
IN SMALL THINGS NEARLY FORGOTTEN: THE RICHMOND FAMILY HISTORY IS AMERICA'S HISTORY

Beverly W. Brannan

1950-51: The academic year my father used the GI bill to get a master's degree at the University of Kentucky, the year I spent in my grandparents' home and at their general store, the year the Upland South stamped my life and work. My mother, little brother and I lived with my maternal grandparents in Beckton, Kentucky, a town of about twenty-five at the time, located in the farm country between Glasgow and Bowling Green, Kentucky. In our household, three generations lived together in a multigenerational household typical of farm families for hundreds of years.

The extended family gathered in the evenings in the front room where we continued supper conversations until bedtime. In this time before television, the grown-ups spent the evenings talking while the youngsters played on the floor. In summer, we'd go outside to enjoy the relative cool of the evening. The grown ups would sit in wooden lawn chairs while we children played on pallets on the ground or lay on our backs looking up at the stars in the sky.

Each evening the talk followed the same pattern: who had traded in the store that day, who they were related to, what land they owned, and who'd owned it before them, and before them. The group included two storekeepers, a patent medicine salesman, three secretaries in offices that did extensive face-to-face business, and a farmer who gathered with fellow farmers loafing at the store at the end of the workday. Beckton had been their home throughout their lives and they shared many acquaintances whom they saw frequently. Their talk wove a network of local connections that covered the Barren, Warren, and Allen County area and reached back to a time before the Civil War.

Sometimes talk would turn to the "olden days" when my grandmother's family had lived in Tennessee. My great uncle, her brother, was a storyteller and patent medicine salesman. He would talk of "Little John," as they referred to their grandfather John Ruskin Richmond (Figure 1). One story still vivid in my mind was of Little John at age 10, whose father and older brothers sent him from the field where they were working to a nearby neighbor's to bring them a jug of whiskey. The neighbor was away when Little John arrived and the latch string was drawn. Determined to get inside, he climbed up the stick chimney, dropped down into the unused fireplace, filled his jug, went out the door, and took the whiskey



Figure 1. Photographer unknown. "Little" John Ruskin Richmond with daughter Cora (left) and wife Mary Ann (nee Pare) in front of their house at Kepler, near Smiths Grove, Warren County, Kentucky, about 1898. Photograph from copy negative in private collection. Source of original unknown.

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The next morning while the family was seated at breakfast, the neighbor arrived demanding payment for the whole barrel of whiskey. Little John had neglected to shut off the spigot completely and the rest of the whiskey had run onto the floor. The owner figured Little John must have done it because other neighbors had seen him headed toward the house swinging a jug and saw him lugging it home later.

From my earliest memory I wanted to write down stories like those but because I heard only the one year's talk, I needed to gather more information to give the story body and to understand the role plain people play in history. Academic histories in the early 1970s offered little of value so I turned to records close at hand—oral histories and material culture. A few years later anthropologist James Deetz made an important contribution to understanding the nature of the history of

ordinary people in his book, *In Small Things Forgotten*.¹ It is in the small things *nearly* forgotten that we can make the connections between the daily lives of ordinary families and the national record of the American peoples.

In the South, families are so important that it seems only natural to study them and take seriously the materials they have saved from their pasts. Collecting and integrating the history of our extended family has taken me and the members of my immediate family on an amazing journey into Jackson County, Tennessee, a county that supposedly has no surviving historical records. By adapting the historians' concept of sources to fit the kinds of data prevalent in the Upland South, the history of the plain folk in the Old South can be vividly reconstructed.

This paper has two objectives: to show how rich the history of ordinary families can be when we combine traditional with non-traditional sources, and to show how the history of ordinary Americans illuminates our national history. Generational history offers the advantage of providing natural networks of associates and kin that are often difficult to establish in standard histories. Expanded, they can become regional histories, showing migration motives and paths. Histories of ordinary people that can inform histories of ideas, religion, politics, or transportation can be compiled even when direct ancestral lines are not available. For example, my maternal grandparents died by the time I began my project but enough of their generation were still living to corroborate earlier oral traditions. They sent me to talk with their friends and to visit family sites, and explained discrepancies in census and military records, maps, and other people's stories. I began fitting the pieces together in the early 1980s, while working on a degree in American Studies. The discipline's broad interpretation of "data" offers a viable framework for doing this kind of historical research.

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A visit to a distant cousin produced an unpublished family history based on oral traditions gathered by the late 1930s that we were permitted to copy. The search for corroboration of its many anecdotes has led us to church histories, court depositions, local histories and historians, and letters tucked into Bibles. The verifiable connections between people, locations, and ideas that these sources provide outweigh the various errors of fact we discover along the way.

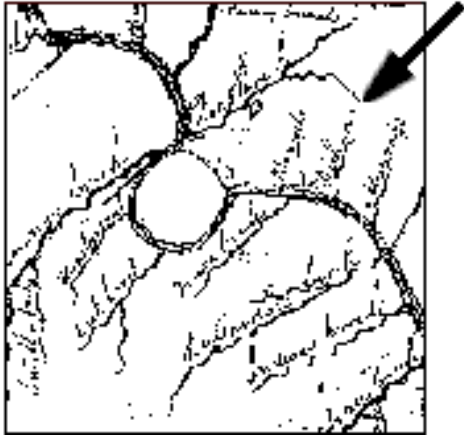


Figure 2. Note Richman's Creek, Jackson County, Tennessee, 1836. This is the approximate site of the Richmond's farm at Rough Point. Source: Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

Site visits made us familiar with the lay of the land, comfortable with the people, and able to envision the events we were learning about. A Richmond descendant in Cookeville, Tennessee, took us to Little John's great-grandfather John's home site on Flynn's Creek in Jackson County where the first Tennessee Richmonds lived. Two Smith County Richmond descendants drove us to Little John's adolescent home near Dixon Springs (Figure 2). Smith County historian R. D. Brooks told us things large and small that brought meaning to records long overlooked in Bibles, court houses, and archives.

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A few instances from Little John's family line show how family-centered research can establish direct connections to broader topics. Oral tradition and civic documents combined to reveal how Little John's father's odd behavior was typical of frontier experiences that gave rise to the American tall tale. Until I read John Moore Richmond's Jackson County Court records for the 1830s and 1840s, I had thought northern writers penned imaginative myths about the South to make it seem exotic to the likes of *Harper's Weekly* readers, but the court records disclosed episodes in the lives of our own ancestors that could easily have been written by Mark Twain or Bret Hart.



Figure 3. Ruth B. Wood, photographer. Records in the Jackson County, Tennessee, courthouse, September 1996. Source of original: Beverly Brannan, Washington, D.C.

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These court records disclosed that Little John's father, John Moore Richmond, went by his middle name Moore. In 1831, Moore Richmond was operating a liquor store from his house on Gainesboro town lot #1, where he lived with his young family. On Christmas eve 1837, he sold his house and business to two men I'll call buyer A and buyer B for the sake of brevity. Buyer B was not present at the sale. Moore accepted in payment a promissory note for \$550 extended by a third man, also absent from the sale. I was shocked to learn from Moore's deposition that he sold his house and business to complete strangers in return for a second-hand promissory note from yet another stranger!

Over the course of the next four years, buyer A plied the region by steamboat—from Louisville to Nashville—producing stock, mostly "spiritous liquor," for the store he operated with his brother-in-law who was buyer B. When the

note fell due and Moore tried to collect, the buyers escaped with all their possessions in a small boat on the Cumberland River. They went to Arkansas where buyer A was killed before he could be brought back for trial. The man who had extended the promissory note used in the initial payment could not be found either, and like the buyers, he had left no property to attach. To complicate matters further, buyer B had sold a portion of the property to a fourth party who claimed he had paid cash to buyer B and therefore owed nothing to Moore Richmond. In a sale of the property on the courthouse steps, Moore Richmond's father Robert purchased it for \$600.²

This episode is only a prelude to Moore's many land and property transactions, conducted more for their braggadocio effect on drinking partners, it seems, than out of any good business sense. If we recall the ego-enhancing function of inflated claims, we realize that records of land purchase can tell us about both the anxieties involved in being seen as a man whose word was his bond and the litigious nature of frontier communities. Honoring oral agreements, even those made under the influence of "spiritous liquor," was a way to uphold status in the backwoods communities of the time, a phenomenon that writers have analyzed for more than one hundred years in studies of independence, honor, and violence in the Old South. Elliott Gorn catches the vicious nature of the fighting in his wonderfully titled article, "'Gouge and Bite, Pull Hair and Scratch': The Social Significance of Fighting in the Southern Backcountry."³ Tracing the transaction of Moore's property provided a meaningful context for the family tradition that Little John's father used to "fight to see who was the better man."

Initially it seemed odd that when referring to such a rough-and-tumble society, people consistently cited their ancestors' religious affiliations. First I used this to calculate the distance between their dwellings and their churches. Later I realized that religious affiliations were related to the same fierce sense of personal independence that prompted frontier gentry to duel and backwoodsmen to gouge out each other's eyes to defend their honor.

The simple declaration in our unpublished family history that the Richmonds were "first Presbyterian by faith and

then Methodists" opened a window onto our ancestors' world.⁴ We had discovered that Little John's great-grandfather was a Scotch-Irish Presbyterian who lived in South Carolina beginning in 1754. Specialized histories explained the nature of the religious beliefs and political philosophies in conflict in England, Scotland, and Ireland starting in the 1600s. Over a two hundred year period, the predominant religions-Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist-represented a progressive search for greater independence in mobility, economics, intellect, and faith. Sequentially they moved from ritual, symbol, and clerical intercession with the Heavenly Father toward simplicity of worship and direct communication with God.

From their religious affiliation and dates, we can situate the Richmonds in this progression. They had lived in the South Carolina community of White Oak for more than a decade when Anglican preacher Charles Woodmason described the fierce resistance Scotch-Irish Presbyterians mounted to his efforts from 1766 until 1772 to draw them into the established Church of England. Presbyterian resistance tactics included acts just short of guerilla warfare, such as unleashing fifty-seven fighting dogs in the sanctuary while Woodmason was conducting services.⁵ The Richmonds must have known about such episodes in their tiny community, and possibly participated in them, resisting every effort to diminish their self-determination. After six years, Woodmason returned to England, acknowledging the futility of trying to bring American colonists into the heirarchical, class-conscious, state-supported church. On the eve of the Revolutionary War, American colonists demanded greater freedom, both in religion and in politics.

After the Revolution, the Richmonds provide a personal connection to America's religious revolution, the Second Great Awakening, which swept through the South from about 1800 through 1812. In *America: Religions and Religion*, Catherine Albanese explains that people living on the frontier valued a theology of action over one of intellect, and that the churches that grew most rapidly filled that need. The Methodist Church grew faster than any other in the early part of the nineteenth century because it successfully combined the optimism that accompanied the new century and the new nation with a careful balance of key concerns of the day, such as desires for the perfection of mankind, concern with restoring religious practice to the basics developed in the first century after Christ, missionary zeal, and a simple organizational structure.⁶

By 1802 the Richmonds had moved to the new frontier of Tennessee, settling in Jackson County. On the frontier where people's spiritual needs were not being met regularly by any religious institutions, Methodists led other denominations in holding informal mass camp meetings out of doors. People gathered annually at camp meetings for up to a week to listen to preaching, to pray and sing together, and to socialize. From 1800 until 1813 southern Presbyterians and Methodists held joint camp meetings, including in the Cumberland River area of Tennessee where Francis Asbury, who established the Methodist Church in America, conducted meetings himself. During this period the Richmonds switched from Presbyterianism (which held that individuals are pre-ordained by God for eternal salvation) to Methodism (which posits that eternal salvation is available to all who profess faith and follow the steps prescribed for a godly life). The place and timing of the Richmonds' switch from Presbyterians to Methodists places them squarely in the mainstream of American religious tradition.

Hundreds attended the camp meetings so singing schools were set up to teach people common sets of songs and how to sing them together. The English-based shaped note musical notation system and singing style spread from these camp meetings. Group singing was one of the most emotionally charged aspects of the meetings, resulting in far more conversions than would a camp meeting without a preliminary songfest. The southern shaped note singing tradition represents American heritage and regional culture, economic and social class culture, the culture of religious dissent, and a communion with the past.



Figure 4. Photographer unknown. J. C. Richmond's family in Oklahoma, about 1908. Henry Kennedy Richmond, center, with daughter, Clera left, and wife, Genie Ray Richmond, right. Photograph from copy negative in private collection. Source of original: Jeanne Lee, Carthage, Tennessee.

Two generations later we can name individual songleading Richmonds who carried on this largely southern tradition. Little John and many of his relatives left Tennessee after the Civil War but his cousin Pole (Napoleon Bonaparte Richmond, 1848-1929) remained in Jackson County, as did Pole's son Johny [his spelling] Richmond (1881-1937). Johny stayed with the widowed Pole on the family farm at Rough Point on the Cumberland River in Jackson County and bought out his brothers' interests. Johny and his wife Clio Draper were members of the Church of Christ, a denomination that grew out of the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches. Johny and Clio gave the land for and helped build the Richmond Chapel Church of Christ at Rough Point in Jackson County and performed many weekly tasks such as laundering altar clothes, maintaining the church property, and visiting shut-ins.⁷ Johny trained to be a singing school teacher in the conservative four-shaped note tradition. This style of singing was important because it facilitated group singing in a church that did not permit musical accompaniment, and because it symbolized southern cultural tradition in an era of great change at the end of the nineteenth century. Johny was one of several song leaders in the extended Richmond family and many other Richmonds attended "singing school" in the more genteel era that followed the settling of the frontier.

Johny relied on farming and shipping for his income. The side of his farm facing the Cumberland River is the site of Richmond Landing, where steamboats stopped to load crops and unload manufactured goods. His

wife Clio cooked excellent meals for the passengers who lighted and came in to visit while the crops and goods were being transferred. Isolated as Richmond's Landing may seem, Tennesseans carried with them memories of its Upland South culture when they migrated: Little John to Kentucky; his father, Moore, to Arkansas; Pole's son Henry to Oklahoma territory. Henry Richmond married Eugenia "Genie" Ray in January 1903 and lived on the Richmond family farm for a year and a half. After their first child was born in May 1904, they joined Genie's father and family who had settled in Wanette in Oklahoma Territory. In 1997 I received a letter from 87-year old J. C. Richmond, son of Henry who settled in Oklahoma just before it became a state (Figure 4). J. C. recalled his parents' life history and his family's trip back to Tennessee when his parents were deciding where to settle permanently:

My Dad got here too late in the year to start a crop so he ran a saloon for the rest of 1904. We kids knew nothing about it for about 30 years My folks bought a small farm. It was low land near the South Canadian river. About the time I was born [1910], the river went on a rampage and ruined the farm. The South Canadian is known for changing channels. [Dad] sold it for almost nothing. Old grand Pa Ray's health failed, so he went back to Tennessee and we lived on his farm

Grandpa Ray died in 1917. We were on his place and it had to be sold so we went back to Tennessee by train. Got to Nashville, took a boat up the Cumberland River to Richmond Landing. We got there in the early morning. Aunt Clio "Draper" was cooking bacon and eggs for breakfast.

We moved into one of the rent houses. We lived there 9 months. I enjoyed the time we were there. My Dad had a corn crop by the river. I stayed there when he was working and watched the boats pass up and down the river. [Dad] sold out to Uncle Johny and we went back to Oklahoma.

About the middle of September 1917, we left for Oklahoma. We went across the river to the railroad at Cookeville, I think. Uncle Johny drove a T model, Uncle [Mayburn] Webb drove a T model, [and] a renter on the place took some things that we shipped in a wagon. Buster [Earl Stanton Richmond (1907-1993), J. C.'s cousin] and I rode in a wagon. [Buster] told me they got back home late in the night. It was quite a trip.⁸

The Richmond stories we have gathered and shared over the years have taken us on a trip through time and distance. With their stories in mind and the valuable information from the many traditional and non-traditional resources left to us, we tell about their lives in rich detail and almost watch the procession of time through their eyes. They illuminate our national history, bearing out again and again Edward Ayers's descriptions in *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* of politics, economics, transportation, employment, daily life, entertainment and more.⁹ Like Ayers's southerners, most Richmonds have clung to tradition. Most joined the Confederacy to fight for their familiar way of life. Most continued farming after the Civil War, ever hopeful that encroaching industrialization would cease before it forced them off their land. Most voted for Democrats who promised them agricultural support. They participated in churches. They visited their cousins, making it possible to chronicle this family history.

As people led me to one Richmond after another and gave me bits and pieces of information-often magnificent but bits and pieces, nonetheless-I remembered the many women in my family who are quilters and kept thinking I was creating a crazy quilt of narratives as I connected the various stories: from Little John to John Moore to Robert to John the Patriot, and back and back. Gradually, though, patterns emerged that show what characterizes the people and culture of the Upland South and how our migrations, agricultural background, conservatism, family networks and New South opportunism have contributed to the metaphoric quilt of our national history. To paraphrase the title of the millennium history project launched by the National Endowment for the Humanities, "our history is America's history."

NOTES

1. James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten* (Garden City, New York, 1977).
2. Moore Richmond vs. Pinckney McCarver, Iris Bond, December 20, 1840, Circuit Court Records, Gainesboro, Jackson County, Tennessee.
3. Elliott J. Gorn, "'Gouge and Bite, Pull Hair and Scratch': The Social Significance of Fighting in the Southern Backcountry," *American Historical Review* 90 (Feb.-June 1985): 18-43; Arthur K. Moore, *The Frontier Mind* (New York, 1957); Frank Lawrence Owsley, *Plain Folk of the Old South* (New York, 1982); Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York, 1982).
4. Victor Moulder, "A Chronological History of Our Relatives From the Earliest Colonial Times to the Present Day," unpublished typescript, September 25, 1940, p. 1. (Copied from Anna Laura Moulder Grinstead, Three Forks, Kentucky, August 1976. Copy in possession of the author.)

5. Parke Rouse, Jr., *The Great Wagon Road from Philadelphia To the South* (New York, 1973), 201-209.
6. Catherine Albanese, *America: Religions and Religion* (Belmont, CA, 1992), 161.
7. Jeanne Sadler Lee, Carthage, Tennessee, in conversations and correspondence with Beverly Brannan, 1996-1997.
8. J. C. Richmond (Oklahoma), correspondence to Byron Richmond and Beverly Brannan, 1997.
9. Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York, 1992).

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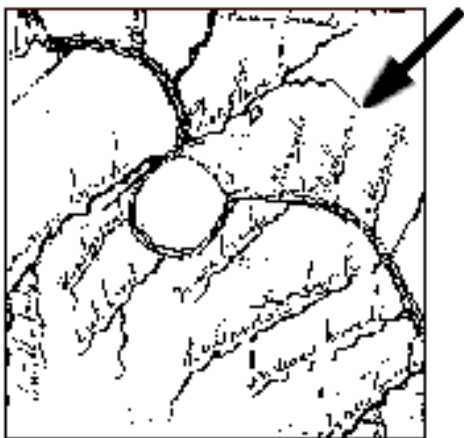


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These court records disclosed that Little John's father, John Moore Richmond, went by his middle name Moore. In 1831, Moore Richmond was operating a liquor store from his house on Gainesboro town lot #1, where he lived with his young family. On Christmas eve 1837, he sold his house and business to two men I'll call buyer A and buyer B for the sake of brevity. Buyer B was not present at the sale. Moore accepted in payment a promissory note for \$550 extended by a third man, also absent from the sale. I was shocked to learn from Moore's deposition that he sold his house and business to complete strangers in return for a second-hand promissory note from yet another stranger!

Over the course of the next four years, buyer A plied the region by steamboat—from Louisville to Nashville—producing stock, mostly "spiritous liquor," for the store he operated with his brother-in-law who was buyer B. When the note fell due and Moore tried to collect, the buyers escaped with all their possessions in a small boat on the Cumberland River. They went to Arkansas where buyer A was killed before he could be brought back for trial. The man who had extended the promissory note used in the initial payment could not be found either, and like the buyers, he had left no property to attach. To complicate matters further, buyer B had sold a portion of the property to a fourth party who claimed he had paid cash to buyer B and therefore owed nothing to Moore Richmond. In a sale of the property on the courthouse steps, Moore Richmond's father Robert purchased it for \$600.²

This episode is only a prelude to Moore's many land and property transactions, conducted more for their braggadocio effect on drinking partners, it seems, than out of any good business sense. If we recall the ego-enhancing function of inflated claims, we realize that records of land purchase can tell us about both the anxieties involved in being seen as a man whose word was his bond and the litigious nature of frontier communities. Honoring oral agreements, even those made under the influence of "spiritous liquor," was a way to uphold status in the backwoods communities of the time, a phenomenon that writers have analyzed for more than one hundred years in studies of independence, honor, and violence in the Old South. Elliott Gorn catches the vicious nature of the fighting in his wonderfully titled article, "'Gouge and Bite, Pull Hair and Scratch': The Social Significance of Fighting in the Southern Backcountry."³ Tracing the transaction of Moore's property provided a meaningful context for the family tradition that Little John's father used to "fight to see who was the better man."

Initially it seemed odd that when referring to such a rough-and-tumble society, people consistently cited their ancestors' religious affiliations. First I used this to calculate the distance between their dwellings and their churches. Later I realized that religious affiliations were related to the same fierce sense of personal independence that prompted frontier gentry to duel and backwoodsmen to gouge out each other's eyes to defend their honor.

The simple declaration in our unpublished family history that the Richmonds were "first Presbyterian by faith and then Methodists" opened a window onto our ancestors' world.⁴ We had discovered that Little John's great-grandfather was a Scotch-Irish Presbyterian who lived in South Carolina beginning in 1754. Specialized histories explained the nature of the religious beliefs and political philosophies in conflict in England, Scotland, and Ireland starting in the 1600s. Over a two hundred year period, the predominant religions-Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist-represented a progressive search for greater independence in mobility, economics, intellect, and faith. Sequentially they moved from ritual, symbol, and clerical intercession with the Heavenly Father toward simplicity of worship and direct communication with God.

From their religious affiliation and dates, we can situate the Richmonds in this progression. They had lived in the South Carolina community of White Oak for more than a decade when Anglican preacher Charles Woodmason described the fierce resistance Scotch-Irish Presbyterians mounted to his efforts from 1766 until 1772 to draw them into the established Church of England. Presbyterian resistance tactics included acts just short of guerilla warfare, such as unleashing fifty-seven fighting dogs in the sanctuary while Woodmason was conducting services.⁵ The Richmonds must have known about such episodes in their tiny community, and possibly participated in them, resisting every effort to diminish their self-determination. After six years, Woodmason returned to England, acknowledging the futility of trying to bring American colonists into the heirarchical, class-conscious, state-supported church. On the eve of the Revolutionary War, American colonists demanded greater freedom, both in religion and in politics.

After the Revolution, the Richmonds provide a personal connection to America's religious revolution, the Second Great Awakening, which swept through the South from about 1800 through 1812. In *America: Religions and Religion*, Catherine Albanese explains that people living on the frontier valued a theology of action over one of intellect, and that the churches that grew most rapidly filled that need. The Methodist Church grew faster than any other in the early part of the nineteenth century because it successfully combined the optimism that accompanied the new century and the new nation with a careful balance of key concerns of the day, such as desires for the perfection of mankind, concern with restoring religious practice to the basics developed in the first century after Christ, missionary zeal, and a simple organizational structure.⁶

By 1802 the Richmonds had moved to the new frontier of Tennessee, settling in Jackson County. On the frontier

where people's spiritual needs were not being met regularly by any religious institutions, Methodists led other denominations in holding informal mass camp meetings out of doors. People gathered annually at camp meetings for up to a week to listen to preaching, to pray and sing together, and to socialize. From 1800 until 1813 southern Presbyterians and Methodists held joint camp meetings, including in the Cumberland River area of Tennessee where Francis Asbury, who established the Methodist Church in America, conducted meetings himself. During this period the Richmonds switched from Presbyterianism (which held that individuals are pre-ordained by God for eternal salvation) to Methodism (which posits that eternal salvation is available to all who profess faith and follow the steps prescribed for a godly life). The place and timing of the Richmonds' switch from Presbyterians to Methodists places them squarely in the mainstream of American religious tradition.

Hundreds attended the camp meetings so singing schools were set up to teach people common sets of songs and how to sing them together. The English-based shaped note musical notation system and singing style spread from these camp meetings. Group singing was one of the most emotionally charged aspects of the meetings, resulting in far more conversions than would a camp meeting without a preliminary songfest. The southern shaped note singing tradition represents American heritage and regional culture, economic and social class culture, the culture of religious dissent, and a communion with the past.



Figure 4. Photographer unknown. J. C. Richmond's family in Oklahoma, about 1908. Henry Kennedy Richmond, center, with daughter, Clera left, and wife, Genie Ray Richmond, right. Photograph from copy negative in private collection. Source of original: Jeanne Lee, Carthage, Tennessee.

Two generations later we can name individual songleading Richmonds who carried on this largely southern tradition. Little John and many of his relatives left Tennessee after the Civil War but his cousin Pole (Napoleon Bonaparte Richmond, 1848-1929) remained in Jackson County, as did Pole's son Johny [his spelling] Richmond (1881-1937). Johny stayed with the widowed Pole on the family farm at Rough Point on the Cumberland River in Jackson County and bought out his brothers' interests. Johny and his wife Clio Draper were members of the Church of Christ, a denomination that grew out of the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches. Johny and Clio gave the land for and helped build the Richmond Chapel Church of Christ at Rough Point in Jackson County and performed many weekly tasks such as laundering altar clothes, maintaining the church property, and visiting shut-ins.⁷ Johny trained to be a singing school teacher in the conservative four-shaped note tradition. This style of singing was important because it facilitated group singing in a church that did not permit musical accompaniment, and because it symbolized southern cultural tradition in an era of great change at the end of the nineteenth century. Johny was one of several song leaders in the extended Richmond family and many other Richmonds attended "singing school" in the more genteel era that followed the settling of the frontier.

Johny relied on farming and shipping for his income. The side of his farm facing the Cumberland River is the site of Richmond Landing, where steamboats stopped to load crops and unload manufactured goods. His wife Clio cooked excellent meals for the passengers who lighted and came in to visit while the crops and goods were being transferred. Isolated as Richmond's Landing may seem, Tennesseans carried with them memories of its Upland South culture when they migrated: Little John to Kentucky; his father, Moore, to Arkansas; Pole's son

Henry to Oklahoma territory. Henry Richmond married Eugenia "Genie" Ray in January 1903 and lived on the Richmond family farm for a year and a half. After their first child was born in May 1904, they joined Genie's father and family who had settled in Wanette in Oklahoma Territory. In 1997 I received a letter from 87-year old J. C. Richmond, son of Henry who settled in Oklahoma just before it became a state (Figure 4). J. C. recalled his parents' life history and his family's trip back to Tennessee when his parents were deciding where to settle permanently:

My Dad got here too late in the year to start a crop so he ran a saloon for the rest of 1904. We kids knew nothing about it for about 30 years My folks bought a small farm. It was low land near the South Canadian river. About the time I was born [1910], the river went on a rampage and ruined the farm. The South Canadian is known for changing channels. [Dad] sold it for almost nothing. Old grand Pa Ray's health failed, so he went back to Tennessee and we lived on his farm

Grandpa Ray died in 1917. We were on his place and it had to be sold so we went back to Tennessee by train. Got to Nashville, took a boat up the Cumberland River to Richmond Landing. We got there in the early morning. Aunt Clio "Draper" was cooking bacon and eggs for breakfast. We moved into one of the rent houses. We lived there 9 months. I enjoyed the time we were there. My Dad had a corn crop by the river. I stayed there when he was working and watched the boats pass up and down the river. [Dad] sold out to Uncle Johny and we went back to Oklahoma.

About the middle of September 1917, we left for Oklahoma. We went across the river to the railroad at Cookeville, I think. Uncle Johny drove a T model, Uncle [Mayburn] Webb drove a T model, [and] a renter on the place took some things that we shipped in a wagon. Buster [Earl Stanton Richmond (1907-1993), J. C.'s cousin] and I rode in a wagon. [Buster] told me they got back home late in the night. It was quite a trip.^{[8](#)}

The Richmond stories we have gathered and shared over the years have taken us on a trip through time and distance. With their stories in mind and the valuable information from the many traditional and non-traditional resources left to us, we tell about their lives in rich detail and almost watch the procession of time through their eyes. They illuminate our national history, bearing out again and again Edward Ayers's descriptions in *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* of politics, economics, transportation, employment, daily life, entertainment and more.^{[9](#)} Like Ayers's southerners, most Richmonds have clung to tradition. Most joined the Confederacy to fight for their familiar way of life. Most continued farming after the Civil War, ever hopeful that encroaching industrialization would cease before it forced them off their land. Most voted for Democrats who promised them agricultural support. They participated in churches. They visited their cousins, making it possible to chronicle this family history.

As people led me to one Richmond after another and gave me bits and pieces of information-often magnificent but bits and pieces, nonetheless-I remembered the many women in my family who are quilters and kept thinking I was creating a crazy quilt of narratives as I connected the various stories: from Little John to John Moore to Robert to John the Patriot, and back and back. Gradually, though, patterns emerged that show what characterizes the people and culture of the Upland South and how our migrations, agricultural background, conservatism, family networks and New South opportunism have contributed to the metaphoric quilt of our national history. To paraphrase the title of the millennium history project launched by the National Endowment for the Humanities, "our history is America's history."

NOTES

1. James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten* (Garden City, New York, 1977).
2. Moore Richmond vs. Pinckney McCarver, Iris Bond, December 20, 1840, Circuit Court Records, Gainesboro, Jackson County, Tennessee.
3. Elliott J. Gorn, "'Gouge and Bite, Pull Hair and Scratch': The Social Significance of Fighting in the Southern Backcountry," *American Historical Review* 90 (Feb.-June 1985): 18-43; Arthur K. Moore, *The Frontier Mind* (New York, 1957); Frank Lawrence Owsley, *Plain Folk of the Old South* (New York, 1982); Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York, 1982).
4. Victor Moulder, "A Chronological History of Our Relatives From the Earliest Colonial Times to the Present Day," unpublished typescript, September 25, 1940, p. 1. (Copied from Anna Laura Moulder Grinstead, Three Forks, Kentucky, August 1976. Copy in possession of the author.)
5. Parke Rouse, Jr., *The Great Wagon Road from Philadelphia To the South* (New York, 1973), 201-209.
6. Catherine Albanese, *America: Religions and Religion* (Belmont, CA, 1992), 161.
7. Jeanne Sadler Lee, Carthage, Tennessee, in conversations and correspondence with Beverly Brannan, 1996-1997.
8. J. C. Richmond (Oklahoma), correspondence to Byron Richmond and Beverly Brannan, 1997.
9. Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York, 1992).

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