This is a tale of a young man who began performing and recording at the early age of 15. His first recording was titled I Should Have Been Crucified and was released as a 45 RPM single. He is not an ordained minister but religion and the gospel have been an integral part of his life and he conducts his ministry through music and singing. Danny’s first full length LP was recorded three years later at age 18.

During the next 10 years, he made several additional recordings and hosted Reach Out, a radio show that aired on several stations in central Florida. Reach Out provided listeners a means to hear local and well-known gospel artists’ songs and interviews. His albums include a collection of religious and gospel songs released under the following titles: The Collection, 18 songs including When The Roll Is Called Up Yonder. Hymns Of Praise, Amazing Grace and Rock Of Ages plus 9 others. The Best Of Reach Out consisting of 8 songs. Christmas With Danny containing 10 Christmas recordings. Come Morning with 10 songs.
At age 28, Danny took time off to pursue other goals in his life and at 35; he decided to resume his singing career. He has just released his latest recording as a CD titled Old Time Religion which includes 12 of my favorite songs such as Old Time Religion, The Old Rugged Cross and I Saw Light.

Danny is a fourth great-grandson of John W. Riddle, Sr. (1765-1844). Daniel R. Riddle was born in Detroit, Michigan on May 4, 1965. He is the son of James Luther Riddle and Yvonne Bailey. Danny’s father was born in Burnsville, North Carolina and moved to Detroit, married and became a supervisor with the Ford Motor Company. He died in 1982 at New Port Richey, Florida when Danny was 17. James and Yvonne had two other children Debra “Debbie” and Dale. Regrettably, Danny lost his brother Dale in April of this year at age 42. Danny’s grandfather was George Riddle (1883-1938) born in Burnsville, North Carolina. Danny’s grandmother was Lula Boone (1881-1941) from Burnsville, North Carolina. George and Lula had four other children: Oscar, Georgia, Bonnie, and Dixie in addition to James Luther. In the December 1995, issue of the Riddle Newsletter the article More Descendants of William Riddle relates my tour of Yancey and Buncombe Counties with Dixie as my tour guide.

I must sadly report that on December 19, 1998 Dixie died in the arms of her loving niece Debbie, Danny’s sister.

Dixie was a gracious lady who brightened the lives of all who knew her and she will be remembered for her sparkling wit, sense of humor and the wonderful stories about growing up in Yancey County.

Danny’s great-grandfather Carlo (Charles) B. Riddle was born in 1855 and was the son of James W. Riddle born about 1832 and his wife Nancy Hensley. Nancy was the sister of my second great-grandmother Elizabeth Hensley. Nancy and Elizabeth were daughters of John Hensley and Blanchey Allen. (See the December 1997 Riddle Newsletter titled Blanchey Allen, Granddaughter of Capt. “Teges” Adoniram Allen.) Her father was Adoniram D. Allen II and her mother was Lucinda “Lucy” Riddle, daughter of our ancestor John W. Riddle, Sr. the first Riddle to settle in western North Carolina in 1805.

Danny’s third great-grandfather James W. Riddle was the son of William Riddle born about 1793. On July 8, 1844, William accompanied by his young son James, about 13 years old, served as guides for Dr. Elisha Mitchell. Dr. Mitchell was seeking the highest peak east of the Mississippi River. The account of this expedition was published in the June 1998 issue of the Riddle Newsletter titled Guide For Dr. Elisha
Mitchell. Danny’s third great-grandfather was William Riddle the son of John W. Riddle, Sr. Now that you know a little of Danny’s ancestral background you might want to order one of Danny’s recordings. You may order through Danny’s WEB site at http://www.dannyriddle.com/ or write to

Reach Out
8624 Brookwood Drive
New Port Richey, FL 34654

Carla Sparks
We Go Where God Sends Us

Richard Riddle

Carla contacted me in November of this year and informed me that she was a fourth great-grand daughter of John W. Riddle, Sr. I was immediately curious about how someone originally from the mountains of North Carolina would be corresponding from an island in the Caribbean. Her tale follows: I was born in Bakersville, North Carolina, on Feb. 8, 1953. We moved to Tampa, Florida in 1955 where I was raised. At an early age, I became a member of the Idlewild Baptist church in Tampa. My husband Tom was born March 31, 1951 in Chicago and was reared in Tennessee and Michigan and later moved to Tampa when he was sixteen.

My husband came from a broken home; his father was married four times and he claims to have been raised heathen. He traveled to Tampa to improve his relationship with his mother, sister, brother, half sister, and half brother. Here he lived a harsh and difficult existence, stealing and breaking into homes. His high school friend invited him to a Christmas party at my church where we first noticed one another. We actually met a few weeks later on February 1, 1970.

We married November 10, 1973 and have been together ever since. We began our youth ministry our first married year at the same Baptist Church where we were married. We continued our youth ministry in Tampa, Jacksonville, and Melbourne, Florida until 1983. My husband then became a Pastor and we began a new church, the Port Malabar Church of God. We remained Palm Bay, Florida until relocating to the Cayman Islands in September 1993. What drew us to the Cayman Islands? My sister Kathy married Moses Kirkconnell III whose family is from Cayman Brac.

Moses attended college with my husband where they became great friends. Approximately ten years later, my sister met and married Moses in Tampa, where he and his parents had resided for several years. When Moses’ parents decided to return to Cayman Brac, Moses and my sister also moved. When we visited Cayman Brac and we instantly fell in love with the island and the people. My husband possesses
an uncanny ability to relate to the many lonely young people here. Our organization, The Caribbean Commission, organize youth camps on the different Caribbean Islands.

We began about 90 miles south of Cuba on Cayman Brac, an island twelve miles long by a mile wide with a population of 1200 people. We expanded to camps on Grand Cayman and have had two in Nicaragua. My husband is currently planning another in Nicaragua for January 2001. Fourteen different Caribbean Islands have requested our youth camps and we will begin as God provides. The Nicaraguan Youth Camps have been a tremendous experience with approximately 500 youths attending during the day and about 1200 people for the evening meetings.

Unfortunately, we had to limit the daytime numbers because of the limited experienced help available. In 1998, we moved to Grand Cayman Island where my husband is completing a 29,000 square foot building, the Family Life Center for the Church of God. It is the only building of this type in the Cayman Islands. We are so pleased that all three of our children decided to join the ministry. Our oldest, Melissa, lives in Virginia, our son Aaron is a Youth Pastor here and our youngest son Justin, resides in Baltimore, Maryland where he is currently taking a discipleship Master’s Commission training program. We were originally committed to Cayman Brac for one year but remained for five and have been on Grand Cayman a little over two years with no thoughts of leaving.

**Carla’s Ancestry**

Carla’s father is Frank H. Sparks (b. 1925) and her mother is Phyllis June Riddle (b. 1931). Frank and Phyllis June have four children Phillip Howard, Carla Gail, Kathryn Elizabeth, and Lori Anne. Carla’s mother Phyllis June is the daughter of Ranzie L. Riddle (1894-1943) born in Yancey County, North Carolina and Jane Oakes (1901-1980) born in Mitchell County, North Carolina.

Ransie and Jane had six children Jack M., Annie Mae, Catherine, Harold W., Elizabeth “Betty,” and Phyllis June. Carla’s grandfather, Ranzie is the son of William Harvey Riddle (1860-1941) and Mary Jane Dixie Thomas (1861-1945). William Harvey and Mary Jane had 10 children, Mary Magdalene “Maggie,” Martha Ella, James Coleman, David Clingman, William Palmer, Ranzie L., Abigail, Pearl,
Nathan McKinley, and Anne Mae. Carla’s great-grandfather, William Harvey Riddle, was the son of James Garrett Riddle (1828-1888) and Sinai Elizabeth Thomas (1834-1908).

They had six children Nathan A., Nancy E., Talitha Cumi, William Harvey, Baccus L., and Amanda R. Carla’s second great-grandfather, James Garrett Riddle was the son of John W. Riddle, Jr. (b. 1799) and Elender “Nellie” Cook (b. 1802). (See the December 1998 issue of the Riddle Newsletter for the article Johnny Riddle and Nellie Cook.) John and Nellie had five children Nathan, Ansel, James Garrett, John III, and Lewis. John and Nellie are buried in the Dayton-Riddle Cemetery, Brush Creek, and Yancey County, North Carolina. Their grave marker is inscribed: “Riddle - Johnny First Settler - Nellie Cook Indian Princess.” Carla’s third great-grandfather, John W. Riddle, Jr. was the son of John W. Riddle, Sr. (1765-1844) and his unknown first wife.

Some Riddle researchers believe her last name was Hawkins and was the sister of John Sr.’s brother Randolph. John Sr. and her produced nine offspring, Lucinda “Lucy,” William (see the article Guide for Dr. Elisha Mitchell in the June 1998 issue of the Riddle Newsletter), Margaret “Peggy,” John W. Jr., Benjamin Tyre, Robert, Mary “Polly,” Nathaniel, and Jane “Jinsey.”

Descendants of Eliza Riddle

Richard Riddle

Rebecca Tolley-Stokes contacted me recently. Rebecca remarked that she was confused about her Riddle ancestors. Her grandmother was Lesie Nadine Riddle born in 1910. With this information, I was able to provide Rebecca with her ancestral line beginning with her grandmother Lesie Riddle.

Grandparents were Lesie Riddle born June 13, 1910 and married Roscoe Tolley.

Great-grandparents were William Riddle born December 25, 1865 in Pensacola, Yancey County, North Carolina, married in 1887 to Virginia Ella Angel born May 25, 1868 in Burnsville, North Carolina, died July 2, 1960 in Bakersville, North Carolina and is buried in Happy Valley Cemetery, Carter County, Tennessee. William died April 16, 1946 in Erwin, Tennessee and is buried in Peterson Cemetery, Unicoi, Tennessee. William’s mother Eliza Riddle gave him her maiden name.

Second great-grandparents were Louisa “Eliza” Riddle born 1843 in Buncombe County, North Carolina who married first (no marriage record), Ed Austin, and then Manuel Lingerfelt. Louisa died August 16, 1937 in Crabtree Township, Yancey County, North Carolina. The information about William Riddle, the son of Eliza and Ed Austin is from William and Virginia Angle Riddle, Toe River Valley Heritage, Vol. 1, No. 591, edited by Lloyd Richard Bailey, Sr., published in 1994. The information was submitted by Larry M. Tolly, Rt. 3, Box 369-A, Gate City, Virginia 24251. The editorial note by Dr. Baily is in error.
He implies that Eliza, the daughter of Benjamin T. Riddle and Rachel Austin, is the mother of William. It is true that Benjamin Tyre Riddle (1800-1875) and a Rachel Austin (1803-1850) had a daughter named Eliza (1830-1889) but this Eliza did not have a child named William by Ed Austin. Third great-grand parents were Marvel M. Riddle born March 15, 1825 in Yancey County, North Carolina, married in 1839 to Rachel “Granny Riddle” Austin who was born July 26, 1819 in Yancey County, North Carolina and died August 18, 1928 and is buried in Greenwood Cemetery, Buncombe County, North Carolina.

Marvel died January 15, 1916 in Barnardsville, Buncombe County, North Carolina and is buried in Greenwood Cemetery, Buncombe County. As reported by Norma Dilingham Morgan of Weaverville, North Carolina, the death record from Buncombe County says that Marvel was the son of William Riddle and Pressil Renfroe.

The only William Riddle in Buncombe County in 1825 (Yancey in 1833) was William Riddle; son of John W. Riddle, Sr. Thanks to the efforts of Mary Cathryn Riddle Watts the mystery of Marvel Riddle’s ancestry of has been solved. The identity of Marvel’s father had eluded Riddle family researchers for years. Fourth great-grand parents are William Riddle born about 1793 in Stokes County North Carolina and married about 1811 in Buncombe County to Priscilla “Pressie” Hensley Renfroe who was born about 1795. William died about 1858 in Yancey County, North Carolina.

Priscilla “Pressie” Hensley Renfroe was born about 1795. Research by Jack Riddle indicates that Priscilla was a Hensley. Following the discovery of Marvel Riddle’s death record, her son noted that her last name was Renfroe. Information from Bill Hensley states that Priscilla’s father was Hickman Hensley and her mother was Elizabeth Renfroe.

Fifth great-grand parents were John W. Riddle, Sr. born about 1765 and his unknown first wife. John later married Nancy Biddix who was born in 1788. According to recently discovered bible believed to have belonged to either Benjamin Tyree Riddle or to his son James Riddle, the following is recorded “John Riddle died the 18th of March 1844.”
Happy New Year - I think

Richard Riddle

During this time of the year, we wish each other “Happy New Year” with little or no thought as to why we celebrate January 1 as the beginning of our New Year. Few of us realize that had you lived in North Carolina or any English colony before 1752, the New Year would be celebrated on March 25, the first day of spring based on the Julian calendar then in use. In our youth, we were taught how time is measured.

There are 60 seconds in a minute, 60 minutes in an hour and 24 hours in a day, 28, 29, 30, or 31 days in a month depending on the month, and 12 months in a year. It takes a year for the earth to travel around the sun and that each year has 365 days except for leap year, which has 366. Why a leap year? Every four years the earth’s rotation around the sun takes a little longer than 365 days so a day is added in February. If we use the first day of spring (vernal equinox) as our reference point it takes 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes, and 46 seconds for the earth to make one revolution around the sun.

This results in gaining slightly less than a day (.9688) in four years. During the reign of Julius Caesar, the calendar in use had summer beginning in the spring. In 46 BC, Julius Caesar tried to compensate for these 365 days per year error by adding a day to the year every four years. However, Caesar’s correction of one day in four years (1/4 day or six hours a year) overcompensated which made the calendar year longer than the seasonal or solar year.

Therefore, seasonal anniversaries began earlier and earlier each year. By 1582 AD, 1,628 years after the adoption of the Julian calendar, the beginning of spring occurred on March 11 instead of the correct date, March 21. In 1582, Pope Gregory XIII decreed that ten days would be dropped from that year’s calendar and the day after October 4 would now be October 15. His calendar continued to use the leap year to add a day in February but it would be omitted in century years not divisible by 400. As an example 1600, 2000, and 2400 will be a leap year, but 1700, 1800, 1900, 2100, and so on will not.

The Roman Catholic countries adopted the Gregorian, or New Style (N.S.), calendar in 1582 but England and her colonies did not accept it until 1752. They then had to drop 11 days. The Gregorian calendar still has an error of being 23 seconds longer than the solar year. By the year 4316 we will have
gained one day. January 1, 2001 is the beginning of the Third Millennium according to the United States Naval Observatory, the nation’s official timekeeper. If your celebrated the beginning of the new millennium on January 1, 2000 you will have to celebrate once again to be correct. Regardless of when you celebrate, I would like to wish you and yours a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

**Benjamin Britton Riddle**

From the book *Some More Riddles of North Carolina*

by Richard Riddle.

Benjamin Britton, or B. B. Riddle, as he signed his name, was born January 28, 1851. He was the oldest of seven children born to James and Elizabeth Hensley Riddle. His father, James, was the son of Benjamin Tyre Riddle, and the grandson of John Riddle, the first Riddle to settle in Yancey County in 1805. Benjamin Britton was named in honor of his grandfather, Benjamin Tyre.

When Benjamin B. was 15 years old his mother died, it is believed, as a result of complications that developed during the delivery of her last child, Samuel M., who is better known in the Pensacola area as “Lubbi Sam.” Shortly following the death of his mother, his father died, and young Benjamin became the head of a family of children consisting seven: Martha, his oldest sister was 14; Marcus was 13; Bill was 10; Blanche was 8; Adoniram or “Niram” was 4; and Sam was 1.

The little family was committed to staying together, and stay together they did, through the loving help of God, B.B.’s paternal grandfather, many uncles, aunts, and other members of a little log church known as the Laurel Branch Baptist. By 1870, as shown in the Yancey County census, the family was still together and living in Pensacola township near their uncles, Robert, Samuel, John, and grandfather, Benjamin Tyre.

Thanks to the information published by Kirby Ray Whitaker, in her books on the Ray family history, we begin to see how important the Laurel Branch Baptist Church was in the life of Ben B., and the lives of those who call Pensacola home. The first building was
a log structure located near where Laurel Branch empties into the Cane River about one half mile from Pensacola. The church was established in the early 1800’s.

The second building, also a log structure, was located near the present church which is still active today. In the 1874 church records we find the “Articles of Faith” and “Rules of Decorum,” signed by B.B. Riddle and Leander Ray, Revising Committee. Perhaps the one person who had the most influence on the life of young Ben, who was not a blood relative, was Leander Ray. Leander married Ben’s aunt Margaret, and was 28 years Ben’s senior.

He was well educated, a church leader, and a highly respected gentleman of the Pensacola community, who probably swayed Ben’s decision to enter the ministry. On August 1, 1875, Ben married Nancy Elmore Peek, a member of the Laurel Branch Baptist Church’s congregation. They had two children, a boy, and a girl. The baby girl died six months after her birth. Nancy, Ben’s wife, died two months later. Ben is now left with a baby boy, age one and half years to care for.

On March 6, 1880, the church licensed B.B. Riddle “To exercise his public gift as minister anywhere God, in his providence, may cast his lot.” On October 18, 1881, he and Phinetta Blankenship are married. This union is blessed with two children; a daughter and a son. Tragedy again strikes the Reverend Benjamin’s young family. His son dies six months following his birth. Next, Ben’s second wife dies one year following the loss of their son. In spite of the misfortune that seems to follow him, he keeps on trying to care for his two remaining children, preaching the gospel of God’s love and mercy, and ministering to the congregation of the little log church called Laurel Branch.

His tenure as pastor at the Laurel Branch Church was not continuous, so, Ben served as pastor to other churches within the Cane and Toe River Valleys. He became a circuit riding preacher. During his circuit riding days, he became the founder of what is now called the “South Estatoo Baptist Church.” In the beginning, it was known as the “Sand Bottom Baptist Church” in the Toe River Valley.

Ben was again elected as pastor of the Laurel Branch Church in 1885, 1886, and 1887. On April 14, 1887, Ben takes a third wife, Nancy Moriah Rathbone.
This union would last 41 years and produce 15 children, including two set of twins; all born in Pensacola. Ben continues to be elected as pastor and served until October 31, 1891. By this time the B.B. Riddle family had increased by two more sons.

In 1894, the new church was dedicated and the Reverend Benjamin Britton Riddle delivered the first sermon in the new building. This building has been expanded and modernized, but the sanctuary exists today much as it did in 1894.

The Rev. Ben continued to serve as Pastor of this Church as did other ministers during the period 1894 through the 1920’s. His family continued to grow with a child being added almost yearly, and in some years, 1895 and 1905, two children (twins) were added each year. The last child, a boy was born when Ben was 61. Of course, as new children were added, the older ones were marring and beginning their own families.