

THE RUCKER FAMILIES
OF
BEDFORD COUNTY, VIRGINIA

RUCKER REUNION - JUNE 11, 1994

REUNION TALK

BY JEAN B. ROBINSON

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"By the grace of God, a deck of cards, and a keg of rum you are here today," so began a talk on the Rucker Family by Edith Copeland Rucker. The Ruckers of Georgia were having their annual reunion, the first weekend in October, 1986, at Alpharetta, GA. Her talk was published in the Alpharetta ReVue, Nov. 15, 1986, and later published in a book, Days Gone By in Alpharetta and Roswell, GA, by Caroline Matheny Dillman (submitted by Ron Payne, Falkville, AL).

Her talk gives a new story to Peter Rucker's arrival in America. At past reunions I have told different stories of Peter's famous arrival via a shipwreck off the coast of Jamestown, VA. The one I like best was his tying two kegs of rum together and floating to shore. I've never been sure whether he needed the kegs to save his life or whether he was taking them to stock his larder.

The legend of the shipwreck continues. There were two potential survivors of the disaster, Peter Rucker and one other man. They gambled in a game of "Seven Up" to determine who would win the remaining keg of rum to use to float to shore. Peter won and "a keg of rum" has become the password of Peter Rucker's descendants. This makes an even better story than the one I tell. The only problem is that I don't know how a game of Seven Up is played. I'm sure if any of you know you will tell me after my talk.

For the benefit of new members, Peter Rucker arrived in this county in 1700, not 1690 as previously thought, married and began his family. We do not know the maiden name of his wife, Elizabeth, nor do we know the maiden name of his son John Rucker's wife, Susanna.

The story of the Ruckers is one of migrations. Peter Rucker migrated to America and lived in Essex County, VA. for about 25 to 30 years. He moved west to the then frontier which is today Madison County, VA. All of his children lived in the area, except John who lived in Orange County.

The British tradition was to leave everything to the oldest son, but the German custom was to leave equally to each child. As the Ruckers were of Germanic descent, their practice became to leave each child a working farm.

The only way to accomplish this was by constantly moving west. Peter Rucker could only provide each child with a farm by moving to the then frontier of Virginia--Spotsylvania County. Its name changed to Orange, then Culpeper, then Madison which it is today.

John Rucker owned 100 acres in Orange, near today's town of Orange where he ran a tavern and racetrack. This wasn't enough to provide his seven sons with living. Therefore, John Rucker patented 5850 acres in Amherst County, and divided it among his sons, five of whom took of residence there. The Ruckers were prolific and Amherst wasn't big enough to hold the next generation of Ruckers. So the family began moving to the surrounding states, Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, etc. Of course some of them moved further west in Virginia. This is the story of the Ruckers who moved to Bedford County, across the James River, to the south of Amherst.

Three of John's sons, John, Ambrose, and Isaac, had descendants who moved to Bedford County. The other two, Anthony and Benjamin invented the tobacco batteau which you will hear about tomorrow.

Bedford County was formed in 1754 from Lunenburg and parts of Albemarle. John Rucker Jr. was the first to patent land there for two of his sons, George and William.

I have drawn a map to show the location of Ruckers in Bedford and have made a chart to identify those Rucker who lived there. Bill Rucker has made a very fine booklet on the town of Bedford and Jack White has written an excellent guide on the Ruckers of North Bedford both of which are included in your reunion packet.

Note: A number of Ruckers have written books and they are offered to us today:

1. Alice Allen
2. Ron Payne
3. Mike Rucker
4. Jean Robinson
5. Any others. . .

- A. John³ Rucker Jr. bought land on Elk Creek, in the Pleasant Vale Valley of North Bedford County, and divided it among two sons, George and William. We will drive past William's home, Elk Creek, and visit George's home, Pleasant Vale, which has been in the family until recent times. Jack White and I am from the line of Pleasant Vale which we will visit.
Will descendants of this line please stand up.

- B. Ambrose⁴ Rucker Jr., purchased land on Wolf's creek, in South Bedford and took up residence there. We have not identified Ambrose's land, but hopefully Bill Rucker will locate it. We have visited Ambrose's son, Anthony's home in Moneta which is a wonderful primitive home with cemetery. However the cemetery needs restoration.

One son, Ambrose moved to Otter Hill, south of Bedford and Warren Rucker of Ruckersville is of this line. He is with us today. Are there any other descendants of this line?

A second son, Moses Peter, lived in Moneta, but his descendants, today, live in Bedford. Bill Rucker will you please introduce your family. His uncle, Dr. Billy, took the reunion committee on a tour of Moneta.

Bedford is full of Ruckers and the most exciting thing about a reunion is meeting new cousins.

I looked at the 1910 City Director of Bedford to identify all Ruckers who lived in Bedford and drew a map to identify where they lived. I could identify everyone except a Henry Rucker that lived at the Palace Hotel. Who was he?

Don't tell me spirits don't move in peculiar ways, because the very next day I received a letter from Henry Rucker of Aiken, SC, sending me an article on the "white lady of Avenel. It clicked, he was the son of Henry Rucker of Bedford. I met Henry Rucker at the 1988 reunion in Ruckersville and we have kept in touch.

Henry's brother, Robert (Bobby) Rucker, continues to live in the family home at 410 Avenel Ave. We will get a chance to see his home while at Avenel this afternoon.

Will descendants of this line please stand up.

Talk about strange coincidences: Two weeks ago, I went to the opening of Valentine Riverside, a hands on museum in Richmond, and a young man recognized me. He was Joe Sites, an archaeologist with the museum. Joe was getting married two days later in Charlottesville. His parents are with us, but Joe is probably on his honeymoon? (They^{are} descendants of Samuel Burks Rucker of Lynchburg.)

Joe reminded me to visit the Richmond Batteau on site for the festivities and told me about another Rucker at the festival. Anne Rucker was playing the banjo in a mountain band. Later I spoke to her and found out she was the wife of James Rucker and they live in Richmond. And guess who his father is? Bobby Rucker of Bedford. I called Bobby and he agreed to have the members visit his home while at Avenel.

- C. Isaac³ Rucker's grandsons, Joshua and John, took up residence in North Bedford.

John Rucker married Lucy Rucker, the granddaughter of William and inherited Elk Creek. I do not know of any present descendants of this line.

Joshua Rucker built the home at Oak Farm that will be on our tour. The discovery of his home, I must credit to Ruth McBride. Her research and work as a real estate broker led us to the owners of Oak Farm. The funny thing is we did not know any descendants of this line. Ruth led us to two sisters who in turn led us to Anne Glover and the Meriwethers. Joshua's descendants intermarried with the Meriwethers and lived at Sholto, now the Boonsboro CC. Anne and I are cousins through the Meriwethers as well as the Ruckers.

Anne Glover has compiled the descendants of Joshua Rucker which she has available for us today. Anne has given us a list of about 50 families to invite to the reunion and many of them are attending today.

Will Anne and her relatives please stand up. Anne will tell us a little about Sholto.

The Ruckers of Bedford lived in three main districts: George, William, and Joshua Rucker lived in North Bedford; Ambrose Jr.'s sons, Anthony, Thomas, and Garland Rucker, lived in South Bedford. Later some of the South Bedford Rucker descendants lived in the town of Bedford.

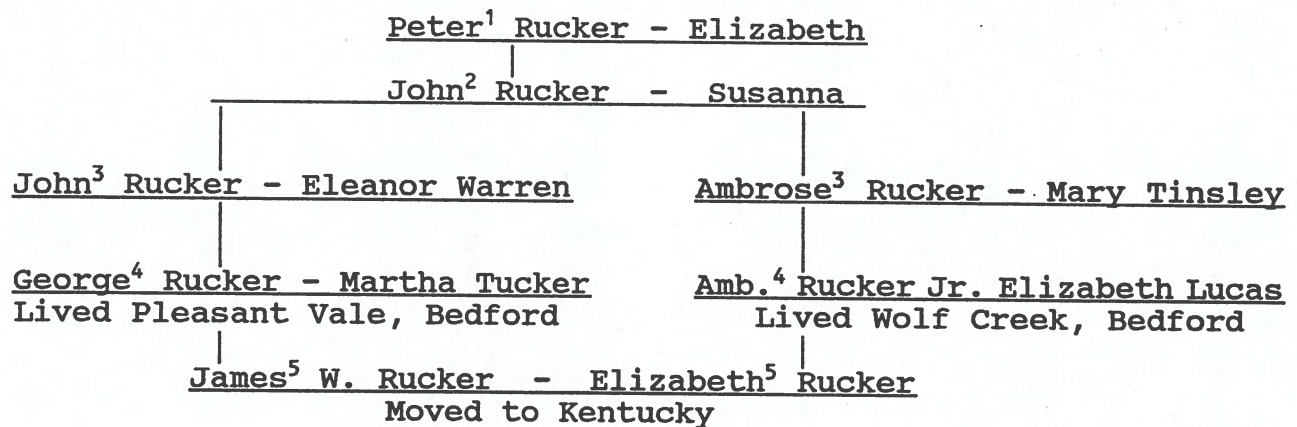
The Ruckers of South Bedford did not intermarry with each other, in fact they did not keep contact with each other even though descendants ended up living in the same town of Bedford. Hopefully they are becoming reacquainted today at this very reunion.

The Ruckers of North Bedford intermarried and intertwined like ivy and honeysuckle growing up a mulberry tree. See the chart of the Ruckers of North Bedford.

In preparing this talk, I did not think that any north Bedford Rucker intermarried with any south Bedford Rucker but by accident, I discovered the following.

New Information, so listen up: George Rucker's son James⁵ W. Rucker (George⁴, John³, John², Peter¹), b. @1789, Bedford Co., VA; married, 24 Apr 1820, Elizabeth⁵ Rucker the daughter of Ambrose⁴ Rucker Jr. (Ambrose³, John², Peter¹). Their marriage is mentioned by Sudie Rucker Wood, p.104, under Elizabeth, but James is not identified. Under George, p.39-40, James and his line is omitted from Wood's book. James is found in the 1850 census in Mercer Co., KY. The only other Rucker there is Elizabeth, widow of Daniel, who was James's brother.

**ONLY KNOWN
INTERMARRIAGE OF A SOUTH BEDFORD RUCKER
WITH A NORTH BEDFORD RUCKER**

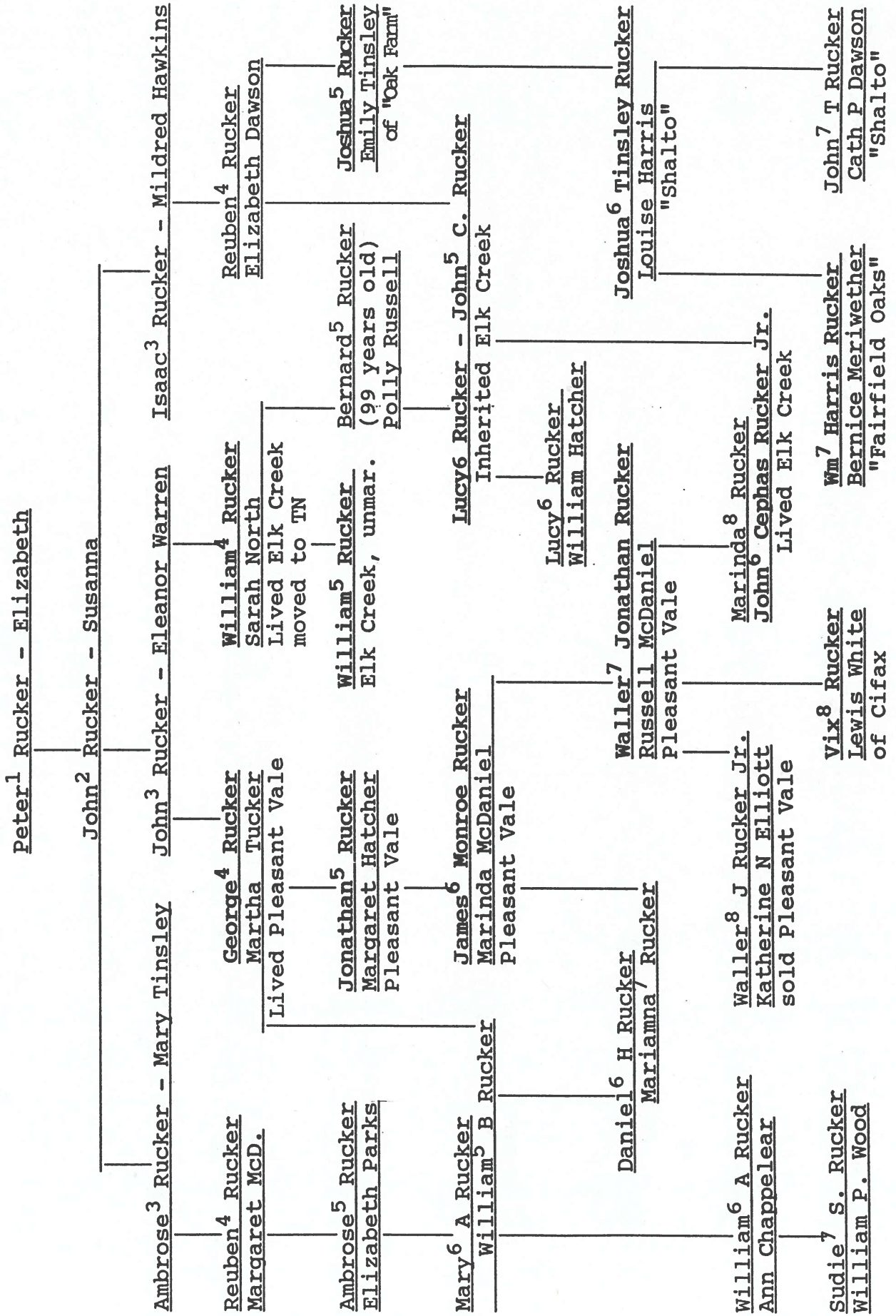


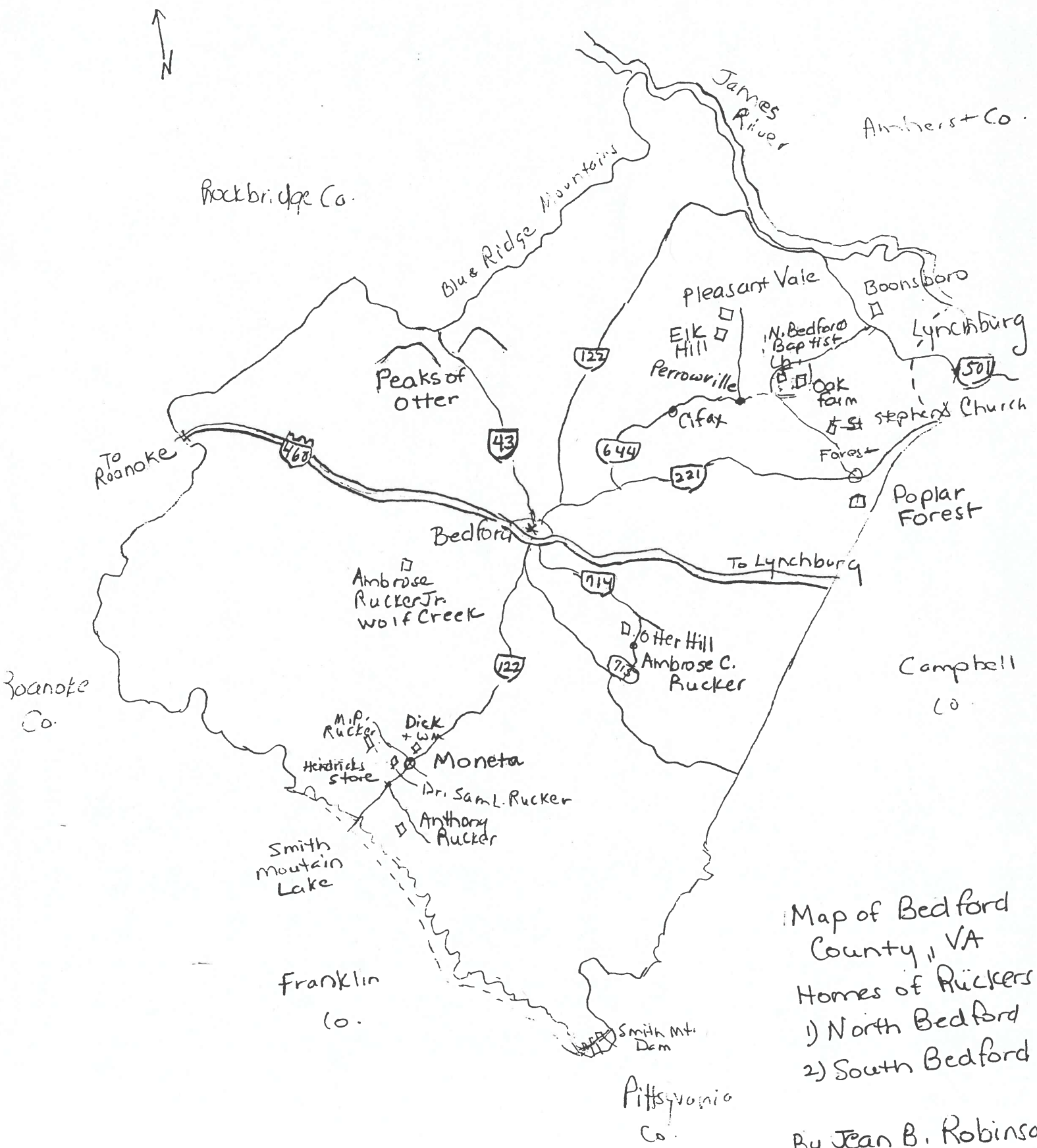
Issue of James W. Rucker and Elizabeth Rucker (from Mercer Co., KY, 1850 census records):

1. David⁶ Rucker, b. @1832, KY.
2. Matilda⁶ Rucker, b. @1834, KY.
3. Sarah⁶ Rucker, b. @1837, MO.
4. Laura⁶ Rucker, b. @1840, MO.
5. Thomas⁶ Rucker, b. @1844, MO.
6. Addison⁶ Rucker, b. @1846, MO.

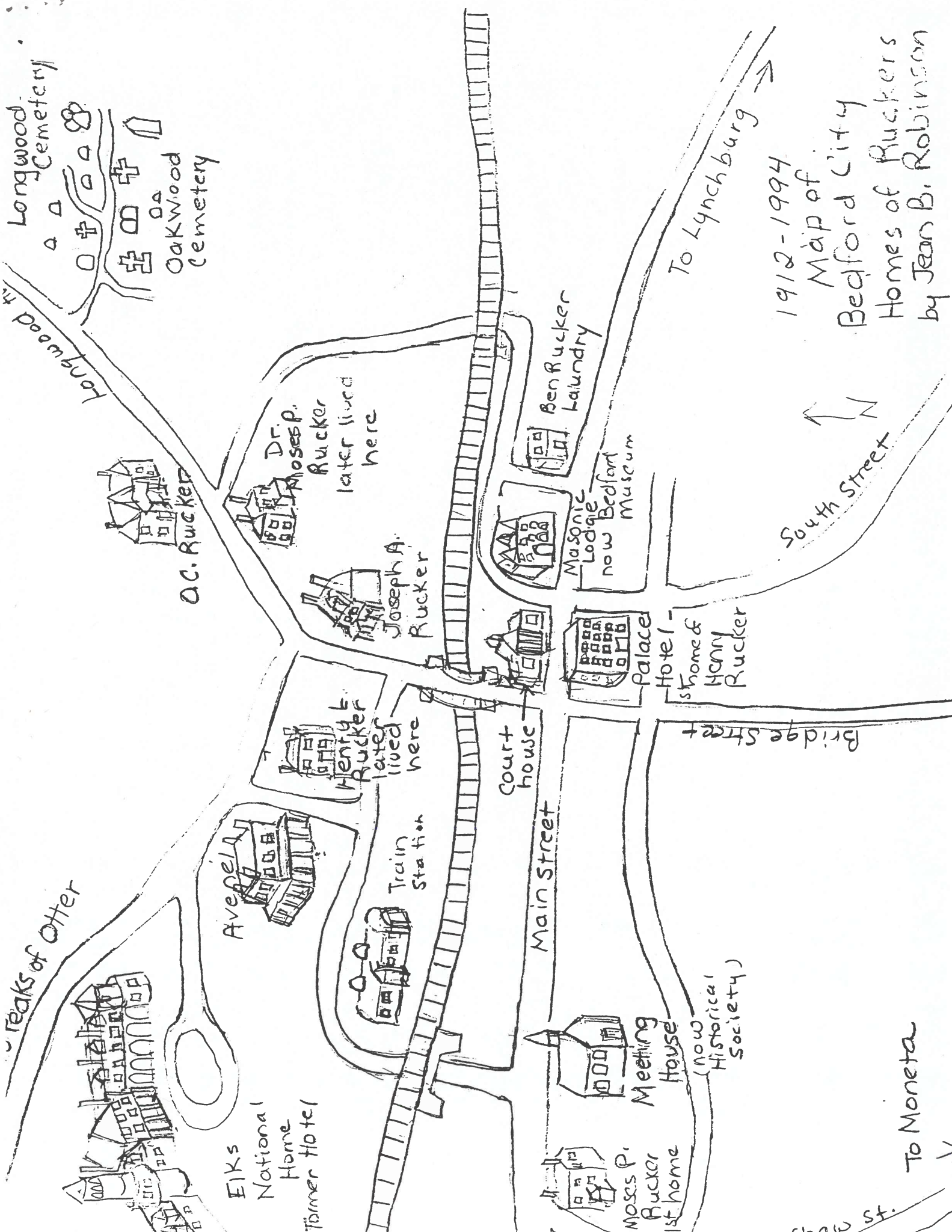
If anyone can identify these Ruckers or give me additional information about them, please let me know.

RUCKERS OF NORTH BEDFORD COUNTY, VIRGINIA
by Jean B. Robinson





Map of Bedford County, VA
 Homes of Ruckers
 1) North Bedford
 2) South Bedford
 By Jean B. Robinson



Longwood Cemetery
Oakwood Cemetery

Longwood

A.C. Rucker

Dr. Moses P. Rucker
later lived here

Joseph A. Rucker

Ben Rucker laundry

Masonic Lodge
now Bedford Museum

Palace Hotel
home of Henry Rucker

Henry B. Rucker
later lived here

Court house

Avenida

Train Station

Main Street

Meeting House
(now Historical Society)

Moses P. Rucker
1st home

Bridge Street

To Lynchburg

1912-1994
Map of
Bedford City
Homes of Ruckers
by Jean B. Robinson

South Street

Peaks of Otter

Eiks National Home
Former hotel

To Moneta

shaw st.