*Note in previous articles, I have written of Josiah Holleman and his sons, Joel and Wilson.  In this posting, Allen Holleman writes of Jesse Holleman, the father and grandfather of the before noted Hollemans.  Allen's lineage is profiled in our October 4, 2012 article in the Archives of this blog. Take a look at Allen's blue convertible! GNH*

**Jesse Holleman, a Man Among Men**by descendant Allen Holleman

**Jesse Holleman** (1735 ca - 1825) is a great grandson of Christopher Holyman (1618-1691), the patriarch of most of the Hollyman (various spellings) clans in America.  **Christopher, Sr.** arrived in Jamestown in 1650, and fathered **Christopher, Jr** who parented **John Holleman**, the father of Jesse Holleman of this article.  All lived in Isle of Wight County, VA and had extensive land holdings in this Tidewater area of southeast Virginia.

We don't know much about Jesse's early life other than he was born about 1735-37. His mother was named **Elizabeth** but we know less about her except that she was named as heir and executrix of John's will dated and applied in 1751 when John died.

*Below a Google photograph of the Holleman Farm at Mill Swamp today.  Approximately 100 acres remain of the original 1,020 acres Christopher Holyman, Sr. patented in 1684.  The Mill Swamp Cemetery land and possibly the land for the Mill Swamp Baptist Church, adjacent to the Cemetery, were donated by the Holleman family.*  *The Holleman House and remaining farm is located on the left center of this picture on Highway 621.*

Jesse inherited 200 acres beside the Mill Swamp as a teenager, and it is safe to say he began farming the land as he grew into manhood.  He was educated well enough to read and write as he signed his name, not using an 'X'.  Also in his later professions of surveyor and land appraiser, many documents and other written works were necessary.  Even later, as a Baptist minister he needed not only to read and quote the Bible but to deal with the records and documents required.

Jesse acquired other properties and expanded his farming, mainly tobacco which leeches the soils so badly that land could be used only for a few seasons.  He and later his sons must have worked the farms themselves as census records show him having only one slave.  Although the slave population grew rapidly in Virginia in the 1700s, Jesse probably could not afford bonded servants in his early years.  Tobacco demands skill to raise, cure and transport, and he may have been able to hire some help among the numerous free blacks in Isle of Wight County.

What was Jesse like, what sort of man was he?  Farming demands dedication and hard work so he would have been self-directed and even driven.  By learning new professions, he showed determination to succeed and proposer. He surely had high standards for himself and expected no less for his children.  And they did not disappoint. A son, **Josiah**, became a member of the House of Delegates and a long time commissioner of Isle of Wight County.  A grandson, **Joel Holleman**, became a U.S. Congressman and Speaker of the House of Delegates.

The Holleman family was reasonably prosperous and prominent in the area among such neighbors as the **Wombles**, **Gwaltneys**, **Burwells**, **Wrenns** and **Cofers**.  And in marrying **Charity Cofer** (m. ca 1766), he did very well indeed.  He was held in such regard that he was co-executor of her father's will along with her brother and was trusted to value the land and divide it according to the senior Thomas' wishes.

There are records of his father John being a land appraiser, and one wonders if he might have also been a surveyor as well.  Jesse had probably learned much from John, even at a young age as they grew up quite early in colonial times.  Jesse gained experience and became a highly-regarded surveyor, an exacting science even in that more "primitive" time.  Land appraisal is more of an art, but requires trust in one whose judgement and experience can be relied upon, for sale or inheritance purposes.  There was little money so property and the cash crop tobacco were the basis for wealth.

Jesse and Charity had three daughters: **Mary "Polly**", **Sarah** and another whose name is lost to history.  I have read that they had twelve sons but we can only identify nine.  All the boys names started with 'J': **John**, **Josiah**, **Jesse** (Jr.), **Jordan** and **Jonathan** we know quite well and some about **Jeremiah** but nothing about **Jeptha**.  **Joel, Jedidiah or a possible Joseph.** They might have died at a young age**.**

And none named James. It was long thought that the elusive and enigmatic **James Grantson Holliman** was one but **Joseph Parker**, **Maxine Wright**, **Jeanette Holiman Stewart** and **Glenn N. Holliman** have demonstrated otherwise earlier at this blog site.  Charity would have been only 10-12 years old if she had birthed James Grantson, and she never lived North Carolina as did he.

Charity was in the 1810 census in Jesse’s household but died before 1816 when Jesse married a prominent widow, **Frances Dews Stringfield**, when he was about 70 years old.

And no, there were no more children,but Jesse who took up another profession; that of minister of the oldest Baptist church in Virginia - **Mill Swamp Baptist** that is still a thriving congregation even today.  There was a previous congregation that met at Burleigh Plantation in the earlier 1700s, but they never had a church per se. MSBC grew from that congregation. When he was in his 80's Jesse again served the church as minister.

And what might seem strange today...

Jesse was also a distiller of spirits.  It was common practice to have a toddy before dinner and Jesse, who evidently had no use for temperance, made apple brandy: his favorite.  It probably helped him live longer and surely made the journey better.  My how the Baptists have changed!

Many have stated that Jesse was a patriot in the American Revolution (true) - as a soldier in the army. That part is not a fact!  He would have been about 40 and too old for field service - except maybe as a senior officer, and the records would exist for that. No, he had a large farm and family to look after as well as his other professions. As all able-bodied men were expected to serve in the local militia, Jesse would have served there, probably along with his teen-aged sons.

 Alas, when **Banister "Bloody" Tarleton** burned the Isle of Wight courthouse in 1781, most of the militia records were lost along with many others. (This is why we have lost so much information on our antecedents.)

Jesse did something equally important.

In 1779 he was appointed Surveyor of Roads for IoW, building and maintaining roads used by the citizens, militia and army for moving men and materials through the county. There were no major concentrations of troops there and no major battles.

However, and unfortunately the British used the roads as well, making forays into the area burning, pillaging and thieving, always driven back to their ships by the local militia, who opposed smaller British forces, with the Army facing larger concentrations**.**

Jesse died in December of 1824 and his will was proved with an inventory on 3 January 1825. It has long been thought and written that he was buried in the Mill Swamp church cemetery but the land for that was given in 1830, five years later. It is almost certain that Jesse was laid to rest in the existing cemetery on the Holleman farm. Along with John, Christophers Jr. and Sr. Wooden markers of the time did not last and Wilson’s is the earliest in carved stone.

Jesse’s service as surveyor is the important basis for a number of DAR and SAR applications - including my own.

Jesse Holleman was truly ‘A Man Among Men’.

*Much of my research is based on the outstanding works like: "The Hollyman Family" by George A. Holleman and of Jeanette Holiman Stewart, Joe Parker, Dr. Sid Holleman, and others of our excellent Hollyman genealogists and historians. Especially to Cuz'n Glenn Holliman for his wonderful and important works on our family and for allowing me to tell Jesse's story here in his blog. JAH*

*I am grateful to Allen for this article, and encourage all who have an ancestral story to send it along so we may share it with others. GNH*