FRIDAY, APRIL 9, 2010

[Our Family's Colonial Era, 1607 - 1775, Part I](http://hollimanfamilyhistory.blogspot.com/2010/04/our-familys-colonial-era-1607-1775-part.html)

*The following five colonial history posts are put together from a number of sources including published historical works, internet sites, and from the research of our contributors Dr. Rhodes Holliman, Maxine Wright, Glenda Norris, Ron Holliman, the late Walt Holliman and* *other family members who came before them*. *Those who have additional information or ideas for genealogy posts, please let us hear from you. Only by researching, critiquing, and listening to one other can our understanding of the past increase.*

**"From where did we come" is one of the oldest questions we humans ask. For Hollimans, our American experience began in Jamestown, Virginia where English America was founded by some adventurous colonialists from London in 1607. In this post we begin an on-going series about the first decades of our family in American.**

By: Glenn N.Holliman

*The map right identifies Smithfield,Virginia, where Christopher Holliman, Sr. settled by 1661. Jamestown is not marked but is just south of Williamsburg, where one can catch a ferry to Isle of Wight County on the south side of the James River.*

By any measure, the life of **Christopher Holliman, Sr**. (ca. 1630 - 1691) was one of adventure and economic success. We know he sailed over on a ship that was sponsored by John Coxe of London. Christopher stepped onto American soil in Jamestown, Virginia on May 22, 165o. He was only 19 or 20 years of age when he began his adventure in the "new world."

Christopher Sr.'s first wife was named **Anne**, last name unknown, and of that union, six children grew to maturity.

There is no other record of Christopher Sr. until 1661, when a deed states that he purchased land near what is now Smithfield, Virginia, across from Jamestown on the south side of the James River. He farmed several hundred acres along Cypress Creek, a tributary of the Pagan, which itself runs into the James River. From this body of water, Christopher, Sr. easily loaded hogsheads of tobacco onto ships which would transport his cash crop to England. He purchased more land along Cypress Swamp in 1668.

He did well economically because in 1684, now in his 50s, he patented a large amount of land from the Royal Governor between the Mill Swamp and the Blackwater River. The Blackwater River is the western boarder of Isle of Wight County. The plantation, as he styled it in his will, was large - 1,020 acres, a large farm for the time and place. When he died in 1691, his will divided the land among his children and his second wife, **Mary Gray Holliman**.

Where is the exact location of the original site? The deeds, dependent upon landmarks now gone, except for the Swamp and BlackwaterRiver, are unclear. A family friend and professional geographer who also traces his family back to Isle of Wight County, Paul Fly, suggested I look along the border of Surry and Southampton Counties.

In March 2010 my wife, Barb, our oldest granddaughter, Holly, age 4 1/2, and I took a day trip from Richmond, Virginia down Highway 460 past Wakefield, Virginia to the hamlet of Ivor. There we turned east on Proctor Bridge Road, crossed the Blackwater River and made some interesting 'discoveries' that I will share with you next week!


*The BlackwaterRiver (pictured right) flows southward into North Carolina. It is deep and wide enough for boats to carry tobacco casts to ships bound for England. Tobacco was the cash crop of Virginia and was the mainstay of its colonial economy.* *In his 1691 will, Christopher Holliman Sr. records that he had tobacco barns, confirming tobacco too was his financial foundation.*

FRIDAY, APRIL 2, 2010

[The Confederate Soldier Who Became a Teacher, Part II](http://hollimanfamilyhistory.blogspot.com/2010/04/confederate-soldier-who-became-teacher.html)

*This is the second part of Rhodes Holliman's story of James Franklin Holliman (photo below, ca. 1900). James Franklin returned from the Civil War and devoted himself to school teaching and educating a new generation. He also fathered nine children with two wives. Scattered throughout western and northern Alabama are many descendants of this dynamic ancestor!*

**A SOUTHERN FARM BOY**
**AND A GALLANT LOVER**
by Dr. Rhodes B. Holliman of Dublin, Virginia,
his great great nephew. First published in *Southern Times, Magazine* *of Tuscaloosa and West Alabama*, Issue 130.

He (James Franklin Holliman) returned to Bluff Community in Fayette County, AL, to resume farming and became the local school teacher. He had a large number of relatives on his class rolls including his brothers and sisters. He married Rebecca Utley Stewart, his wartime sweetheart, on July 2nd, 1865.

Her birth date remains in contention. Her ornate grave marker says: "Nov. 26, 1829". Other sources of family information say: "Oct. 6, 1839", but it is generally conceded that Rebecca was older than James - if her grave marker is correct, she was 10 years older. This disparity in their ages would be unusual for that era and place. men of that time usually married women who were younger.

A love letter written by him at some time during the War is reputed to be his proposal of marriage. It shows a remarkable expression of sensitivity considering that it was composed by a self-taught, back-woods, farm boy whose parents and siblings were mostly illiterate.

*“Miss, for the first time I undertake the pleasant task of addressing you by letter with feelings that you can better imagine than I can describe; to attempt to describe the feelings that pervaded my bosom the last time I had the pleasure of your company would be useless. They would baffel (sic) all descriptions; neither could I at that time, owing to the intensity of my feelings, express them, but my pen obeys the impuls (sic) of my heart, and I can with pleasure in this way communicate (sic) my thoughts and the tender sentiments of my soul to her I love, to her I adore.

It affords me unaffected pleasure to hold correspondence with one so pure, so inicent (sic), so lovely, and you will reseive (sic) thes (sic) lines as a token of the love of one whos (sic) heart you posess (sic), one who from the first moment in which he beheld you has never ceast (sic) to love you with all the tenderness that the human heart is capable of feeling. I, who never can enjoy life except in your society; what would all the world be to me without you to share its pleasures, a caotic (sic) nothing.

Often does my imagination fly to where you are and hover around you and fancy that I see your beautiful form and the angel like beauty and simplicity that is continually beaming from your face. O (sic) when shall my fondest hopes of hapiness (sic) be realized ? When shall I press you to my heart, and call you mine, my one, my lovely. Then would I in the language of the poets, be content and blest whenever I hear the voice of her I love.

Love, that word is full of meaning to me. Could I express that devotion of heart and soul, that enables both lover and love, that undying impulse of attachment that rules my breast; that union of thought, feeling and existence, by which two persons are bound together, that lasts for life and never knows ending; but language fails, and I alone can fel (sic), and you can realize the extent of what cant (sic) be expressed lovely girl. These are of one who will ever remain your faithful lover.”*
Rebecca (“Becca”) bore him 4 children: 3 boys and a girl. She died on November 2nd, 1883. An exhaustive search for a picture of her has yielded nothing.

He remained single until he was 57 years old (1896) whereupon he married a former student, Bertha Lee Powell, who was 18 years old! She bore him 5 children: 3 boys, 2 girls. He was 67 years old when his last child was born. He died on May 13,1911. Bertha Lee assumed the roll of head of household and reared her brood to be responsible and productive citizens.

In James' Last Will and Testament dated September 16, 1910, he bequeathed 40 acres of farm land to each of his children by Rebeccaand Bertha Lee and he appointed Bertha Lee as his executrix and guardian of his children. He bequeathed to her 20 acres of choice land all of his personal property.

His cause of death, as listed on the Alabama Death Certificate, was "softing of the brain." The duration of his terminal illness was listed as "8 months." The accuracy of medical diagnostics in rural Fayette County in 1911 was profoundly primitive!

*The above photo is of Bertha Lee Powell Holliman and her third child, Janet, b 1903 and who passed away in 2002.* *Bertha Lee died March 21, 1948. Photos on this post courtesy of Dr. Holliman.*The last of Bertha's children to die was Janet, who, in 2002, had survived for 99 years and 10 months. He, both wives, and a number of his offspring and in-laws are buried in the Holliman-Stewart Cemetery just south of the Bluff Community in northern Fayette County, AL. The ruins of his old homestead have been recently discovered just south of the family cemetery and isolated from any current or historic road bed.

FRIDAY, MARCH 26, 2010

[The Confederate Soldier Who Became a Teacher](http://hollimanfamilyhistory.blogspot.com/2010/03/confederate-soldier-who-became-teacher.html)

*In this post we focus on another of Mary Polly Holliman's sons, James Franklin, who survived the Civil War and returned home to become a school teacher. Unfortunately for Polly and her remaining children, her husband, Uriah, and two other sons, Charles Daniel and Elijah, died while serving in the Confederate Army. Imagine the heartache and worry of Polly both during and after the devastating war.

Our continued thanks to cousin Rhodes Holliman for his permission to share these amazing stories and photographs of our ancestors.

The photo is James Franklin Holliman in his Confederate uniform, ca. 1863.*

**A SOUTHERN FARM BOYAND A GALLANT LOVER**

by Dr. Rhodes B. Holliman of Dublin, Virginia,
his great great nephew. First published in *Southern Times, Magazine of Tuscaloosa and West* *Alabama*, Issue 130.

James Franklin Holliman was the second of 13 children born to Uriah Holliman and Mary Polly Lucas Holliman. She delivered her entire brood by herself, 7 boys and 6 girls. James was born in Tuscaloosa County, Alabama, on January 28th, 1839, but Uriah soon moved the family north into Fayette County, AL, where he obtained Federal homestead land for farming.

When the clouds of War covered the South, a wave of patriotic enthusiasm swept over the family and the father, Uriah, now 46 years old, 4 of his 7 sons, and one son-in-law joined the Confederate Army. The War would exact a heavy toll on this family: of the 6 who enlisted, only 3 would survive.

James enlisted for a year as a private in the 9th Alabama Battalion, Company B, in Fayette, Alabama, in September, 1861. In the following spring, the 9th Battalion proceeded to Corinth, MS, and was engaged at Shiloh and Farmington. At Blackland, MS, the Battalion lost about 20 killed and wounded and disease took its toll at Shiloh, Corinth and Okolona, MS. Among those dying at Okolona was James’ father, Uriah (May 8, 1862), and a brother, Charles Daniel (May 12, 1862).

James reenlisted in the 9th Battalion in September, 1862, as a 1st Lieut., and was sent to Mobile, AL, remaining there until April, 1863. At that time, the Battalion proceeded to Tullahoma, TN, and was placed in Gen. Henry D. Clayton’s Brigade. This set the stage for the carnage that would follow in the area around Chattanooga, TN. The 9th was in several small engagements, especially at Hoover’s Gap. In July, 1863, at Tullahoma, 2 additional companies were attached and the 58th Alabama Infantry Regiment was formed. The 58th was in the thick of the fighting at the Battle of Chickamauga in September 19 - 20. On the 19th, the 58th captured 4 pieces of artillery, and on the 20th, in a suicidal charge, they broke the enemy line with the loss of 148 out of 254 men. A few weeks later in November, the 58th was consolidated with the 32nd Alabama and the field officers of the 58th were retained.

The consolidated Regiment had 400 present at Missionary Ridge on Nov. 25th, 1863, but lost 250 in casualties and prisoners. Lieut. James F. Holliman was captured on November 25th. He was shipped to a military prison in Louisville, KY, and thence to the infamous prison for Confederate officers at Johnson’s Island, Lake Erie, near Sandusky, Ohio. There he remained until he was paroled and took the Oath of Allegiance on June 13th, 1865. He was then described as being 26 years of age, dark completion, dark hair, gray eyes, 5 feet, 9 inches tall.

*In our next weblog, we share the second half of James Franklin's life along with a beautiful love letter sent to his fiancée, Rebecca.*