

FLAYL-NICHOLS---(?- 1823)

By Joe A. Sharp (ECHOES , East Tennessee Historical Society- January, 1957)

Flayl Nichols, Revolutionary soldier, settled in Sevier County, Tennessee, about 1790. He married Nancy Hatcher in Bedford County, Virginia, January 7, 1780. They sold their Bedford County lands in 1787 and 1788, and records of Franklin County, Virginia, show Flayl ~~xx~~ serving as juror and making depositions there during these same years. No details of his Revolutionary service are known, but his mis-spelled name, "Flail Nicholes," was recorded on the roll of Captain Adam Clement's Bedford County militia company. Also, it was said that he served in the regiment of Colonel William Campbell at King's Mountain, and Captain Clement's company assisted General Nathaniel Greene in North Carolina in 1781.

Flayl's father was John Nichols whose will was probated in Bedford County in 1803. The only bequest to Flayl was the "big family Bible," but since he was the first heir named it is believed that he was the oldest child and may have received his share before his father's death. It is not known what happened to this old Nichols Bible. Flayl's brothers and sisters, as named in their father's will, were: John, Archibald, Elisha, Jesse, Mary Cundiff, Katherine Pollard and Jane Hancock. Bequests were also made to "my beloved Wife Martha Nichols," but her maiden name was not revealed- unless she was a second wife she was the mother of Flayl and the other children named above.

Bedford County records show the following marriages of the above Nichols children: Archibald was married twice- (1)- Judith Hatcher, daughter of Richard Hatcher- (2)- Sarah Wollington (1799); Elisha Nichols married Rosey Slinker (1782); Jane Nichols married Edward Hancock (1783); Jesse Nichols married Sally Fields (1800). It is believed that Katherine Nichols' husband was John Pollard, but the given name of Mary Nichols Cundiff's husband is unknown. Neither is anything definitely known of Flayl's brother John except the bequest in the above John Nichols will of a "small shot gun... unto my grandson John Nichols, son of my Son John Nichols." This grandson is believed to have been John J. Nichols, who with his wife, Margaret (Scartlen) Nichols migrated from Bedford County to Sevier County and settled near Sevierville about 1819. Descendants of Flayl always claimed kinship with descendants of John J. Nichols.

There is absolute proof that John Nichols, father of Flayl, was also a soldier of the Revolution.

Flayl's Sevier County home was located on the West Fork of Little Pigeon River four miles south of Sevierville, near the mouth of Walden's Creek, where Colonel Samuel Wear established Wear's Fort not long after 1783. Tradition has it that Flayl and family first resided in this fort after their arrival from Virginia during the early 1790's, when the Cherokee Indians were making their last attacks on the Tennessee frontier. It is likely that Flayl participated in Colonel Wear's Tallassee expedition against the Cherokee in 1793.

In 1808 Flayl received a Tennessee grant for his "occupant" claim of 331 acres, which included two horse shoe bends of Little Pigeon and the surrounding hills; the river today makes the same bends as in 1807 when the Nichols grant was surveyed as shown by the surveyor's plat

in the Tennessee Archives. His lands joined the lands owned by Stephen Winton, George Green, John Mahan and Alexander Montgomery, also original grant holders and early settlers in the same neighborhood. His home was on the bank of the river a few hundred yards north of Shiloh Cemetery and he operated a mill nearby.

Details in the lives of humble men are hard to find; so it was with Flayl Nichols, and doubly so in Sevier County where the early court records were lost in the court house fire of 1856. Flayl, however, left a few foot prints, although obscure and scattered. In 1801 we find him serving as captain of a Sevier County militia company; later, in 1805, the Tennessee legislature made him a commissioner for the town of Sevierville although he did not live in the town.

Perhaps Flayl's greatest claim to fame was his service as state senator in the Tennessee legislature, 1803-04; he represented Sevier and Blount counties. In the impeachment trial of Judge David Campbell, he joined the minority of James White, Senate Speaker and Knoxville's founder, and Joseph McMinn, future Tennessee governor, and voted for Judge Campbell's conviction. He introduced bills to "establish fairs in Sevier County," and to empower the Sevier County court to levy a tax to repair the "court house, prison and stocks." He also voted with the majority that defeated a bill to "prohibit the further importation of slaves into Tennessee." And on November 7, 1803, Flayl joined the overwhelming majority of the Senate that voted to clear John Sevier, Tennessee's great frontier hero, of fraudulently obtaining North Carolina land warrants for 105,000 acres of Tennessee lands. Finally, on August 1, 1804, he voted against the bill allowing North Carolina to "perfect titles" to lands in Tennessee, and after the passage of this bill he entered his strong protest in the Senate Journal.

Flayl and Nancy had nine children, as follows: Sarah (b. 1780), Martha (b. 1783), Rhoda (b. 1785), John (b. 1787), Jesse (b. 1788), Simon (b. 1795), William (b. 1797), Robert (b. 1800) and Edward (b. ?). Only one of these remained in Sevier County- this was John who married Esther V. Black of Blount County, Tennessee, in 1814. It is believed that she was a daughter of Joseph Black, one of the founders of Blount County and Maryville. The daughter Martha married Irish-born Robert Lawson, early Sevierville shoe maker and saddler, and they migrated to Talladega County, Alabama, soon after the War of 1812, and many of their descendants still live in the latter place today. Sarah married John Matson, War of 1812 soldier; after his death she and her children also settled in Talladega County where many of her descendants also live today. The son William married Martha Cannon and about 1835 they migrated to Randolph County, Missouri- he died there in 1884. Jesse, a soldier in the War of 1812, married Tobitha Coulter (or Cotter) and they migrated to Marshall County, Alabama, where Jesse died in 1841- his widow still lived there in 1872. Nothing is known of the other sons, but family tradition that they, like William, also settled in Missouri.

Flayl Nichols died at his home on the West Fork of Little Pigeon, August 17, 1823. The family Bible recorded his death as follows: "Flayl Nichols departed this life on Little Pigeon River Sevier County Tennessee State with gravel Aug 17, 1823." His grave in Shiloh Cemetery is marked with the original hand-shaped sand stone rock, with the

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inscription "F.N. Dc. 1823," and the carving of the old fashioned canoe-shaped coffin below this inscription. In recent years a flat granite head stone showing his Revolutionary War service was furnished by the War Memorial Division of the United States Army and it was placed in front of the old stone. The widow Nancy survived for several years- she died about 1840. No original marker remains at her grave, but the writer with the help of three Alabama descendants placed a granite marker for Nancy by the side of Flayl's grave.