

THE FICKLINGS/FICKLINS

Summary of a private report to family 1993

Norwich

The Ficklins are supposed to have come to America by way of Barbados or Bermuda from Norwich on the east coast of England in the 17th century.

Yarmouth, in County Norfolk, was an important port in the maritime trade. Norwich, a city about 30 miles inland grew to be a major provincial center second only to London. Surrounded by flat upland marshes hostile to agriculture, and supporting few forests, Norfolk depended on mills and fisheries to sustain its people. Within the city of Norwich poverty was widespread enough to warrant a “census of the poor” in 1570.¹

Yet some who had once been serfs had risen out of poverty to a position of equality with others who descended from gentility without inheritance. These often fell into the yeoman class, not beholden to any overlord, and though not wealthy, had some money.²

Within this class was a Norfolk family identified by the name of “Feck” or “Fick” --most likely Anglo Saxon in origin. Five Hundred years prior the Domesday Book noted a people living 200 miles north on the Yorkshire Moors at a place called “Fig Clinge.”³ Whatever the origin of the name, people of that name were recorded in Norfolk County.⁴

The immigrant ancestors of the Ficklins in America were George and John Fickling, born in 1685 and 16__ and probably contemporaries of the above Jeremy. George’s first son was named Jeremiah. The above Robert and John probably are members of the two previous generations. No further records were found to establish the extent of the Fickling family in Norwich nor its actual origin.⁵ The first “Ficklins” sailed for the Americas in the 17th century.

Footnotes:

1 Norwich Census of the Poor, 1570,

2. Yeomen were not of ‘gentle’ birth but owned property by virtue of having earned sufficient means to acquire at least subsistence land. These were in the form of leaseholds as opposed to proprietorships or land grants.

3. Domesday Book 1066 AD: “Fig Clinge,” Fylingdales: Merrywine had 1 caracute of land taxable which 1 plough can plough. Wm De Percy has it. Waste. Value before 066 %x 4d. On coast 5 miles south of Whitbey on Robin Hoods Bay. Barren moors. (An early warning station of North Riding, York as of the 1990’s)

4 Some. Norwich vital records: Joseph Fickling b. 1616 to Robert and Isobel Fickling; Robert Fickling b./christened 1657 to John and Margaret Fickling; Jeremy Fickling christened 21 May 1676 at All Saints.

5. It is stated in the “Ficklin Newsletter,” August 1990 published by Dale Ficklin of Las Vegas NV, that one John Ficklin had come to Virginia by 1643 and that Arthur Ficklin was born in Barbados by 1751. This indicates that some of the family probably came very early to Virginia and the West Indies—and that perhaps George and John were actually born in the Indies also or came with a later contingent.

West Indies

A month or so after setting sail from Norfolk a vessel carrying the first Ficklings reached the Canaries Current southwest of the coast of Spain and not long after that reached the westernmost islands of the Windward Islands of the Lesser Antilles. They were easterly of the islands settled by the Spaniards a hundred years before whose native populations had long ago been killed off through forced labor.

Now the slavers brought shiploads of Africans to replace the lost labor force. Plantations had flourished in the warm tropical latitudes, the islands became the center of the slave trade and a haven for the pirates of the Spanish Main. The situation was attractive to the English men of leisure and wealth. They began arriving from the damp and foggy ports such as Yarmouth as early as 1627 when the English Adventurer Companies began to build plantations on islands such as Barbados.

The Ficklings may have been among the earliest of these. Within twenty five years the first generation of native-born Ficklings, Arthur, Thomas and Stephen were born on Barbados.¹

About the year 1705 a vessel from England carried two members of the Fickling family from Norwich. The older brother, George, was accompanied by his pregnant wife, Charity. More than two-thirds of the way to the mainland of North America the ship stopped at a tiny group of coral islands called "Bermuda." The beautiful hills rose 300 feet but the islands contained no rivers or streams. The climate was mild. There Charity and Geoge Fickling debarked while George's younger brother William (who was probably a teenager) sailed west to Virginia.²



George and Charity's first son, Jeremiah, was born on Bermuda and they continued to live in this paradise for awhile.³ But beneath the thin layer of soil was hard coral. There would be little opportunity to farm so they sailed south to Barbados. But there they found the same tiny coral islands. Beyond the islands, six hundred miles west lay the treacherous coast of Carolina and the island called Edisto south of Charleston.

Charleston, South Carolina, early 1700s

George and Charity Fickling arrived on Edisto Island in 1720 with six children.⁴ They bought land and slaves at Charles Town and planted tobacco. Charity died in 1737. George remarried a young woman, Anne Allen, who was the younger sister of his son Jeremiah's wife.

Jeremiah Fickling had married Mary Allen and they had several children. They acquired land on Welsh Neck of the Pee Dee River north of Charles Town.⁵ In 1752 he bought land upstream on the Edisto in

Colleton County. His son Joseph was born there in 1735. Jeremiah's wife Mary died leaving him with seven children. He remarried but died in 1764 on Edisto Island at age 67.

Jeremiah Fickling, Jr., eldest son of Jeremiah Fickling, Sr., was born in 1730. He married Eleanor Breanon and had at least three sons (Thomas, Francis I and Henry, born 1752, 1753 and 1754 respectively).

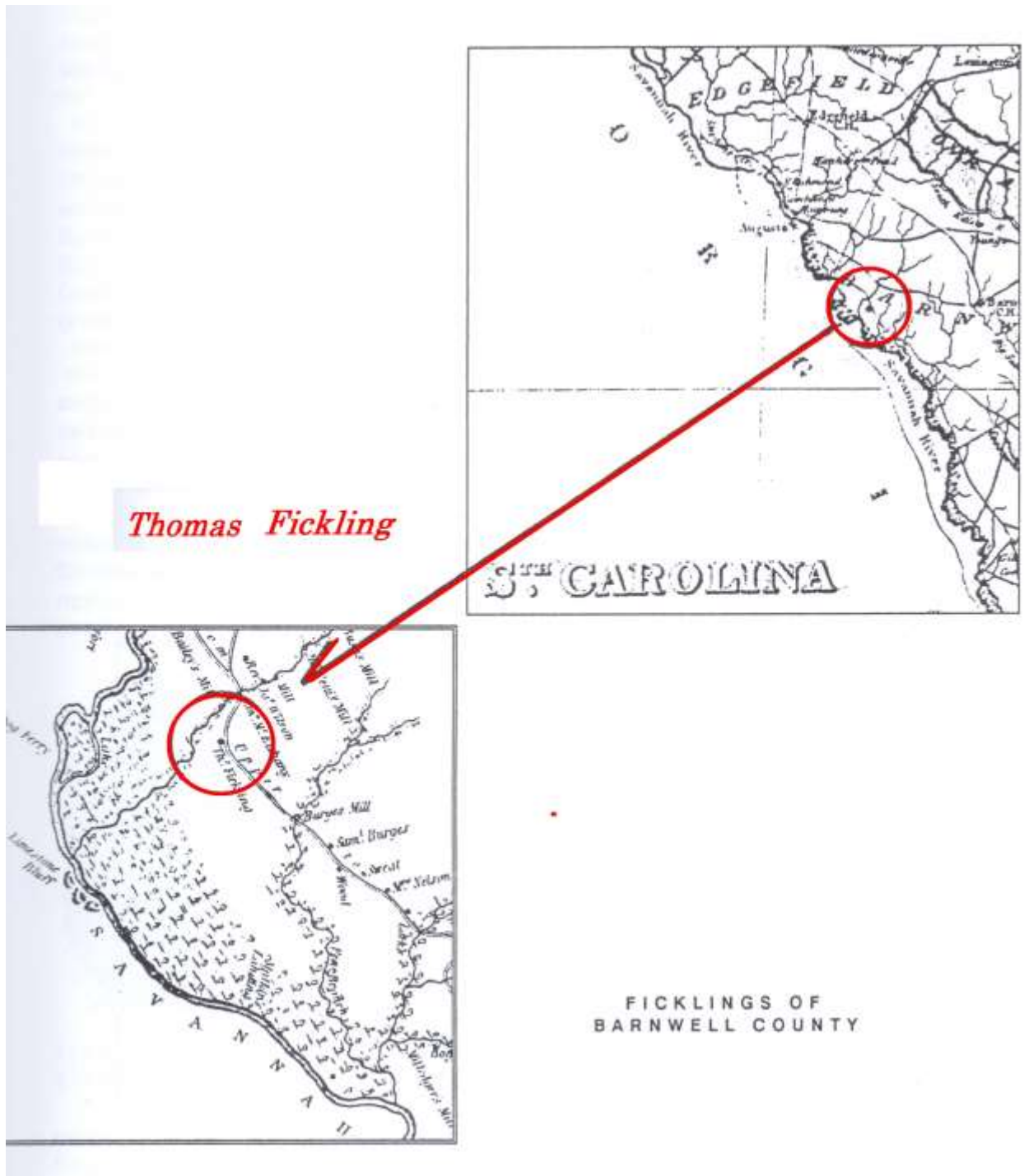
The Ficklins prospered as did many in Charleston. When the Revolutionary War broke out loyalism in Charleston had run high. The southern planters had grown rich through trade with England but the Crown's taxation policies had alienated many of the South Carolina planters. A Patriot government was set up in October 1775 and the Ficklins of Edisto Island joined the local militia. They served also on the Committee of Correspondence to ferret out the disloyal. Jeremiah and his cousin, John, served under Captain Joseph Jenkins and his brother, Joseph, served under Colonel Glover.

On April 13, 1780 the British attacked Charleston Harbor and the city was held siege. It surrendered May 12, 1780. The campaigns of Cornwallis and Tarleton moved across South Carolina, Cornwallis taking strongholds throughout the piedmont. Banastre Tarleton mounted a brutal and merciless campaign of slaughter all the way to the frontier. The British forces continued into North Carolina. Many famous battles were fought and many southern Patriots commanders achieved fame as they slowly drove the British from the Carolinas by early 1781.

From Charleston to Barnwell County, South Carolina

Following the Revolution the Ficklins of Colleton Island in coastal South Carolina continued to prosper and proliferate. When Captain Joseph Fickling and his nephew, Jeremiah, died they willed dozens of slaves and considerable estate to their heirs. The branch of the Ficklins that descended from Captain Joseph's son, Jeremiah, stayed on Colleton Island. Jeremiah's sons Francis, Thomas and Henry came of age during the war and married as it drew to a close.⁶

The Southern planters grown wealthy from tobacco began to move into cotton when the cotton gin was developed in 1793. It was then feasible to amass much bigger plantations requiring large labor forces. The slave trade swelled a hundred-fold to fill the needs of a burgeoning cotton industry.⁷ A new way of life was established and wealth began to concentrate in a few southern families. Moreover cotton depleted the soil, and as the land wore out, planters moved west, first to Savannah and then on to Alabama. Poorer whites found their only opportunity to share in prosperity was to keep moving west.





Possible FICKLING FARM,
BARNWELL COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA⁴



Possible FICKLING FAMILY BURIAL GROUND,
BARNWELL COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA

Jeremiah's son Francis I married Elizabeth Bridgett in 1781 and raised two daughters and a son. Jeremiah's son Thomas married his cousin Sarah (in 1787 at age 35 and raised five children, the oldest of whom was George, born 1788.)

It may be helpful to explain the relationship of three men named "Thomas Fickling." Jeremiah's son Thomas became known as "Thomas the Elder" because he gave his own name to a son, Thomas, born in 1797. This son Thomas became "Thomas Sr.," because he in turn also named a son "Thomas" who became known as "Thomas Jr."

The families of Thomas the Elder and Francis I appear to have formed close ties. When Jeremiah II died in 1800 he sold off his entire estate, slaves, stock and all to cover his debts. He willed only one slave and that went to his youngest son, Henry. He gave 120£ each to Francis I and Thomas the Elder and the remaining funds were divided among the three sons. Francis I settled his family of two daughters and one son in Charleston and lived there until he died in 1826.⁸ In 1806 his only son, Francis II, married his cousin, Mary, daughter of Thomas the Elder. Mary, herself, was the product of the marriage of cousins.

Thomas the Elder however acquired land in 1814 westward in South Carolina to the rolling hills of Barnwell County. The land above the flood plain of the Savannah River was fertile. It supported large cotton and tobacco plantations. Francis II and his young family followed Thomas the Elder to Barnwell County.

Alabama

Thomas Fickling the Elder, uncle and father-in-law of Francis Fickling II died in 1819 leaving his wife Sarah a widow. One third of his 300-acre estate went to Sarah and the rest was divided among Thomas the Elder's children and grandchildren including Mary, wife of Francis II. Francis and Mary went to live with Sarah to help her with the farm and there he raised his five teenage sons and a daughter.

Then Francis I of Charleston filed a lawsuit-- three years later-- claiming the inheritance of Thomas Sr., son of Thomas the elder and also that of his own son Francis II. Francis I claimed that they had previously sold their inheritance to him. The two grandchildren who retained their inheritance were Caroline and Young, orphans of George, son of Thomas the Elder.

Around 1825, Thomas Sr. (son of Thomas the Elder, deceased) left Barnwell County and headed to Alabama. He settled on Mobile Bay on the Gulf Coast with his orphan nieces.⁹

Francis Fickling II also joined the migration to the new State of Alabama. Land could be had for \$2 / acre to be paid in installments over four years. The land was expected to be good for growing cotton. Francis I took his family to Butler County, Alabama.¹⁰

Francis Fickling III, (son of Francis II) now grown, had already married a woman name Mary Young. The eldest son of Francis III and Mary was named "Milledge" born in Butler County in 1836.¹¹

About that time the family seems to have gone through some turmoil. Caroline, granddaughter of Thomas the Elder, may have married her uncle Thomas Sr. at Mobile Bay. They had a son, Thomas Jr. who married in the 1840s and had a baby girl by 1850.

During that same time, Francis III and his wife Mary were living up north in Butler County about a hundred miles away with their five children including Milledge. In 1844 Francis III and Mary had another son, Francis IV, called "Frank." Within five years three daughters were born.

Six years later Francis II and Mary Ficklin still lived in Butler County, but there is no trace of their son, Francis III, his wife nor his family. Strangely a man named "Francis" lived in Hinds County, Mississippi, and was working as an 'overseer' and living with a young man listed as 'insane'. It is not known if this was Francis III.¹²

This is a possible scenario: Little Frank, (Francis IV) had probably been sent to live with his uncle Thomas Jr. and wife Martha and their one-year-old daughter, Elvira.¹³ The wife and other children of Francis III may have managed to survive, scattered as it was. Perhaps Francis III was forced by hard times to look for work in Mississippi. On the other hand he may have simply been estranged from his wife. Some descendants have claimed some mystery about Francis III—something no one would discuss. What had happened during those years of the fifties left bitter memories with the children.¹⁴

Sometime in the 1850s Mary Ficklin died in Butler County. Her widower, Francis II, remarried to Isabella McCormick in 1859 and moved the family and his slaves to Mississippi thirty miles east of Jackson. Francis II established a 440-acre plantation at Independence, about five miles south of the village of Morton.

About this time the name "Ficklin" began to replace "Fickling".

Mississippi

Francis III rejoined the family. No sooner had the Ficklins settled than they began putting up slaves as collateral on loans and trust deeds. The plantation which cost them about \$2,000 was located in a forested region of gentle hills interlaced with ponds and streams of the Strong River.

Among their neighbors was the Page family, who had been in Mississippi since an early ancestor, Joseph Page of Bayou Pierre, had in 1790 obtained a patent on the Pearl River which flows through Jackson to the Gulf. The Pages owned a large plantation in Independence and a grocery store in Morton.¹⁵ The Ficklins had not been in Morton long when Francis II died.

Civil War—War Between the States

The family of Frank Ficklin III, once again united, was living in Morton, Mississippi in 1860, on the day that Abraham Lincoln was elected president of the United States—a seriously divided nation. By February 1861 the representatives of the southern states had met at Montgomery and established the Confederate States of America, and had chosen Jefferson Davis its president

Two months later Confederate artillery fired on the federal Fort Sumpter and the war commenced.

Frank Ficklin IV and Milledge Ficklin the sons of Francis Fickling III both served from Mississippi. Their records are archived at the Mississippi State Archives. A detailed discussion of their service is given in a separate pdf file:

Frank Ficklin IV and Milledge Ficklin in the War Between the States.

www.westerly-journeys.com/genealogy/Ficklin/FicklinCivilWar.html

When the dust from the War between the States had finally settled, many families of the Confederacy found themselves with diminished assets and much to restore. Predatory Northerners flooded into the South to further ravage the countryside during the infamous period called “Reconstruction.”

Frank Ficklin II and III had both passed away and the young Ficklin men had returned from the War to what was left of the family farm. Milledge was by then 29 years old but Frank (IV) was only 21.

Before the War old Francis III had been a farmer with assets of \$3500. If the Ficklins of Morton had any fortune before the war, the boys probably had considerably less afterwards. It is doubtful that Frank IV and Milledge Ficklin had many slaves to free, for the Ficklins had begun selling them even before the war. During the War property in the town of Morton had been sold.¹⁶ The boys set about to rebuild their lives and three years after the War Milledge began selling off more of the family plantation in Independence. The Pages also had to sell some of their Independence land to pay off debts.¹⁷

Milledge Ficklin married Fannie Ferguson in the late 1860s and opened his first store in Morton, Mississippi, possibly in partnership with the Pages.¹⁸ Milledge’s wife died after bearing him two children. He remarried shortly after her death.

Frank Ficklin, disabled by a respiratory problem continued to farm and married Mary Elizabeth Page¹⁹. She bore him 3 sons, Oscar, William Hayward, and Frank Page born between 1868 and 1878.

Milledge went into debt in 1874, perhaps to finance his store. He sold Frank half a quarter section in Independence, and Frank took out a trust deed to be paid off with the cotton produced on the land that year. Frank and Milledge together took out a promissory note for \$100 payable in a year. Three months later Frank bought another half quarter section in Independence for \$100.



FANNIE FICKLIN'S GRAVE, INDEPENDENCE MS

Migration to Texas

Waco, McLennan County, Texas was the heart of a cattle boom where herds of wild longhorns that roamed the southwest were rounded up for the drive along the western trail to Dodge City, Kansas.

The land in Morton, Mississippi was beginning to wear out. The Ficklins heard that good cotton and grain land was available to the west in Texas. In 1878 the Ficklins of Mississippi perhaps along with Ficklin cousins from Alabama, joined a wagon train and travelled overland to Texas.²⁰ Frank was by then 34 years old and his oldest boy, Oscar, rode a mule all the way to Texas.

Falls County, Texas lay in the black plain region of Texas. It had attracted farmers from Mississippi and Alabama for thirty years. (Perhaps some Ficklin cousins had already arrived). The Ficklins settled not far from the Rio Brazos. Thomas Jr. grandson of Thomas the Elder settled two hundred or so miles upstream with his young bride and second wife, Isabella.

Frank's wife died and he married to Martha Penn in 1889. They moved to Bosque County north of Waco.²¹

Frank and Martha returned to the farm on the Rio Brazos in Falls Texas where tragedy struck the Ficklins in 1884. Twelve-year-old Hayward Ficklin had a fatal accident. He had built a fire in the cook stove and thought it was out. He picked up a can of coal oil and poured it on the wood. It exploded and he was badly burned. He lingered six weeks but eventually died June 15, 1884

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Dale Ficklin, *Ficklin Newsletter*, Las Vegas, NV, 1 Aug 1990
- ² Walter Homan Ficklin, *Fickling Family of America*, Denver CO, 1912.
- ³ Dale R. Ficklin, "The Ficklin Family of the South," manuscript, Las Vegas, NV, 1988.
- ⁴ Dale R. Ficklin
- ⁵ No record has been found to show they ever lived at this location.
- ⁶ Bobby Gilmore Moss, *Roster of South Carolina Patriots in the American Revolution*, Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., Baltimore, MD, 1983. [Although a Jeremiah Fickling had served in the Edisto Island Militia, it is presumed it was not Jeremiah II who would have been 50 years old. It was possibly one of the sons of Captain Joseph Fickling. None of Jeremiah's sons is listed as having served.
- ⁷ Alan C. Collins, *The Story of America in Pictures*, Doubleday & Co. Garden City, NY, 1953, p. 153.
- ⁸ Dale R. Ficklin, *The Fickling Family of the South*, published by author, Las Vegas, NV, 1988. Francis Fickling I married Elizabeth Bridgett 30 Nov 1781. He died in St. Phillips Parish 1826-1828.
- ⁹ It is merely speculation that Thomas and Caroline Fickling of subject family are the same as those shown in Mobile Bay on the U.S. Census of 1850 at ages 53 and 44. They would have been born in 1797 and 1808 respectively. It is not known if George Fickling had gone previously to Alabama.
- ¹⁰ The migration to Alabama is extrapolated from census data and from the Fickling genealogies of Dale R. Ficklin, Diana Oliver of Yorktown, Texas and Annie Beth Johnson of Waco, Texas.
- ¹¹ The births of Frank and Millege are also from the same sources as 10 above.
- ¹² U.S. Census, 1850, Hinds Co., MS: Francis Ficklin, 50 year-old overseer, living with Robert Anderson a 30-year old from Virginia listed as insane. Allowing for possible census errors with regard to birth, it is possible this is Francis Fickling III.
- ¹³ The U.S. Census 1850 Baldwin Co. AL, household of Thomas Fickling Jr. The eldest female in the household was named Martha but she was only 22 years old. A boy Francis was listed as 7. It is very unlikely he would be Martha's son. It is believed this could be Frank Ficklin IV living in his uncle's household.
- ¹⁴ Diana Oliver, Yorktown, Texas. Personal correspondence. She mentions some secret about Francis Ficklin III. His children seemed ashamed of him and would not talk about their father. The facts surrounding Francis Ficklin II may never be known and are further confused by census data.

¹⁵ U.S. Census 1860, Scott Co. MS showed no slaves in household

¹⁶ Chancery Records, Scott So. MS

¹⁷ Chancery Records, Scott So. MS

¹⁸ *Forest Mississippi Herald*, 22 Aug 1946 quoted in correspondence from Delores Sanders at Forest, MS to Diana Oliver of Yorktown, TX, 12 May 1982. Chancery Records for Scott Co. MS refer to Pages Grocery.

¹⁹ No record has been found for the marriage. Ficklin genealogies refer to Frank's wife as "Mary". Since the name "Page" has been given to Ficklin men in every generation since that time, it is reasonable to assume that Mary was a "Page", possibly the daughter of Samuel T. Page whose land transactions are recorded in Scott County. Fannie Ficklin, first wife of Milledge Ficklin is buried next to the Page graves at Independence Methodist Church. Next to Fannie are several unmarked graves which may be the graves of the Francis Ficklins II and III.

²⁰ Genealogy of George Fickling I furnished by Diana Oliver, Yorktown, Texas, 30 Aug 1990. Also personal correspondence with Annie Beth Johnson, Waco, Texas, granddaughter of Frank Page Ficklin.

²¹ Annie Beth Johnson