

THE FAMILY OF RALEIGH MADISON PADGETT

Raleigh Madison Padgett, Jim's Great-great Grandfather, is listed with several variations of his name in public records. Among the variations are Ralls, Rollie, Raleigh, or Rollins, so that at times it was only possible to verify his identity by the names of his children.

In 1880, Raleigh Madison Padgett was a 25-year-old farmer living in Spartanburg, SC with his wife, Mary Lancaster Padgett, and their one-year-old daughter, Minnie. Having lived his early childhood during the Civil War, Raleigh had likely already experienced many changes in his life. The 20 years between 1880 and 1900 would bring many more changes, both in his life and in the lives of his family. Mary would bear him eight additional children, one of whom was named Jonah Rollins Padgett. Their eldest daughter Minnie married George Gold and moved to the Polkville area of Cleveland County. Between 1892 and 1894, Raleigh joined the many farmers choosing to give up farming for a job in the cotton mills, and moved his family from Spartanburg, SC to Henrietta, NC. In 1900, Raleigh was working as a carder in the cotton mill in Henrietta. His 18-year-old son Jonah was working as a doffer, and his daughters Eva Mae, 14, and Lillie R., 12, were spinners.

Prior to 1903, Raleigh went to work as a laborer in Cliffside Mill and moved his family from Henrietta to Academy Street in Cliffside. He likely had many other relatives already living in Cliffside, since, per Judson Crow's First *Families of Cliffside*, there were 56 persons bearing the Padgett surname living in 14 different Cliffside households in 1910.

On May 24, 1903, Raleigh's son Jonah married Mary Ann "Annie" Watson, daughter of Thomas Irvin Watson and Mary Ann Craton Freeman Watson. In the June 4, 1903 issue of *The Sun* newspaper, datelined Cliffside, NC, the following announcement appeared :

Miss Annie Watson, daughter of Mr. T.I. Watson, and Mr. Jonah Padgett, son of Mr. M.R. Padgett, both of this place, were happily married at 10:30 AM at the home of the bride's father. We congratulate the happy couple and wish them a bright and happy life.

Their marriage certificate shows one of the witnesses to the ceremony was R.R. Haynes.

Jonah was working as a weaver in the mill at Cliffside in 1910, and he and Annie were living on Reservoir Street with their children, Lillian, Baxter Lee, and Ruth. Their son Paul was born in March of 1910, but died in October of the same year and was buried in Cliffside Cemetery.

Raleigh and Mary continued to live in Cliffside for the rest of Raleigh's working years. In May of 1930, with Raleigh age 75 and no longer able to work in the mill, he and Mary were living with the family of their daughter, Minnie Gold, on the Lattimore-Polkville Road in Cleveland County, NC. However, when Raleigh died eight months later, in January of 1931, he was at the home of his son, Jonah in the Cool Springs Township in Rutherford County. Raleigh's and Mary's death certificates list their place of burial as Cliffside, NC. No grave markers have been found for them.

JONAH ROLLINS PADGETT FAMILY

At some time between 1910 and 1918, Jonah moved his family from Cliffside to Spindale, NC and went to work in Spindale Mills there. He registered for the WWI draft with the Rutherford County, NC Draft Board on September 12, 1918. The information on the registration form listed his age as 37, his residence at that time as Spindale, NC, and his employer as Spindale Mills. It described him as being of medium height and slender build, with blue eyes and dark hair.

About 24 million men living in the U.S., who were from 18 to 45 years of age were required to complete a WWI draft registration card. Of course, due to his age, his having a wife and a number of children, and because WWI was beginning to wind down, Jonah was not called to serve. However, many of his family and friends did enter the service, either as volunteers or as draftees, including his 22-year-old single brother, Hoover Lovelace Padgett.

Hoover had registered for the draft a year earlier, in May of 1917. He was inducted into the U.S. Army on July 5, 1917, and served until 1918. At age 47, he was required to register again, this time for the WWII draft. At that time, he and his wife, Virginia, were living in Cleveland Ohio, where he was working for the Publishers Guild. When he died in April of 1952, he was buried in the Dayton National Cemetery at the VA Medical center in Dayton, Ohio.

Jonah was apparently dissatisfied with either his job or with living in Spindale, since before 1920 he moved his family from Spindale to Main Street in the Alexander Mill Village, where he and his eldest daughter, Lillian, 15, were both working in the mill. Baxter, at age 13, was in the household, and Jonah and Annie had become the parents of two more sons, Robert and William, ages six and three at the time of the 1920 census, who were born after the move from Cliffside. Another daughter, May Sue Frances, joined the family in 1923, in the same year that their daughter Lillian married Leon David Putnam.

Leon, originally from the Green Hill Community, lived in Henrietta with his mother Sallie, and several of his siblings, prior to his marriage. Around 1930, after the births of their children, Virginia, Paul David, and Dorothy Dean in Rutherford County, Lillian and Leon moved to Gaston County, where their daughter Joyce Ann was born. Shortly thereafter, they moved to Kingsport, TN to work in Borden Cotton Mill. They returned to the Carolinas in the mid 1930s, and in the early 1940s, they settled permanently in Mecklenburg County, near Charlotte.

Baxter Lee Padgett was living with his parents and working in Alexander Mills in 1928 when, at age 21, he married 16-year-old Vera Evelyn Newton, the daughter of David Newton, another Alexander Mills resident. They were married in Spartanburg, SC. Jonah and Annie welcomed Evelyn into their household and into their family.

An article featuring a former employee of Alexander Mills appeared in the June 27, 2010 issue of the *Forest City Daily Courier*. Accompanying the article was a 1930 photograph of the employees of Alexander Mills. Among the employees shown in the photograph were Evelyn's husband, Baxter Lee Padgett, her father, Dave Newton, and her brother, Lee Newton.

Shortly after this photograph was made, Dave left his job in the mill and the Alexander Mills Village, but moved only a short distance away. He bought a farm off Doggett Road, on what today is called Newton Road. He spent his remaining years there, and he and many of his family members rest in nearby Tanners Grove Church Cemetery.

When the 1930 census was taken, Baxter and Evelyn were living in their own household on Holland Street, only four houses from Jonah and Annie. Two years later, in September of 1932, Evelyn died giving birth to their son, James David Padgett. Baxter, recalling that Evelyn had once said Cliffside was a beautiful cemetery where she would not mind being buried someday, paid \$10.00 for the lot there where she was buried.

Loss of Mothers

Losing one's mother at an early age, as Jim did, was a tragedy that occurred all too frequently in his family, repeating the losses suffered by several generations of Jim's ancestors. He was the third in a direct descendant line to suffer such a loss. Jim lost his mother, Evelyn Newton Padgett, when he was born. His mother, Evelyn Newton Padgett lost her mother, Sarah Jane Newton, when she was about 5 or 6 years old. His Grandmother, Sarah Jane Newton lost her mother, Esther Melinda "Lindy" Downs Newton, when she was only three years old. Lindy was more fortunate in that she was almost 17 before she lost her mother, Phoebe McCurry Downs, in 1865.

ABRAHAM NEWTON FAMILY

Jim's maternal great-grandfather, Abraham Newton, was born in May of 1850. He was the son of William Swofford Newton and Anna Canipe Newton of Cleveland County. Abraham married Ester Malinda "Lindy" Downs, the daughter of Robert and Phoebe McCurry Downs, about 1869. He and Lindy had seven children before Lindy's death in January of 1886. Her younger children were then only one and three years old.

Abraham remarried shortly after Lindy's death to Julia Ann "Annie" Terry. Five of his and Annie's seven children were born before they moved from Cleveland County to Caroleen. Their last two children were born in Caroleen after 1900. Abraham had left his Cleveland County farm to join the many others giving up farming to work in the cotton mills for what they saw as a steady paycheck. In the 1900 census of Caroleen, High Shoals, Rutherford County, NC, Abraham, age 46, his wife Annie, age 31, His daughter, Sara Jane, 17 (from his prior marriage to Lindy) and his and Annie's children Lexie, 13; Clarence, 10; Pearson, 8; Carl, 6; and Palmer, 3, were living on what was then Bostic Street in Caroleen. Abraham and three of his six children who were then living in the household were working in the mill, Abraham as a sweeper, Sarah Jane as a weaver, and Lexie and Clarence, children of his second marriage, as spinners. Also in the household were two of Abraham's Cousins, siblings Mary Newton, 21, and David Newton, 20, as well as three other men listed as boarders. Two of the boarders may also have been relatives, since they were listed as William Newton, 22, and John Newton, 20. The third boarder

was listed as Losson Roberts, age 23. All the cousins and boarders worked in the mill at various jobs. There were a total of 13 persons living in the household.

Twenty year old David Hartwell Newton, one the two cousins boarding with him in Caroleen in 1900, married Abraham's 17-year-old daughter, Sarah Jane, in January of 1901. The other cousin in the 1900 household, David's sister Mary Catherine, married John D. Robinson in September of 1900, and she and her husband witnessed the marriage of David and Sarah Jane.

David and Sarah Jane moved across the county line into the #11 Township of Cleveland County to begin farming at some time between their marriage in 1901 and the time of the 1910 census. Sarah Jane had borne David five children during those nine years, and had lost one child. Between 1910 and 1916, she gave birth to three more children. Sarah Jane died at some time between the birth of her daughter Anna Mae in 1916, and January of 1920. Evelyn would have been little more than six years old when her mother died. Her two younger siblings were about four and two, and her oldest siblings were still in their teens. Since their father did not remarry for a number of years, it was surely a trying time for them all.

In the 1920 census, David was again living in Caroleen and working in the mill. He was a widower, and his daughter Evelyn, age eight, was among his unmarried children still in the household with him.

Sarah Jane's father, Abraham, was working as a sweeper in the mill at Caroleen in 1920 at age 70. He had fathered 14 children, seven with each of his wives. When he died in September of 1922, he was buried beside his first wife, Lindy, in Clover Hill Church Cemetery in Cleveland County. When Annie died, she was buried at Clover Hill with them.

David remarried around 1924 to 31-year-old Texie (Texas) Queen, daughter of J. Ambrose Queen of Cleveland County. Willard D. Queen, Texie's eight-year-old son from a previous relationship, became a member of the family with the marriage, and was raised and buried with the family as Willard D. Newton. David and Texie's eldest child, Eugene, was born about 1925, followed by the birth of Charles in 1927. Their son Ted was born in 1929, after Evelyn had married Baxter Padgett in 1928 and moved from the household.

In 2010, Ted was living on Newton Road near Tanner's Grove Methodist Church, and was Evelyn's only surviving sibling.

After Evelyn's Death

After Evelyn's death in 1932, Baxter and the baby moved into the house with his parents, and Annie became the main caregiver of Baby James. Baxter was said to have been devastated by Evelyn's death, and had a very hard time dealing with her loss. For a while, he tried to bury his grief by drinking a great deal.

He may have seen the folly of this, or perhaps he felt being away from the daily reminders of her that surrounded him might help him cope with his grief. In any case, about 1933 Baxter left

James with his grandparents, and went to Kingsport, TN, where he took a job at Borden Mills. Perhaps his move there was influenced by the fact that his sister Lillian and her husband, Leon Putnam, lived in Kingsport and worked in Borden Mills. Textile workers at that time moved wherever there were jobs available or where there were better paying jobs. Not only did Baxter get a job for himself, he also got jobs for his father and his brothers, Bob and Bill, and moved the whole family to Kingsport. They all moved into a house together, and Annie continued to care for James.

On September 14, 1934, Baxter married Dorothy Lane, of Erwin, TN. James was told that Dorothy's parents did not like the idea of their daughter marrying a widower with a small child, so Baxter and Dorothy, determined to be married in spite of this, eloped. They left Kingsport together, planning to stop off in Forest City on their way down to tell Dave Newton, Evelyn's father, of their intentions before going on to Spartanburg, SC to be married.

Dorothy's father, learning of their plans only after they had already left Kingsport, so disapproved of Dorothy getting married against his wishes that he chased the couple all the way into Forest City in an attempt to stop them. He arrived at Dave Newton's home only to learn that he was too late. They had already been there and gone on to Spartanburg to be married. The couple returned to Kingsport, and Dorothy moved into the Padgett household with the rest of the family.

About 1935, the family moved to Gastonia to take jobs in the mill there. Very soon, about 1936 or 1937, they moved to a house on the Charlotte Highway in Fort Mill, SC, to better jobs at Springs Mills. They were living in Fort Mill when Baxter and Dorothy's son, Samuel Lee Padgett, was born in October of 1938.

After Sam's birth, Baxter and Dorothy moved out of the crowded house into another house not far from Jonah and Annie, and then eventually into the house next door to them. Baxter's sister Lillian and her husband Leon David Putnam had also moved to Fort Mill, so although James continued to be raised mainly by his grandparents, he was surrounded by family. Being raised mostly by his Padgett Grandparents did not prevent Jim from developing a loving and close relationship with his Mother's family. He always looked forward to the two weeks or so he spent on the farm with his Grand-Daddy Newton during the summers of his childhood.

Jonah's Death

On Sunday, November 2, 1941, Jonah, then almost 61 years old, stayed home rather than attending church with Jim, Baxter, and the rest of the family. Lillian and Leon had invited the family to lunch after church. Jonah had just showered and was getting dressed to go when he suffered a cerebral Hemorrhage. He died, and his body was returned to Cliffside Cemetery for burial.

Annie moved out of the house she and Jonah had shared, and into an apartment with her daughter Frances, but after suffering a stroke she moved into the house with Baxter's family. In 1943, Frances married Floyd Howington, a sailor from Fort Mill whom she had met while he was

home on leave. About a year later, Annie decided she wanted to move back to Alexander Mills, where her daughter Ruth lived with her husband, Winfred Alton Harmon. Annie died of a heart attack at Ruth's home in March of 1945, only a year after moving back home.

Baxter's Family

Baxter was working for Springs Mills in Ft. Mill in 1944, and after his mother moved back to Rutherford County, he wanted to return to Kingsport. However, due to the labor shortage while so many of the normally male employees were away during WWII, regulations existed to maintain job stability and to keep the mills manned. (I am not sure if these were governmental regulations, or if they were mutually agreed upon covenants between mill owners. In any case, one regulation discouraged textile workers from moving from mill to mill by keeping one textile mill from hiring away another mill's workers. This prevented a mill from hiring a worker whose current or immediately previous employer was another mill. Anyone determined to change mills could circumvent this regulation by taking a temporary job in another field before applying for the job he wanted, so that he was not technically a textile worker from another mill.)

In order to support the family and have interim employment so they could return to Borden Mills in Kingsport, Baxter took a job driving a cab and Dorothy took a job as the cab company's dispatcher. The war ended shortly after they began their new jobs and the regulation was suspended, so Baxter moved his family back to Kingsport and returned to work at Borden Mills.

In 1950, when he was 17, James, then called "Jim," left high school and joined the Navy. He served his three-year enlistment aboard the aircraft carrier *USS Sicily*. Another young man from Kingsport, Thomas Light, served aboard the *USS Yorktown*. When both their ships were in their home port of San Diego, he and Thomas would take shore leave at the same time, and go out on the town. As did most young sailors whose pay burned a hole in their pockets when they went ashore to have a good time, they would run out of money before the end of the month. Sometimes when they were broke, Thomas' sister, Betty Jean, would send them a little money.

When Jim was discharged in 1953 and he returned to Kingsport he found his father preparing to return to Fort Mill. They all, including Jim, moved back to Fort Mill, where Baxter and Dorothy went to work at Springs Mills. Jim took a job with the Celanese Corporation of America in Rock Hill, but was not satisfied there, so stayed only about three weeks before returning to Kingsport alone. Baxter and Dorothy remained only three or four months before they too returned to Kingsport and went back to work at Borden Mills. Borden Mills later merged with and became J. P. Stevens. Baxter and Dorothy worked for the company until they both retired.

When Baxter died in 1973, he was buried in Oak Hill Cemetery, as was Dorothy when she died in 2009.

After Jim returned to Kingsport in 1953, he and Betty Jean Light decided to be married, and they did so on November 19, 1953. Jim went to school at East Tennessee State University for a while, and then went to work.

Jean was a victim of juvenile diabetes, and had problems with her pregnancies. Their first child, Debra Ann, was born in November of 1954, but lived only 3 days. She was buried in Oak Hill Cemetery in Kingsport.

Jim took a job at Eastman Kodak about 1955, and was working there two years later when their second child, Michael David Padgett, was born in December of 1957. Happily, this baby survived, grew up, married, and gave Jim five grandchildren. In November of 1959 their third child, Mark Edwin Padgett, although a full term baby, was stillborn. He was buried in Oak Hill Cemetery with his sibling, Debra Ann. Jim and Jean had been married almost 32 years when Jean died in August of 1984. She was buried with their babies.

Jim continued to work for the company, which had become Tennessee Eastman, staying with them for a total of 32 years before retirement. He was a heavy metal fabrication instructor when he retired in 1987. After retirement, he went back to work for them as a Limited Service Employee, working as a contractor and photographer. He became a Certified Professional Photographer, and worked for about 5 years as the photographer for "UTN Sports Publications," the magazine covering University of Tennessee sports. He still acts as the official photographer for East Tennessee State's sports events and fills any other photography need that arises there.

He met Kathy Bennett at Eastman about a year before he retired. Kathy already had her Associate Degree in Electronics, and in October of 1988 entered into a three year Federal Apprenticeship Program to train as a Control System Mechanic, which she completed in April of 1992. At the same time, she had continued her education at ETSU and received her Bachelor of Science degree in Electronic Technology. She is currently working with Eastman Chemical as a Control System Mechanic, and she and Jim live in Kingsport, TN.

Kathy now joins Jim in making his annual Mother's Day trip to Cliffside.

SOURCE NOTE: *Much of the narrative of this article is based upon information provided in Federal census; Cleveland, Gaston, and Rutherford County birth and death records; the Social Security Death Index; Military Draft Registration records; US Veterans Burial Records; Rutherford and Cleveland County marriage records; and Cemetery Surveys. Without help from someone having personal knowledge of the family, it would have been impossible to write this story. James David "Jim" Padgett graciously provided the pictures accompanying this writing, and shared the information he had available.*