Continued from Volume 5 Issue 1
By Richard L. Riddle

**Battle for Horseshoe Ridge and Snodgrass Hill**

Early light on Saturday, September 19, 1863 found the two vast armies staring at each other. Kelly’s Brigade was formed "at the upper side of a wheat field, forty yards below the fence and woods that ran parallel with our division."

Captain Isaac H. Bailey of Company B, the 58th gave this account in 1901: "After remaining in line about 45 minutes the command was given: ‘Unfurl your banners.’

At this moment the sun broke forth, dispelling the fog, and as our banners floated out on the breeze the Federals, our enemy, General Boynton’s command commenced playing ‘Yankee Doodle’ and to move out eastward on an almost parallel line with ours.

Almost immediately we were ordered to march in a parallel direction, the enemy inclining to the right and to the left. There was soon a terrible cannonading around us, but with little damage,
none to the 58th N.C.

Very soon after this we captured a battery of artillery on a round eminence in a corn field, and greatly hoped to get to guard them, but by the time we had exchanged a few chews of tobacco, we were ordered away. For the balance of the day, with the rest of the brigade, we were held in reserve.

At about 7 o’clock Sunday morning, the 20th, the two flanking companies, A and B, commanded by Captains Bailey and Toby, of the 58th N.C. Volunteers, together with five companies from the other regiments, were put under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Kirby, of the 58th, and ordered in the direction of Alexander’s Bridge across the west prong of Chickamauga River as skirmishers to feel the strength of the enemy in that direction.

We proceeded about one and a fourth miles when we came to an open field lying along the Chickamauga River some three fourths of a mile in length and about the same in breadth. When we had gone nearly half way down through the field, we could see fortifications all up and down the river the full length of the field and about twenty five yards from the riverbank.

Notwithstanding we knew that the enemy was behind the breastworks, we had to advance to feel his strength.

So we slowly advanced until we came to the fortifications of fence rails leaning from our advance in the direction of the river to where the enemy had fallen back to and under the bank of the river to draw us over, then to fire on us as we would have to retreat over the fortifications just passed.

As soon as the line of skirmishers had passed over the fortifications, the enemy fired from their ranks, three or four men deep, a most galling and enfilading fire into our ranks. We had now ascertained by sad and painful experience what we had been sent out to do.

We were then obliged to retreat through the rail fortification upon the woods and across the old fields of broom straw waving in the melancholy wind, and over a number of our most loved comrades left dead on the field. One of them, Thos. G. Tipton, had just saved the writer’s life.”

Captain Isaac Bailey of the 58th continued:
"After a desperately contested fight from 3:30 p.m. to nearly nightfall, we succeeded in gaining the hill from which the enemy made three or four unsuccessful attempts to dislodge us by assault. However, owing to the conformation of the ground, the 58th N.C. was exposed to a galling fire from the front and on both flanks, the left flanking company being within ten or twelve feet of the enemy. In this action the regiment lost about half of its numbers by official report of Colonel Kelly, commanding the brigade. Company A, Captain Toby, started on the charge with 34 muskets and reached the top of the hill with only 12, losing 22.

In conjunction with Colonel R.C. Trigg, 54th VA, commanding another brigade, we captured two regiments of the enemy, which surrendered to Colonel Trigg during the temporary absence of Colonel Kelly, commanding our brigade.

As the column commenced moving with the prisoners a volley was fired into our ranks causing a good deal of confusion, it then being dark.

Arrangements having been made to replenish our supply of ammunition, we went into bivouac and rested for the night, on the hill which the 58th, together with the remainder of the brigade, had so gallantly won, fighting against a superior force posted in an apparently impregnable position.

We moved steadily forward, beat and captured many of the enemy, and slept in his ‘stronghold.’ Whether you may call it whipping them or not, there was not a Federal to be found within thirteen miles of us by next morning who was able to get away."

Captain Isaac Bailey recounted some of the casualties of the 58th as follows: "Early in the action Lieutenant Colonel Edmund Kirby, while gallantly cheering his men, fell pierced by four bullets.

Major Dula [ed. Thomas J. Dula, was the subject of the song: Hang Down Your Head Tom Dooley made popular in the 1960’s by the Kingston Trio] was wounded early in the engagement.

Colonel Palmer, the only field officer with the regiment, was here wounded, but still continued in command, with his senior Captain, Isaac H. Bailey, to aid him as Major and Lieutenant Colonel, after which Captain Bailey fell almost mortally wounded, left leg broken, shot through the right side and one ear almost severed from his head.
Thirteen commissioned officers, including the Adjutant, had been killed and wounded, two-thirds of the right flanking company, Captain Toby, having been killed and wounded, and about seven-tenths of the left flanking company, Captain Bailey’s. "The Confederate victory at the Battle of Chickamauga was complete by about 7 p.m. on September 20, 1863.

Kelly’s Brigade’s strength entering the battle was 876. Its reported casualties were: killed 62; wounded 238, missing and presumed captured 29, total 329 for a 37.55% loss according to the official report. The 58th lost 46 killed, 114 wounded and one missing, for 161 casualties, over 50% of the regiment’s pre-battle strength, and sustained 49% of the total casualties for the brigade.

The gallantry shown at Chickamauga would earn John Herbert Kelly a general’s commission. "Nothing in this battle, marked with gallantry so frequently that it became commonplace, surpassed the courage of these two brigades [Kelly’s and Gracie’s] as they watched their ranks thin minute by minute and still doggedly refused to yield an inch of ground. Kelly was promoted to brigadier general on November 16, 1863.

He was promoted on the strong recommendation of General Bragg making him the youngest general in the Confederacy. Kelly was reassigned to command a brigade in Wheeler’s Cavalry Division on November 12, 1863. He was mortally wounded on a raid near Franklin, Tennessee, on September 2, 1864. Kelly died two days later at 24.

The 58th N.C. camped on the battlefield the nights of September 20-22, probably surrounded by their dead. Fatigue details were assigned to dig graves; others were on picket, while others had the odious duty of carrying the dead to their graves.

Brigadier General Preston remarked in his official report about the Battle of Chickamauga: "The troops of my division had never been engaged in any important battle, having been stationed during the war chiefly in Southwestern Virginia and East Tennessee, to defend their mountain passes from invasion.

Held in reserve while the conflict raged around them for a day and a half, they manifested a noble ardor to share in its dangers and its glories. Though long in service and not aspiring to the title of veterans, I felt strong confidence in their patriotism, courage and discipline.

The hour for the trial of all these great qualities arrived; every hope was justified, and I feel assured that both officers and men, won honorable and en-during renown upon the memorable field of Chickamauga."
Colonel John B. Palmer went back to western North Carolina to recover from his wounds, and while
there, received orders to assume command of the Department of Western North Carolina. Palmer’s
headquarters was at Asheville and he remained in western North Carolina until the end of the war.

President Davis called on the Army of Tennessee quartered on the summit above Chattanooga on
October 9, 1863 and inspected the soldiers.

Davis rode the entire line in range of Union cannon at Chattanooga, below. Glenn Tucker, author of
Chickamauga: Bloody Battle in the West, wrote in his chapter on Horseshoe Ridge that the 58th N.C.,
recruited from northwest North Carolina and led by Colonel Palmer was reviewed by the generals.
North Carolina Governor Vance had supplied Longstreet’s Corps with new gray uniforms, while the
58th was in rags and barefoot.

The 58th had passed out of state and were orphaned and therefore not given new uniforms. Kelly’s
Brigade was ordered not to cheer as Governor Vance and the dignitaries passed in review, so they took
off their ragged caps and waved them to the generals who were touched by the gesture.

Battle of Missionary Ridge November 24-25, 1863

The 58th spent most of October and November 1863 on the heights above Chattanooga. Speculation
about the command’s duties includes construction of breastworks and supporting artillery units
bombarding Chattanooga below.

On November 12, 1863 the 58th and 60th N.C., 54th and 63rd VA regiments were permanently made a
brigade under Brigadier General Alexander Welch Reynolds, "Old Gaule" of Clark County, Virginia.
Reynolds’ Brigade was recalled from Buckner’s division shortly after it departed Missionary Ridge for
Knoxville and was somewhat in limbo when the Battle of Missionary Ridge began.

According to Captain George W.F. Harper, Reynolds’ Brigade was
deployed in a thin line on Missionary
Ridge, with no reserve. Major

General U.S. Grant, commanding the
Federal Army of the Cumberland,
ordered his men to attack. It was an
unlikely assault, the Confederates dug
in on the heights made it appear like
Pickett’s charge with roles reversed.

Reynolds’ Brigade, assigned to
Stevenson’s division had been on the
Southern left on the 21st, was sent to
reinforce General Patrick Cleburne’s division.
The brigade held their position for three days while repulsing attacks from Union soldiers under General Phil Sheridan. Heavy lines of Federal infantrymen approached the Confederate entrenchments and confusion reigned in the Southern ranks. Reynolds’ brigade, posted between Deas’ and Bate’s Brigades was ordered to the top of the mountain as the Federals began their approach.

Reynolds’ men intended to fill a gap at the crest of the ridge between Bate’s and Anderson’s brigades. Adding confusion to the situation, the reason for their withdrawal was unknown to the men through whom they passed. While scaling the heights some of Reynolds soldiers passed through Colonel Jesse J. Finley’s Florida Brigade, which caused added disorder just as the battle began.

Reynolds’ mixed brigade, did not situate themselves in the 150-yard wide breach in the Confederate line on the top of Missionary Ridge.

Captain James Garrity’s Alabama Artillery Battery filled the gap alone with no support. Reynolds’ regiments were deployed across the Crutchfield Road behind Bate’s Division, over a quarter mile from the breach in the line that they were supposed to occupy. The Federals breached the Confederate line through Anderson’s Brigade and not in the unoccupied position where Reynolds was supposed to be located. General Bate sent Major James Thomas Weaver of the 60th N.C. to reinforce Anderson’s Brigade plus form a counter attack.

Reynolds’ men ran over a quarter of a mile to reach Bate’s right flank but they were too late as Federals were pouring through the breach. Bate reported "Union troops turned our guns upon us and opened a fire of musketry from our right and rear. This caused my right to give back."

Blue coated soldiers took Bate’s position and were "rapidly enveloping [his] division." George Washington Harper wrote "General John C. Breckinridge, in command at this point, when the troops were withdrawn about midnight inquired about the regiment then filing into the road, and being told, raised his hat and complimented the ‘Tar Heels’ very highly on their part in the fight."

As recorded: "On November 25, 1863 Union soldiers assaulted and carried the seemingly impregnable Confederate position on Missionary Ridge. One of the Confederacy’s two major armies was routed." About midnight, November 25-26, Reynolds’ withdrew toward Dalton, Georgia. Reynolds’ men were blamed by Braxton Bragg for the Confederate rout at Missionary Ridge. Their mistake was in not informing their comrades of their orders. Another problem appears to have been the inability to communicate orders to the men responsible for their implementation.

*Missionary Ridge, Tennessee*
James Clark, Company F, 63rd VA wrote: "The Yankees did not follow us but a short distance. We drove them back & took a good many prisoners." In Clark's estimation Reynolds' Brigade quickly regained their composure and reorganized again into an effective force. Casualties for the 58th N.C. were heavy at Missionary Ridge and many were taken prisoner, some because they no longer had to the will to continue the fight.

The 58th appears on the casualty list of General Stevenson's Division for the period November 24-25, 1863, but Reynolds gave no number. The 58th and the rest of the Army of Tennessee went into winter quarters at Dalton, Georgia about 100 miles north of Atlanta.

**December 1863 - September 1864 The Atlanta Campaign**

General Joseph Eggleston Johnston took the helm of the despondent Army of Tennessee on December 27, 1863. The despised Braxton Bragg was gone and the Army of Tennessee quickly adopted "Uncle Joe" Johnston as their own. Johnston understood that the Army of Tennessee needed time to recover, to re-supply, and to train for the unavoidable battles to come.

The Mobile Register reported the Army of Tennessee had no "barefooted soldiers" for the first time in its existence. Johnston was also busy gathering supplies to sustain his soldiers during the spring campaign. In fact he was gathering all Confederate soldiers that could be spared outside Virginia.

**Rocky Face Ridge or Stony Side Skirmish - February 26, 1864**

On February 25, 1864, Brigadier General Reynolds at Dalton, Georgia reported a skirmish with Federal forces at Rocky Face Ridge or Stony Side, about eight miles from Dalton. Reynolds recorded that this engagement had been entirely successful, and casualties were as follows: The 58th and 60th N.C. regiments took 24 wounded three mortally, the 54th VA had twelve wounded and the 63rd VA sustained only five wounded.

The muster report of Company G reports that the Federals were advancing on Tunnel Hill near the rail line in mid-February 1864. Stevenson's Division was ordered from their campsite, just west of Dalton into action. The command marched on the night of February 23, and arrived near the "demonstration" on the 24th.

*Clisby Austin House. This was Sherman's headquarters during the assaults on Rocky Face Ridge*
The brigade was not inserted into the line of battle until the 25th and according to members of the regiment, they then "whooped the Yankees." James Clark of the 63rd VA wrote on February 28, 1864, "Our Brigade has been in front all the time. We lost about 40 killed & wounded out of the Brigade."

During the first days of May 1864, an event occurred which made a lasting impression on the men of the Army of Tennessee and the 58th N.C. On this sunny spring day, fourteen men were executed for desertion; eight of these men were from the 58th N.C.

One of these men, Jacob Austin of Union County, North Carolina was a conscript. Many soldiers did not feel these sentences were fair as others had been pardoned for similar offenses but some officers felt that the executions were necessary to stem the tide of unauthorized absences. Other soldiers were sentenced to extra duty, humiliation or loss of pay.

These executions had the desired effect, at least in the 58th N.C., as desertions virtually ended. Of course, by May 1864, most of those who remained were hard core Southern supporters or those with an excessive sense of duty.

**Battle of Rocky Face Ridge May 7 - 15, 1864**

As Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman’s army approached Rocky Face Ridge, he decided to send two columns against the position while a third was sent to the right through Snake Creek Gap in order to hit the Western & Atlantic Railroad at Resaca. The two columns engaged the enemy at Rocky Face Ridge.

In the meantime, the third column, under Maj. Gen. James Birdseye McPherson, traversed Snake Creek Gap and on the 9th and advanced to the outskirts of Resaca where it found entrenched Confederates. Fearing defeat, McPherson pulled his column back to Snake Creek Gap. On May 9, 1864 the 58th participated in the battle of Rocky Face Ridge. Rocky Face Ridge, a 500 foot rock cliff, was defended by General Stevenson’s Division which included Reynolds’ Brigade and the 58th.

Federal Brigadier General Charles G. Harker’s Brigade assaulted the summit, which it reached in a single file procession. Harker’s men attacked through the gap between Stevenson and Cheatham. Stevenson reported that the fight was obstinate and bloody, but the Federals were unable to capture the crest of the Ridge.

Union losses in the engagement were 837 while Confederate losses were estimated at 600. It has been reported that Sherman decided that the Ridge could not be taken without severe loss of life therefore he returned to his original plan of flanking maneuvers. On the 10th Sherman decided to take most of his men and join McPherson in order to seize Resaca.

The next morning, Sherman’s army withdrew from it’s position in front of Rocky Face Ridge. Discovering Sherman’s movement, Johnston retired south towards Resaca on the 12th.
**Battle at Resaca May 13-15, 1864**

Resaca was a depot town on the Western & Atlantic Railway. As prelude to the engagement of May 13-14, Federal General Thomas advanced on Johnston’s center at Dalton. He was joined by General Schofield from Cleveland, Tennessee and attempted to flank Johnston and secure his vital supply and communications center at Resaca. This maneuver forced the Southern troops from Dalton back to Resaca on May 14.

The Confederates under Johnston had been busy during the winter preparing a network of entrenchments from Dalton to Atlanta. Johnston was painfully aware that Sherman would have to make a serious mistake for a Confederate military victory to occur in Georgia. He believed the Army of Tennessee’s mission was to hold the Federals in check until the Northern election in November.

Reynolds’ Brigade in Stevenson’s Division took the brunt of the Federal assault led by Brigadier General A.S. Williams’ and his XX Corps, which secured the positions that were their objectives. Stevenson, to the left of Lieutenant General A.P. Stewart informed Stewart that he would attack precisely at 4 p.m. At 6:00 p.m., Johnston counter attacked on the right with Hoods’ troops, supported by one of Hardee’s Divisions (of which Stevenson’s Division and Reynolds’ Brigade were one), and General William H.T. Walker’s division.

Hood advanced about two miles and was in position to inflict damage to the Federal flank when General Williams was sent, just in time, to repel Hood.

There was confusion in exchanging orders, Hood issuing them with Johnston countermanding. It appears that the mix up in communications through the thick brush may have led to the Southern defeat at Resaca. This was Johnston’s only true defeat in the Atlanta Campaign.

Stevenson’s divisions bore the brunt of the Federal assault. Federal soldiers advanced to within 30 paces but Stevenson’s line held. Sherman flanked to Lay’s ferry, about three miles below Resaca, where he crossed the Oostanaula River on two pontoon bridges. Confederate losses at Rocky Face Ridge and Resaca were approximately 2,800 of their 67,000-man force.

Federal losses were reported to be 2,997 of 104,000 men. Johnston’s Army fell back to predetermined positions at Cassville, Georgia, setting up the next engagement.
**New Hope Church May 25-26, 1864**

Johnston had taken up positions on the high ground at Cassville on May 18. His Corps commanders, Hood and Polk thought it folly. He gave up the ground, "a step which I have regretted ever since." His men fell back through Allatoona Pass on May 19.

The 58th N.C. participated in the battle as evidenced by casualties reported in the muster rolls. Since the regiment was assigned to Hardee’s Corps it may safely be assumed that they were on the Southern left, near Wheeler’s Cavalry, as Sherman had ordered his army to attempt another flanking movement.

As with so many battles in the Western Theater, there is no contemporary information as to the regiment’s specific participation. The Army of Tennessee crossed the Etowah River during the night of May 19-20. On May 25, 1864, the pursuing Sherman had crossed the Etowah River and was traveling cross-country toward Marietta, Georgia via Dallas, Georgia with 100,000 soldiers and 20 days worth of supplies. The Southerners were entrenched in a heavy thicket with General Hood’s main line centered at New Hope Church a few miles northeast of Dallas. Polk’s Corps was closer to Dallas.

The Federals advanced toward the Confederate lines which were so well concealed that they may not have known they were there.

The Federals were allowed to reach within 25 or 30 paces before they were cut down with a thunderstorm of fire from the concealed Confederates.

About 5 p.m Johnston ordered Stewart’s Division to form a line of battle. This line was only one man deep and they held their position against the federal advance line three men deep.

If the line had broken, Stevenson’s Division would have been lost completely as Stevenson was to the rear of Stewart on another road facing another Federal assault.

Federal General Hooker reported 1665 killed or wounded and was unable to recover many of his men who were caught between the lines and in the brush. Stevenson’s Division was saved again. During the Reynolds’ Brigade engagement at New Hope their beloved leader Brigadier General Reynolds was wounded.
On May 27, Federal General Howard led 14,000 Union troops against Hood, initiating the battle of Pickett’s Mill which Hood’s troops held against the Federals. Broomfield Ridley recorded in 1898, that this battled was "another heartrending scene of death and destruction.

The men saw the Atlanta Campaign as a chess game between Sherman and Johnston, with Johnston making the key moves and Sherman responding in bewilderment. Johnston was a master of the game. Even though he had half the pieces of Sherman, he was able to avoid a Federal checkmate for months."

In the early days of June 1864, Sherman was busy driving his army toward the Chattahoochee River and Johnston was just as busy trying to stop him utilizing constant skirmishing from mid May until the fall of Atlanta. The toll was taken for the Army of Tennessee.

The Battle of Mt. Zion Church (Federal: Kolb’s Farm) June 22, 1864

On June 18 Johnston withdrew into a new position that ran from the crest of Kennesaw Mountain to Olley’s Creek. Hood’s Corps was to the right in the direction of Marietta. Lt. General Leonidas Polk’s Corps (he was killed June 14), now commanded by General William W. Loring, was positioned along the crest of Kennesaw Mountain while Hardee’s Corps blocked the road from the west to Marietta. The whole area settled in for a siege.

The Battle of Mt. Zion Church, also called Kolb’s Farm in Federal reports, began on the morning of June 22. Hooker and Schofield’s Yankees were emplaced along the Powder Spring Road toward Marietta. Hood’s skirmishers, probing the lines, discovered the Yankees and reported that they had not had time to dig in. Hood ordered Stevenson’s Division to attack. The Southerners almost succeeded but the Federals counterattacked with roughly 10,000 troops and Stevenson’s men were routed.

Johnston was furious with Hood for this poorly planned, disastrous attack that cost Reynolds’ Brigade so dearly. It did end General Sherman’s attempt to bypass the mountain stronghold. Federal losses were under 250, while Confederate casualties approached 1100.

Samuel Riddle was one of those casualties. One June 22 he was wounded in his left leg which had to be amputated. This wound would earn him the nickname Peg-Leg Sam.

After serving the Confederacy almost three years and being involved in some of the war’s most devastating battles, Sam’s career as soldier would end.
It's unknown when or how he returned home but return he did to his native Pensacola, North Carolina. Two years after the conclusion of the Civil War he married Mary Naomi Rust of Bridgewater (near Morganton), Burke County, North Carolina.

Sam and Mary Naomi were wedded in Yancey County where they bore nine children. Sam became active in business, politics, and education and served several years as Yancey County Register of Deeds and County Treasurer.

He and Mary taught school plus he established the first Pensacola Post Office and served as Postmaster for eighteen years. Mary then took over from Sam and served for seven more years becoming one of the countries first female Postmasters.

Eight of nine children of Sam and Mary would live to become adults. One became a graduate nurse, another a physician/surgeon and one of the founders and chief of staff at Grace Hospital of Morganton, North Carolina. One more became a doctor of pharmacy and successful business executive. One other son, Robert Vance Tate Riddle, named after Sam’s old commander Robert B. Vance, published the first newspaper in Pensacola named the Pensacola Citizen at age 10.

Robert continued to publish his small weekly paper on his manually operated Pearl printing press about five years. He graduated from the University of North Carolina and practiced law until his early death at age 35.

Unknown Cousins By The Dozen!

By Richard Riddle

The following article is an abstracted and edited version of a story written by Dave Presnell and his wife Maryann.

It is a poignant story in many ways but as all good tales it has a joyful conclusion. For the purpose of publishing this article in the Riddle Newsletter, I have taken the liberty of relating Dave’s account in my own words. I hope I can mirror Dave’s desire to comprehend his father’s motive for withdrawing from his Presnell-Riddle family.

Dave Presnell was born in Garden City, Michigan in 1932. He is the fourth of five children born to Manasia James Presnell and Hettie Ray Standifer. Dave’s father spoke little of his Presnell family so Dave’s mother Hettie, his sister Loree, and his three brothers Mike, Jim and Tom knew very little concerning their Presnell relatives.

They did know that the name of Manasia’s father was Harrison and his mother was Lila Adeline Riddle. They also knew that Manasia was born in Red Hill, North Carolina near the Tennessee border and that
he had served in World War I where he was injured. Manasia was sent to a hospital in Atlanta, Georgia to recuperate.

While a patient in the hospital he became aquatinted with another injured soldier, Charles Elliott. At the war’s conclusion, both Manasia and Charles enrolled in a program to teach injured veterans a trade or skill at Tennessee Polytechnical Institute (TPI) in Cookeville, Tennessee. While at TPI, Charles married Violet Standifer.

They introduced Manasia to Violet’s sister Hettie. After Manasia completed his work at TPI in 1923 he was employed by Ford Motor Company in Detroit, Michigan. In 1924, he returned to Tennessee and married Hettie Ray Standifer. They then returned Michigan where they lived the remainder of their lives.

Occasionally Manasia’s family would exchange visits with Hettie’s family but never with the Presnells. Manasia informed his family that his mother died about the time he was born and that he had been raised by his sister Sally.

The family did know that Manasia always carried a newspaper clipping in his wallet that mentioned a George Presnell in Iowa who was involved in a killing. In 1969, Manasia James Presnell died and buried along with him were his Presnell family secrets.

Twenty years later, Dave and his wife Maryann Wynn were building homes in a Texas development near Houston called "The Woodlands." A young couple named Presnell one day appeared at the sales office searching for new home. When Dave heard that a Glenn Presnell was interested in buying a home, Dave rushed to meet his first non-related Presnell.

Glenn and Dave became friends while during the construction of Glenn’s home. This began Dave’s nine year quest to locate his Presnell relations and to solve the mystery surrounding them.

Dave and Maryann enrolled in a genealogy class at the local community college and after completion, their search of the census records began. Within a few months they had unearthed the names of Dave’s grandfather, father, and six other children believed to be Dave’s uncles and aunts, but no Sally or George.

Where was Sally, who Dave’s father had claimed raised him? Who was George? The 1900 and 1910 census records revealed that Dave’s grandfather Harrison was widowed in 1900 and had remarried in 1910. The 1910 census record also indicated that Harrison had been married three times. Who was Harrison’s first wife and were Sally and George their children?

Over the succeeding few years, Dave and Maryann became increasingly involved in the home building business and therefore less time for their family research. A few pieces were added to the puzzle but no major discoveries.
Prior to resuming the search for family information, Dave became increasingly concerned about what he might discover. Would it change the image he had of his father as a kind and gentle man? Would he find that his father was involved in some way with murder or other misdeeds?

If he encountered his father’s relatives would there be a residue of ill will? Dave decided that whatever he might learn it would not alter his opinion of his father so he decided to continue his search.

Early in 1998 Dave decided to hire a professional researcher in Salt Lake City, Utah. The researcher traced this Presnell family, sometimes spelled Presley back to the 1850 census. In the 1880 census he found that Harrison was married to Aelline, his second wife, and they had two children in the household, James age 10, and George age 2.

Could this be the mysterious George mentioned in the newspaper clipping that Dave’s father had carried in his wallet? The researcher also reported that Harrison had two brothers, John and Amos, and a nearby Riddle family had several children including daughters named Lilia A. and Althea S. Dave was sure that Lilia A. was Lila Adeline his grandmother. What facts or evidence did he now have?

Harrison and his brother Amos married Riddle sisters, Lila Adeline and Althea S. The occupation of these brothers is given as Mica Miners. Harrison and Adeline had two children, James and George. If James is ten years old in 1880, then he was born in 1870. Adeline is shown as age 10 in the 1870 census so this could not be her son. James must be Harrison’s son by his first wife.

Dave and Maryann decided that they would have to travel to the North Carolina mountains to locate more information about Dave’s Presnells. On July 13, 1998 they arrived in Spruce Pine, North Carolina and the quest commenced.

During the next four days, Dave and Maryann searched the 1920 census records of Yancey County, North Carolina and Unicoi County, Tennessee. They located, met, spoke to, hugged, and got to know "cousins by the dozens."

They discovered a whole new extended family. They were amazed and pleasantly surprised by the friendliness and candor of each new cousin. With every cousin came more information dealing with the Presnell family history. They shared family stories and memories that would remain with Dave and Maryann the remainder of their lives.

They did indeed discover the reason Dave’s father had kept the George Presnell newspaper clipping all those years. George was Manasia’s older brother. The melancholy tale is as follows:

In 1903, George Presnell and Lewis Buchanan were working at a sawmill owned by the Buchanan family. Lewis tried to seduce George’s wife Susie and was boasting about the incident to George. George killed Lewis and fled North Carolina.
He journeyed first to Missouri and later to Iowa. George wanted to return for his wife Susie but his father Harrison, fearing that the Buchanan family would take revenge, informed George that Susie had died. When George left North Carolina he could neither read nor write, a fact he later rectified to became a respected citizen. Believing he was a widower he married again in Iowa, became a member of the local school board, a road commissioner, and a justice of the peace.

When his wife’s health failed, he conveyed her to the Ozarks in the hope her health would improve. They settled in Boone County, Missouri where George operated a coal mine and once again became a highly regarded member of the community. In 1932, twenty-nine years after the event at the Buchanan sawmill, the legal authorities were able to locate George through letters he had written to relatives in Bakersville, North Carolina.

He was returned to Bakersville and held for trial. He discovered that his first wife, Susie was still living when she visited him during his incarceration. George now had two wives who he loved. Both of George’s wives attended each day of the trial.

There were only a few witnesses who remained alive to offer testimony at the trial. One was Lewis Buchanan’s daughter and another was also a Buchanan relative. Lewis’ daughter testified that she witnessed the argument between her father and George the day before her father was killed and stated that Lewis was drinking.

Lewis’ other relative claimed that he had seen the argument and George had cut three gashes in Lewis’ leg which caused his death. Another state’s witness, a girl who was fourteen years old at the time of the incident, said that she had gone to the mill to see her sweetheart and she had witnessed George grab Buchanan’s leg and cut it three times. The state rested it’s case.

George was called to testify and he informed the jury that Buchanan had taunted him about Susie. He said that Buchanan asked if Susie had told him what he had attempted to do the day before. George testified that Buchanan had been drinking, was quarrelsome and wanted to fight, but George had told him to go home.

Later when George returned to the sawmill, Lewis was there. Lewis again initiated the argument and kicked George in the mouth which knocked out a tooth. The altercation continued and George stated that he had cut Buchanan one time only.

The judge asked the ladies to leave the courtroom while George related exactly what Buchanan had said about his advances to Susie. After lunch the ladies returned and the trial continued.

The doctor, who had initially been called to the scene of the killing, testified that when he examined the dead man, he had been cut only once. The wound would not have been fatal had the knife not severed an artery which caused Buchanan to bleed to death.
It had been believed that Lewis’ relative was the only eye-witness but the high point of the defense was a surprise witness who was at the sawmill at the time of the killing. This witness testified that he saw Buchanan kick George and then draw a gun.

He claimed that George had been whittling on a stick and had a small knife in his hand and he knew what was about to happen and turned his head. The prosecutor shouted "Why did you do that?" fully expecting to hear that "he did not want to see George cut Buchanan." Instead, the witness answered "Because I didn't want to see Buchanan shoot."

The jury was only out for one hour and four minutes and it’s verdict was "NOT GUILTY." As George and Susie left the courtroom everyone wanted to congratulate them.

They walked to a nearby restaurant for their first meal together in thirty years. Susie made the utmost sacrifice when she sent George back to his second wife while she returned home alone.

George and his second wife stayed in Erwin, Tennessee. Later, when she developed cancer and wanted to return to Germany, the land of her birth, George honored her wish and he never returned to the mountains of North Carolina. In 1965, George passed away in Missouri.

The mystery of George Presnell was solved but several questions remained unanswered. Did the Sally who raised Dave’s father, Manasia really exist? No record of her so far. What was the real reason Manasia was separated from his family? It was not reasonable that the George Presnell affair justified this family disassociation.

The day before Dave and Maryann began their return trip to Texas they met the granddaughter of Sally. Sally was the sister of Manasia and who he claimed had cared for him as a child.

Dave had examined the census records for Sally but there was no mention of her as she had been born in 1881 and most of the 1890 census records, where she should have appeared, were destroyed by fire. By 1900 she had married John Miller and thus was listed in the census as Sally Miller and not as Sally Presnell.

Shortly after their return to Texas, Dave and Maryann discovered that it was not Sally who raised Manasia but another sister, Nancy Elizabeth. When Nancy and Manasia’s mother died, Nancy was almost ten years old. Manasia was two and his older brother Dave was three. Nancy quit school to raise Manasia and Dave. She later married Willis Furman Bailey and together they had eight children and three of Nancy’s daughters are still living.

These daughters verified that Nancy raised her two younger brothers and always referred to them as "the boys" and would weep when she talked of them.

You will recall the young Presnell couple that Dave and Maryann met in 1989. Dave and Glenn are 4th cousins twice removed. Dave’s progenitor, James Presnell, Jr. and Glenn’s progenitor, Daniel Presnell
were brothers. Daniel’s son Harrison C. Presnell left Caldwell County, North Carolina to seek his fortune in Texas.

Dave and Maryann returned to western North Carolina in October 1998 to attend the Presnell Family Reunion held at the home of Pearson and Wanda Presnell Riddle where over 100 family members attended.

Wanda is a descendant of Amos Presnell and Althea Riddle. Readers of the Riddle Newsletter may recall the article published in the first newsletter of December 1994, titled Descendants of Althea Riddle Today Live as Presnells.

The story was based on information provided by Lowell T. Presnell of Burnsville. Lowell is also a descendant of Amos and Althea and recently published a book titled Mines, Miners and Minerals.

Dave and Maryann plan on returning to the Burnsville area in July, 1999 to spend more time with their newly unearthed cousins.

James Riddle Hoffa

Richard Riddle

I am sure many of you have heard of Jimmy Hoffa, union leader and the president of the International Teamsters Union from 1957 until 1967. He was sent to prison in 1967 and pardoned by President Nixon in 1971. On July 30, 1975, James Riddle Hoffa disappeared, apparently the victim of a gangland execution.

Not many are aware of why his middle name was Riddle. In August 1998, I was contacted by Tammy Hoffa, the great-granddaughter of Viola Riddle, Jimmy Hoffa’s mother. Tammy is interested in tracing her Riddle family and related the following:

Tammy’s research indicates that Viola Riddle was born January 1, 1890 in Indiana and married John Cleveland Hoffa in 1909. John and Viola had the following children: William Henry, James Riddle, Jennetta, and Nancy. William Henry Hoffa is Tammy’s grandfather. After Viola’s husband died in 1920, Viola, along with her children moved to Michigan in 1924.

Viola Riddle was the daughter of Thomas Roger Riddle, son of Isaac Roger Riddle, son of Isaac William Riddle, son of Captain William Riddle. For those who would like to read more about Captain William Riddle, several articles dealing with him and his descendants have been published in the Riddle Newsletter. The latest and most accurate is by Mary E.V. Hill entitled William Riddle 1740-1781 in Volume 4, Issue 1, December 1997.