

The Solomon Wildman Adams Family

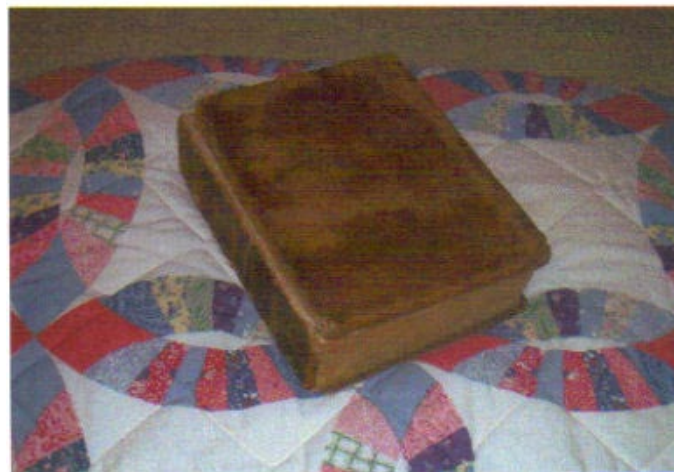
Researched and Compiled by **Jackie Layne Partin** in 2005

One of the problems I encounter while researching my own family genealogy is that there is *no end* to family. As if my own extended family, the Meeks and Layne lines, aren't enough to keep me digging for years, there is my husband's side of the family to research for our children and grandchildren. His heritage is in the Swiss Colony Schild family of Gruetli and the Partin family of Franklin and Grundy County. I began researching both families, but when I found that his Grandmother Mattie Schild's maiden name was Adams, I felt a tug to veer off in that direction. I convinced myself that it would be the easiest of several lines I could follow. The Adams name was not that common around the county, so my workload would be limited. Now, just where does one start when a surname is basically all one has?

Step one for me was the **internet**. I found a listing of cemeteries on the Grundy County site wherein several Adams family members were listed as being buried in the Dick Sanders Cemetery in an area called Freemont or more precisely, Wheeler Town. One of my sons took me on his four-wheeler out the winding roads to the cemetery which was a couple or so miles passed the Bonnie Oaks Cemetery. Being a Monteagle native, all this territory was new to me. There in the midst of gravesites of Nunleys, Meeks and Campbells were several Adams family stones—small ones and larger newer ones. The oldest one was marked Solomon W. Adams born 1827 and died 1886. Who was this man? I wanted to know. Having been told that **Lillian Gibbs Hedges** of Monteagle was an Adams descendant, I called for an appointment to visit with her.

Word-of-mouth was the method I learned to appreciate the most when searching for family histories. Lillian was a gracious host filled to the brim with her Adams family stories and history. I loved every minute of my time spent with her as she overflowed with stories, pictures and heirlooms. The most touching moment was when she placed an Adams family Bible on the table in front of me. I was afraid to touch it—not because I would damage it, but because it warranted respect. It was published in 1809 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Carefully I turned to the page where the names of the five children of **Thomas and Ann Adams** and their birth dates were listed. My eyes quickly fell to the last child listed—**Solomon Wildman Adams** born March 26, 1827. My inside voice shouted, “He’s my man!” Where did this family Bible start its journey which would terminate in 2005 in the small town of Monteagle? Lillian assured me that these were my husband's family, so this spurred me on in my research.

Old Bible records are one of the greatest helps for family researchers. Lillian gave me a copy of the page with the children's names on it. Obviously Thomas and Ann were the owners of the Bible, and they listed their children as (1) Ruth Adams born November 1814; (2) Thomas Adams born June 06, 1817; (3) Elizabeth Adams born December 01, 1819; (4) Samuel Cary Adams born July 31, 1824, and (5) **Solomon Wildman Adams** born March 26, 1827. Since the Bible was probably acquired in Pennsylvania, I thought it wise to start searching for **Thomas and Ann Adams** during the time frame of the children's births in that area of the country.



The Thomas and Ann Adams Family Bible

With the help of the **U. S. Census records**, a genealogy program called **ancestry.com** and by **word-of-mouth**, the **Bible records** began to take on life. Thomas Adams was born in 1785 in Byberry Township, Philadelphia, PA. On November 17, 1813 in Bucks, PA, he married Ann Wildman who was also born around 1785 in Pennsylvania. Thomas' father Benjamin Adams was with him when he took his marriage vows. This information strengthened my case because families usually had their first child within the first year of marriage, and their daughter Ruth was born a year to the month of their marriage. Also Ann's maiden name "Wildman" was given to their lastborn son for a middle name. It was becoming more and more obvious that I had found the Adams family of the Bible records. The next two children Thomas, Jr. and Elizabeth appeared to have been born in Pennsylvania, but the last two sons Samuel and Solomon were born in Ohio. In 1850 Thomas was working as a farmer and living in Clay Township, Wayne Co., Indiana. This seemed to be the hub area of the family for most of the children's lives. In other words, this was probably known as "home". At least two of their grown children were living nearby. Samuel Cary and his family were living in the next household, and Solomon was in Jay Co., Indiana. Thomas and Ann had started their lives together in Pennsylvania and throughout the years had lived in Ohio and then Indiana. In 1860 around the age of seventy-four each, they were still living in Wayne Co., IN and received their mail at the Greenfork Post Office. It appeared that they had both died before the 1870 Census record.

Solomon W. Adams married **Susannah W. (probably Webster) Rowlett** on October 28, 1847 in Jay County, Indiana. Susannah was born on April 15, 1831 in Abington, Bucks, Pennsylvania. Her parents were David Edward Rowlett (born around 1800 and died 1866), and Ann Webster Rowlett (born September 01, 1792 and died Feb. 15, 1857). Her paternal grandparents were John Rowlett (born October 31, 1772, died July 16, 1846) and Mary Edwards Rowlett (born Dec. 19, 1778/79, died Mar. 31, 1834). She had five known siblings, four brothers, Edwin, Jesse, Ezekiel and David, and one sister, Mary Ann.



Solomon Wildman Adams and his wife Susannah W. Rowlett

While still living in Indiana, **Solomon and Susannah's** son **Albert** was born in October 1855. Strangely, the couple had been married for exactly eight years, and no other children had been listed on the 1860 Census other than Albert and Henry. I want to believe that the two stones marked "**John Adams 1858**" and "**Thomas Adams 1859**" in the Dick Sanders Cemetery were put there in "memory" of two children lost during those years. We know that the family was not living in Tennessee in 1858/1859 so the children could not be buried there. It just wasn't the norm for couples in those days to go seven years without having children. It sounds reasonable that the dates 1858 and 1859 are death dates instead of birth dates, and that these two sons were born before Albert and died between Albert and Henry. The sons could have died on the long trek to Texas as we will tell about next. Nevertheless, at some point after Albert's birth, Solomon moved his family from Indiana to near Prairie Point, Wise County, Texas. In 1860 his neighbors were the Jacob Moffatt family who were also from Ohio/Indiana. It appears that families traveled together when making long journeys, so let's hope that these two families knew each other. I have also been told that there were family connections in Texas, but at this time I haven't researched that.

The journey would have been a long one taking Solomon and his family through southern Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, northern Arkansas and finally into northern Texas. This trip was probably made in a covered wagon. I wonder if Solomon could see the smoke on the horizon of an impending civil war between the States of the North and South and wanted to get his family farther away from some of the heavy action.

While in Wise County, Texas, Solomon worked as a broom maker and had real estate valued at \$400 with personal assets worth \$350. His son Albert had been born in Indiana, but he now had another son **Henry** born in 1859 in Texas. This also makes it unlikely that Susannah had another son Thomas born in 1859 unless Henry had a twin. This is another reason that I believe the date on Thomas' stone at Dick Sanders Cemetery is a death date, and that the stone is a memorial stone. Also a daughter **Phebe Ann** was born in Texas around 1862. The end of the Civil War, homesickness or economics caused Solomon to start the long trip back to his former home in Indiana. Probably the journey was made in 1867 since another daughter **Matilda** was born in Arkansas that year. Two stories handed down from two different sources are these: it has been passed down through the years that Phebe Ann was born in a wagon on a journey through Kentucky. This story cannot be supported by the Census records. The story probably is true, but the name and place were wrong. Evidence points to the daughter Matilda as being the one born in a wagon but in the state of Arkansas not Kentucky. The other story is that my husband's grandmother **Mattie Adams Schild** told him that some of her family was traveling in a covered wagon when they came through some very dry areas. The family ran out of water. They were so dehydrated that when they finally came to water, the older ones had to hold the younger ones back from drinking too much water too quickly. Both stories probably have their roots in Solomon's family as he moved them back "home".

The family had returned to Indiana before 1869. This time they settled in Wayne County, Indiana where Solomon's parents and some of his siblings had lived. Let's hope that Solomon got to be with his parents before they passed on. Maybe their age and health were what brought him back home. In 1869 another son was born. His name was **Edwin Rowlett Adams**. Susannah was around thirty-eight years old when Ed was born. Solomon was farming and in 1870 listed his real estate value at \$1800 and \$300 worth of personal assets. Susannah also had relatives nearby who, no doubt, were a comfort to her. Living a few households away was her brother Jesse Rowlett. He was working as a laborer for a "Cloud" family. Her brother Ezekiel had moved out to Nebraska, and there is evidence that she kept in touch with her brother for some years to come.

Along about 1869 down in Grundy County, Tennessee, **Mr. Peter Staub**, a former citizen of Switzerland, was "wheeling and dealing in land". He was instrumental in setting up a colony for Swiss immigrants who were on the move to the

county. Land was going for approximately \$2.00 an acre (*according to a recent story in "The Cumberland View"*). According to family stories handed down, it was this same Mr. Staub that caused **Solomon W. Adams** to make the decision to once again move his family away from Indiana. This time he wanted to go south to Tennessee, and he did just that some time soon after 1870. His parents had died, and somehow the family Bible was given to him for keeping, and it made the journey with him to Tennessee.

I would like to enter a note here that in 1870 in St. Joseph, Michigan, another covered wagon left for Grundy County, Tennessee. One of the children in that wagon, Edward Curtis, would, not too far in the future, meet one of Solomon Adams' daughters, Phebe Ann, and later marry her. The Curtis family travels can be read on the Berrien County, Michigan general web page.

On May 30, 1875 in Grundy County, Tennessee, Solomon's son **Albert Adams** married **Miss Lucetta Sanders**, daughter of **George Carrell "Dick" Sanders**. This placed Solomon and Susannah in Grundy County before 1875. I don't know the name that was associated with the area where they settled. It was between Tracy City, TN and Coal Dale, TN (*name changed to Coalmont in 1903*). It probably was part of what is called Freemont today. Albert and Lucetta had four children: **Charles, William, Maggie** and **Martha Matilda or "Mattie"**, as she was fondly known.



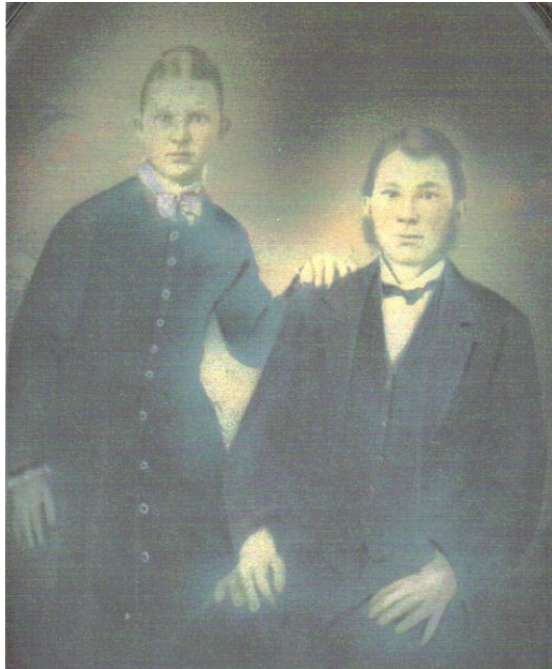
Lucetta Sanders Adams and her two sons Charles and William



Lucetta Sanders Adams and her two daughters Maggie and Mattie

In 1879 Solomon's twenty-year-old son **Henry Adams** was found in the woods dead of a gunshot wound. He had taken his gun with him to do some hunting. The death was generally accepted as a suicide although there were questions. It must have been so difficult for this family to lose one so young to such sad circumstances. His body was interred on a piece of land near the Wheeler Town area that had been donated by **George Carrell "Uncle Dick" Sanders** for a cemetery. His birth date on his stone says 1864, but this is wrong; it should read 1859. Solomon supposedly had plenty of land, but he buried his son on this particular piece of land probably because Dick Sanders had already started a cemetery there long before. Dick had lost his own young son, Dick, Jr., between 1870 and 1880; maybe his own son was buried in this plot previously to Henry. Remember that Dick's daughter had married Solomon's son, so they were very well known to each other, and when Henry's death happened so suddenly, Dick's plot may have been offered for the burial.

In 1880 Solomon and Susannah were still living in district six of Grundy County. Phebe Ann, Matilda and Edwin Rowlett were still at home with them. Solomon was supporting his family by farming, as were most of his neighbors. Albert and Lucetta and their two sons were living next door to them. On Jan. 01, 1881, Phebe Ann married **Edward Lewis Curtis** and started her family. They became the parents of **Caroline, Arthur, Bertha and Willie**, and for some time, continued to live near the old homeplace.



Phebe Ann Adams and husband Edward Lewis Curtis

Sadly in February 1886, nineteen-year-old **Matilda Adams** died. She was the second child placed in the cemetery. Hopefully some of the hurt and loneliness which followed the loss of two children was tempered for Solomon and Susannah by having four of their grandchildren living nearby—Albert’s two sons, **Charles and William**, and two of Phebe’s children, **Caroline and Arthur**. But as the adage goes, “When it rains it pours,” just three and a half months later on July 11, 1886, **Solomon Wildman Adams** died and was placed next to his two children. His long hard journeys throughout the United States came to a halt on that hot July day some one hundred twenty years ago. Susannah had to be saddened by so much death in her immediate family—two children and a husband in only seven years. Five years later in 1891, she passed on to her final resting place. What a journey these two had made! She was placed beside her husband and two children at the Dick Sanders Cemetery.

Edwin Rowlett Adams was twenty-two when his mother died, but not long afterwards on January 24, 1892, he married. He chose **Florence Nunley** daughter of **Carroll and Paralee Nunley** to be his bride. Together they had eight children with only five reaching adulthood. They were **Martin, Minnie, Chris, Andrew and Henry**. Edwin made his living in the coalmines as did just about every other man in his neighborhood. He and Florence built a comfortable home around their young family. The house that they built was almost identical to the one that Florence’s parents lived in leading one to believe that Edwin’s father-in-law helped him with the design and labor. For all outward purposes the family appeared to be living in good times. But trouble was always looming in the coal mining towns of Grundy County during those years and many to come.



L to R: Edwin Rowlett Adams, Chris, Martin, Florence, Minnie and neighbors Mollie and William Carroll Harris.

Edwin Rowlett Adams wanted a union. This did not set well with the coal companies. He was an outspoken man and a leader for the union. During the year of 1908 threats of strikes at the Coalmont mines were on again, off again. It was during this year that Edwin was found unconscious in the woods. He had been shot once in the left side of his head. His family who saw the scene said he appeared to have been sitting on a log with his gun leaning against the log on his right side. After the shot was fired, he fell backwards from the log and was unconscious when found. Several men carried him to his home where immediate efforts were made to remove the bullet from his head. Young Minnie was about nine years old and saw the scenes unfold before her eyes. On March 09, 1908 her father died while she looked on. There was talk of how the hole was larger than could have been made with his own gun; how his gun was still leaning against the log and on the right side of his body; how there was no way that he could have shot himself in the left side of his head; rumors surfaced in the coal mining town. Minnie remembered that at least twelve men held an inquest in the family home. But if a decision was made as to murder or suicide, nothing was ever done. The family had no doubt that their husband and father had been murdered. Edwin left a wife and five young children to fend for themselves. Looking back on this situation, it just doesn't appear that Edwin was the type of man to kill himself. He was a hard-working man who cared for his family and their needs. He also was concerned for the well-being of the hardworking coal miners. Unlike the rest of his family who preceded him in death, Edwin was buried at the Bonnie Oaks Cemetery down the road from the Dick Sanders Cemetery.

Edwin's daughter **Minnie** grew up and married **Loyce L. Gibbs**. **Lillian Gibbs Hedges** is one of their children. Many people today can remember the story of how Grady Edward Partin of Tracy City Furniture Store sold a blind man a television years ago. The blind man was Lillian's father Loyce. **Minnie Adams Gibbs** told and retold

the Adams family stories to her children who thankfully have passed them down to their descendants.



Minnie Adams Gibbs with two of her children Nelson and Lillian

Phebe Ann Adams Curtis' grandchildren became well-known in their communities. Her son **Arthur** was the father of **Willi Mai, Margaret, Arthur Roy, Aleen, Edwene, Johnny, Billy, Jimmy, Thomas, and Bettie**. Many of her descendants are still with us here on the mountain in Grundy County. They are all probably just as full of memories and stories as Minnie Adams Gibbs was as she passed them on to her daughter Lillian. Actually Phebe and Ed Curtis both had traveled in covered wagons across the U. S., so nights around the fire must have been wonderful for their children and grandchildren.

Albert Adams and Lucetta divorced between 1910 and 1920. Albert lived for a while with his daughter **Mattie Adams** after her marriage to **George Willie Schild** in 1913. Albert died of heart failure in 1923. He was the last of the Solomon Adams family to be buried in the Dick Sanders Cemetery. Martha Matilda Adams Schild was my husband's grandmother. She reared her family in her husband's family homeplace which was the "Old Stagecoach Inn" in Gruetli, Tennessee. Her daughter, **Georgia Violet Schild Partin**, was my husband's mother. **Grady Ward Partin** and I have three sons, **Stan, Curt, and Daniel**, and two grandchildren, **Jocelyn MacKenzie and Dillon Stokes Partin**.



Martha Matilda Adams Schild

Research like this takes time, but it is so rewarding. Now I can tell my two grandchildren the stories of their Adams family heritage. Somehow I think that those would be better character builders than watching cartoons on Saturday mornings or playing video games. Of course, I could be wrong, but I'm going to give it a try. I have loved every minute of this research and preparation. Please correct me or give me additions. I will be faithful to do my part in telling this story as authentically as possible. (Jackie Layne Partin, P.O. Box 295, Monteagle, TN 37356 or jackiepartin@blomand.net).

For more of Jackie's writings click on the book icon.
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