

TENNESSEE PIONEERS

Spencer Clack (1746-1832)

By Miss Tommie Clack, Abilene, Texas, and J. A. Sharp, Sevierville, Tenn.

Spencer Clack, Revolutionary soldier, settled in Sevier County, Tennessee, in 1788 or 1789. Little is known of his military service except that he was lieutenant of a Virginia (Henry County) militia company in 1782-83; Captain Tully Choice was company commander. He was born, March 28, 1746. His obituary gave his birthplace as Loudoun County, Virginia, but this could not be accurate for Loudoun County was not partitioned from Fairfax County until 1757, and no Clack records, as early as Spencer's birth, were found in either of these counties.

Spencer Clack did, however, live in Loudoun County, and witnessed there, in 1770, the will of Thomas Beavers; also, Loudoun County was probably where he married Mary Beavers about 1766. He sold his lands in Loudoun County in 1777 and moved southward to Henry County, Virginia about 1778, when he purchased land in the latter county. In 1786, when Franklin County, Virginia, was formed from parts of Henry and Bedford Counties, he became one of the first justices of the new county, and in 1787 he sold his Franklin County lands, just before his westward trek to Sevier County, Tennessee.

No conclusive proof of the parentage of Spencer Clack has been offered, although various attempts to do so have been made by descendants and genealogists. It does seem certain, however, that he descended from Rev. James Clack, English-born rector of Ware Parish, Gloucester County, Virginia, from 1679 to 1723.

The Spencer Clack home in Sevier County was located on the right bank of Little Pigeon River, immediately below the junction of the East Fork and West Fork of that river. Here, in 1808, Spencer obtained an occupant grant from Tennessee for 442 acres; most of this land was on the north bank of East Fork directly opposite to the town of Sevierville, or the Forks-of-Little-Pigeon, as this frontier settlement was known. The Chandlers and Walkers, Clack descendants, later owned the same place and the old Clack home was located on the same site as the later Chandler-Walker home. Near his home Spencer operated one of Sevierville's first mills, also a cotton gin and wool-carding machine.

Spencer Clack was prominent in the affairs of the Forks-of-Little Pigeon (Sevierville) Baptist Church from the time of its formation in 1789 until his death. For many years he served as church clerk. In addition to his church activities he was interested in education and politics. He was an early trustee of Nancy Academy, Sevier County's first school and gave money for its support. He was one of the five Sevier County delegates to the Knoxville convention of 1796, which drafted and adopted Tennessee's first constitution and he was a signer of that document. He also represented Sevier County in the lower house of the first three Tennessee legislatures, 1796-1802, and in 1801 he served on the legislative committee "to prepare a device and motto" for the Great Seal of Tennessee.

Neither the Spencer Clack Bible record nor the Spencer Clack will have been found; therefore, the writers will list only those who were unquestionably children of Spencer and Mary Beavers Clack. Perhaps, in this way, the confusion and error of other Clack descendants and genealogists may be avoided. Good proof exists for the following Clack children: Martha, Rawleigh (Rolly) (b. 1772), Rhoda (b. 1776), Catherine (b. 1778), Frances (b. c1783), Mary (b. 1785) and Malvina.

Martha Clack's marriage to Josiah Rogers occurred in Franklin County, Virginia, in 1786; they apparently came to Sevier County with the Clacks. Rawleigh Clack was married (1) to Mary Randles in 1791, and after her death he was married (2) to Martha

Spencer Clack (Continued)

Kerr in 1816; this marriage took place in Sevier County. Sixteen children resulted and about 1820 Rawleigh and family moved down the Tennessee River to Rhea County, Tennessee, where he died in 1842. Rhoda Clack married James Randles in 1791; they raised a family of twelve on Boyd's Creek in Sevier County. Randles died in 1816, while on a trip to Virginia for salt, and was buried somewhere in Washington County, Virginia. Catherine Clack was married, in 1794, to Rev. Elijah Rogers, early and well known Baptist minister in East Tennessee; they raised five sons and five daughters at their Sevier County home near the mouth of Little Pigeon, on the French Broad River. Mary Clack married William Miller; they left Sevier County at an early date and settled in Meigs County, Tennessee, where she died in 1860. Frances Clack was married (1) to Mordecai Gist; after his death she married (2) John Mynatt of Knox County, Tennessee. Malvina Clack married Major Beavers; they left Sevier County for Talladega County, Alabama, soon after the War of 1812.

There were doubtless other Clack children, but the writers do not believe that Spencer Clack, Jr., John Clack and Nancy Clack were children of Spencer and Mary Beavers Clack, as some published accounts claim. However, there is a well established tradition that there was a son, Micajah Clack, who was "killed by lightning". And there may have been a daughter named Rebecca Clack, but again we must rely only upon tradition for proof. Also, in 1789, one Sarah Clack (b. c1773) married William Henderson in the "forks of Little Pigeon", as shown by bounty land papers in the National Archives; they migrated to St. Louis County, Missouri, about 1840. We believe that this Sarah Clack, heretofore unknown to present generations of Clack descendants, was another daughter of Spencer and Mary.

Spencer Clack's death occurred, July 9, 1832, and he was buried in the old Baptist Cemetery at Sevierville; the original flat limestone rock with the unique carving of Spencer's face and the initials, "S.C.", still marks his grave. Mary Beavers Clack died, August 14, 1840, and was buried by the side of her husband. At the time of his death a contemporary described Spencer Clack as a "pious . . . worthy Christian, kind and affectionate . . . an excellent neighbor, remarkably even and unruffled in temper".

The Revolution in Tennessee, from Pension Applications
No. 2, Abraham Cross, S 1 900.

State of Tennessee)
Sullivan County) August Session 1832

On this 22nd day of August personally appeared in open court before the Justices of the court of pleas &c now Siting Abraham Cross a resident of the State & County afore-said, aged eighty years, who being Duly sworn according to law Doth on his oath make the following Statement in order to obtain the Benefit of the act of Congress passed 7th June 1832.

That he served six months in the service of North Carolina from Washington County know Sullivan as a drafted militia man under Capt. Hicks, that he was During said six months partly stationed at the fort at Shoats ford and on scouting parties and some times as an Indian Spy against the Indians alies to the British, and if I ever Rec^d any discharge dong Recollect it other than Verbally which service was performed in the year 1777.