

JOHN J. ABBOTT (1821-1876)

By Joan Horsley

Based on research as of Sep 2013

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JOHN J. ABBOTT

Son of Richard Abbott and Catharine Fulkerson

Born: 3 Feb 1821, Halifax County, VA

Married 1st 22 Nov 1841, Halifax County, VA to Paulina S. Lax/Lacks

Married 2nd Abt. 1869, St. Clair County, AL to Amanda McCargo

Died: 22 Nov 1876, St. Clair County, AL

PAULINA S. LAX/LACKS - Daughter of Royall Lax and Mary Hodge(s)

Born: 11 Mar 1824, Halifax County, VA - Died: 9 Oct 1866, St. Clair County, AL

AMANDA "MATTIE" McCARGO - Daughter of Jonathan McCargo and Amanda Ragland

Born: 17 Jul 1838, Halifax County, VA - Died: 21 Dec 1898, St. Clair County, AL

CHILDREN of JOHN J. ABBOTT & PAULINA S. LAX/LACKS (11)

James B. Abbott (died in Civil War), John H. Abbott (m. Idora McClellan), Mary "Mollie" C.

Abbott (m. William D. McCargo), Nicholas W. Abbott (m1 Nancy Elizabeth Lowery, m2 Mary

"Molly" I. Alexander), Richard Abbott (died in childhood), William R. Abbott (m. Annette "Netta"

L. Cospers), Pauline Rebecca Abbott (died in childhood), Thomas J. Abbott (m. Martha "Mattie"

F. Willingham), George W. Abbott, Jefferson D. Abbott (never married), Matthew T. Abbott (m.

Mary A. "Addie" Brewer)

CHILDREN of JOHN J. ABBOTT & AMANDA McCARGO (4)

Susan "Sudie" M. Abbot (m. Leonidas "Lon" C. Davis), Robert E. Abbott (m. Eliza E.

Willingham), Mattie Abbott (m. Jerry D. Bell), Gertrude Abbott (m. William B. Wallace)

JOHN JAMES ABBOTT was born 3 Feb 1821 in Halifax County, VA, the eldest son and first surviving child of Richard Abbott and Catharine "Caty" Fulkerson. *[Birth date from grave marker. Middle name in death cert. of son Matthew.]* John was born and raised on land that his father, Richard, inherited from his father, Joseph Abbott (Sr.), where Richard also was born. *[HWB2:298]* Joseph Abbott's family had lived on the land at Difficult Creek since arriving in Halifax from King and Queen County, VA, abt. 1762. Deeds show their land was located just east of today's Crystal Hill, VA, in north-central Halifax County. Prior to 1777, Halifax Court was held near today's Crystal Hill, which is 7 miles north of today's county seat at Halifax, VA.

Contrary to unsourced online files for this Abbott family that include numerous errors, John J. Abbott was not born in "Maresville." No such town ever existed in Halifax County. The name "Maresville" may have been a mistaken reading of Meadville, since some Abbotts are listed in what was called "Meadville District" in the 1820 census. However, the town of Meadville, created in 1798, was across the Banister River 10-12 miles west of where they lived and in a different area of the county.

John J. Abbott married Paulina S. Lax/Lacks by bond dated 22 Nov 1841 in Halifax County, VA.

[Halifax Marriage Bonds Register No. 1] John was three months shy of 21 years old, and Paulina was age

17. Her father, Royall Lax/Lacks, signed the certificate of consent. The witness and John's bondsman was John H. Traynham, Paulina's brother-in-law who married her sister Rebecca H. Lax in 1834. (The bond index spells their last name as "Lacks," although the spelling of the family name in Virginia for the previous 100 years was "Lax," and the transition from "Lax" to "Lacks" was just beginning when they married. Also, later in Alabama Paulina's first name was pronounced "Perlina," the name that came down through family oral history. See more about the variations of her names in the report on Paulina.)

The Lax families were close neighbors of the Abbotts from the time Joseph Abbott brought his family to Halifax abt. 1762, so John and Paulina grew up together. Also, John's mother, Catharine Fulkerson Abbott, was related by Chandler marriages to Paulina Lax's family.

Halifax County had been a prime migration destination in the mid-1700s with settlers arriving not only from northern and eastern parts of Virginia but from colonies further north such as New Jersey, where John J. Abbott's maternal great-grandfather came from. However, economic conditions in Halifax deteriorated badly over the first decades of the 1800s. The Industrial Revolution was bringing changes of its own, but the economic situation in Halifax was exacerbated as a relatively small group of wealthy merchants and large landowners gained control of all the sources of vital supplies and services, which led to heavy debts and foreclosures among a large segment of the Halifax population. A great exodus from Halifax ensued, from which some local historians say the county never recovered.

John J. Abbott's parents, Richard and Catharine Fulkerson Abbott, were among numerous relations and friends who were burdened with cumulative debts and deeds of trust to such merchants. His parents finally joined the exodus from Halifax after they were forced by debts to sell the last of their previous 481 acres at Difficult Creek on 21 Nov 1843. [HDB49:165] His father was 73 years old when they moved in Dec 1843 abt. 30 miles southwest to the southeastern part of adjacent Pittsylvania County, VA. John's five younger siblings, all still unmarried, went with his parents. John and Paulina chose to stay in Halifax.

However, John J. Abbott likewise struggled against mounting debt to the same merchants as his father. By the following deed of trust dated 30 Oct 1845, John used all his personal possessions plus his interest in the estates of his wife's recently-deceased parents, Royall Lax and Mary (Hodge) Lax, to secure his debt. (A married woman could not hold property in her own name alone, and her husband became, "by right of" his wife, the legal owner of any properties coming to her.) The records do not tell us if or when John was able to pay off these debts or what he had to forfeit in order to do so. There is no formal deed of release, but no later deed of trust was recorded.

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Date: 30 Oct 1845

From: JOHN J. ABBOTT

To: William T. Ballow and Edwin R. Ferrell, Trustees, to secure debts owed to William Bailey and James Young merchants and partners trading under the firm and style of James Young & Co. and to William Bailey, James Young, and John A. Kent merchants and partners trading under the firm and style of Young, Kent, & Co.

For: \$1.00

Description: 2 feather beds, bedsteads, and furniture; one cupboard; one walnut chest; one folding table; one dressing table; one looking glass; all the balance of my household and kitchen furniture; eight chairs; one spinning wheel & cards; all my interest in the estates of Royall Lax

and Mary Lax which I am entitled by right of my wife Paulina S. [*née* Paulina S. Lax]; one debt on Richard Abbott [his father] for \$38.98, one debt on Charles Allen Jr. for \$6.50, and the balance that will be due me from William T. Ballow and all other debts due me; and my part of the crop of tobacco made in 1844 as overseer for Mary R. W. Roberts, my part being 1/4; two bridles, one mare; saddle and side saddle; fire stone pots, one brass kettle - to the only proper use and behoof of the said trustees.

Purpose: To secure the debt John J. Abbott owes to James Young & Co. of \$118.74 due by bond with interest from 1 Mar 1845, and a debt to Young, Kent, & Co. of \$25.70 due by bond payable 1 Mar 1846.

Conditions: If John J. Abbott fails to pay the above-mentioned debts or any part thereof with the interest due thereof by 1 Mar 1846, the above-mentioned properties shall be subject to public auction at the request of John J. Abbott, James Young & Co., or Young, Kent, & Co. Proceeds to go to payment of debts plus interest and expenses. Balance remaining, if any, to go to said Abbott.

Signed: John J. Abbott

Witnesses: Bev. Barksdale Jr., Geo. C. Holt, W'm H. Morgan

Recorded: 30 Oct 1845

[Source: Halifax Deed Book 51, p. 49-50. LVA Reel 24. Abstract by J. Horsley. Comments in brackets added.]

Besides giving us an inventory of John's personal possessions at the time and further proving Paulina's parents, this deed gives us a glimpse of their life and residence at the time. The deed shows that at least by 1844, John was working as an overseer for "Mrs. Mary R. W. Roberts," whose land was at Difficult Creek on the south side of Abbott family lands where John grew up. Mary R. W. Roberts (*née* Hill) also was related to John J. Abbott through her husband's family. She was the widow of William D. Roberts (d. c1839), a first cousin of John's mother Catharine Fulkerson Abbott. William was the son of Daniel Roberts, a brother of Sally Roberts Fulkerson, Catharine's mother. Daniel's wife was related by marriages to John's uncle William Abbott. William D. Roberts and his brothers James P. Roberts and John Roberts were on earlier Abbott family records. Later, William and Mary's son Thomas L. Roberts was closely involved with Abbott family members, and their son John H. Roberts married a granddaughter of Richard Abbott's sister Mary Abbott Owen. These connections are examples of the many ways the Abbotts were intertwined and intermarried with their close neighbors over the span of a century in Halifax.

John's father, Richard Abbott, died in adjacent Pittsylvania County, VA abt. Dec 1848, and his will, written 18 Mar 1847, was presented in Pittsylvania Court 15 Jan 1849. [*PWB2:68*] Richard was abt. 78 years old at his death, and Catharine was abt. 58. Despite the loss of his land, he was able to preserve assets well above the average. Richard left all his estate to his wife, Catharine, during her lifetime. His will further instructs that after her death, the remaining estate should be sold and the proceeds divided equally among all his children, except that his son John J. Abbott should receive \$100 less than the others, indicating Richard previously had given John a gift of that value (perhaps when John married).

Since Richard did not name all his children in his will, it is fortunate that John is named in order for us to have faultless proof of John's parents. In the 1950s, John's granddaughter Mrs. Ernestine Abbott Almon, born 14 years after John died, made some incorrect assumptions and mistakenly thought it was a "near-fact" that John's father was named Joseph, whom she called "Joseph Abbott III." The wills of Richard and his father Joseph Sr. prove otherwise.

By the 1850 census, John and Paulina, now with four children, were living in the southwestern part of Halifax County, not far from where his widowed mother and siblings were living in southeastern Pittsylvania County. In 1850, as in 1844, John was working as an overseer but no longer for Mary Roberts (whose new son-in-law was running her farm with the help of her two sons, now ages 16 and 18). In 1850, John J. Abbott probably was working for David Lawson, who is listed next to John's family in the census and who owned 21 slaves that year. (Interestingly, in the later 1700s, a Horsley family lived near and was related by marriages to David Lawson's family in Halifax before the Horsleys moved on through SC and GA to AL. A hundred years later, a granddaughter of John and Paulina married a Horsley great-grandson in Easonville, St. Clair County, AL.)

 1850 U.S. Census - Halifax Co, VA - Southern District
 Abbott, John J. - 31 - Overseer - born VA
 Pelina [Paulina] - 26 - VA
 James B. - 7 - VA
 John H. - 4 - VA
 Mary C. - 2 - VA [called "Mollie"]
 Nicholas W - 5 mos. - VA [b. 30 Jun 1850]

 Soon after the 1850 census, John and Paulina and family bade their own farewell to Halifax County and left the place where their families had lived for almost 100 years. John's widowed mother, Catharine Abbott, remained in Pittsylvania County, where she and John's unmarried sister, Sarah F. Abbott, earned their living as seamstresses (a talent inherited by a number of John's descendants). All of John's other siblings moved out-of-state by 1856. Two brothers and a sister moved with their spouses to nearby North Carolina counties just across the state line, and the other brother, who left the area at the same time for parts unknown, ended up 20 years later in Jefferson County, AL, adjacent to St. Clair.

By 1852, John J. Abbott's family was living near the Tennessee River at Florence, Lauderdale County, AL, according to family information told to me by descendant Mary Joe Abbott Wise. Lauderdale County is in the far northwestern corner of Alabama at the Tennessee border, over 600 miles southwest of Halifax. John and Paulina must have known people in Halifax who moved to this area either before or with them, as families usually migrated long distances with, or to join with, relatives or friends. (Mary Joe thought perhaps some later-related Willinghams first went from Halifax to that area, too.) However, the place apparently did not meet the Abbotts' needs or expectations, and they soon moved on.

Between 1852-1854, John and Paulina moved their family 180 miles southeast to Talladega County, AL, located along the east side of the Coosa River in northeast Alabama, where they joined other Halifax friends, including Willinghams and McCargos. On 15 Jul 1854, "John J. Abbott of Talladega County" was issued two federal land grants for land in Talladega. One tract was 39.62 acres, and the adjoining tract was 79.74 acres. On 1 Jan 1859, John J. Abbott was issued another grant for land in Talladega. This tract of 39.97 acres was few miles west, so John may have sold, traded, or leased it out. [BLM-GLO. AL Vol. 326, p. 24, 85; Vol. 329, p. 311] (County deeds for John in Alabama have not yet been searched.)

From his real and personal property values in the 1860 census, John J. Abbott recovered well financially in his new home, even as his family size doubled over the previous decade:

1860 U.S. Census - Talladega Co, AL - Northern Division - Post Office: Talladega

Abbott, J. J. - 45^[sic (39)] - Farmer - Real Est: \$1500, Pers. Est: \$875 - VA
 P. - female - 36 - VA [Paulina Lax/Lacks Abbott]
 J. B. - male - 17 - Farmer - VA [James B. Abbott]
 J. H. - male - 14 - VA [John H. Abbott]
 M. C. - female - 12 - VA [Mary "Mollie" C. Abbott]
 N. - male - 10 - AL ^[sic, b. VA] [Nicholas W. Abbott]
 R. - male - 8 - AL [Richard Abbott]
 W. R. - male - 6 - AL [William R. Abbott]
 R. - female - 4 - AL [Pauline Rebecca Abbott]
 G. W. - male - 2 - AL [George W. Abbott]
 F.^[sic] J. - 1^[sic (2)] - AL [Thomas J. Abbott]

John J. Abbott is not listed as a slave owner in the 1860 U. S. Census Slave Schedule.

The Civil War formally began in April 1861. In March 1862, John and Paulina's eldest son, James B. Abbott, then abt. 19 years old, enlisted in the Confederate Army. James enlisted for three years in his home county of Talladega as a Private in Company F, Alabama 30th Regiment Infantry. The company, under Capt. Thomas H. Patterson, was composed primarily of men and boys from Talladega, many of whom had grown up together. In a statement made later that year while a prisoner of war, James said he enlisted "through fear of the draft," as many likely did.

Three months later, on 18 Jun 1862, James B. Abbott was among those captured in "East Tennessee" and sent as a prisoner of war to Camp Morton, Indiana. In late November 1862, an exchange was arranged, and James was one of the 770 soldiers sent back South, arriving in Vicksburg, MS on 8 Dec 1862. The next record in James' service file gives no details, only that "J. B. Abbott" died in 1863 in Chattanooga, TN, as listed on the "Register of Confederate Soldiers who were killed in battle, or who died from wounds or disease." James was about 20 years old when he died but likely had experienced the human tragedies of several lifetimes during the last year of his young life. (See details of his service file in his individual notes compiled from NARA Publication M311.)

About the same year James died, John J. Abbott moved his family west across the Coosa River into adjacent St. Clair County, AL. Three years later, John's wife, Paulina "Perlina" S. Lax/Lacks Abbott, died 9 Oct 1866 in St. Clair County. She was 42 years old. In addition to her 9 children born before the 1860 census, Paulina also had two younger sons, Jefferson (b. 1861) and Matthew (b. 1864).

Mary Joe Abbott Wise told me that although Paulina does not have an existing grave marker, she is buried with her husband John J. Abbott. Their graves were among those that had to be moved to the Coosa Valley Cemetery near Pell City due to a dam built on the Coosa River in the early 1960s that flooded the original cemetery. (More details below.)

According to passed-down family information, John and Paulina's son Richard Abbott died at age 16, and their daughter Pauline Rebecca Abbott died at age 12. Using their ages in the 1860 census (which for most family members fit with recorded birth dates), Richard and his sister Pauline both died abt. 1868. Their deaths so young and so soon after the deaths of their brother James in the war and their mother Paulina, possibly in childbirth, had to be a special sadness

added to the devastating losses and widespread hardships of the Civil War and its aftermath throughout this decade.

Yet there were also occasions to celebrate and the promise of new life in the Abbott family. Abt. 1868 or 1869, John J. Abbott married his second wife, Amanda "Mattie" McCargo. Mattie was the daughter of Jonathan McCargo and Amanda Ragland, who married in Halifax County, VA by bond of 26 Nov 1827.

John and Paulina's daughter Mollie C. Abbott married Amanda's widowed brother William D. McCargo around the same time. (Marriage records not yet obtained.)

1870 U.S. Census - St. Clair Co, AL - (Precinct 12) - Post Office: Kelleys [Kelly] Creek

Abbott, J. J. - 48 - Farmer - VA

Amanda - 32 - Keeping house - VA

John H. - 28 - Farmer - VA

Nick - 19 - Farm hand - VA - attended school this year

William - 16 - AL - attended school this year

George - 14 - AL - attended school this year

Thomas - 12 - AL - attended school this year

Jefferson - 10 - AL

Mathew - 8 - AL

Susan - 8 mos - AL ["Sudie," first child of John J. and Amanda/Mattie]

McCargo, Mary - 16 - W - Work in house - Ark [relative of Amanda]

Harriett - 25 - B - Domestic servant - AL [prob. a former McCargo slave]

Patsie - 8 - B - At home - AL

Note:

According to a 1915 map of the area, the town of Kelly Creek was just west of the Coosa River and a few miles southwest of Easonville in the southern tip of St. Clair County at its border with Shelby and Talladega County. As discussed below, Easonville no longer exists but was just southwest of today's Cropwell, AL.

John James Abbott died 22 Nov 1876 in St. Clair County, AL at age 55. His youngest child, Gertrude, was only 3 months old, and his widow, Amanda, was age 38. John is buried in Coosa Valley Cemetery just south of Pell City at Cropwell, AL in St. Clair County.

His grave marker is inscribed:

John J. Abbott

Born Feb. 3, 1821; Died Nov. 22, 1876

Note:

A photo of John's grave marker is available online at FindAGrave.com

[Find A Grave Memorial #11839775. Created by Kitty Walker Lennard. Record added: Sep 28, 2005]

The same website includes a photo of a plaque at the Coosa Valley Cemetery with this inscription:

"The Coosa Valley Baptist Church Cemetery, Easonville Methodist Church Cemetery, and the Cospers Family Cemetery, now part of Martin Logan Reservoir, were re-located to this site in 1962-1963." *[Photo of plaque contributed to FindAGrave by Kitty Walker Lennard]*

Although the FindAGrave website lists the cemetery address as Pell City, Abbott descendant Gloria Furman tells me that it is actually on the southern outskirts of Pell City at Cropwell. Online maps show the location about a mile or so north of Easonville Road that presumably once went into Easonville, now under the waters of Martin Logan Reservoir.

In 2007, Mary Joe Abbott Wise wrote this to me about the grave transfers:

“We've talked about the Methodist-Episcopal Church that [Nicholas Abbott's first wife] Nanny Lowery Abbott attended. I have learned from my mother & aunt that this Church is what I knew in my childhood as Coosa Valley Baptist. My Masters grandparents lived across the road from it. My Willingham & our Abbott families were buried there. They were moved to the new Coosa Valley location on Hwy 231 before the dam came and the lake filled. The church was on the old Hwy 231, and the area is all under water now.

“My Dad [Joseph B. Abbott, d. 1976] spent a week here while our family graves were moved. It was an emotional time for him – I remember how 'wrung out' he'd be every afternoon. He'd stop by our house & spend some time with my boys before he went home - playing with them helped to get it off his mind until the next morning when he'd go again. His Willingham greatgrands [great-grandparents], Isaac & Sarah Jones Willingham, were the oldest markers found. Isaac died in 1853.

“The graveyard was on the right hand side of the drive [up to the church]. I remember it was on a slope & was sectioned off (going up the hill) with low rock walls. Behind the Church there was a Black cemetery & I don't remember any markers. In the early days the families took their slaves to Church with them or so I've been told. Locals remember when the lake was filled - said there were coffins floating around, caused a lot of panic with some families. Thanks to my Dad, we know all of our folks were moved.”

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1880 U.S. Census - Mundine, St Clair Co, AL

Abbott, Amanda - 42 - Widow - Farmer - VA-VA-VA

Thomas J. - 21 - Stepson - Laborer - AL-VA-VA [son of John & Paulina]

Susan - 10 - Daughter - AL-VA-VA

Robert E. - 8 - Son - AL-VA-VA

Mattie - 5 - Daughter - AL-VA-VA

Gertrude - 3 - Daughter - AL-VA-VA

John and Paulina's youngest sons are living this census with their sister Mary "Mollie" C. Abbott McCargo in adjacent Talladega County, AL, where Mollie was born:

1880 U.S. Census - Blue Eye, Talladega Co, AL

McCargo, William - 50 - Farmer

Mollie - 30 - Wife [Mary C. ABBOTT]

Major G. - 24 - Son [by Wm's 1st wife] - Clerk in Store

Lular [Lula] M. - 20 - Daughter [by Wm's 1st wife]

ABBOTT, Jefferson - 20 - Works in Sawmill

Mathew T. - 16 - At School

This entry below may be John and Paulina's son George Abbott also living in Blue Eye this year, marked as married within the year but no wife with him. (See Notes for George W. Abbott for more information)

1880 U.S. Census - Blue Eye, Talladega Co, AL

Turner, James A. - 54

Martha E. - 50 - wife

Rebecca A. - 21 - daughter

Caroline - 16 - daughter

McReynolds, Sarah - 87 - mother

ABBOTT, GEORGE - 23 - Boarder - Farm Laborer - "married within the [census] year"

1898 - Amanda "Mattie" McCargo Abbott died 21 Dec 1898 in St. Clair County, AL

Grave marker inscription:

Mattie Abbott Wife of J. J. Abbott

Jul. 17, 1838 - Dec. 21, 1898

Coosa Valley Cemetery, Pell City, St. Clair Co, AL

[Source: Photo on FindAGrave. Memorial #11839758. Created by: Kitty Walker Lennard, 28 Sep 2005]

Re: Graves of John J. Abbott and wives Paulina Lax and Amanda McCargo

Mary Joe Abbott Wise wrote me in 2003 that "John James and his wife Perlina share the same tombstone. The stone is Masonic, so I assume it was placed after John J.'s death. His second wife, Amanda McCargo is buried next to them."

JH Note: The Masons were very active in the South at least by the time of the Civil War, so John's marker with the Masonic symbol could have been placed on the original marker for his grave, and by the photo Mary Joe sent me, it does not look like a recent marker. I do not see any inscription for Paulina, and apparently her marker did not survive the grave removals in the 1960s.

Gloria Furman tells me, "The graves are in Cropwell on the edge of Pell City. My daughter...and I found them about 14 years ago [1993]. There are a lot of Abbotts buried there. Some of them were moved from Easonville when that town was flooded for a TVA project [1962-1963]." (Other Abbott graves are more recent deaths.)

Re: House of John and Paulina Abbott

This is part of an email Mary Joe Abbott Wise sent me in 2004 with a photo attached. (Like most of the Alabama family, she calls John's wife Perlina, the way her name came down through the family as the Deep South pronunciation of Paulina):

"The front drive was narrow & circled around the front of the house with the fish pond in the circle. This is the house that John James & Perlina built & where they raised their family. It was moved after the lake was filled in the 1960's & still looks pretty much the same with the exception of a few porches. We've always regretted not buying it back from AL Power but since

it was put together with pegs we couldn't find anyone who would move it - they all said it would fall apart during the move. Sorry we didn't chance it but glad someone did - it's visible from Hwy 231S & looks great."

Re: Names of John J. Abbott's children

Among other Abbott family information Mary Joe generously sent me over the years of our friendship, she was my first source for the full names of John J. Abbott's children, although she did not have sources for them. Of the ones who survived to adulthood, I have documented all the full names except: the full middle name of Jefferson D. (Davis), the full middle name of William R. (Royal), and the full middle name of Sudie M. Abbott Davis (Malvina). Mary Joe gave their sister's name as Mary Frances Abbott Bell, but I have found her recorded only as Mattie (the nickname of her mother Amanda), so I have listed her only by the name I could prove.

Acknowledgement:

I shall forever be indebted to Mary Joe Abbott Wise. In 2003, I posted a message on an online Abbott Message Board asking for any information about Nicholas W. Abbott. At the time, all I knew about him--or any Abbots--was his name as my grandmother Ella Abbott's father. Several months later, Mary Joe found my post, and for the next six years that I had the joy of knowing her, she shared generously and warmly the wealth of information she had about our Abbott families, among whose descendants in St. Clair she lived all her life. Her unexpected death on 22 Nov 2009 grieved me deeply for the loss of a valued friend and relation who shared my passion for learning our family history. Mary Joe now knows more than we can ever know on this side of "the veil," but I hope she will be pleased with the outcome of our work together and the corrections and additions I have found that I could not have done, and would not even have begun, without her. May she Rest In Peace among all our Abbots in Coosa Valley Cemetery and sing and dance with them in the Beyond.

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