

The Snelsons and Seays

By: Phoebe Carnes

Information provided by Pauline Frances Abstance (daughter of Iva and Lee Francis), *Snelson Lineage and Historical Records* by Leona Williams Smith, Mrs. Commodore Casada, and Don Casada

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Editor's note

Phoebe Carnes is a rising 8th grade student at Swain Middle School, the daughter of Kelly Parson and Barry Carnes.

Regarding her Seay-Snelson family line which will be discussed: Phoebe's maternal grandmother is Debbie Seay Colville, daughter of Robert Hugh Seay and June Evelyn Thomas and granddaughter of Jonie Seay and Zennie Snelson. Zennie is a daughter of R.L. Snelson and Decie Sluder, so Phoebe's Seay-Snelson discussion traces to her 3-g grandparents and their offspring.

In addition to her Seay and Snelson (and Harrison) connections discussed herein, Phoebe has Cline, Conley, Farley, Sherrill, Teague and Thomas (and likely other) family relatives buried in the Bryson City Cemetery. Hers is a deep area heritage.

Robert Levi Snelson



Decie Sluder Snelson



Marriage Certificate of RL
Snelson and Decie S.
Snelson

Married February 10th, 1889

WHAT THEREFORE GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER LET NOT MAN PUT ASUNDER.
THIS IS TO CERTIFY



THAT Robert, Levi, Snelson
AND Decie, Texamer, Sluder,
WERE UNITED BY ME
IN
Holy Matrimony
at Leicester N.C. on the 10th
day of February in the year of
our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred
and Eighty-nine in the presence of
WITNESSES:
Samantha Sluder Signed Rev. Wolph Hawkins
Jim Rash Leicester N.C. (Buxcomb Co.)

WHEREFORE SHALL A MAN LEAVE HIS FATHER AND HIS MOTHER AND SHALL CLEAVE UNTO HIS WIFE AND THEY SHALL BE ONE FLESH.

Decie Snelson

Robert Levi



Robert Levi Snelson lived in Leicester, NC, as a child. The family raised tobacco and flax, along with other things. They used the flax to make underclothing and trousers. Robert worked with his father in a sawmill that could be transported from place to place. It was on the Sluder farm, (Decie was a Sluder) that Robert's father Thomas sustained injuries that lead to his death.

Robert married Decie and moved to Haywood County, then to Bryson City. He was on the Board of Alderman. He supervised the building of the first hydroelectric plant in Bryson. He served as chairman of Board of Deacons at First Baptist. When he was 72, he was unable to find anyone to paint the steeple, so he did it himself.

Decie Snelson was a loving mother of five children. (Zennie, Iva, Ferd, Letha, and Orville). Other than being known as a caregiver and frequent church member, she was a fantastic cook, and knew how to make all sorts of things, from black walnut cakes to half-moon pies. She dried her own red peppers and apples, generally keeping a string of peppers so she could take a bit of them to spice up her soups and stews. She has strong opinions about right and wrong, and wouldn't shy away from letting others know them. She was constantly busy and energetic, though she knew about relaxation. In the afternoon, you would most likely find her resting before going off to visit friends or family.



INFANT SON OF
JONIE & ZENNIE
SEAY

AUG. 3, 1907

SEPT. 28, 1907

Infant Seay was
that son of Jonie
and Zennie Seay.
He was the
grandson of Robert
and Decie
Snelson.

Zennie Snelson was the oldest daughter of Robert and Decie. She was born February 11th, 1890. She married Jonie Seay August 8th, 1906. Her first child was never named and is buried in Bryson City Cemetery. According to family stories, Zennie miscarried twins at some point. Her son Robert Hugh Seay was born February 22, 1930. The only Seay in the plot is Infant Seay, however Jonie was buried there but was moved. Nobody remembers for certain why, but it may have been because Zennie got mad at her sister Letha. When Letha moved out, she supposedly took some of Zennie's belongings. Zennie didn't want her husband to be buried with her sister, so she moved him out. Zennie, Jonie, and Hugh are buried at Swain Memorial.



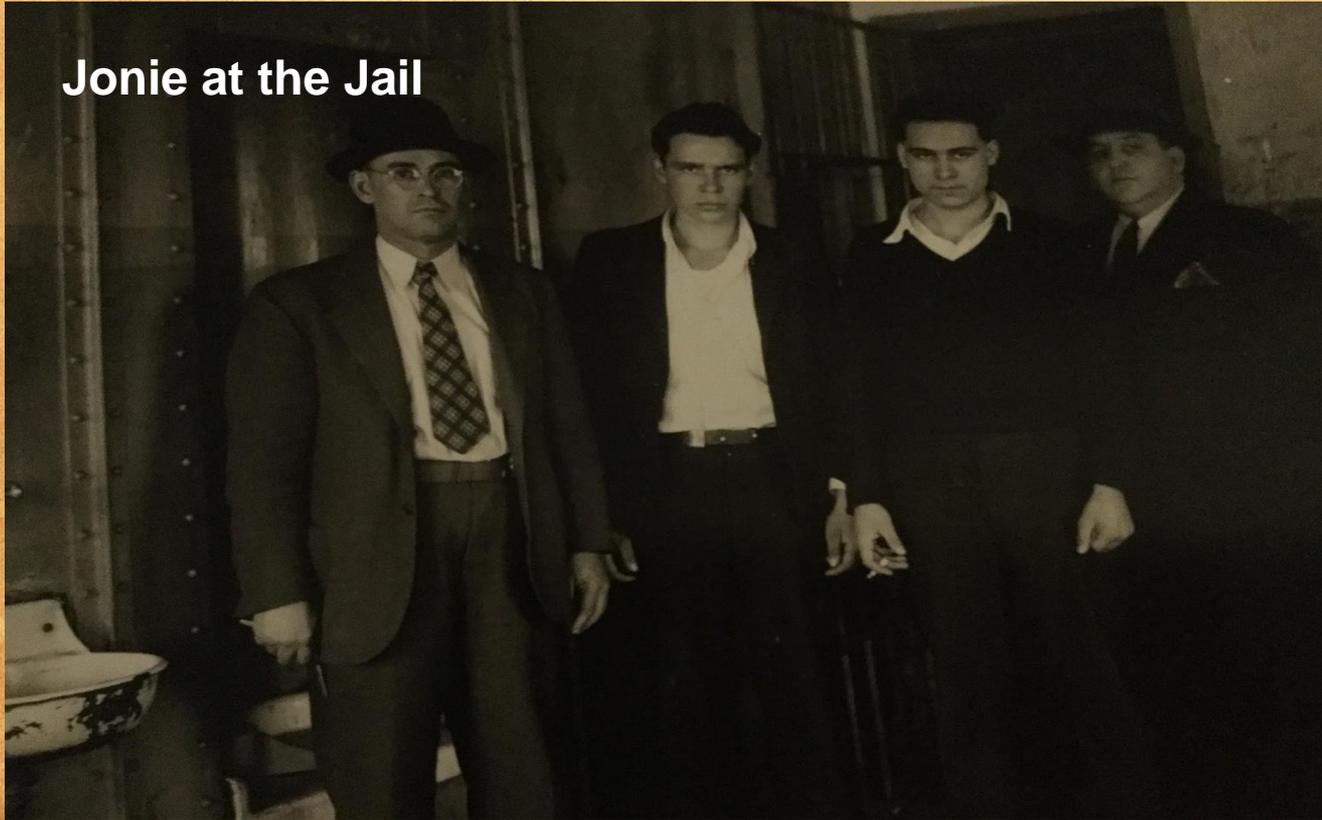
Zennie with Hugh Seay



Jonie with Hugh Seay

Jonie Seay was drafted into World War I in 1918. He was a conductor for the Murphy line of Southern Railway. He also served as sheriff of Swain County.

Jonie at the Jail





Joseph Francis was the son of Iva Snelson and Lee Francis. He was the grandson of Robert and Decie.

DYNAMITE INJURED BRYSON CITY BRIDGE

DEAD MAN WAS USED TO HAND-
LING IT

Blew Hole in Bridge While Killing
Fish Some Time
Ago.

That general indifference regarding the unlawful use of dynamite was responsible for the explosion Thursday night which badly damaged the court house at Bryson City, killed Omar Conley, blinded Barrett Banks and dangerously wounded Register of Deeds Lee Francis is indicated by the statement made yesterday by a gentleman who came from Bryson City.

It was stated that not long ago Omar Conley exploded dynamite in the Tuckasegee river in the town limits and so close to the bridge that when it exploded prematurely a hole was torn in the flooring. Although the use of dynamite for killing fish is unlawful no prosecution was instituted, it is said, the authorities being content with requiring Mr. Conley to repair the damage to the bridge.

ONLY COLD WEATHER SAVED BRYSON CITY

200 POUNDS OF DYNAMITE WERE
STORED IN COURT HOUSE

If It Had Not Been Frozen It Would
Have All Exploded.—The
Unfortunate Banks.

Only cold weather prevented the total destruction of Bryson City Thursday night when Omar Conley was killed and two other men badly injured by the explosion of dynamite which Conley and Barrett Banks were thawing over a stove in one of the offices.

Men here yesterday from Bryson City said that the county commissioners had stored in an upper room 200 pounds of dynamite to be used in road marking and that equally large quantities were in nearby stores. The force of the dynamite which did fire would have set off all the other explosives if they had not been frozen.

It was also stated that a short time before Banks had complained that his family had been unfortunate, one brother having lost an eye by an explosion, another lost an eye in a fight and a third had his jaw broken. Shortly afterwards he lost both eyes and nearly all his teeth were torn from his jaws. He will recover, but the condition of Register of Deeds W. L. Francis was reported as grave last evening.

Commodore Casada



Joseph Francis

Carol Wright Sr.

CAROLINA WOOD TURNING (1930)

Iva Snelson Francis



* * *

Mrs. Iva Francis

BRYSON CITY — Mrs. Iva Snelson Francis, a former resident of Bryson City, died Sunday in Kissimmee, Fla., after a period of declining health.

She was a native of Haywood County, a member of Bryson City Baptist Church and Tuckasegee Chapter No. 16, Order of Eastern Star.

Surviving are a son, Joseph S. Francis of Chicago; a daughter, Mrs. Pauline Abstance of Kissimmee; two sisters, Mrs. Zena Seay of Bryson City and Mrs. Letha Sandridge of Miami, Fla.; four grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Services will be held at 2 p. m. Thursday in the chapel of Bill Moody Funeral Home.

The Rev. John Bowden will officiate. Burial will be in Bryson City Cemetery.

Pallbearers will be James Sneed, Calvin Myers, P. R. Bennett, James B. McCracken and Reg and E. H. Moody.

The family will receive friends at the funeral home from 7 to 9 p. m. Wednesday.



LETHA S. SANDIDGE

OCT. 28. 1898

FEB. 12. 2000

“Aunt Lee” was the youngest daughter of Robert and Decie. She lived in 3 centuries. By marriage to her husband, R.L. Sandidge, we are related to Martha Washington through the Custis line and the grandson of Sandidge, whom established the first telephone exchange and newspaper in Swain County.



Ferd Snelson was born August 14th, 1895. He was the oldest son of Robert and Decie. He served in World War I and was a retired Southern Railway conductor. He was a member of the First Baptist Church of Bryson City. He died March 5th, 1967 and is buried in the Green Hills Cemetery in Asheville.

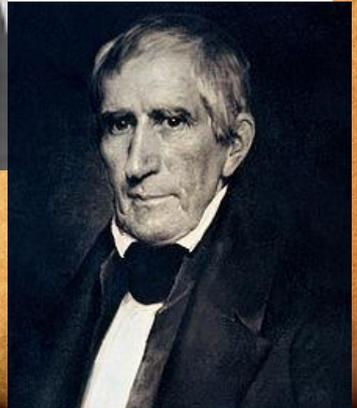
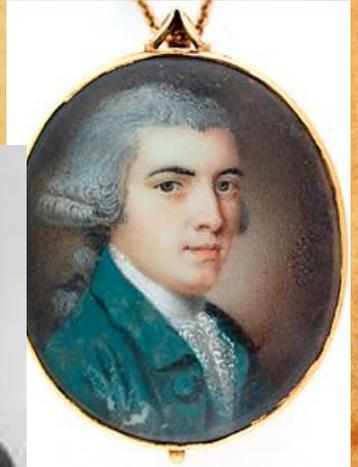


ORVILL SON OF
R. L. & D. T. SNELSON
BORN DEC. 25, 1899
DIED JULY 6, 1905

Orville was the youngest son of Robert and Decie Snelson. He was known to be a playful little lad, and one day he fell from a tree at a small height, but in a strike of bad luck, hit his head. This injury caused what was then called brain fever, and this resulted in his early demise. Robert was ill and unconscious at the time of Orville's passing, and Decie had the small casket carried to his bedside for a final goodbye before burial.

The Most Amazing Fact (That I Freak Out About)

I recently learned something that I personally have dreamed about for a long time. It turns out that our family is related to a Founding Father by the name of Benjamin Harrison. We are related via my great great great great great grandmother, who was related to Harrison, a signer of the Declaration of Independence and a close friend of George Washington. I'm a Revolutionary War Era nerd, and I'm surprised this news didn't give me a heart attack. And another thing on that note, Benjamin is related to William Harrison and the other Benjamin Harrison, the 9th and 23rd Presidents of the United States.



Harrison Connection-

Robert's great grandmother was Rachel Harrison Snelson. She was the daughter of Joseph Harrison, a Revolutionary War soldier. Joseph's father, Nathaniel Harrison helped survey the line between VA and NC. He was commissioned by the governor to represent VA in the boundary line. Nathaniel's father was Benjamin Harrison 3rd. Benjamin 3rd's father, Benjamin 2nd founded William and Mary College with his son in law. He was a sheriff, burgess, justice, and colonel in the militia. He was highly respected among fellow officers and those around him. His tombstone says, "*Who loved mercy and walked humbly with his God, always loyal to his Prince and a great benefactor to his country.*" Benjamin 2nd's father, Benjamin Harrison was born in Essex, England. He came to Virginia in 1628. He was a descendent of one of Cromwell's colonies and signed a death warrant of a king. He acquired considerable property on both sides of the James River.

Harrison Connection

William Henry Harrison was the 9th President of the United States. He was the uncle of Nathaniel Harrison.

Benjamin Harrison signed the Declaration of Independence and was a confidant to George Washington. He was Nathaniel's grandfather. This is Phoebe's (9 Greats) Grandfather.

The 23rd President of the the United States was Benjamin Harrison. He was a cousin to Nathaniel.

Citations

<http://www.dsdi1776.com/signers-by-state/benjamin-harrison/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_Harrison

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Henry_Harrison