

A Convergence of Two Worlds:

**the Braveboy Family
and their Descendants**

Jordan Thomas Carroll

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Dedicated to those who lived here for centuries unknown, and the family produced by a convergence of two cultures. May we never forget from whence we came.

A Convergence of Two Worlds

European explorers and settlers of the “New World” set foot upon a land inhabited for centuries by indigenous people. One can only imagine the awkward first meetings of these two cultures, and the positive or negative first impressions they left. Crossing the ocean was a journey of great risk for settlers, but there were grave consequences for Native Americans as well. Settlers feared Indian raids as much as these natives feared the technology and diseases of their newly arrived acquaintances.

Near Edenton, North Carolina, on the banks of the Yeopim River a tribe of Indians had lived for centuries. The very first record we have of contact with natives in this area is part of a tragic story. Sir Walter Raleigh led two groups of settlers to an area comprising parts of modern day Virginia and North Carolina.¹ This settlement infamously bears the name Roanoke. Settlers arriving in 1584 met not only the Weapemeoc Indians, an Algonquian tribe, but also realized the cruelty of farming conditions in this new location. Raleigh’s first attempt at settlement failed since the entire colony returned to England.² In 1587, Raleigh used what he had learned from his previous expedition and brought another group of settlers to the area.³ After a few months, the colony at Roanoke chose to send their governor, John White, back to England for more supplies.⁴ Unfortunately, an ocean crossing at this time took months. White returned to England, but he was detained by the queen. At this time in history, relations between the Spanish and English were not pleasant due to competition and piracy in the “New World.” Finally in 1591, White was allowed to

¹ The First English Settlement. <http://statelibrary.dcr.state.nc.us/nc/ncsites/english1.htm>.

² Ibid.

³ Wikipedia. Sir Walter Raleigh. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Raleigh.

⁴ Abandonment of Roanoke. <http://statelibrary.dcr.state.nc.us/nc/ncsites/English2.htm#Abandonment>.

return to his colony with provisions, but the supplies were not needed. Not a single colonist was to be found. The only clue to the mysterious disappearance of the English settlers was carved into a tree; it was the word “Croatoan.”⁵ Years later the English would establish a permanent and successful settlement at Jamestown. Unfortunately, the two very different cultures could not coincide peacefully, and many tribes were obliterated.

For centuries the Weapemeoc had lived in the North Carolina area. Disease and violence brought by the settlers took its toll upon the native population. Land once occupied by the Weapemeoc became inhabited by the Yeopim (Jaupim), Pasquotank, Perquiman and Poteskeet Indians.⁶ However, by the beginning of the eighteenth century only a handful of each tribe survived.

John Braveboy of Bertie County, North Carolina has long been thought to be a descendant of the Yeopim Indians. He contained enough “Indian blood” for census takers to recognize that he was not a typical white settler. John’s family was unique in its access to power and wealth. Members of this family were respected in North Carolina and later in Kentucky where he moved.

November 26, 1800 was a special day for two members of the Thomas family of Bertie County.⁷ Sarah Thomas and John Brayboy were married on this date as well as John Thomas and Sarah Britt.⁸ Removing from their home in Bertie County, North Carolina, John and Sarah Thomas arrived in Trigg County, Kentucky sometime around 1811. They had traveled to Rock Castle, Kentucky by flat boat along with Richard, Zaddock and James Thomas.⁹

⁵ Abandonment of Roanoke. <http://statelibrary.dcr.state.nc.us/nc/ncsites/English2.htm#Abandonment>.

⁶ Weapemeoc Indians. <http://www.accessgenealogy.com/native/tribes/algonquian/weapemeochist.htm>.

⁷ Ingmire, Francis. Marriage Records of Bertie County, NC 1759-1866, pg. 32.

⁸ Hughey, Ken. Personal correspondence from <Hughey01@msn.com>.

⁹ Gray, Virginia B. Personal knowledge from biographical submission.

It is possible that Sarah Thomas was part Indian like her husband. Census takers at this time in history chose the ethnicity of patrons they visited,¹⁰ and this might explain why Sarah is listed with the name Braveboy instead of Brayboy in the 1820 Trigg County, Kentucky Census. By this time John was dead leaving Sarah with two boys under ten, two boys age ten to sixteen, two girls age sixteen to eighteen and a slave. It was highly unusual for a descendant of Native Americans to own a slave at this time.

Undoubtedly, one of the sons listed in the census was John Brayboy. He would marry Edey Starnes on August 1, 1837 in Trigg County, Kentucky,¹¹ but Edey would die before 1850. As a widower, John remarried to Eliza Ramey-Herrald,¹² the widow of Samuel Herrald, on September 11, 1850 in Trigg County, Kentucky. His sister Judith married Edward Hogan on July 10, 1824, and Frances married William Mitchell on July 10, 1827. Names of the other three sons are not known at this time.

John Brayboy, son of John and Sarah, was born in Kentucky sometime during the year 1811 according to the 1850 Trigg County census. At this time his wife Edey had died, and he was left with a household of six children. The oldest child was Henrietta who married Thomas Cox on July 13, 1858. Next was Sarah who married Joseph DeLawson on February 25, 1868. John and Edey's first son was William H. Brayboy. William married Matilda Hendricks on May 8, 1870. Nancy, the fourth child, married the widower of her sister, Thomas J. Cox, on July 18, 1865. On February 1, 1872, Mary, the fifth child, married Stanley T. Hendricks. Lastly, Molly

¹⁰ Edmonston, Barry. Challenges of the Census. <http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itsv/0699/ijse/census.htm>.

¹¹ Trigg County, KY Records, Marriages 1820-1850, pg. 5.

¹² Jerome, Brenda. Caldwell County, KY Marriages 1833-1853, pg. 102.

Frances was born in 1850 in Trigg County, Kentucky. It is quite possible that Edey's death was related to pregnancy.

According to the Trigg County Order book, John Brayboy surveyed roads running between Canton and Eddyville, Kentucky in 1851. He obtained the right of way for the road he surveyed.¹³ Clearly, John was educated whether in skill or academics.

A widower with six children, John married Eliza Ramey-Herrald. This union produced nine children to my knowledge. The first son was James who married Sarah Thomasson on October 24, 1872. Secondly, another son named George married Miranda Hendricks on April 2, 1876. Next, Benjamin Franklin Brayboy was born May 24, 1856 in Trigg County, Kentucky. The first girl was Edith who married Reverend Robert C. Ramey in 1876. Another daughter, Lucy, married P.W. Choate on November 17, 1887. Belle, the next girl, on December 11, 1884 married George Hendricks. Elizabeth "Betsy" was born May 14, 1870 in Trigg County, Kentucky. She married William Barnes the son of C. and Ellen Richardson Barnes. Next was Florence who married Webb Curtis the twenty-sixth of November in 1892. Amby R. is the last known child of John and Eliza Brayboy.

John Brayboy did not appear in the 1880 Trigg County Census. He was buried in an unmarked grave at Mount Pleasant Baptist Church in Trigg County, Kentucky. His second wife Eliza, who was born Christmas Day of 1828, died on March 10, 1915. She was buried "Between the Rivers" at the Ferguson Springs Cemetery.

Elizabeth "Betsy" Brayboy was the daughter of John and Eliza Ramey Brayboy. She had married William Barnes before the 1900 census. In 1910, the family

¹³ Ordered by the court on September 8, 1851.

consisted of three children (Paul, Minnie and Nellie Lee) as well as Walter the brother of Will and Eliza Brayboy. Eliza lived with her daughter and son-in-law, Will Barnes, until her death.¹⁴

By 1920, Will and Betsy had one child living at home. Nellie Lee was born April 6, 1907 in Trigg County, Kentucky. She became the second wife of Hoy Hamilton Colley. Hoy had previously married Hattie Thomas Cook, but she died March 16, 1933 in Trigg County, Kentucky. Nellie became the stepmother to Gordon, Ray, Thomas, Jack and Joseph Hoy Colley. She previously had one child, and his name was Ollie Ragon Dunnagan. Hoy and Nellie would have one boy (Walter) and three girls (Juanita Colley Dunning, Ruby Colley Carroll and Dorothy Colley Crady). Hoy Hamilton Colley died in 1951 leaving Nellie to raise ten children.

Nellie and her family relocated from Trigg County to Lyon County, Kentucky. For a period of time the family lived in the Lewis home near the Delaney Hall Cemetery and Birdie Bannister farm. Later, the family moved into "Old" Eddyville living near the school. Of course, Old Eddyville was eventually flooded with the creation of the dams. Later in life, she would move into the Lyon County Housing Project.¹⁵

Nellie Colley was known to most children as "Ma Colley." Although she was diabetic, she always had cakes, pies or cookies ready for children who paid her a visit. She loved life and laughter, and children brought her both. Nellie Lee Barnes Colley died January 30, 1992 at Western Baptist Hospital in Paducah, McCracken County, Kentucky. She was buried beside her husband in the Yates Cemetery in Canton, Trigg County, Kentucky.

¹⁴ 1900 and 1910 Trigg County, KY Census records.

¹⁵ Personal knowledge of her daughter, Ruby Colley Carroll.

The descendants of John and Sarah Brayboy, like many others, have survived the test of modern times. Their children witnessed a divided nation at war with itself. In turn their children grew up during the reconstruction of our nation. The next generation would bear children at the time of The Great War, which forever changed the world. John and Sarah's great-great grandchildren will remember the horrible atrocities committed during World War II. Generations until the present day have seen war and peace, recession and prosperity, farmland turn into urban development, and numerous advancements in technology.

For unknown centuries this family lived along the east coast in Indian villages. Their existence was interrupted by the European process of colonization which decimated native populations. In order to survive, the family assimilated and intermarried to produce generation after generation of Americans. The descendants of John and Sarah Thomas Braveboy have certainly braved their way into the future.

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The author is the 4th great-grandson of John and Sarah Thomas Braveboy.