts. The family remained in Warren Co. during the 1860 census- Elizabeth Ann was married

by then, but William, James, and Eliza were going to school, and Wiley continued to farm.



Prairie City, Jasper Co., Iowa, August 20, 1907. Street scene during Old Settler's Day. RPPC.

In 1868, per obituaries, the family, including Elizabeth Ann and her husband John Roberts, migrated to Jasper County, Iowa, in covered wagons per their great-granddaughter Edith Roberts who heard the stories often as a child. The family has not been found in an 1870 census- not in Iowa, as expected, nor Illinois; even Virginia censuses have been checked with no success.

The family is next found in the 1880 US Federal Census in Jasper Co., Iowa, indexed as "Murren." Wiley was still farming that year, at age 74, and living with just his wife. In March, 1885, the two were found together in the Iowa State Census in Mound Prairie Township, Jasper Co., Iowa, listed after their daughter Elizabeth and her husband John Roberts. (No land description is given and they have a separate dwelling, so they may have been living on the Roberts' farm.)



Headstone of Wiley Anderson Murrell and his wife Mary Magdalene Honce. Mound Prairie Cemetery, Jasper Co., Iowa

Wiley A. Murrell died that same month as the census, on 27 Mar 1885 in Prairie City, Jasper, Iowa. His wife Mary died two years later, on 13 Jul 1887 in Mound Prairie Twp, Jasper, Iowa. Both are buried in the Greenleif/Mound Prairie Cemetery near the family's farm.

We are very lucky to know so much about the family once Wiley A. Murrell and Mary Magdalen Honce were married. The brick wall part is Wiley's ancestry- who were his parents, where did they live, and where in Virginia was Wiley born? Some researchers think that John Murrell (1785-?) and Hannah Mitchell were his parents. This is the theory I am leaning toward, especially since Wiley and Mary's first son had the name of John (after his paternal grandfather possibly?) and the middle name of his maternal grandfather (Henry Honce.) Other researchers suggest William L. Murrell (b. 1769 VA, d. 1850-1860 in Cocke Co., Tennessee) and Elizabeth or Nancy Lax (1760-) were Wiley's parents. We would welcome conclusive proof of either, or other leads and sources.

Notes, Sources, and References:

1) *Murrell Family Bible*, hand copied circa 1966 at a relative's home in Iowa, though whose home is unknown. Some researchers and the newer headstone for Wiley state his birth date was 02 Feb 1806; the Bible states it was 03 Feb 1805. Date of Bible is unknown. (Sorry, it was the time before much documentation, and hey, I was just a kid!)

2) Marriage bond transcription:

"Know all men by these presents, that we, Wiley A. Murrell [and] Catherine Honce are held and firmly bound unto Littleton W. Tazewell- Governor of Virginia, in the sum of one hundred and fifty dollars, current money, and for the payment of which, well and truly to be made, to the said Governor and his successors in office, we bind ourselves, our heirs, executors and administrators, jointly and severally, firmly by these presents. Sealed with our seals, and dated the 9th day of April 1834.

"The condition of the above obligation is such, that whereas, there is a marriage shortly to be had and solemnized, between the above bound Wiley A. Murrell and mary Magdalen Honce daughter of the above bound Catherine Honce of the county of Botetourt. If therefore, there be no lawful cause or impediment to obstruct said marriage, then the above obligation to be void, else to remain in full force and virtue."

It was signed by Wiley A. Murrell, his mark, and Catharine Honce, her mark, with F [Woltz?] as the witness.

3) Marriage Bond date is listed as marriage date on Ancestry.com and per *Early American Marriages: Virginia to 1850*.

Source Information: Ancestry.com. *Virginia, Marriages, 1740-1850* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 1999.

Original data: Dodd, Jordan R., et al.. *Early American Marriages: Virginia to 1850*. Bountiful, UT, USA: Precision Indexing Publishers.

4) 1840 US Federal census: Source Citation: Year: 1840; Census Place: , Botetourt, Virginia; Roll: 552; Page: 294; Image: 601; Family History Library Film: 0029684. Accessed last on Ancestry.com 12/08/2013.

5) 1850 US Federal census: Source Citation: Year: 1850; Census Place: District 8, Botetourt, Virginia; Roll: M432_936; Page: 156B; Image: 551.

6) William A. Murrel- Obituary: "G. A. R. Veteran at Roseville, is Buried Today." *Galesburg [Illinois] Evening Mail*, page 10, August 3, 1922. William was just 15 when they moved to Illinois. On 01 Aug 1862 he answered the call to arms and joined Co. H, 83rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry during the Civil War. He participated in active fighting during his 3 years with the company and was mustered out 26 Jun 1865. He married Cordelia Talley of Roseville, IL, on 01 Oct 1867 and they had 2 daughters and 2 sons. William died 01 Aug 1922.

7) Obituary of Elizabeth Ann (Murrell) Roberts: "Mrs. Roberts Called Home," *Prairie City News*, February 7, 1917. Page number unknown as my copy is a clipping acquired many years ago from family.

8) 1880 US Federal Census: Source Citation: Year: 1880; Census Place: *Mound Prairie, Jasper, Iowa*; Roll: 346; Family History Film: 1254346; Page: 150A; Enumeration District: 096; Image: 0524. Accessed 12/08/2013.

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