

First Generation -Joseph Hannah and Anna

We have included this family in our book even though we have not yet found definitive proof of the relationship of Joseph, subject of this chapter, to our proven ancestor David Hannah, Sr. of Pocahontas County, West Virginia (see chapter 5). We believe David Hannah Sr. to be a son of Joseph. The evidence of that link is so far only circumstantial, as described below, but we feel it is quite strong.

Joseph and his family were among the very early settlers in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. They probably followed the normal pattern of Scotch-Irish emigration from North Ireland. We don't know when the family of Joseph and Anna arrived in Virginia or just what route they traveled. Our earliest records of Joseph are as a member of James Cathey's company of militia in Augusta County, Virginia⁷, and the baptism of his son, Alexander, both in 1742.⁸ The militia was organized to provide protection against the Indians who came from the Ohio River country to the Valley of Virginia on hunting expeditions. At various times they attacked the white settlers who were encroaching on their hunting grounds. Every able-bodied man was expected to serve in the militia, so these militia lists are an important source of information for the genealogist.

One record which shows us where Joseph and Anna lived is the patent or deed for land from the colony of Virginia dated 1756. This record is for 273 acres on Naked Creek, a small creek which runs into the North River right on the border between present Augusta and Rockingham Counties in Virginia. Not far away the North River, the Middle River and the South River flow together to form the South Fork of the Shenandoah. Since Joseph was in the area as early as 1742, we suspect he lived or "squatted" on the land for some time, then finally bought it from the government in order to be able to sell it. We have not tried to pinpoint the exact spot where the family lived, but this could probably be discovered with a diligent search of the land records of Rockingham and Augusta Counties. There are several other references to Joseph and Anna in court records from 1750 on, mainly as witnesses for legal purposes and as providers of supplies for the militia.

At least three of Joseph and Anna's children were born while they lived in the area around Naked Creek. There were two churches in the vicinity, one called the Old Stone Church and one called Tinkling Springs Church. Both were served in the early days by the same Presbyterian pastor, John Craig. Some of Craig's records have survived and they show the baptisms of three of Joseph's children: Alexander in 1742, Jane or Jennet in 1745, and Mary in 1748.⁸ Unfortunately the mother is not named in these records, only the father.

In 1758 Joseph sold the land on Naked Creek and bought 300 acres on the South River just a few miles away, where the town of Grottoes, Virginia is today. This location is also near the Augusta/Rockingham border. One of several caves there was first known as Hannah's Cave, later Amond's Cave and then Weyer's Cave. According to an old court record⁹ the Hannahs mined ochre, a yellow powder, out of the cave. It may have been used as a dye or pigment for paints. Another family story says that the Hannahs and the Mefferts, a German family later joined in marriage to the Hannahs,

had a gunpowder mill near these caves, and furnished gunpowder during the Revolutionary War. If that story is true, maybe the yellow powder was sulfur, rather than ochre. These caves are now a tourist attraction known as the Grand Caverns.

Joseph Hannah is named as a "patriot" in the records of the National Society of Daughters of the American Revolution (NSDAR - usually referred to as simply DAR). That means he performed some service in the Revolution, not necessarily military, and any female descendant of Joseph is entitled to join the DAR. The person who registered Joseph in the DAR is a descendant of Joseph's son, Thomas.

Joseph left a will in Rockingham County. It was "proved" (accepted and recorded) in Rockingham County court as shown in court minutes of Sept. 28, 1789 when his son, Alexander, was named executor and the estate appraisal was ordered. We have not been able to find the will in the Rockingham County records, but a typed transcript was found in the Rockingham Historical Society library. In the will, which was dated July 27, 1789, he leaves all of his land to two of his children, Thomas and Rosanna. He leaves one hundred pounds, one shilling and six pence to be divided among all of his children "*when the money can be collected by my executors*". The will names his wife, Anna, and children: Alexander, Joseph, David, Thomas, Mary Boon, Irene Olden, and Rosanna.

We have located the marriage records for five of their seven children: Alexander married Mary Laird in 1778; Joseph married Mary Laird in 1779 (The two Mary Lairds were cousins); Thomas married Magdalene Meffert in 1785; Rosanna married Matthew Ogletree in 1791.¹⁰ We have found no marriage record for Mary or the other son, David. However, we believe him to be the same person as David Hannah, Sr. of Pocahontas County, who married Elizabeth Gibson. (see chapter 5)

Joseph's son, Thomas, married Magdalena Meffert and had a son whom they named Mafford Hannah. In the 1880 census of Upshur County, West Virginia, Mafford declared that his father, Thomas, was born in Ireland. That would mean that at least some of Joseph and Anna's children were born in Ireland. We know that the David Hannah, Sr., to whom we can trace our lineage, was born in Ireland. We know that Mafford's father, Thomas, was born in Ireland, and we know from Joseph's will that Thomas had a brother named David. This lends support to our belief that Joseph's son, Thomas, and our David Hannah, Sr. are brothers.

That would mean that Joseph Hannah, his wife Anna and at least two children emigrated, probably from Ulster, before 1742 (based upon the earliest baptism record - Alexander's, dated 1742). Knowing the names of at least two of their children born in Ireland gives us some hope of finding a record of this family in some dusty archive in the Emerald Isle.