

# Covered Wagon Byants of Pacolet

By **GLEN W. NAVES**

**Journal Staff Writer**

**PACOLET** — Century-spanning wheels have rolled between Pacolet and the West again, this time bringing joyous reunion.

Descendants of the Bryant family, including the Missouri McMillins, finally got together this week.

Relics and reminiscences flavored their sharing.

The old family Bible's worn pages were tenderly thumbed through once more.

Chimes rang from the music box.

And the Civil War muzzle loader was taken down from its wall pegs for fascinating re-examination.

Time turned back 100 years as members of the Pacolet and Cape Girardeau, Mo., clans met for the first time.

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**VISITING THE** Bryants here from Cape Girardeau were Mrs. Amos McMillin, her daughter, Mrs. Colleta Pinkerton and two granddaughters, Brenda Pinkerton, 12, and Dona Sue Pinkerton, 10.

**They came by automobile.**

Their ancestors made the Pacolet-Missouri trip in 13 wagons just before the War Between the States broke out.

**Mrs. McMillin, the former Miss Maggie Bryant, is a direct descendant of the pioneer "covered wagon" Pacolet Bryants who made the long trek West.**

The Spartanburg Journal played a part in bringing the Bryant descendants together. In the early fall of 1957 The Journal published Mrs. McMillin's letter sent from Cape Girardeau and requesting information concerning her kin. The query was read with excitement and delight in the 200-year-old Bryant farmhouse near Pacolet. One of the readers was Mrs. Fred Manus, a Bryant descendant. She telephoned Mrs. McMillin. The long-lost thread of kinfolks and their whereabouts was picked-up. It has since been woven into a tapestry of treasured experiences. Letters flowed thick and fast between here and Cape Girardeau. In 1957, Mr. and Mrs. Manus journeyed there to spend Thanksgiving with the

McMillins. But the reunion here this week was the first for most members of the family.

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**THIS HAS BEEN** an exciting and busy experience for all of them.

Mrs. McMillin saw the ocean for the first time in her life.

The Rev. James Bryant, pastor of Hopewell Baptist Church at Blacksburg in Cherokee County, and Mrs. Bryant drove her and her Missouri party to Myrtle Beach.

"The Atlantic is a big river," Mrs. McMillin exclaimed.

Previously, the largest body of water she had seen is the Mississippi River.

Mr. and Mrs. Manus drove the visitors to Kings Mountain Battleground for a tour of the famous Revolutionary War battlefield.

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**THERE'S GOING** to be another reunion soon. It will be held in Cape Girardeau Sunday, Aug. 16. The Rev. and Mrs. Bryant are planning to attend. Indications are that others of the Bryants from

hereabouts will also be present.

Mrs. McMillin's husband still has to meet the Pacolet area Bryants. He remained behind in Missouri to "take care of things."

His gray-haired, smiling wife proudly told a Journal reporter "we've had a long and busy and good life. Amos and I raised 26 children. Ten were our own. The rest were orphans. We farmed 500 acres until three years ago when we moved into town. We spent 31 years on the same farm."

Laughter and family talk have resounded from dawn til far into the night all this week in the house Reuben Bryant built around 133 years ago on the Pacolet Mills-Pacolet Station Road.

Treasures and memories of long ago hallow the pegs-fastened log structure, enlarged through the years from four to 10 rooms.

Among them is the family Bible Reuben Bryant bought in Columbia Oct. 10, 1833, according to a notation on one of its pages. Entries in neat, old-fashioned script, record marriages, births, deaths and

other data. They include Reuben's birth date, Oct. 10, 1803; his two marriages, the first to Polly Bryant Oct. 12, 1826, and the second to Joanna Bryant Aug. 8, 1869.

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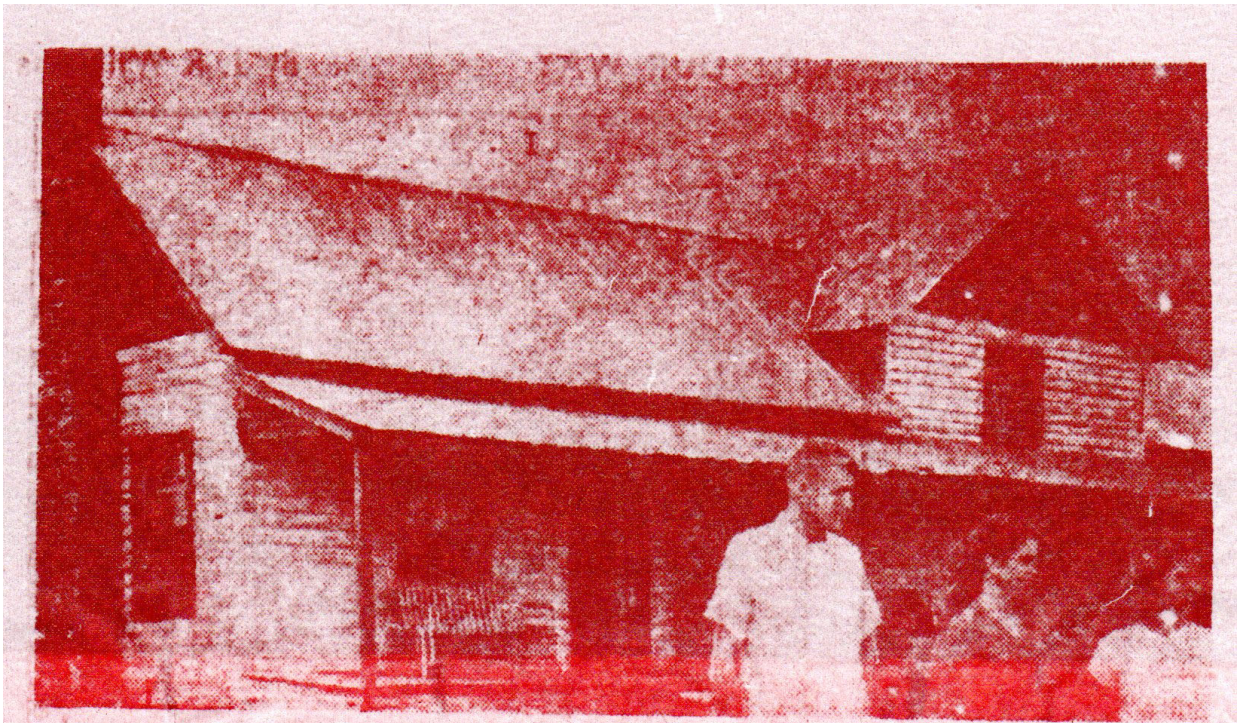
**THE FAMILY** music box, a rare heirloom housed in a polished chest, still chimes out its 12 tunes, including excerpts from Carmen, The Mikado and The Merry Wives of Windsor.

Reuben Bryant's long muzzle-loading rifle which spat flame from his hands on Civil War battlefields is another of the family's treasures.

The many old documents cherished by the Bryants include his sworn statement of Aug. 12, 1865, freeing his slaves.

The original log-walled rooms, two upstairs and two down, form the core of the present 10-room house where the present Pacolet Bryants reside. Numerous great and great-great grandchildren proudly carry on the Bryant name hereabouts.

Bryants making the covered wagon journey from this



**GRANDSON REUBEN BRYANT and Helen Bryant (center) and Vickie Bryant, great granddaughters, pose before the old Bryant home in Pacolet Community.**

# Bryant Family Reunited

By GLEN W. NAVES

**PACOLET**—Family ties lost long ago in the dusty trail of wagon wheels rolling West have just been restored by happy voices over telephone wires between here and Missouri.

Today, the Bryant clan in this community was creating a new roster of its multi-generations kin.

A Journal news article last Wednesday spanned two centuries and brought the Pacolet and Cape Girardeau, Mo., branches of the Bryants together. It publicized the request of Mrs. Maggie McMullin, the former Miss Maggie Bryant, for descendants in Spartanburg County to contact her at Cape Girardeau and if possible to attend the family reunion there.

Here, in the nearly 200-year-old house of Reuben Bryant on Pacolet Mills-Pacolet Station Road, the article "hit pay dirt." Grand and great-grandchildren read it delightedly. One of them, Mrs. Fred Manus, telephoned Mrs. McMullin. Excitement and happiness have kept the Bryants bubbling over ever since.

Treasures of long ago hallow the pegs-secured log structure, enlarged through the years from four to 16 rooms.

One is the family Bible purchased by Reuben Bryant in Columbia Oct. 10, 1833. Its worn pages record in neat, old-fashioned script marriages, births, deaths and other data. Entries include Reuben's birth date, Oct. 10, 1803; his two marriages, the first to Polly Bryant Oct. 12, 1826, and his second to Joanna Bryant Aug. 8, 1869, also Polly's birth date, Aug. 16, 1827.

The old family music box, a rare heirloom housed in a polished chest, still chimes out its 12 tunes, including excerpts from Carmen, The Mikado and The Merry Wives of Windsor.

Reuben Bryant's long rifle, a muzzle-loader which spat lead and flame upon Civil War battlefields, is another of many cherished relics.

Others include the Oct. 10, 1791 deed in which John Bryant conveyed land to his son, Reuben; U.S. Postmaster General Aaron Brown's June 29, 1857-dated commission to Reuben as postmaster of Briantville as the community was then known. His Aug. 12, 1865 Spartanburg District notary public commission was signed by Gov. William H. Gist. Another was signed by Gov. Robert K. Scott and dated Feb. 8, 1869.

The old post office was located in what is now the bathroom of the restored house.

Another document is Reuben's sworn statement of Aug. 12, 1865 to free his slaves.

The original log-walled rooms, two upstairs and two down, form the core of the present 16 rooms occupied by Mrs. Manus, a granddaughter, and her husband; her mother, Mrs. Minnie Bryant, 82, and a grandson, Reuben, who was named for the original builder.

Surviving grandchildren are

Mrs. Manus, Will, Frank, Furman, Reuben, Charles and Edgar Bryant, all of this immediate section, and the Rev. James Bryant, Baptist minister of Monroe, N.C.

Numerous great and great-great grandchildren carry on the Bryant name hereabouts.

Bryants making the 13 covered wagon journey from this section to Missouri before the War Between The States were Chester, Richard and George, all brothers of Reuben and their families. Other Pacolet pioneers joined the caravan for the long journey. Their names are lost in the passing of time.

Mrs. McMullin, a descendant of the original "Westward Ho" Bryants, picked up the threads with her letter asking The Journal to help locate Spartanburg County Bryants.

"We never dreamed there were so many of us until I telephoned Mrs. McMullin in Cape Girardeau and we began comparing notes and checking names," Mrs. Manus said.



**GREAT-GRANDSON**  
Claude Bryant with Civil War muzzle loader.



Photos by E & B Studios for The Journal  
**GREAT-GRANDDAUGHTERS** Helen (left) and Vicki Bryant display the portrait of Pacolet Pioneer Reuben Bryant.