

## CHAPTER XXII - SEARCHING FOR EPHRAIM JACKSON



Bed Cover made by Janie Marks

Ever since I was a little tyke I have heard my mother's side of the family boast that Jackson blood flows in our veins. Our family commonly assumed that we were descended from President Andrew Jackson. This assumption made a good story except a little research revealed the fact that "Old Hickory" didn't produce any known descendants. Every time I refuted this popular family myth about "Old Hickory", the person relating this story would usually add "Well, maybe it was Stonewall Jackson. I get them confused." After a lot more research, I had to eliminate Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson as a possible ancestors well. Neither of these historic figures are connected to my Jackson ancestral line.

What follows is a chronicle of my search for our family's first Jackson ancestor, who came to the new world. The key to my successful journey had its roots in 1831, when a Scotsman hand wove a beautiful bedspread using vibrant red, green and blue yarn. This yarn had been spun by a lady who was later identified as my great-great-great grandmother, Jean Leach Marks. In a letter, written for future generations, my great uncle, Grant Ragains described the prized heirloom as follows. "The red was from a root called madder, the green was hickory bark set with alum and the blue was indigo set with chamber lye. Its beauty has been greatly admired over the years and many fancy prices have been refused for this bedspread." Twenty-two years earlier, this same lady had also acquired a beautiful White Swan Tablecover that had been handmade in Scotland. These wondrous mementos from a distant past had been passed down to Jean's daughter, Janey Jackson, who gave them to her granddaughter, Jane Carlton who passed them on to her great granddaughter, Mary Elizabeth Ragains.



Ambrose Wake Carlton and Mary Jane (Jackson) Carlton

Mary Elizabeth Ragains had two sons and two daughters. Unfortunately both of her daughters died early in life, neither leaving a female heir. Because of this, these priceless heirlooms became the possession of her son and caregiver, Grant Ragains. Grant, known and loved in the Ragains' family as "Uncle Tot", was also without issue. Uncle Tot left the bedspread and tablecloth to his oldest niece, Elizabeth Ragains Ward. Aunt Elizabeth passed them down to her daughter, my cousin, Betty Ann Ward Chandler.

Thanks to Uncle Tot's chronicle, I started my quest with the names of four consecutive generations of maternal ancestors starting with Mary Elizabeth Ragains. I verified her maiden name as Carlton, from an old family bible. Next I found her, in the 1860 Johnson County, Illinois census. I also discovered that P. G. Ragains had married Mary E. Carlton in Johnson County and Ambrose W. Carlton had married Mary Jane Jackson in Johnson County by searching the Illinois Statewide Marriage Index. Taking a second look at the 1860 census I was delighted to find Charles and Jane Jackson living next door to Ambrose and Mary Carlton. This was followed by the discovery of the same Charles and Janey Jackson with their daughter Mary J. in the 1850 census living in Indiana.

Since Charles B. Jackson, wife Janey and daughter Mary J. were all listed as being born in Pennsylvania, I began searching the records in that Commonwealth. I soon discovered a concentration of Jackson's and Marks in Lehigh County, Pennsylvania. Because of this, I contacted the Lehigh Historical Society and asked them to help me in my search. To my delight, they responded by locating a privately printed book, "The Jackson Family, A History of EPHRAIM JACKSON, First Ancestor to come to America" by Jesse Calvin Cross which was published in 1961. This book told of a Charles Benjamin Jackson, born 2/23/1803, obviously Janey Marks husband. I had found my great-great-great grandfather. Not only that, but the book also named his father, Samuel Jackson III, his grandfather, Samuel Jackson, Jr., his great grandfather Samuel Jackson and his-great-great grandfather Ephraim Jackson. It told of Ephraim arriving in Maryland in 1684 on a vessel named "Friendship" that had sailed out of Liverpool, England. He had paid for his passage by indenturing himself for four years to Nicholas Newland.

This wonderful find also identified Ephraim's wife as Rachel Newlin. Rachel was the daughter of Nicholas Newland and Elizabeth Paggott, the family that paid for Ephraim's passage to the new world. Ephraim wasn't an "Old Hickory" or a "Stonewall" but he was a noble man who was highly esteemed for his integrity, intelligence and sound judgment.