Coward Family Newsletter

A Brief History of the Coward Family Reunion

Volume 2, Issue 1 April 2002

The annual Coward reunion began as a birthday party for Nathan Coward on his 74th birthday, June 12, 1892. It continued as a reunion even after his death on February 22, 1909. On the occasion of the first "birthday party" it was agreed that the family would meet every year during his lifetime to continue the celebrations, rotating from one home to another beginning at the home of the eldest child, Clara Coward Smith. It took several days to prepare for the celebration. At that time, the family at whose home the reunion was held was responsible for preparing all the food and for gathering all the plates and utensils. Typical attendance was 85 people.

Nathan Coward was a well

to do cattle farmer and owned several hundred acres of land and a few slaves. He was married twice, to Jane Rogers Coward and to Sophia Hedden Coward whom he married after the death of Jane in 1885. Jane was a native of Buncombe County, but moved with her parents to a place on Cullowhee Creek. Nathan and Jane had 10 children: Minerva Emeline, Clara Almira, Tolvin Berry, Jonathan David, Martha Samantha, Mary Alice, Oscar Bowman, John Hamilton, Sallie Jane, and Robert Rogers. Sophia Hedden married Nathan when she was 16 years old, in October 1885. Nathan and Sophia had four children: John Homer,

Frances Emeline, Benjamin Franklin, and Jane Hedden. Minerva Emeline died in childhood and John Hamilton died as a young man. Thus, two of Nathan's younger children had the same names as two of his older children

Although the reunion started as a birthday celebration for the Nathan Cowards, other branches of the family joined it later

In this space in the next newsletters will be brief histories of the children and their families.

The 111th Coward reunion will be held on June 9, 2002 at the Pavilion in Cullowhee (the park on the campus of Western Carolina University).

BE THERE!!!

Nathan Coward

Who are we?

Who are the Cowards?

We are doctors, lawyers, judges, educators, ministers, students, farmers, mechanics, painters, small business owners, realtors, nurses, psychologists, public health workers, government employees, businessmen and

women, and other professions not named.

We are Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Catholics, Universalists, Unitarians, and other religions not named.

We come from every state in the union. We are young and old, rich and poor, well and sick.

But we all have one thing in common:

We came from humble beginnings, from people who had a reverence for the joys of life and for its responsibilities; from people who knew ease and hardship; from peowho passed on their integrity and honor to all of us who followed.

CELEBRATE
YOUR FAMILY!!

Congratulations!!! New Cowards Arrive!

Talvin Coward Family

Megan Ruth Ramba was born to Judith and David Ramba on July 22, 1997. Megan is the granddaughter of Carolyn Ruth Coward and she has a baby brother, Harley David Ramba, born December 21, 2000. Grandmother is thrilled! They live in Tallahassee so "Granny" can see them often.

George Thomas Anderson was born to Oscar and Carin Anderson on May 17, 2001. George and Joy Coward Anderson are the proud grandparents. Oscar, Carin and baby live in the D.C. area.



Congratulations!!! New Cowards Join Us!

Dave Coward Family

Katherine Elizabeth Harwood was married on June 16, 2001 to Nicolas Capiedra Ortega at Candlewyck Baptist Church in Charlotte, NC. Lisa is the daughter of Rick and Kathy Harwood and the granddaughter of Carolyn Stillwell Harwood. Lisa met her new husband at La Paz (a fine Charlotte restaurant) where they are both employed.

Russell Lawrence Bolin married Donna Lynn Jackson on August 12, 2000 in Malibu, CA. Russ is an attorney and Donna is senior writer-producer at Warner Brothers. Russ is the son of Larry and Margaret Russell Bolin and his grandparents were Lynn and Elizabeth Brown Russell.

Mary Rebecca Sillmon married Leo Michael Santowasso in Raleigh, NC on April 28, 2001. The bride is the daughter of Dr. and Mrs. David Sillmon and the grandaughter of Nell Wilde Sillmon.

Sandra Leigh Graves married Brian Shane O'Leary on Saturday, August 11, 2001 in King's Mountain Methodist Chapel. Sandra is the daughter of Joanne Sutton Graves and the late Whit Graves and the grandaughter of the late Davie Coward Sutton. All of Sandra's relatives were present and aunt Sue Vail reports that they has a "blast"!

Louis J. Smith/Clara Coward Family

Catherine Nicole Davis and William Blanchard Rideout were married on February 24, 2001 in Raleigh, NC. Will is the son of Nan and Richard Rideout and grandaughter of Clara McGuire and F. Wendt.

Mary Melissa Wendt was married to Daniel John Tymchuk of March 24, 2001 in Homer, Georgia. Mary Melissa is the daughter of Fred and Judie Wendt and the grandaughter of Clara McGuire and F. Wendt.

Anna Elizabeth Rouse was married to George Wayne Robinson on June 24, 2000. Anna is the daughter of Julia and Daryl Rouse and the grandaughter of Frances Smith and J. M. Kidwell.

...AND THEY LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER...



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In Memoriam: Ray Lowell Hooper

Ray Lowell Hooper of Durham, NC died December 5, 2001 after a brief illness.

He was born in Jackson County, NC on March 24, 1914, the fourth child of Aaron and Mary Jane Zachary Hooper. He was educated at Western Carolina University and North Carolina State University. He worked as a chemist for Ecusta Paper Corporation and in the chemistry department at Brevard College.

He married his wife of 60 years,

Ruby Inez Glazner in May, 1941. The made their home in Brevard until they retired to the Methodist Retirement Community in Durham and later to Croasdaile Village, also in Durham.

Ray was a long-term active member of the First United Methodist Church in Brevard. He was an exceptional woodworker, an inveterate hiker and woodsman, a connoisseur of fine apples, and a knowledgeable baseball fan.

In addition to his wife, Ray is

survived by his daughters,
Marianna Osolin-Putnam and
her husband, James Putnam; and
Maria Hooper Dunham and her
husband, Robert Dunham, all of
Chapel Hill. He is also survived
by 3 grandchildren, Anastasia
Osolin and her husband, Derek
Maus of Potsdam, NY; Aaron
Dunham of Boston; and Leah
Dunham of Chapel Hill.

Memorial services were held in Durham on December 16, 2001 and in Brevard on December 26, 2001.

In Memoriam: Nell Wilde Sillmon

Nell Wilde Sillmon died on November 9, 2001. The funeral was held on November 11, 2001 at Pleasant Garden United Methodist Church.

Nell was born in Jackson County, NC, the daughter of Julius Jacob Wilde and Minnie Norton Wilde. She married Pryor Robert Sillmon on July 22, 1929 and they lived in Pleasant Garden (near Greensboro) for many years. Nell was prededed in death by Pryor and by their daughter, Mary Nell Sillmon Tully.

Nell is survived by her son, Dr. David Sillmon and his wife, Gertrude, of Greensboro. Also surviving are 5 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren.

Nell Wilde Sillmon

In Memoriam: Roxie Cowart Crawford

I received word of the death of Roxie Cowart Crawford from her daughter, Kathy Farris. I am sorry that I have no other information to share at this time. I will add it to the newsletter when I get some.



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In Memoriam: John H. Clayton, Jr.

John H. Clayton, Jr. of Cullowhee died on July 15, 2001. Funeral was held at Cullowhee Baptist Church on July 18, 2001.

John retired in 1980 after working as a paint contractor and in retail sales. He served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. He was a member of Cullowhee Baptist Church, a board member for the Cullowhee Fire Department, served on the Jackson County Planning Board for 15 years and on the Jackson County

Recreation Board for 18 years. He was a charter and lifetime member of Land of the Sky PDCA and a lifetime member of Mike Martin VFW Post 9493.

He is survived by his wife of 56 years, Catherine McGuire Clayton; daughters, Ann Fowler of Hendersonville and Janie Lambert of Morganton; sons, Pat of Cullowhee and David of Valdese.; and six grandsons.

Our sympathies are extended to Johns' family.



TRIBUTE PAID TO LEWIS J. SMITH

The Lewis J. Smith Association paid tribute to our relative, Lewis J. Smith on the 100th anniversary of his death (May 22, 1901) at their annual meeting held at the East Laporte Baptist-Methodist Church on June 16, 2001.

The association, which promotes history and education, is named for Lewis J. Smith, a founder of the school that is now Western Carolina University.

After teaching in Haywood County, he enlisted in Company C, 29th Regiment, North Carolina Troops and served during the Civil War.

After the war he was married to Clara Coward Smith and they became the parents of 12 children. Needing a larger place to live they built a house in the "Painter" community that is now part of Cullowhee. As noted by his daughter Nannie Smith McGuire, "My father was not one

to live in a community long without a school and church ." So the Smiths donated an acre of their own land to establish a one-room subscription school . Liberty School was constructed on that site.

In 1888 Smith was elected to represent the 42nd state senatorial district which encompassed Jackson, Macon, Swain, Graham, Clay and Cherokee counties.

THE STATE NURSE: FLORENCE "MAC" THOMPSON

The following was written by Clay County poet, Brenda Kay Ledford, to honor Florence "Mac" Thompson.

For forty years Mac fought Polio, diptheria, whooping cough, All diseases that threatened The health of mountaineers.

She worked to heal The bleeding hillsides, To feed the hungry Comfort the brokenhearted She helped rid poverty From the rural region. She worked for power To light dark homes.

And brought joy to sad Faces filled with pain. She gave hope to patients Who gave up on life The state nurse traveled Muddy roads and forded Shooting Creek to reach Sick, bedridden folks.

For forty years Mac Thompson Touched the lives of people. She cared for mountaineers With heartfelt love.



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News from the "Family"

Dave Coward Family

Jacob Nichols (son of Charles and Renee Nichols) was inducted into the National Junior Beta Club on October 30, 2001 at Wesleyan academy, High Point, NC. Way to go, Jacob!!! Congratulations!

On October 29, 2001 first cousins, Edna Earle Sutton, Sue Sutton Vail, Joanne Sutton Graves, Carolyn Stillwell Harwood, and Marilane Bird Nichols visited at the home of Sue and Dunc Vail in Ashe County, NC. Photographs, memories and tall tales were shared as well as hopes and dreams. Of course, the pitfalls of "old age" were also discussed!

Benjamin Coward Family

Andrew Wright Pratt and Adam Towson Pratt of Atlanta, GA Boy Scout Troop 463 both recently received their Eagle Scout Awards. This is the highest award given by the Boy Scouts. Andrew are the twin sons of Justin and Suzanne Pratt of Atalnta and the grandsons of the late Mr. and Mrs. Alden Coward of Murphy, NC. They are pictured with their twin uncles, Bruce and Brian Coward who are also Eagle Scouts.

Left to right: Andrew Pratt, Brian Coward, Adam Pratt, Bruce Coward

OH WHERE, OH WHERE CAN YOU BE?

The last Coward Family Newsletter to the following people were returned to me as undeliverable. If you can help me get the correct addresses, I will be very grateful

Mary Griffin, Kingsland, GA
Carl and Blanche Painter, Sylva, NC
Wanda Springstead, Sylva, NC



Jo Ann Stamey, Sylva, NC Lucile Woodard, Bryson City, NC Marian Yancey, Amissville, VA

Thanks for the money... and could you keep up the good work?

Thanks to all of you who have answered the summons for financial support for the Coward Family Newsletter. I have enough money to publish this issue and will have a respectable reserve for the next one. Please don't forget your "family" when you find yourself with too much money on hand! You may send your contributions to me at the address on the last page of this newsletter. Memorial and honorarium

contributions will be acknowledged by a post card to the honoree or to the family of the person being memorial-

Memorial contributions have been received from:

Kathy Farris in memory of her mother, Roxie Cowart Crawford.

Marilane Nichols in memory of **Nell Wilde Sillmon**.

Other contributions have come from Ruth Cowley, Rebecca Smith, Barbara Tyson, Sue Vail, David McCann, Joy Anderson, Chuck Bird, Winifred Swingle, Miriam Foster and Judy Forcier.



Reach the Coward Family Newsletter!

EDITOR

Lynn Riggsbee 3308 Champaign St. Charlotte, NC 28210

Phone: 704-554-8765 Fax: 704-552-8449

Email: jbrlnr@bellsouth.net

GENEALOGIST

Trudy Adams 2140 Marion Street Birmingham, AL 35226-3012 Phone: 205-882-2446

Email: Trudyhadams@aol.com



CELEBRATE
YOUR
FAMILY!!!

Notes From Lynn's Desk

I intend to write in each newsletter about the family of one of Nathan Coward's children. However, my research materials are limited and I will have to depend on their descendents to provide me with family anecdotes and history. May I ask that one member of each family send me some information to be included in a subsequent newsletter?

And speaking of research...many thanks to those of you who sent me information for this issue. When you send me information for inclusion in the newsletter, please let me know the branch of the family you represent. I had to locate some "family ties" for this issue and I am not confident that I got everything right. If I misrepresented your ancestry, please let me know and I will make a correction in the next publication.

I had very limited response from my query regarding changes in the feeding and format for the reunion, so we will stay the way we are for now. I hope all of you can come on June 9, 2001!

Coward Family Newsletter 3308 Champaign St. Charlotte, NC 28210