

The PETTRY FEUD

WELL – ALMOST !

Harvey Hinchman "Harve" Pettry and his younger brother, Benjamin Lewis "Ben" Pettry, had an ongoing disagreement with their cousins, William Edward "Will" Pettry and Callans C. "Nick" Pettry. Their ongoing disagreement may be explained by different accounts. Harve and Ben believed Will and Nick was stealing corn from their father's cornfield. Another account has it that Ben and Harve believed that Will and Nick had turned some cattle loose into their father's cornfield. Still others said that Harve and Ben were secretly seeing Will and Nick's wives.

Perhaps a little of "all of the above" and who knows what else or more were true.

Harve and Ben had received word through the local grapevine that Will and Nick were planning to kill them. On September 2, 1901, Harve and Ben, being more aggressive, struck first. They laid in waiting for Will and Nick on the steep hillside between Edwight and Sundial near the mouth of Crooked Hollow, and which was built later; behind the site of the Marsh Fork Junior High School with a football field known as the Dewey Romine Memorial Field. This Junior High School burned down in 1981.

One account has it that they killed Will and severely wounded Nick and ran out of bullets. While Harve watched over Nick, Ben ran home and got more cartridges, returned, and Harve killed Nick. According to some accounts Harve did the shooting and others say that Ben did the deed. Some say that Harve was such a good shot that he would have killed each with one shot apiece. It appeared that everyone I talked to that claimed to know what happened had a different story of the event. Will and Nick's bodies rolled or were rolled down the steep hill and were found the next day lodged against some trees beside the river. When found, Nick still had a slab of smoke cured bacon tied to a carrying string around one of his shoulders.

Ben related to a kinsman some years later that Nick and Will had vandalized the family's mill by throwing abrasive material between the stones and causing damage, but had not been caught. Later, the two assaulted Ben while he was alone. His brother Harve came upon the fight, but was across the river. Harve, firing his pistol from his position across the river killed both Nick and Will. From the pictures of him and from what I judge of him to be when I saw him, Ben was a small and frail man, weighing less than 135 lbs.

Who killed Will and Nick was obvious to most people who knew them. Most all of the Pettrys and their neighbors on Marsh Fork of Coal River became highly emotional over the killings and everyone began to choose sides. A family feud was sorta in the makings.

Sylvester Plunkett Petrey and his son Charles Luther Petrey, who lived on Indian Ridge at Pipestem in Summers County, came to visit his half-sister Ella Mae Pettry and half-brother Benjamin Franklin Pettry at Dry Creek the day that Will and Nick's bodies were

discovered. Realizing that trouble was brewing, Sylvester got Luther out of bed before daylight the next morning saying, "Son, lets get the hell out of here before these Coal River Pettrys start killing each other." He then saddled up his horse and left before daybreak. Sylvester visited again some month's later and bought Will's horse from his widow, Angeline.

The law stepped in quickly and arrested Harve and Ben. Perhaps this quick action by the law defused the hostile actions that were about to take place and at the same time defused the Pettry family feud. Only Harve was charged with felony and brought to trial in Beckley. Court records in Beckley for 1902 show: "The State against H.H. Pettry, Felony". As was the practice of keeping court records at that time, only the results of a case were recorded. The recorder listed a number of cases heard that day that were dropped from prosecution stating; "This day came the State by her attorney in the forgoing styled cases, who by leave of the court says he will not further prosecute in these cases." Before the case was dropped however, there were some court discussions about the evidence and circumstances surrounding the killings. Harve maintained that he alone killed them in self-defense. Witnesses testified that Will and Nick had talked of killing Harve and Ben. This alone may be why the State's Prosecuting Attorney dropped the case against Harve.

There was a human skull on the judge's bench at the trial, and the prosecuting attorney often referred to it in his argument. Some say it was Nick's skull because Will's skull had been crushed. After the trial, Harve picked it up and defiantly said they could take it and use it for a soap gourd.

Harve did not go to prison. This may seem strange, but there are presently 8 people in Marsh Fork District charged, some of which have already been tried and convicted with murder or manslaughter of various degrees and are free (1987).

Will and Nick are buried at Edwight in a small hillside cemetery in coffins built by James A. Pettry. The cemetery is on a steep incline where I saw four graves, each marked with a flat fieldstone. One of the other two graves is that of a child who was shot in the head while in her father's arms. A drunk had fired the fatal shot into her home. I understand now that there are more than four graves in this cemetery and it is called, Edwight Pettry Cemetery.

William Edward "Will" Pettry (Jan. 24, 1878--Sept. 2, 1901) was the son of Ballard P. "Curly" and Rachel Adline (Bonds) Pettry. Will married (March 17, 1898) Minerva Angeline Pettry (Nov. 17, 1879--Oct. 15, 1959), half-sister of Nick and the daughter of Absalom "Ab" and Elizabeth Ann (Workman-Pruitt) Pettry. Will was 20 years old and Angeline was 19 years old when they married. After Will was killed, Angeline married (July 7, 1902) #2 James Sanford Smith and married (Nov. 14, 1908) #3 Ballard Wilbert Pettry, the son of James A. and Martha Jane (Hendricks) Pettry.

Will and Angeline's known children are:

Virgie Lee	married	#1 Walter Lee Clay
		#2 Clinton M. Brown
King Sheridan	b. Jan. 29, 1901	married Leslie "Lessie" Mae Cook

Angeline married #2 James Sanford Smith, no known children. She had a son, Ray Pettry (1905-1975) by Charlie O. Jarrell before marrying #3 Ballard Wilbert Pettry. Ray never married, had a clubfoot and is buried in the Pettry Cemetery at Naoma, WV, as is Angeline. Angeline and Wilbert's known children are:

Roscoe	married	#1 Elsie Fay Clay #2 Ollie Marie Toney
Millie	married	#1 Clyde Mason Murdock #2 Layton Bunch

Will's father, Ballard, was a retail merchant and operated a dry goods store at Edwight. Ballard and Rachel, who lived behind the ol' Edwight schoolhouse at the mouth of Hazy, are buried at Naoma and their known children are:

*William E. "Will"	married	Minerva Angeline Pettry
Jessie Crockett	married	Mary Elizabeth Pettry
Andrew Jackson	married	#1 Mary Annie Bradford #2 Ida Henderson
Sarah Margaret	married	Lewis Jarrell
Henry Lee	married	Grace Hollingworth
James Ballard		Aug. 4, 1889--Jun. 20, 1890
Araminta Jane	married	#1 Milton Thompson #2 Kenner Thompson
Ida L.	married	Volley Quincy Mitchem
Lula May		Jun. 7, 1895--May 14, 1903
Lela	married	#1 William J. Beckelhimer #2 John Luther Whittington
Garnet D.	married	John E. Mitchem

Callans C. "Nick" Pettry (Nov. 14, 1863--Sept. 2, 1901) was the son of Absalom Pine "Ab" and Ella Louise (Jarrell) Pettry, and married #1 Mary Emiline Webb and #2 Susan Angeline Jarrell on July 22, 1892. Ab and Ella were married on Aug. 18, 1860. Nick was 29 years old, and Susan was 16 years old when they married. Susan (b. May 1878) was the daughter of Gibson and Mary (Ferrell) Jarrell and a sister of Gertie Kuhn of Packsville. Susan married (Sept. 16, 1903) #2 George M. Ward after Nick was killed.

Known children of Nick and Mary are:

Sidney	married	Almeda "Mead" Gunnoe
Haven Walter Lee	married	#1 Celia Louise "Hun" Dickens #2 Gamie _____

Known children of Nick and Susan are:

Derma		b. Sept. 4, 1893
Myrtie	b. Jan. 7, 1894	married Isaace Massey

Martha	b. June 25, 1896	
Pearl Bryant	married	Harrison Miller Massey
Minerva Angeline	married	Albert F. Webb
Margie	Feb. 15, 1900--died young	
Leslie	Feb. 15, 1900--died young	
Vicie	married	Joseph Harmon

George M. Ward and #1 Betty Mae (North) Ward's known children are: Willie, Otis, Elizabeth "Lizzie" and Henry. Lizzie married, #1 James Gallimore, #2 Oliver Massey. Henry married Mamie White. Known children of George and Susan are:

Arthur	married	Myrtle (Harden) Riddle
Alberta	married	Van Sheppard
Charles	died young	

Absalom "Ab" (d. Nov. 14, 1926) and Ella Louise (Jarrell) Pettry's known children are:

James A.	married	Elizabeth Ann Pettry
* Callans C. "Nick"	married	#1 Mary Emiline Webb
		#2 Susan Angeline Jarrell
Virginia Jane "Hun"	married	John Lewis Jarrell
Laura Belle	married	James William Humphries
Isabella	1869-1896	
Duncell	1874-1896	
King	1874-Dec. 14, 1898	
Margarett	1875-1875	

After Louise died (June 20, 1879), Absalom "Ab" married (Sept. 1, 1879) #2 Elizabeth Ann (Workman) Pruitt, and their twin children are:

Ceila C.	married	#1 Walter Breedlove
		#2 Phillip Sheridan Price
* Minerva Angeline	married	#1 William Edward "Will" Pettry
		#2 James Stanford Smith
		#3 Ballard Wilbert Pettry

Harve (Dec. 29, 1869--June 13, 1922) and Ben (Oct. 29, 1876—Sept. 30, 1962) were the sons of Burwell and Nancy A. (Jarrell) Pettry. Nancy A. was the daughter of Lemuel Jr. and #1 Elizabeth Julia (Windsor) Jarrell. Burwell and Nancy married on April 10, 1869, originally lived at Shumate's Branch but moved to Glen Jean near Fayetteville after the killing of Will and Nick. Sometime after 1910 they moved to Peytona and still later they moved to live with Dr. Ben at Colcord (Lawson). Burwell and Nancy's known children are:

Edward	died young	
* Harvey H. "Harve"	married	Flora Martha Cook
Lewis J.	b. Jan. 1877	
Julia Frances	married	James Robert Homaker

Martha Dora	married	Squire Everett Wiley
Mary O.	b. Dec. 25, 1874, died young, twin to Martha	
* Benjamin L. "Ben"	married	Ethelyn Fussell
Celia Launa	married	Orville Essex
Ida O.	married	William "Butch" Caufelt
Theodere	July 20, 1886--May 18, 1890	
Howard	Dec. 31, 1890--died young	

Harve and Ben became doctors of medicine and practiced in Raleigh County on Clear Fork at Colcord. Locally they were referred to as Dr. Harve and Dr. Ben. Dr. Harve studied at Grant University and Maryland Medical School. Dr. Ben studied at Louisville Medical School. Dr. Harve delivered my mother, Icie Marie (Williams) Pettry, on February 21, 1906 at Bald Knob, WV. She and her father, Charles Logan Williams, attended Dr. Harve's funeral. They walked from Pettus to Jarrolds Valley then riding a train to Colcord. The train stopped in front of Dr. Harve's home with a large number of people in attendance.

Benjamin Lewis "Ben" Pettry taught school at Edwight before becoming a doctor. He was in the Medical Corps during WWI and was in charge of a military hospital in France. He practices medicine at Dorothy, WV as a contract doctor for the mines and C&O Railroad employees in 1906. Dr. Ben resided in a two-story house near the mining company's offices and general store. He traveled often and was activity in local Republican politicks. Dr. Ben married, late in life (Dec. 24, 1924 at 48 years old), Ethelyn Fussell of Fitzgerald, GA, who he met while on vacation in Georgia. She was a tour taxi driver and drove him around while in the area. Ethelyn was the daughter of Dr. James Carlton and Lelin May (Little) Fussell. I remember Dr. Ben and his wife often visited my father and mother at Packsville when I was young. The picture below was taken in our yard at Packsville while they were visiting Dad and Mom. Dr. Ben (Oct. 29, 1876--September 30, 1962) had no children, and is buried in Sunset Memorial Cemetery in South Charleston, WV. Ethelyn (Nov. 8, 1897- Dec. 1, 1984), I assume is buried in Sunset Cemetery also.



Dr. Ben and Ethelyn (Fussell) Pettry

~1947 at Packsville, WV

Dr. Harve always carried a pistol, perhaps from fear of revenge, and possibly Dr. Ben carried one also. Harve, a crack shot, often hunted squirrels with his pistol. Harve was also a teacher, jackleg lawyer, a notary public, and many papers requiring notarization in this area and time bears his name. Harve would sign his name as; "H.H. Pettry, n.p." Dr. Harve and Dr. Ben were witty and more intelligent than their peers.

Harvey Hinchman "Harve" Pettry (Dec. 29, 1869--June 13, 1922) married (April 29, 1895) Floria Martha Cook (April 2, 1874--Oct. 14, 1925), the daughter of Hiram and Nancy (Miller) Cook. Their first three children were born before the killings took place. Dr. Harve must have lived a short time at Glen Jean with his parents because he moved in 1902 to Lawson (Colcord) at the mouth of Buggard Branch Hollow. Here later he practiced medicine as a contract doctor for the mines and C&O Railroad employees. In 1918 he enlisted in the Medical Corps and was discharged as a Captain. During his military service, he lived on a farm near Vanceburg, KY. Dr. Harve and his family returned from Vanceburg and were living and practicing at the mouth of Sycamore Hollow, near Colcord, when he died. Here his office was across a small dirt street from his two-story home. On June 13, 1922, he left his office and walked across the street to his house for lunch and sat in a chair on the porch watching two of his children playing and was reading the newspaper. One of the children hurt it self and began to cry, as Harve got out of his chair to get to them, a pistol that he always carried in a holster under his left arm went off. The bullet passed through an artery in his upper left leg and on through the wooden floor of the porch. Dr. Ben was notified and came to attend him from Dorothy, which is about 2 miles away, via railroad pump cart. Dr. Harve died a short time later from the loss of blood. Some people said that justice was done when they heard the news of the accident. Dr. Harve is buried in the Lawson Cemetery across from the Patty C. Sockdale Home School, up Buggard Branch Hollow.

The Charleston Gazette issue of June 14, 1922 reported the accidentally shooting, which is probably the most accurate account as:

Colcord Physician Accidentally Killed by Pistol Under Arm

"Contraction of muscles while reaching to the floor for a paper is believed to have discharged the shot which yesterday morning killed Dr. Harvey H. Petry, of Colcord. Dr. Petry, following breakfast, had seated himself on the porch of his home to read the morning paper, while two of his children played around him.

While he was sitting there a shot was heard. His wife rushed to the porch to find her husband stretched on the floor and smoke curling from the barrel of a pistol worn in a holster under his left arm. The shot had pierced the left thigh. One cartridge had been discharged. His move to reach the paper is believed to have discharged the gun.

Dr. Petry, despite all efforts to save his life, died an hour later. He had been a resident of that district for a number of years. He was consulting surgeon for the Ameagle Colliery company and the Dorothy Coal company. He had a large practice among the residents in and around Colcord."

The bullet hole in the porch floor was still there on June 22, 1987 when Nora (Jarrell) Pettry and her son, Phillip, showed it to me. Dr. Harve's pistol was a 45-caliber semi-automatic he had acquired while in military service. Dr. Harve's children sold the house to Alfred and Nora (Jarrell) Pettry. Alfred's father, Jim Pettry, had built Nick and Will's coffins. The house now is the home of Gary and Barbara (Pettry) Anderson (2007). The front porch has been replaced and the old board with the bullet hole was in the possession of Phillip Pettry. Phillip stored the old board in his garage for safekeeping but was lost when floodwaters on Sycamore Creek washed the garage and its contents away. I assumed the bullet still rest in the ground under Gary and Barbara's front porch, about 4 feet to the right of the front door and 3 feet out from the house.

Dr. Harve and Floria's known children are:

Capitola L.	Feb. 28, 1896--Dec. 20, 1898	
Benjamin Howard	married	Ruth Hansford Crist
Guy Carlton	married	Sara Jean Buckley
Shelby Lawrence	married	Nina Brooks Carlisle
Inez May	married	Claude Lorraine Morton
Paul Kester	married	Chloe Pearl Jarrell
Harvey H. Jr.	married	Anna Wilcox Parker
Jessie Wynn	married	William Wesley King
Charles Eugene	married	Mary Lou Kelley

Harve's namesake son, Harvey, became a surgeon and practiced medicine in Shelbyville and Charleston, IL.

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The author of this sketch invites corrections, additions and variations to this bit of southern West Virginia history. This is work in progress. You are welcome to copy the contents of this report in part or whole.

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