Captain William Thomas Riddle, a reckless North Carolina Tory leader, was captured, court-martial, and hanged on an oak tree near the Mulberry Fields (now Wilkesboro) Meeting House in 1781. Captain Riddle, along with two of his associates named Reeves and Gross, were put to death by the order of Colonel Benjamin Cleveland of the Wilkes (Surry) County Militia.

William Riddle and Ben Cleveland had been adversaries for some time. Months earlier, Riddle had captured Ben Cleveland at Cleveland's plantation at Old Fields on south fork of the New River, now Ashe County.

Ben's brother, Robert Cleveland, learned of his capture and gathered 20 to 30 men who rescued Ben but Captain Riddle and his men escaped. A few in the party that rescued Colonel Cleveland said that they saw Riddle's wife riding away with Captain Riddle and his Tories.

Riddle later conducted a night raid into the Yadkin Valley where he captured two of Cleveland's soldiers, David and John Witherspoon. At Riddle's camp on the Watauga River the Witherspoon brothers...
were given the choice of taking the oath of allegiance to the King and joining the Tory band or being shot as traitors to the

Crown.

The brothers took the oath and were allowed to go home with the understanding that they would return as members of
Riddle's military unit and bring David Witherspoon's
mare, called O'Neal, back with them.

As soon as they reached home David mounted the fleet-footed mare and road several miles to the home of Col. Ben Herndon. Herndon quickly raised a large party of

armed militia and guided by Witherspoon, the party caught the Riddle

camp by surprise, killed some, captured three and allowed the others to escape.

The three prisoners were brought to the Wilkes County courthouse in Mulberry Fields where a court-martial panel was swiftly convened with Colonel Benjamin Cleveland as the presiding officer. Cleveland ordered that Riddle, Reeves and Gross be put to death by hanging at sunrise on the following day. To show his contempt for the Tory captives, he delayed the execution until he had consumed a large breakfast commensurate to his three hundred plus pounds.

It is not known whether William Riddle's wife was captured with him. It was said by many in the crowd that witnessed the event that Captain Riddle's wife, Harriet "Happy" Roberts, witnessed the execution. What became of their bodies after hanging is unknown. Some say that they were contumaciously disposed of in the Wilkesboro area but others reported that the families were allowed to claim them for burial. The sturdy black oak tree where William Riddle was hanged will be long remembered as the hanging tree or the Tory Oak.

Several sources were used for the above story as well as some speculation by your Riddle Newsletter Editor. Among them was an article, The Tory Oak Remembered, published in the Summer 1995 issue of the Old Wilkes, Inc. newsletter and Branches Of One Riddle Family Tree by Doratha Riddle Marsh. These sources agree as far as the basic story but disagree in the names and relationship of the men who were hanged with William Riddle. Marsh claims that Riddle's brother-in-law, Bill Nickolas, was one of the men hanged with Riddle and the other may have been Captain Riddle's father, Colonel

The Tory Oak
James Riddle, noted loyalist to King George III.

William Riddle and Harriet Happy Roberts had several children: John, Thomas, Joseph, Isaac, William, James and Harriet. During the Revolutionary War Captain Riddle and his family were living in Montgomery County, Virginia and we know that Happy returned to Montgomery County after the hanging.

On May 8, 1782, the Montgomery County Court records show that the court ordered Capt. William Love to return to Hoppe Riddle five pounds of specie. Apparently Love or some of his men had confiscated Mrs. Riddle's property. The hate and harassment of the Riddle family continued even after the fighting was over with the surrender of Lord Cornwallis to General Washington at Yorktown on October 19, 1781. Happy Riddle and her children soon left Virginia for Lee County, North Carolina, then to Tennessee and finally Kentucky.

Remains of the Tory Oak

Two hundred and fifteen years after the incident at the Tory Oak I made contact with an eighth generation descendant of William and Happy Riddle. Her name is Rebecca Wennermark and she was born in Indiana. Rebecca is a descendant of William and Happy's third child, Joseph L. Riddle, born in April 1777 and his wife Roda Monk (Munk) via her mother's line: Riddle, Hickey, Brown and Bump.

Rebecca is a genealogist and is presently researching her Bump line. After contacting Rebecca I remembered the Tory Oak story that I read years ago. Living in Winston-Salem I decided to make a quick trip to Wilkesboro to see if I could find the old oak tree. I did find the remains of this 300 year old tree. A fierce storm on June 12, 1989 ripped it apart and all that is now left is a stump about six feet high.

The remaining wood was collected and placed in safe-keeping by Wilkes county. Souvenir pieces are now being offered for sale by:

Old Wilkes, Inc.
Courthouse Square
203 North Bridge Street
Wilkesboro, NC 28697
We are able to add four more to the growing list of descendants of Samuel Riddle and Mary "Molly Tate" Naomi Rust. Betty Jo Banks Erwin, the proud grandmother, sent me the name of her latest grandson John Lawrence Erwin, born June 25, 1995 along with the names and birth dates of her other grandsons: Daniel Erwin Entimacher born September 12, 1984, David Ross Entimacher born February 27, 1987 and William Edward Erwin born March 7, 1993.

Daniel and David Entimacher are the sons of Betty Jo's daughter Joan and her husband Edward. William and John are the sons of Betty Jo's son John Tate Erwin and his wife Mary Frye.

In addition, Betty Jo sent me a lot of information on Samuel and "Molly Tate" Riddle, including a portrait of Sam and Molly's family tree. The family tree portrait contains photographs of Sam, Molly and their children. Unfortunately, I am not able to publish a copy with this newsletter but it will be included in a supplement to the book, *Some More Riddles Of North Carolina.*

The following story was passed on to me by Betty Jo.

"Molly at age 15 in 1858 wanted to construct a quilt by herself. At that time quilts were put up, (ed. placed on a quilting frame) and anyone could sew on it. Molly hid her quilt in the attic so no one could work on it and she even raised the flax and spun the thread that was used to make the quilt."

“The pattern is Rose of Sharon and I have the quilt. What a treasure! Molly's quilt will soon be 140 years old. This favorite art form, Quilting was brought to North America by the early settlers and has flourished from until the early 50s."

“If you have never been to a quilting bee or watched as the ladies taught the young girls this ancient craft, you have missed a part of Americana. Had it not been for quilts handed down and made in my family, I would have passed into the next world as a block of ice.”

You can imagine my consternation when shopping in one of our uptown, expensive department stores when I paused to look at a quilt display and discovered that they had been made in China.
More Descendants of Nathaniel Riddle Identified

Based on information provided by Linda Paige Rector, wife of Robert M. Rector, we have been able to add over 40 more descendants of Nathaniel Riddle born 1805, son of John W. Riddle, Sr. Robert M. Rector is the third great-grandson of Nathaniel.

Nathaniel and Rebecca Tatum Riddle's fourth child was Julia Ann Riddle, born 1830. She married Robert Franklin Rector on August 1, 1856 in Marshall, Madison County, North Carolina. Out of this union came nine children. Robert M. Rector's line back to John W. Riddle, Sr. is as follows:

(1) John W. Riddle, Sr., born about 1765, wife unknown.
(2) Nathaniel Riddle born 1805, wife Rebecca Tatum.
(3) Julia Ann Riddle born 1830, husband Robert Franklin Rector.
(4) John Melvin Rector born 1867, wife Altha Brooks.
(5) Hubert Floyd Rector born 1895, wife Flora Loretta Marler.
(6) Thurman Rector born 1921, wife Viola Wilcox.
(7) Robert Michael Rector born 1953, wife Linda Christine Paige. Linda and Robert Rector live in Lenoir, North Carolina and have two sons, Christopher Lee and Brian Michael.

Riddle News Now on World Wide Web

Thanks to our Cousin Kevin Riddle in Leesburg, Florida, a descendant of Tyre Riddle, the Riddle Newsletter is now on the World Wide Web. This means that if you have access to the Information Highway you can now read and get a copy of our Riddle Newsletter from any where in the world. All you have to do is set up your "Web Browser" to go to the WEB URL address: http://www.jimcal.com

Soon you will see Kevin's Page. You then click on "Stokes County Archives" and this takes you to a page that says "Riddle Family Origins." On this page you will find information about the three brothers, Tyre, John, and Randolph Riddle who lived in Stokes County in 1790. In addition, Kevin has provided information on previous issues of our Riddle Newsletter as well as contact information. It is hoped that through this new media we can find more about our Riddle ancestors.

The following is a list of e-mail addresses for Riddle descendants on the Internet:
How To Tell If You Might Be A
"High Tech Redneck"
Source Unknown

If your e-mail address ends in ".over.yonder.com."

If you connect to the World Wide Web via a "Down Home Page."

If the bumper sticker on your truck says "My other computer is a laptop."

If your laptop has a sticker that says "Protected by Smith and Wesson."

If you've ever doubled the value of your truck by installing a cellular phone.

If your baseball cap read "DEC" instead of "CAT."

If your computer is worth more than all your cars combined.

If your wife said "either she or the computer had to go", and you still don't miss her.

If you've ever used a CD-ROM as a coaster to set your beer on.

If you ever refer to your computer as "Ole Bessy."

If your screen saver is a bitmap image of your favorite truck, tractor, or farm animal.

If you start all your e-mails with the words "Howdy y'all."

Tom Riddle Kills Redcoats at Deep River

According to Doratha Riddle Marsh's book, Branches Of One Riddle Family, Thomas Riddle and a group of Chatham County men concealed themselves on the south side of Deep River. As a company of
English soldiers came within shooting and cutting range, the "Sons of Chatham" attacked, killing several of the Kings Best, and sent the others fleeing back to the north.

Thomas Riddle and his brother James, along with several of his Minter cousins, were members of the Chatham County, North Carolina Militia (1772) and served in Captain Charles Matthews (Mathis) Company. It was also been reported that in a separate incident, a Tory stole Tom Riddle's horse and Tom pursued the Tory, caught him and killed him plus recovered his animal.

Thomas Riddle, born about 1750 was the son of William Julius Riddle, born circa 1708 and Elizabeth Nancy Minter, daughter of Anthony and Elizabeth Minter of Caroline County, Virginia. Here after I will refer to William Julius Riddle as Julius Riddle and his wife Elizabeth Nancy Minter as Nancy Minter as most Riddle researchers use these names. In her book Doratha Riddle Marsh states that in fact their names were William Riddle and Elizabeth Minter.

Julius Riddle and Nancy Minter were married about 1740 in Caroline County, Virginia and lived there until about 1753. They then moved to Lunenburg County, Virginia and then to Orange County, North Carolina in 1762. William and his brother Thomas were among the first Riddles to settle in North Carolina. William owned several hundred acres of land on both sides of the Deep River near Little Buffalo Creek and other land near the head of the Cape Fear River.

Julius and Nancy had seven sons who all served with distinction on the American side of the Revolutionary War. G. T. Ridlon, in his book *History of the Ancient Rydales And Their Descendants*, claims that ancestors of this branch of Riddles were supposed to be from Scotland.

They were always reciting stories about Scotland and had all of the characteristics of the Scottish people. The seven sons of Julius were men of great size and extraordinary physical strength and weighed from two to three hundred pounds.

One tale from the Ridlon book that I am fond of is the one about Captain Richard Riddle, son of Julius, which is as follows:

A fighter who claimed the title of Champion of Chatham County went in search of Dick Riddle who had a reputation of being handy in the sport of fisticuffs. The fighter met a man, who measured three feet across the shoulders walking up the road carrying a cow. The fighter asked the man if he could give him directions to where Dick Riddle lived. The man put down the cow and said, "I am Dick Riddle."
The fighter said, "I have come thirty miles to give you a whipping, but I am satisfied by just seeing you," he then bid Mr. Riddle good-day and without another word headed home.

Thomas Riddle married Francis Minter the widow of his cousin Richard Minter in 1781. Francis' maiden name may have been Stewart as reported by Doratha Riddle Marsh in her book. Richard Minter and Francis had three small daughters at the time of his death in 1780.

After Thomas and Francis married, the three children as well as ten resulting from their union are as follows: Charles born 1782, Nathaniel born 1785, Sarah Dicey born 1787, Cato born 1790*, Kesiah (Keziah) born 1791*, William born 1792*, Fanny born 1794*, Susan born 1795, Thomas, Jr. born 1798, and Nancy born 1800. (Note: * I have used the birth dates presented by a descendant of Tom Riddle. Marsh gives other dates.)

While researching these articles, I discovered a descendant of this Riddle family. He is Dan Lanter from Abilene, Texas. Dan traces his line of descent from Sarah Dicey Riddle, daughter of Tom and Francis Minter Riddle. Sarah Dicey married Mark Patterson in Chatham County, North Carolina in 1807. They migrated to Tennessee by 1808 where they had eleven children. Mark and Dicey's seventh child was named Charles Riddle Patterson born 1820. Charles married Sarah I. Campbell born 1823 in North Carolina.

They had eight children, all born in Tennessee. Charles and Sarah's fifth child was named Charles Riddle Patterson Jr., born 1855. Charles Jr. married Sarah Rebecca Rhodes born in 1854 in Tennessee. They had a daughter named Sarah Ann Frances Patterson born 1882 also in Tennessee. In 1901 Sarah married Elbert Melica Davis born 1878 in Tennessee. Shortly after their marriage they moved to Texas and settled in Runnels County, Texas. Sarah and Elbert had four children all born in Texas. Their second child was named Charles Roy Davis born 1906. In 1925 Charles Roy married Dela Mae Bishop born 1908. Roy and Dela worked on several ranches in Taylor and Runnels Counties, Texas.

In 1939 they bought their own ranch/farm near Hatchell, Runnels County, Texas. Roy and Dela's third child was Joyce Mae Davis born 1938. She married Vernon Robert Lanter, who was in the Air Force at Big Springs, Texas. They were transferred to Chicago, Illinois where Dan was born but moved back to Texas in 1972.

**Big Ivy The Way I Remember It**

The ice and snow storms that hit North Carolina during the first week of February, 1996, left 50,000 families in Winston-Salem without lights, heat and some without water and telephone service. I know that many of you who live in mountain areas like Pensacola and Yancey County had it much worse. Watching people doing without these essentials reminded me of my life in Dillingham, part of the Big Ivy Settlement in Buncombe County, North Carolina.
We lived as in the woods as one could without being in the Pisgah National Forest. In fact, the Riddle land joined "Government Land," as the folks who lived at the head of Big Creek called it.

Why did the winter storm of 1996 remind me of this place? Being without those essentials was a part of my everyday life in Big Ivy.

Light at night was provided by a fireplace and a few kerosene lamps. Heat was provided by the fireplace, wood cook stove, quilts and bodies if one could find someone with who to snuggle. Water was provided by an open spring that was located about 50 yards from the house. It always seemed much farther in the winter if you were carrying two five-gallon buckets of water. I know that the water was safe to drink because you could always see little crawfish and water lizards (salamanders) darting around. Crawfish and water lizards will not live in polluted water. At least that is what I was told.

Personal hygiene was accomplished with a two-quart wash pan, homemade and store bought soap, wash rags and towels made from flour sacks, worn-out sheets and clothes. The big bathing event was the Saturday night scrub down in a washtub. It was not unusual to use the same water to bath several children. I don't know about the bathing routine of the older folks. I was always put to bed before their turn.

In warmer weather, baths were taken in Big Creek. No problem with privacy, but the water seldom reached 60 degrees even on the hottest summer days.

Radio? Yes, radio had been invented but we did not have electricity so what would we do with a radio? TV? Television had been invented, but we are talking about 1930 to 1940 and no one in the South had one at that time. My reason for relating this is make this point: What is considered essential today was considered pure luxury during my time in Big Ivy.

I don't want to give the impression that I did not enjoy my life on Big Creek. I have some of my most cherished memories of that life in the wilderness. I use the term wilderness as opposed to rural living as many who lived in the rural areas at that time had some of the services such as electricity and inside bathrooms with flush-type commodes. Those of us living in the wilderness had to learn basic survival skills that remain the rest of one’s life. Things such as what plants were edible and how to gather them,
how to hunt animals which ones to avoid. How things smell and the sounds that they make became a part of your psyche.

My grandfather, Lunel Riddle and his father the Reverend Benjamin Britton Riddle settled on Big Creek in about 1923. They came from Pensacola in Yancey County where their ancestors had lived for five generations and almost 120 years. I have often wondered why? In 1923 Pensacola was accessible by a railroad and motorcar and was a major metropolitan center as compared to the area where Ben and Lunel Riddle settled.

The first reason may have been that the timber and lumber business that had made Pensacola prosper during the early 1900s was beginning to decline. The great forests on the Yancey and Mitchell side of the Black Mountains had been stripped of almost all of the virgin trees. They may have considered it a good time to sell and move before land prices became lower. During this period, the "Great Depression" had reduced many proud hard working men to beggars and thieves.

Another reason may have been because of Ben's twin children, Joe and Sally born 1895, married spouses from Dillingham, Big Ivy Township and settled there. Joe married Snowe Hensley while Sally had married Lloyd Dill Ingham and they all lived in Dillingham not far from one another.

By now you may have guessed why this little community of two general stores, two or three churches and one three room school house was named Dillingham. Almost all of the people who lived here prior to Ben and Lunel Riddle related to the Dilli Inghams.

The settlement of Big Ivy began in the east, near the Coleman Boundary of the Pisgah National Forest, with the headwaters of Big (Dillingham) Creek, following the creek through the Dillingham community and on through the Barnardsville, the largest community, then through the Democrat community on the west.

The distance from Pensacola to Big Ivy at Barnardsville is about 17 miles if you travel south out of Pensacola over the Black Mountains range through the Cane River Gap and down the North Fork of Ivy Creek into Barnardsville. This was an old stock and wagon road (North Carolina 197) used by the first Riddle family to travel from Yancey County to settle in Big Ivy. It is still unpaved and rises from approximately 2,800 feet at Pensacola to 6,000 feet at the Cane River Gap and back down to 2,600 feet in at Barnardsville.
I believe the first Riddle family to settle in Big Ivy was Marvel Riddle and his wife Rachel Austin. Marvel was the grandson of John W. Riddle, Sr. circa 1762-1844.

Marvel's father was with William Riddle who in the summer of 1844 along one of his sons acted as guides for Professor Elisha Mitchell in his search of the highest mountain in the eastern United States. James W., age twelve in 1844, could have been the son that accompanied his father William and Prof. Mitchell measure the Black Dome or as it is now known, Mount Mitchell. At that time William and his family lived on the Cane River near Pensacola.

Marvel married Rachel in 1839. He was fourteen and she was twenty, if their birth records are correct. They had eleven children, their first child Eliza was born 1843 and according to the records of Buncombe County. It appears Marvel and Rachel Austin Riddle were probably the first Riddle family to settle on North Fork near Barnardsville of Big Ivy.

Marvel and at least one of his sons, William Marvel Riddle, may have served on both sides during the Civil War. Rachel “Granny Riddle” became famous as the oldest living person in North Carolina in 1927. She died 22 days after her 109th birthday on August 18, 1928. When the modern life irritates me, I return in my mind to the wilderness and Big Creek and a much more tranquil era.

While studying American literature at Wake Forest University, I created a problem for myself when I presented my view of being without contemporary services to my professor. We were studying Henry David Thoreau and his book Walden. Thoreau and his theories about man, nature and social protest were being touted by my professor as the way things ought to be.

While writing Walden, Thoreau built a one room cabin near Walden Pond and lived there alone from 1845 to 1847. He ate food that he found growing in the woods and vegetables from his own garden.

My professor was deeply impressed with this way of life as were many of my classmates. When he asked me my opinion, I told him that I had lived that way for a lot longer than Thoreau and I liked having the essentials, particularly inside plumbing. I could tell right away that I was not going to do well in his class and I withdrew.
A Stream Sir Walter (Big Ivy) Scott

Fred B. Jarvis - Class of 1934

Barnardsville High School

Deep, very deep, in the hills of western North Carolina lies a community, or communities that make up the Big Ivy section of Buncombe County. Arranged just as snug and beautiful as GOD Himself could make it.

It is a land of white dogwood, pink locust and tall balsams. It has tall mountains, beautiful valleys. A land of the ramp, golden seal and ginseng. A land that remembers Elisha Mitchell and Big Tom Wilson.

Big Ivy is the land that has produced lawyers, school teachers, judges, men and women that believe in SALVATION through the blood of God's only SON. It is a people so very close, yet far apart.

Right in the center of all its magnificent beauty is a stream. It starts in the tall trees of the largest of the Smokey Mountains, winds its way silently and eternally to the French Broad River.

A stream that knows rainbow trout and flat tailed muskrats. A beautiful stream that knows all and tells nothing. She has watched the summers and winters come and go since God said, "Let there be light" and there was light.

The violets and bulrushes nod as she silently goes on her way. She has watched the smoke of moonshine stills curl through the laurel and juniper. She cried with those who followed with plain flowers and simple coffins to await the appearing of the King of Kings. She sings "Amazing Grace" and there is a Fountain filled with Blood, with a small church who loves as Jonathan and David.

She laughs and giggles at the robin and cat bird and sometime roars at those that defy her. She swells with pride when children smile and red roses bloom. She heard the first cry of new born babes and watched last steps of those who go up to spend the day.

In the morning when we awake in His likeness and behold the Son of GOD, we will behold a stream flowing out of the throne of God. That stream will be Big Ivy in all its beauty. Loving, caressing, watching eternally over all GOD'S people.

AND HE POINTED OUT TO ME A RIVER OF PURE WATER OF LIFE, CLEAR AS CRYSTAL, FLOWING FROM THE THRONE OF GOD AND THE LAMB. (Revelations 22:1)
Our prayers and sympathies are with the family of Eugene Franklin Riddle who died at home on April 4, 1996. He was the son of Howard and Geneva Honeycutt Riddle of Burnsville, North Carolina North. Surviving are his parents, two daughters, a son, three grandchildren and three sisters. He was buried in Howard Riddle Family Cemetery.