

The Hart of Georgia



Of the 159 counties in Georgia, there's only one named for a woman. Hart County, in the northeastern part of the state, is named after my daughter-in-law's 6th great-grandmother... and for good reason. A formidable woman she was.

Nancy Hart (nee Morgan) stood six feet tall with red hair and a muscular build and she was as adept with both gun and axe as any man. She was also a devout patriot when it came to American Independence and she had ample opportunity to prove it as she lived during the Revolutionary War. Two of her oft-told tales are summarized below.

In one, as she was stirring a pot of boiling soap over an open fire and regaling her family with the latest news of the war she was alerted to a spy peering at them through the crevices in the log wall. Quick as lightning she flung the ladle of boiling soap through the crevice in the wall, catching the eavesdropper full in the face. Dashing outside, she continued to taunt the now blinded Tory as she bound him and took him prisoner.

Her most famous exploit occurred when six British soldiers came upon her cabin and demanded a meal. While she was well

known for her open hostility towards the British she was also renowned for her culinary skills. In this case, she became cordial and hospitable, fixing an ample feast for her enemy who, stacking their muskets in the corner, enjoyed the food and drink before them. As they became intoxicated, she sent her daughter to fetch her husband from the fields and began slipping their muskets through a chink in the wall. As she was handling the third musket, she was discovered and as one of the soldiers moved toward her she, without hesitation, spun and fired upon him, shooting him dead. A second soldier decided to act and she grabbed another gun and wounded him. With the third musket now in her hands, she dared the others to test her resolve. They did not. When her husband arrived, the remaining prisoners were taken out to the back and hung from an oak tree as Nancy opined that they weren't worth the bullet.

Michael Ondrasik and Home Video Studio specialize in the preservation of family memories through the digitalization of film, videotapes, audio recordings, photos, negatives, and slides. For more information, call 352-735-8550 or visit our [website](#). And please watch our TEDxEustis Talk on YouTube at https://youtu.be/uYlTTHp_C08.

Gone Too Soon



In the 1970s, a new genius burst onto the comedy scene. Originally a student of the famed Julliard School, Robin Williams departed after his junior year when told “there was nothing left they could teach him.” He began performing in comedy clubs in San Francisco and New York and was quickly recognized for his rapid-fire delivery, brilliant improvisational skills, and indefatigable energy. Producers wasted no time finding vehicles for him.

He reached superstar status when cast as a bizarre but lovable alien in the TV show *Mork and Mindy* which ran for four seasons (1978 – 1982). He continued performing his standup comedy albeit in larger and larger venues and then decided to bring his considerable talents to film. His first notable performance was in Robert Altman’s *Popeye* which, while not considered a critical success, did showcase William’s incredible mimicry as the title character. He would continue to hone his craft and create memorable performances in such films as *Good Morning Vietnam*, *Dead Poets Society*, *Mrs. Doubtfire*, and the animated film *Aladdin* where he voiced the genie. Thrice nominated for the Academy Award, he won for his role of a therapist in *Good Will Hunting* (1997).

Robin was the son of Robin Fitzgerald Williams, a senior executive for Ford, and Laurie McLaurin, a former model from Mississippi but we happen to share an ancestor. Robin’s 8th great grandfather Abraham Martin, who originally emigrated from Ireland to the United States in 1680, was also my 9th great grandfather.

Robin Williams died in 2014 at the age of 63 after suffering from severe depression. RIP cousin.

Michael Ondrasik and Home Video Studio specialize in the preservation of family memories through the digitalization of film, videotape, audio recordings, film, negatives, and slides. For more information, call 352-735-8550 or visit our [website](#). And be sure to check out our TEDxEustis talk at https://youtu.be/uYlTTHp_C08.

The Red-Headed Warrior



In the 1700s, one of my relatives became one of the most feared figures east of the Mississippi. An Indian warrior, he was described as having red hair, fair complexion, and a good command of the English language. He could, and in fact often did, pass as a white man. Robert Benge (aka Capt. Benge; aka The Bench) was the son of a Scots-Irish trader named John Benge who, while being married to Elizabeth Lewis, was at the same time married to and having children with a Cherokee woman named Wurtah (allegedly the mother of famed Cherokee linguist Sequoyah which would make them half-brothers). When the Lewis family found out about John's Indian family, they had the marriage dissolved and Elizabeth was free to remarry.

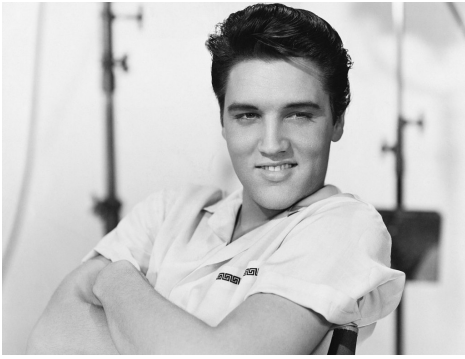
Capt. Benge lived amongst the Cherokee for most of his life and grew to become respected by his fellow tribesman for his leadership abilities, his courage, and his ferocity in battle. He had a great dislike for white settlers and vowed to remove them from his land by any means possible. His reputation grew to the point that white mothers would invoke his name to threaten their children, saying if they weren't good "Capt. Benge will get them."

He conducted many raids against white settlements whose residents often, when hearing that Capt. Benge was heading their way, would abandon their homes and farms never to return. In April of 1794, he raided a settlement in Southern Virginia and, on his way back to the Cherokee camp with his prisoners, he was intercepted, shot and killed by a militia of thirteen men who were in pursuit. The militia took his scalp and sent it to the governor of Virginia who had it forwarded to President George Washington. Vincent Hobbs, the man who fired the fatal shot, was awarded a rifle for services rendered.

Robert Benge was the nephew of my 2nd cousin, Susannah Lewis.

Michael Ondrasik and Home Video Studio specialize in the preservation of family memories through the digitalization of film, videotapes, audio recordings, photos, negatives and slides. For more information, call 352-735-8550 or visit our [website](#). And please watch our TEDxEustis Talk on YouTube at https://youtu.be/uYlTTHp_C08.

Ain't Nothing But A Hound Dog



Life aboard the vessel “Fame” was anything but easy for the Palantine refugees looking to start a new life in a new world. Life in Germany (Palatinate) in the 1700s was difficult enough (famine, war, religious persecution) to spur people to seek a better life elsewhere. But the journey to America was, in and of itself, not without certain peril. Ten ships departed London on June 14, 1710 carrying 3,000 displaced Palantines to their new home. The trip would take six months. A total of 480 passengers did not survive the journey. Another 250 people died during their five month quarantine on Governor’s Island. All in all, nearly one quarter of the passengers on this voyage never lived to see the promise of America.

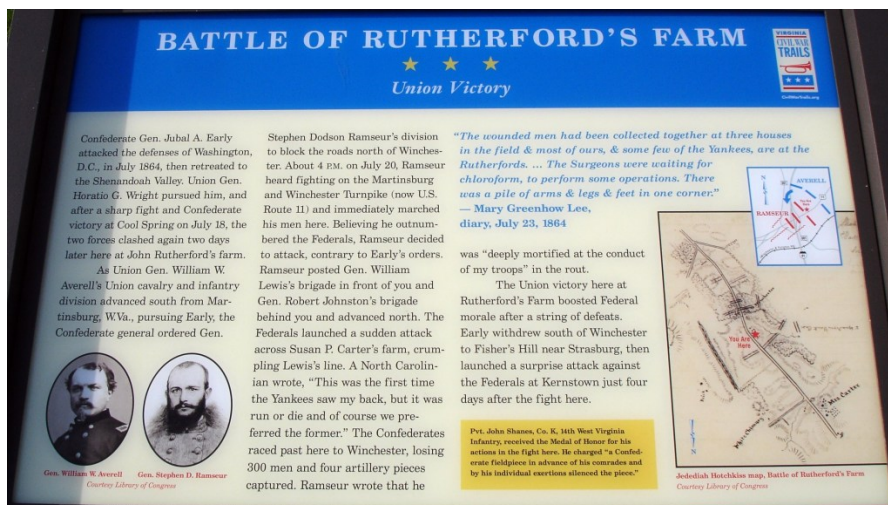
One of the survivor families listed on the passenger manifest was Johann Valentin Bressler, his wife Mary, and their five children. Their Palantine name was actually Pressler but the Germanic P and B sounded very similar so the mistake on the ship’s manifest was understandable. Johann and Mary settled in the Hudson Bay area but, in time, the descendants of the Pressler line began to branch out into other locations. Some in Maryland, some in North Carolina, and others even further south.

Along the way, some descendants chose to alter their last name from Pressler to Presley. It was to this line that a king was born. The king of Rock and Roll. Johann Valentin Bressler was the eighth great grandfather of Elvis Aaron Presley. He was also the eighth great grandfather of my niece’s husband. They also share 7th and 6th great grandfathers. It was just five generations ago that their ancestral lines separated as they

stem from two different brothers of that generation.

Michael Ondrasik and Home Video Studio specialize in the preservation of family memories through the digitalization of film, videotapes, audio recordings, photos, negatives and slides. For more information, call 352-735-8550 or visit our [website](#). And be sure to take a look at our 2022 TedXEustis talk on [YouTube](#).

The Battle of Rutherford's Farm



In July of 1864, Union and Confederate forces clashed in a little remembered skirmish outside of Rutherford's Farm in Virginia. Noted mainly due to the morale boost it gave to the embattled Union army, who had been handed a series of defeats leading up to this moment, it has a greater significance for my family.

As related by Lee Sherrill in his book "The 21st NC Infantry," Andrew J. Nunn, my third cousin (three times removed) was serving as a second lieutenant of F Company, 21st North Carolina. After the battle, which resulted in a full retreat

of the Confederate forces, “the dead and wounded littered the grounds and house of Rutherford Farm. Such wounded that could be moved had been cared for and removed to Winchester, but this core battlefield lay far behind Union lines and with dark, most nurses retired to town.

When the ladies returned to the area the next day, 21 year old Miss Kate McVicar came upon Lieutenant Nunn lying paralyzed with a ball through his lower spine. Nunn complained painfully about the radiation shooting up and down his body from the awkward position in which he lay. Without hesitation, Kate took young Nunn into her arms and held him in a position to relieve most of his suffering until well after midnight.

In the bright moonlight the young nurse managed to steal away from time to time to soothe other Tar Heel soldiers, each time returning to help Lieutenant Nunn.” Unlike many others, with Nurse McVicar’s care, he survived the night, and would spend the rest of the war as a prisoner confined at Fort McHenry. Upon his release, he returned home to Stokes County where he married and resumed his life as a citizen farmer.

Michael Ondrasik and Home Video Studio specialize in the preservation of family memories through the digitalization of film, videotapes, audio recordings, photos, negatives, and slides. For more information, call 352-735-8550 or visit our [website](#). And please watch our TEDxEustis Talk on YouTube at https://youtu.be/uYlTTHp_C08.

Mayberry, R.F.D.



My wife, who identifies as Italian (understandably, as three of her four grandparents were born in that sun-dappled country), is sometimes baffled as to how she ended up with someone as unabashedly all-American as me. The family joke is that of all the men in the world, she managed to marry Opie. As it turns out, I actually do have a connection to the sitcom world of Mayberry.

Andy Griffith, who played the folksy sheriff of the fictional town, happens to be my cousin (5th cousin, once removed to be exact). It's nice to know that my small-town nature and homespun charm have a genetic explanation.

Griffith started out his career in entertainment as a comedic monologist. His routine "What It Was Was Football", released by Columbia Records, became an instant classic. He followed that up with the starring role in "No Time For Sergeants" which began as a teleplay. He would reprise the role on Broadway and again in the 1958 film adaptation. He made his film debut in 1957 as an ambitious and power-hungry country boy with political aspirations in Elia Kazan's "A Face In The Crowd."

In 1960, when Griffith expressed interest in returning to television, Sheldon Leonard, producer of the Danny Thomas Show had an episode written for especially for him. Griffith played a country sheriff who arrested Thomas' character for running a

stop sign. The episode was intended to be a back door pilot for a new show and it worked. Sponsors immediately committed to the concept and on October 3, 1960, the Andy Griffith Show made its debut. It would run for 8 years, and never once fell lower than 7th in the Nielsen ratings.

Michael Ondrasik and Home Video Studio specialize in the preservation of family memories through the digitalization of film, videotapes, audio recordings, photos, negatives and slides. For more information, call 352-735-8550 or visit our [website](#). And be sure to take a look at our 2022 TedXEustis talk on [YouTube](#).

Hudson's Bay Colony



HUDSON'S BAY

INCORPORATED 2 MAY 1670

When two French adventurers (Groseilliers and Radisson) heard from a Cree source that the best fur country could be found northwest of Lake Superior bordering a "frozen sea," they sought permission to explore the area and establish a fur trading post. They were denied permission from the French governor who wanted to keep the trade along the St Lawrence River.

Undeterred, the two Frenchmen reached out to colonial Boston merchants for help in financing their expedition to the frozen sea which turned out to be Canada's Hudson Bay. Their speculative voyage failed when their ship ran into pack ice in Hudson Strait. They were encouraged to go to England for

further financing and eventually gained the support of Prince Rupert who introduced them to his cousin, the reigning King Charles II.

With English support, two ships were acquired: the Nonesuch, captained by Zachariah Gillam (a 6th great-grand uncle of my niece's husband) and the Eaglet. They both left port from Deptford, England but the Eaglet was forced to turn back just past Ireland. The Nonesuch continued alone and was successful in reaching Hudson Bay where, in 1668 the first fort (named after King Charles) was constructed on Hudson Bay from which the expedition initiated the fur trade. It was Captain Gillam who reportedly made the treaty with the Indians and purchased the land (to be known as Rupert's Land).

The Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) was incorporated in 1670 and functioned for the next 200 years as a kind of de facto government in parts of North American until it sold the land it owned to Canada as part of the Deed of Surrender. While a fur trading business for most of its existence, HBC now owns and operates retail stores in Canada including Saks Fifth Avenue and Saks Off 5th.

As for Captain Gillam, he continued his seagoing experiences until 1682 until, while aboard the Prince Rupert, a severe storm caused his ship to drag anchor and drift out to sea. She was crushed by the ice and sank. All nine men aboard, including the captain, were drowned.

Michael Ondrasik and Home Video Studio specialize in the preservation of family memories through the digitalization of film, videotapes, audio recordings, photos, negatives and slides. For more information, call 352-735-8550 or visit our [website](#). And please watch our TEDxEustis Talk on YouTube at https://youtu.be/uYlTTHp_C08.

John the Herald



My niece's husband has an 8th generational great grandfather who is noted for his work in the ancient practice of heraldry. John "The Herald" Guillim published the definitive work, "A Display of Heraldry" in 1610. It has been reprinted many times since and was widely considered at the time to be the "best book extant on the subject."

Its cover page quotes Samuel Pepys in describing the contents as "manifesting a more easy access to the knowledge thereof than has been hitherto published by any, through the benefit of method: where it is now reduced by the study and industry of John Guillim, late pursuivant at arms."

This monumental work displays and explains hundreds of the family crests and coat of arms that helped identify one's heritage, lineage, and legacy. While his was not the first book on the subject (the practice of which predates him by a few centuries), it was and continues to be a work recognized for its historical importance. Though some may disagree.

An entry in the online Encyclopedia Britannica states that Guillim's work not only perpetuates the nonsensical natural history of olden days but is largely responsible for erroneous beliefs about heraldic charges having definite

symbolic meanings and their being granted as rewards for valorous deeds—beliefs that today are perpetuated by the vendors of mail-order and shopping mall “family coats of arms.”

Furthermore, there are many who insist that the credit for the book belongs to a chaplain named Barkham who handed the manuscript to Guillim and allowed for him to publish it under his name as he did not want to use his own. This is a claim still in dispute. The truth may be lost to history.

Michael Ondrasik and Home Video Studio specialize in the preservation of family memories through the digitalization of film, videotapes, audio recordings, photos, negatives, and slides. For more information, call 352-735-8550 or visit our [website](#). And please watch our TEDxEustis Talk on YouTube at https://youtu.be/uYlTTHp_C08.

The Wicked Bible



John Bill, my daughter-in-law’s 10th great grandfather, was born in Shropshire, England in 1576. He was apparently living in London in 1613 where he was identified as “publisher to King James I, Most Excellent Majestie.” John Bill, and his partner Christopher Barker, were given the exclusive license to publish the Bible along with other writings of the royal court.

Unfortunately, he is probably best remembered for the publication of “The Wicked Bible.” In 1631, John Bill’s company, Printing House Square, under the supervision of Robert Barker (Christopher’s son), released a version of the King James Bible which included some grievous errors. Most

notably was the omission of the word “not” from the Seventh Commandment, making it read, “Thou shalt commit adultery.”

A second misprint was found in Deuteronomy 5 where the word “greatness” was replaced with “great-asse,” making the verse read “Behold, the Lord our God hath showed us his glory and his great-asse.”

The second mistake led many to believe that the errors were intentional and that this publication was sabotaged by rival printers so that Printing House Square would lose their monopoly granted to them by the king. This was never proven. However, in 1632, the printers were summoned to the Star Chamber and fined three hundred pounds (equivalent to approximately \$50,000 today). Their printing license was also revoked. Barker never recovered and died in pauper’s prison. John Bill, who died a year before this travesty occurred, did not live to witness it. His son, Charles, who apprenticed alongside him, had left the business prior to the event. The Bill family would eventually emigrate to America where they prospered.

Meanwhile, the royal court ordered all copies of the errant version to be collected and destroyed. A few managed to escape notice. There are sixteen known copies of The Wicked Bible still in existence in museums and libraries around the world as well as a few in private collections. They occasionally come up for auction. In 2008, one was purchased for approximately \$96,000.

Michael Ondrasik and Home Video Studio specialize in the preservation of family memories through the digitalization of film, videotapes, audio recordings, photos, negatives, and slides. For more information, call 352-735-8550 or visit our [website](#). And please watch our TEDxEustis Talk on YouTube at https://youtu.be/uYlTTHp_C08.

The Colonel From Erwinna



My 6th great-grandfather, Col. Arthur Erwin, was a Scotch-Irish immigrant of considerable means who came to America in 1768. After purchasing an estate in Bucks County Pennsylvania, he returned to Ireland to retrieve his family: a wife, seven children and a large contingent of relatives, tenants and servants. He chartered the ship, The Newry Assistance, to make the journey. Unfortunately, his wife and an infant son, who was born on the ship, did not survive and were buried at sea.

He remarried the following year and would have an additional six children with his second wife. When the Revolutionary war broke out, he was commissioned as Colonel of the Fourth and Second Battalions of Bucks County Militia. He was 51 years old. There are letters which have been preserved written by George Washington to Col. Erwin. One in particular, written on December 9, 1776, contained an urgent request by the General

for Erwin to muster his men and proceed post haste to join the main body of the Army to help stop the advancement of the Enemy.

Erwin immediately took action and brought his battalions to Washington's Army which, as it so happens, was camping near his property along the banks of the Delaware River. Erwin proved instrumental during the famous crossing, furnishing and manning (with his tenants and servants) many of the boats which carried the Continental Army across the river. He was personally aboard the final boat to cross and actively participated in the Battle of Trenton.

After the war, he settled down to live the life of a country gentleman, continuing to add to his vast land holdings. He began buying large tracts of land in Luzerne County, PA and Steuben County, NY., which proved to be a fatal purchase. Territorial borders at that time were still much in dispute and some were angry at what they considered to be an illegal land grab. One day in 1792 while visiting at Tioga Point, Erwin was shot and killed, presumably assassinated by person(s) unknown. Despite a proclamation from Governor Mifflin and a reward offer of \$200, his killer was never identified. His body was returned to his home in Erwinna, PA and buried along the banks of the Delaware River.

Michael Ondrasik and Home Video Studio specialize in the preservation of family memories through the digitalization of film, videotapes, audio recordings, photos, negatives, and slides. For more information, call 352-735-8550 or visit our [website](#). And please watch our TEDxEustis Talk on YouTube at https://youtu.be/uYlTTHp_C08.