As stated in the June 2002 issue of the Riddle Newsletter, this will be the last issue of the Riddle Newsletter. As some might recall, the first issue was published in December 1994.

Almost nine years later, we bring down the curtain on what has been an exciting, rewarding, and sometimes frustrating experience. From December 1994 through June 2003, 18 issues of the newsletter have been published containing articles on a wide range of subjects dealing with Riddle genealogy.

Most articles addressed an aspect of John W. Riddle, Sr., his descendants or related families. Although the articles reflected, the most current information available at the time new material has since been discovered.

An example is the article in the June 1997 issue titled Blanchey Allen, Granddaughter of Capt. “Teges” Allen. The article claimed that Blanchey Allen was the daughter of Adoniram D. Allen II and Lucinda Koon (Koontz). In September 1997, it was discovered that Adoniram’s wife Lucinda was not a Koon or Koontz, but was Lucinda “Lucy” Riddle, daughter of John W. Riddle, Sr.
Proof was offered in the article Identity of John Riddle’s Missing Daughters Discovered in the December 1997 issue as to the identity of Adoniram’s wife. Quoting from that article:

“On Saturday, September 13, 1997, Sandra Allen Fender of Morganton, North Carolina contacted me and told me that she, Bill Hensley, and Millard Murdock had been working on the McMahan family genealogy and that they had found something that may be of interest to me.”

“They had been reading the Yancey Co. Probate Minute Docket 1834-1846 (Microfilm # c.107.3000.2) and found a series of deeds that dealt with land that John Riddle, Sr. owned when he died on March 18, 1844. John’s son Benjamin Tyre Riddle was appointed by the Yancey Co. 1844 Spring Court to be the administrator of his estate.

These probate minutes are a record of John’s heirs selling to Benjamin their interest in the lands owned by John in settlement of his estate.” The Minutes of the 1844 Fall Term contained four deeds that pertained to the settlement of John Riddle’s estate.

The first deed dated August 17, 1844 was from John W. Riddle Jr., son of John W. Riddle, Sr. deceased, conveying his undivided interest in the lands of John Riddle, Sr. to his brother Benjamin Riddle for Eighty Dollars.

The second deed dated July 9, 1844 was from William Riddle, son of John Riddle, Sr., Adoniram Allen, and wife Lucy, daughter of John Riddle, Sr., and Edmond McMahan and wife Polly, daughter of John Riddle, Sr. William, Lucy, and Polly conveyed their undivided interest in the lands of John Riddle, Sr. to their brother Benjamin Riddle for the sum of two hundred and forty Dollars, eighty dollars per child. This deed proved that Adoniram Allen’s wife was Lucy Riddle and Edmond McMahan’s wife was Polly Riddle, both daughters of John Riddle, Sr. With this discovery, the identity is now known of two of John Riddle’s missing daughters. The identity of third missing daughter is revealed in the next deed.

The third deed dated September 19, 1844 was from Archibald McMahan and wife Jane McMahan conveying their undivided interest in the lands of John Riddle, Sr. to Jane’s brother Benjamin Riddle for the sum of eighty dollars.

The fourth deed dated October 10, 1844 was from Charles Bailey and wife Margaret conveying their undivided interest in the lands of John Riddle, Sr. to Margaret’s brother Benjamin Riddle for the sum of eighty dollars. Previous research had identified Margaret as the daughter of John Riddle, Sr. and that she had married Charles Bailey.
Another article, Sir John Riddle – Our Ancestor?, published in the December 1999 issue speculated about the father of John W. Riddle, Sr. I believed that our ancestor John Riddle, Sr. was related to the Riddells of Roxburghshire, Scotland. I referenced information that supported the claim that Samuel Riddle was the father of our John Riddle and his brother Randolph.

One reference was a research paper by a Dr. Walter Wayne Smith and the other was page 350 of G. T. Ridlon’s book History of the Ancient Ryedales and Their Descendants in Normandy, Great Britain, Ireland, and America. Dr. Smith’s information explained the lineage from Sir John Riddle, first Baronet, Riddells of Roxburghshire to John W. Riddle, Sr. as follows:

- Sir John Riddell was the first Baronet.
- Sir William Riddell was the second son of John. His older brother Walter became the second Baronet and was knighted at an early age. He later became the Governor of Desborough, Holland and had sons Walter and William.
- William Riddell born about 1663 came to New Jersey with his brother Walter, took service under the Proprietors, and became a member of the Council of West Jersey. He acquired land interests in Maryland and his known sons were James, Walter, and William.
- Walter Riddle born about 1696 is believed to have moved from New Jersey to Maryland and then to Virginia. He had sons Basil, Julius, and Zachariah.
- Basil Riddle, born about 1720 moved to Accomac Co., Virginia and had a son Samuel.
- Samuel Riddle, born about 1740 moved from the eastern shore of Virginia to North Carolina and had sons George, Randolph, and John.

7. John W. Riddle, Sr. was the first Riddle to settle in Buncombe, now Yancey Co., North Carolina before 1805. In June 2000, a related article, Sir John Riddle Part II was published in the Riddle Newsletter which was based on David and Maryann Presnell’s research using the International Genealogical Index (IGI) records from the Church of Jesus Christ Latter-Day Saints Internet site. The information on the LDS web site appeared to support the information in the previous article about the lineage of John W. Riddle, Sr. Glen and Verda Grover of Layton, Utah are the source of much of this information.

- John Riddell b. 1576 Selkirkshire, Scotland
- William Riddell b. 1603 Selkirkshire, Scotland
- William Riddle b. 1663 Maryland
- Walter Riddle b. 1686 Maryland
- Basil Riddell b. 1720 Maryland
- Samuel Riddle b. 1743 Accomack Co., North Carolina, or Virginia
• John Riddle b. 1765 North Carolina

In August 2001, an Internet e-mail message was received from Stella Cotrill, a descendant of John Riddle (1680-c.1745) of Prince George’s Co., Maryland.

Stella indicated that she might have information that would identify the lineage of John W. Riddle, Sr. and his brother Randolph. Following a lead supplied by Stella a copy of a petition was obtained from the Maryland Archives that was filed by Zachariah Riddle of Loudon Co., VA.

It supplied the missing evidence to link the John Riddle (1680-c.1750) family of Maryland to John W. Riddle (c.1755-1844) of Stokes Co., North Carolina. More information will be found in the article The NC Riddle Mystery Solved appearing in the December 2001 Riddle Newsletter. The article explains the lineage of John W. Riddle, Sr. and his brother Randolph.

• John Riddle (1) 1680-c.1745 Prince George’s Co., MD.
• John Riddle (2) 1708-1794 Prince George’s Co., MD
• John Riddle (3) 1734-c.1795 Prince George’s Co., MD
• John W. Riddle, Sr. 1764-1844 Prince George’s Co., MD

In addition to establishing the lineage of John, the article also identified some of John’s uncles and cousins. The information previously published in Sir John Riddle – Our Ancestor? and Sir John Riddle Part II was wrong. John W. Riddle, Sr. was not the son of Samuel and Samuel was not the son of Basil.

In related articles John Riddle of Maryland, June 2002, John Riddle Petition, June 2002 and John Riddle Will, December 2002 more information appears.

This is known about John Riddle born in 1680. He was probably born in Prince George’s Co., Maryland but he could have been born in Great Britain. His parents are unknown but he did have three wives.

On September 2, 1700, John (1) (1680-c.1745) married Elizabeth Bowman and they had the following children:
1. Benjamin was born about 1703 and died in 1750.
2. Elizabeth was born about 1704.
3. John (2) was born July 25, 1708 and died in 1794 and was the grandfather of John W. Riddle, Sr.
4. George was born September 10, 1710.
5. Robert was born in 1712 and died in 1739. He married Sarah Seriban.
6. Andrew was born in 1714 and married Ann Nichols/Nichloes.

John (1) married a second time about 1720 to a woman named Margaret. Together they produced two children:
1. Elizabeth was born December 13, 1721.
2. John was born in 1730.
John (1) later took a third wife, Eleanor Thompson. Maryland Marriage Records confirm she was a widow before she married John Riddle. John (1) and Eleanor produced two more children.
1. John was born in 1740.
2. Elizabeth born about 1742 and married George Linton.

Observe that John (1) named one child John and one child Elizabeth by each of his three wives. This was a common custom followed by the Quakers and may indicate that John (1) was a Quaker. This may indicate that he or his parents previously lived in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, or Delaware as many Quakers settled these areas in the 1600’s.

In John’s (1) will dated August 19, 1745 and filed May 20, 1746 gave Elinor (Eleanor Thompson) his third wife and her heirs his entire estate. He did make two exceptions. He bequeathed five shillings to one of his sons named John and five shillings to one of his daughters named Elizabeth. It is assumed that John (1) gave the five shillings each to the John and Elizabeth that he had with his union with Eleanor Thompson.

In March 1794, about fifty years after John (1) died his grandson Zachariah Riddle of Loudon Co., Virginia filed a petition with the Prince George’s Co. Court of Maryland to settle the estate of John Riddle (2) who died intestate, without a Will. This petition names the children and grandchildren of John Riddle (2).

John Riddle (2) born July 25, 1708 and died in 1794 in Prince George’s Co., Maryland and was the second son of John Riddle (1). John Riddle (2) married Elizabeth Linton in 1729 at St. Barnabas Church in Prince George’s Co., Maryland. They bore eight sons and three daughters all born in Prince George’s Co., Maryland.

1. George Riddle born about 1729 and died about 1766.
2. Jeremiah Riddle born about 1731.
3. Sarah Riddle born about 1732 and married Francis Nicholson of Frederick Co., Maryland.
4. John Riddle (3) born Nov. 16, 1734 and died before 1795. This is the father of John W. Riddle, Sr. and the third son of John Riddle (2).
5. Samuel Riddle born May 7, 1736 and died in 1772.
7. Zachariah Riddle, Sr. born Sept. 20, 1737 and died in 1822 in Loudon Co., Virginia. Basil and Zachariah were twins.
8. Richard Jacob Riddle, Sr. born Aug. 15, 1739 and died about 1807.
10. Elizabeth Riddle born about 1741 and married Anthony Beck.
11. Susanna Riddle born about 1743.

John Riddle (3) born Nov. 16, 1734, married Lucy Ray Edmonston of Prince George’s Co., Maryland. Lucy was the daughter of John Ray and this union produced no offspring. John (3) later married a woman whose given name was Mary and had two sons.

1. Randall (Randolph) Riddle born about 1762 in Prince George’s Co., Maryland.
2. John Riddle (4) born about 1764 in Prince George’s Co., Maryland.

John Riddle (4) is John W. Riddle, Sr. our ancestor from Stokes Co., North Carolina.
On page 350, G. T. Ridlon in his book History of the Ancient Ryedales states that Randolph Riddle, brother of our ancestor John W. Riddle, Sr. was the son of Samuel Riddle.

It is unknown where he obtained this information but his article Riddles of Accomack Co. Virginia on pages 350 - 354 does correctly name some of Randolph’s descendants. John (3), father of Randolph and John (4) did have brothers named Samuel and Basil.

John (1), has yet to be connected to Sir John Riddell or to the Riddells of Roxburghshire, of Scotland. Stella Cotrill thinks that John Riddle (1) 1680 may have been the son of a John, William, or Walter Riddle, born about 1640 in England, Scotland, or New Jersey but this has not been verified.

The quest to solve these Riddle family mysteries has been long and sometimes arduous from the beginning in 1986.

Even though the publication of the Riddle Newsletter is ceasing the Riddle’s of Stoke Co., North Carolina web site will continue and the most current information will be continually posted. The Internet address is http://jimcal.com/riddlefam.htm.

All issues of the Riddle Newsletter are available on the site and please feel free to download and print any that might interest you.

An index of all the newsletter articles can be found in the separate newsletter article Riddle Newsletter Index.

Let me thank each and everyone of you, whether a family member or
not, who has contributed to the content and success of the Riddle Newsletter. You have made this a most rewarding experience and one that I will always cherish.

Dr. Elisha Mitchell Funeral Procession

Richard Riddle

In June 1998, a newsletter article titled Guide for Dr. Elisha Mitchell was published which mentioned that William Riddle, son of John W. Riddle, Sr., served as a guide for Dr. Mitchell in his quest for the highest point east of the Mississippi River.

I would like to thank the noted Allen family genealogist Carol Allen, for sending this article, A Funeral Procession Up Mount Mitchell. It originally appeared in The Youth’s Companion of October 13, 1887, page 434.

A Funeral Procession Up Mount Mitchell

On the 19th of June, 1857, Dr. Elisha Mitchell, a professor in the University of North Carolina, went up with his son from Asheville, N.C., to the top of one of the peaks of the Black Mountains, -the peak known since that date as Mount Mitchell.

The object of his journey was to ascertain the exact height of the various peaks, in order to settle a question, which was a matter of controversy between him and Senator Clingman, concerning their altitude. It was some eight or nine miles from the top of the mountain to the nearest house at the foot of the mountain on the western side,-the house of Tom Wilson, to which the professor proposed to go that afternoon. He apprehended no difficulty in finding the way, as he had been at Wilson’s more than once before. Tom lived on Cane River, on the verge of the vast wild wilderness, which stretched upward from the gate of his enclosure.

Standing thus on the summit, Dr Mitchell parted from his son, who was to return to Asheville, and started alone and on foot down the mountain side. He was never afterwards seen alive.

On the 8th of July following, a party of young men from Wake Forest College, consisting of C. S. Eillis, J. M. Taylor, W. B. Watford, Anthony Rhodes and A. J. Emerson, who were traveling for recreation, came into the village of Kinnville in the county of Yancey, only a few miles distant from Tom Wilson’s.

We were making the trip on foot, hunting and fishing, and leisurely enjoying the pleasures of tent-life in that picturesque region. Our baggage and provisions were conveyed in a wagon drawn by two mules. Mose Dent, a Wagoner by profession, and adept in all the arts of camp-life, was master of transportation; Henry Young, cook and factotum.

This party, entering the little mountain village, attracted the attention of a people not much used to
seeing strangers. On reaching the post-office, we found ourselves surrounded by quite a crowd, eyeing us and asking questions. They asked us if we had heard of Dr. Mitchell.

“Oh, yes,” we replied, “we have seen him at Chapel Hill. “Old Bull” the boys and girls called him, not out of disrespect, but because he was an Englishman, or because he looked like a bluff Britisher.”

“Well, he got lost on Black Mountain about ten days ago, and there has been great excitement through here about it. Parties of men have been hunting for him every since. Yesterday he was found way up on one of the forks of Cane River, drowned. They are getting up a company to go up to-morrow, and take the body to the top of the mountain. Should thing you fellows would like to go along.”

We said that we would like to go very much, and then began to inquire the way.

“‘Taint sich a very easy way to find. If you could git with some of those men that’s gwine up thar, they could pilet ye without any difficulty.”

“Yes, yes, that’s it,” said several.

“Who’s agwine boys, that they could git with?”

“I am,” said a big man, “if they can put up with sich company as me, I’ll go long with ‘em, and furnish me sher of the grub.”

He was rather rough looking, but many of the mountaineers have an uncouth appearance; so we agreed to accept his company.

“My name is Kirksey, Bill Kirksey; everybody here knows me. That’s my house down yonder. I’ll go home and have some provisions cooked, and when you git ready you can drive by thar.”

After Mr. Kirksey went away the crowd dispersed, and we spend some time walking around town and buying such things as we needed, in the little stores.

We observed that men did not seen disposed to talk so freely with us as at first, and here and there we could see groups of three or four looking furtively at us, and evidently talking about us.

“Going up on the mountain, I hear,” said one gentlemen: “dangerous country up there for strangers.”

“Curious people in some of those caves,” said another. “Be careful who you tie to. “Twon’t do to trust every man you meet.”
These hints and innuendoes began to make me feel that something was wrong, but the parties making them would do nothing more than give a vague warning of some danger ahead. The other boys of our party took their guns, after dinner, and went forward in advance, leaving Mose and myself to look up Mr. Kirksey, and follow on with the team.

Finally, a plain, rough-looking man, one of the common people, did us an act of kindness which men of higher stations in life evidently felt that they ought to do but dare not. It was a brave and unselfish deed.

Taking me into a dark room in one of the stores, he said, almost in a whisper:

“Hez anybody told you Bill Kirksey’s true carecker?”

“No,” said I; “no one.”

“Well,” he said, “they would’er told you, but they are all afraid of him. I advise you not to go with him. He is the dainjurest man in this whole county. I know I’m runnin’ a risk in tellin’ you, for he’d kill me ez like ez not, if he knowed uv it. I’ve never hed any fuss with him, and I don’t want any; but I thought it was my duty to try to keep a stranger out of trouble. He’s what they call “the bully,” the champion fighter of West’n North Carliner and East Tenisy. He’s got his challenge out to fight any man that’ll come again him any day. I reckon twenty men have tuck up his dare and fowt him, but they all got knocked out. He fout a fellar over in Pensacoly Cove, not long go, and they say he knocked him down the fust lick he struck, and then picked him up and flung him on top of the little still-house.

“An’ he’s as ready with a pistol and bowie-knife as with his fists. He’s killed two men on this side of the line that we know of and they say he’s done wuss’n that over in Tenisy. He won’t kill a man in cold blood, I must do him the justice to say that much in his favor; but when theyz any liquor around and a row gits up, keep out of retch of Kirksey, or you’ll be in a bad road for stumps. He’s a tiger.”

“What is his occupation?” said I.

“Haint got none that anybody knows of. Gits his living’ by gamblin’, I should judge. Don’t make much of it in this town, unless some stranger comes in; for the people all know him and don’t fool with fire. But ef he can git holt of a green one, he never fails to clean him out dead certain.

“He don’t play for fun, it’s for the money he plays, Kirksey does; and if it’s thar, he gits it. Ef he wins, all right; ef he loses he plays bluff. He leads his victims on till they get big money piled up on the boards, and then he hollers out”

“Thez been cheatin’ goin’ on roun’ this table. You tuck that kyard out o yo’ sleeve, honey! Didn’t he pardner?”

“Pardner swears he saw him do it; it don’t make any difference where he did er not. They fall to cussin’ and quarrelin’ er purpore, and then Kirksey whips out his bowie-knife and sticks here into the table while he retches over with his other hand, and rakes in the pile of money.
“I guess I'll hold the stakes tell this thing is settled.”

“The only way to settle it is to fight out or back out. Ninety-nine out a hundred men will back out, and Kirksey gits the money. That’s his game.”

“He thinks you young fellers, have got plenty money, and he wants some of it. You think that’s too many of you for one man to run over, but you see you don’t know all yet. Most of the people in these mountains are as good folks and honest folks and kind folks, though they look rough, as you’ll find anywhere, but them some bad ones, scattered around, a right smart sprinkle of ‘em, up and down these coves, and them that’s bad are mighty bad. You want to keep outer their claws.

“Kirksey’s the leader of that gang. When you git up ther in the mountains, you’re out of the protection of law, and if Kirksey’s in your tent, some o’ them will be not fur off. They’ll drop into you camp, accidental-like, and when he gits ready to go fur you, there’ll be enough of them to handle you and yo’ crowd, cappen.”

He went to a side door, and looking out, said: “Come here, cappen; I want you to look at this man.”

I saw a man of striking appearance just alighting from his horse; a slender form, a pale face, rather martial appearance, piercing black eyes.

“Now that man, they say, is the only man in Yancey County that Kirksey is anyways afeared of. His name is Marion Hauks. He’s a gentleman and the bravest man west of the Blue Ridge. He is armed you see, always carries a little arsenal long with him. He and Kirksey had a battle once! What fightin’!

“He laid Kirksey out with three or fo’ bullets in him, and Kirksey chopped him with his bowie-knife till they had to haul him home.

Kirksey don’t let on, but I think he kinder dreads Hauks and keeps out of his way. Now, ef you go ‘long with Kirksey, be on yo’ guard.”

I assured him that I should profit by his kind warning, and should most certainly decline Mr. Kirksey’s proposition to go with us and share out tent. I thanked him most heartily for telling us of our danger, and went to consult with Mose as to the best method of getting rid of Kirksey.

I need not disguise the fact that the necessity of facing this man of dread renown, to refuse his company after publicly accepting it, appeared to me at that time to be extremely disagreeable necessity, to say the least.

What if he should proceed with professional promptness to carve me up with his bowie-knife? My companions were gone, and I had no one to rely on for help but Mose.

What if Mose were a coward? What if Kirksey had some of his gang about his house ready to overpower us? If Mose were brave as a lion what could we do against a half dozen men with such a leader?
I may as well say that I wished I had more sense than to choose company without knowing of what sort it was; but this has been the lot of the inexperienced ever since the day of poor dog Tray. Found in bad company, though weakness or what of prudence, and sorry enough for it afterward.

However nervous I was, Mose did not seem to be alarmed when I told Kirksey’s reputation, but showed good, honest pluck.

“Take the straightforred shoot, cappen,” said he. “Le’s drive down to his gate, and you tell him perlitely as you can, that you don’t want his company, and ef he gits mad, let him git mad. I’ll stay in the wagon with this double-barrel gun handy, and ef he gits obstrupolous, I’ll down him to his tracks with a load of buckshot. I’ll do it, cappen, I will, so help me Jerooshy!”

I felt sure the way he spoke this that Mose was true and of good courage, and that he would spill his blood in my defense. This braced me up, and made me feel far more secure.

When we arrived at Kirksey’s house, I told him as courteously as I could, that we declined to take him in our party. Mr. Kirksey smiled.

“Somebody’s been tellin’ you a passle of lies, hanit they? Trumped up a boogar to scar you, hey? And you are afraid to go’ long with Kirksey, then? Thez no harm in me stranger. I’m a pious feller, I am; Sunday school man.

“I’ve shot a man or two, but that was accident. Pistol went off and they was standin’ in the way. I’ve cut up some few men, but they rushed upon my knife when I was slingin’ it round. If they hadn’t a been thar in the way, it would never a happened. Them little things oughtner make ag’ in a peaceable chap like me. But if I ain’t wuthy to go’ long with gentlemen, guess you’ll pay me fuh the vittles I’ve had cooked, won’t you podner?”

I said I could not pay for the “vittles.”

Then this gentle, easy-natured man deemed it a point of honor to compel me to pay for them. He blustered, threatened “cussed,” and swore till he seemed to work himself into a towering passion.

The “bully” was nearly ready for the attack. I was in a perilous situation. I was unarmed; and when he brought out a huge knife, I turned to look for Mose. He had put up the wagon cover to get a fair view of Kirksey, and was just bringin his gun to bear on him, when Kirksey laid his hand on the gate.

“Hold!” said Mose, ‘If you take one step to’des the cappen, you’re a dead man. I’ve got the drop on you, and twenty buckshot in her. I put’em in thar fur a bear, but you can have ‘em. That’s right, put up your knife, and be reasonable. You never came nearer going’ up the spout than you did hes’ then, mister. Now take my advice, and be friendly with my cappen.

Mr. Kirksey had the quality ascribed by Mr. Parton to “Old Hickory,” of being able to moderate his anger when it was prudent to do so. He therefore said:
“I should not uv gone with you, anyway, even ef you had wanted me ever so bad. I have just hyurd news, which calls me over in Tenisy. I can tell you one thing, you fellers better not linger too long in these mountains; it mayn’t be healthy for you.”

To Mose; “I never expected to find a down-country Wagoner with as much grit as you’ve got, old hoss.”

We drove on that afternoon, up Cane River as far as there was a road wide enough for the wagon. We had abundant reason, afterwards, to be glad that we had not taken Kirksey with us. For in our intercourse with the people, we found that the account given us by our unknown friend was entirely true, and that he was the terror of that region.

We stopped at the house of Mr. Nisam Allen, two miles from Tom Wilson’s. There was only a bridle path from Allen’s to Wilson’s.

Early next morning, we started for the rendezvous at Tom Wilson’s. As we would be in the wild wilderness from the time we left his doorway, we took provisions for two days.

About thirty men were gathered for the ascent under the leadership of Tom Wilson. Tom was a fine specimen of the mountaineer; a man of wood-craft, a follower of the chase, a slayer of the deer and bear on the mountain-side; a strong, fair face resisting sun-burn; Saxon-looking, with the flaxen hair of the Scandinavian curling on his bow--a man you could follow with confidence.

The little brook called Cane River was our guide to the place where the body of Dr. Mitchell lay. Sometimes we went in the steam, leaping from one to another of the boulder, through the midst of which the stream gurgles and pushed its way.

At other time, we found this too rough, and were forced to climb along the steep and rugged side of the mountain, picking our way among the rocks, fallen timber, and underbrush; in many places walking along fire-blackened logs, bridging fearful chasms; often in such perilous situations that a misstep might have hurled us down to death. After some miles of this sort of climbing, we came to the fatal pool. Looking down into its pellucid depths, we clearly saw the figure of a man lying dead on the bottom.

Cain River Valley
Many of the men who were there had been engaged for several days in the search for Dr. Mitchell. They were anxious to hear the story of Tom Wilson’s adventures in finding the body. As we sat around the little circular basin, Tom gave the narration in the simple, graphic language of a hunter. He had followed the doctor’s footsteps after finding his trail with the patient of an Indian, and with skill which rivaled the exploits of the famous Natty Bumpo.

Tom had prepared a long pole with a hook at the end. With this hook fastened in the coat collar, the body was slowly drawn to the surface. When the white forehead, with the thin hair floating in disorder, touched the upper air, a sort of shudder vibrated thought he circle of mountaineers surrounding the pool.

There was an investigation by the corner. Pocket book with money in it, watch in place; there was nothing to indicate murder or robbery. “Accidental death” was the conclusion of all present.

His watch had stopped at twenty minutes past eight o’clock.

As well as I recollect, he was a large man-weight over two hundred pounds. A mountaineer with a narrow-brimmed hat, who said he knew, declared that it was an impossibility for that company to carry the body to the top of the mountain. But Tom Wilson and Nat Allen affirmed that they could do it, and would, and the men followed the more resolute, and left the fain-hearted man in the minority of one.

It was most difficult undertaking to carry this heavy weight up, up, up, four miles of the steep and tough mountain acclivity; but these men of Yancey did it. I never witnessed human toil so Herculean.

A stretcher was made of strong, canvas cloth fastened on two strong poles, fifteen or twenty feet in length, and the body secured on it. Four men placed this on their shoulder.

Behind each of these, another man grasped the pole to push upward. These eight men began the climb. There was not path, but upward they went, over huge boulders, slippery, uneven, jagged, sometime far apart-trunks of trees lying across, often breast-high, carpet of moss with water under it, yielding and treacherous-thick, tangled undergrowth of bier, laurel, rhododendron, climbing, sprawling, overhanging, interwoven-always up, up four miles up a steep wilderness.

Advance thirty or forty yards, and then given place to eight other, and so on by relays of eight.

I tried it once for thirty yards and came out breathless. That was enough. I concluded that a lowlander had sufficient task to carry himself to the top of Black Mountain in one day; so I left the work to the mountain heroes.

They were at the summit of Black Mountain before night. Now, when they arrived there, what should they find, these men of Yancey, but a party of men from Buncombe, and ready to convey Dr. Mitchell’s body to Asheville!
“No, sir,” said these men of Yancey County. “We brought this body up here to bury it on the top of this mountain, and we are going to do it. We did not do all this work for Buncombe. No sir, why didn’t you Buncombe fellows come down and find the body and why didn’t you bring it up?”

“After we have found it and worked hard to bring it up, you want to carry it off to Asheville. No sir. It can’t be done, unless you are better men than we are.”

They were fighting mad in a few minutes, and I began to think I should witness a pitched battle, for the men of Yancey swore they would die before they would let the Buncombe fellows take the body from them.

Fortunately, there was a black-haired young man of persuasive tongue, standing there—a man whose hair is now gray, and who may be seen sitting the Senate of the United States, as Senator Vance, of North Carolina.

He made a speech to the angry mountaineers saying to them that he himself would prefer that Dr. Mitchell should be buried there; it would be most fitting and appropriate, that the great mountain might be his monument. But it was the wish of Dr. Mitchell’s family, that the body be carried to Asheville for internment, and he felt sure they would agree that it ought to be so.

They were appeased. Of course they would make no further objection, if it was the wish of the family, they said; but they wished it distinctly understood that they would see the Buncombe fellows many miles further off, before they would give the body up to them.

It was cold that July night, on the top of Mt. Mitchell. There was a small hut build of logs of balsam pine, and covered with bark, which furnished only sleeping accommodations. On the floor of this hut, thirty men, crowded together, found the space too small and the bed too hard for comfort, and we “wished for day.”

About three o’clock I arose, and going out, found that faithful Mose was wiser than I. He was snugly sheltered from the cold wind behind a large rock, and basking in the heat of a roaring fire. I joined him.

Next morning the clouds were far below us, hiding the earth from sight, and the peak on which we stood appeared like an island in mid-ocean. After the sun rose we seemed transferred to the Artic Ocean, and the clouds transformed into a wilderness of frozen sea and icebergs.

Presently there came a rent in the polar pack; this enlarging, we saw the green earth through the rift. Then, gradually, the whole sea of clouds rose and floated away like phantasms of a dream. The sublimity of the scene was indescribable.

We walked down the mountain in two hours and a half. There was a plain foot-oath all the way to Tom
Wilson’s. Had Prof. Mitchell found this path, he would have reached Tom Wilson’s in safety. He failed to remember that a circuit must be made to the left on leaving the top, before starting in the way that led to Tom’s house.

Many noble men have risked and some have lost their lives, to extend the boundaries of human knowledge. Among the martyr to science, the name of Elisha Mitchell should have a place of honor.

I have heard that his body has been removed to the summit of Mt. Mitchell, where the Yancey men desired to bury it. A noble resting-place for him whose name the highest peak of the Black Mountain will hand down to coming generations.

As an item of curiosity, I extract from my bank-book, written at the time, the particulars of a bill which our party paid at Mr. Nisam Allen, on taking our departure. This was the Golden Age, remember:

“Items-Seventeen meals; one quart of honey; one peck of meal; cooking a ham and several pounds of bread; lodging for three; two gallons of milk and twenty pieces of washing. Charge - $2.25 and he said that he would knock off something if we were not entirely satisfied!”

Wasn’t he a Nisam indeed?

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