

# COUNTS FAMILY

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FIRST FAMILY REUNION

1936





A VIEW OF JOHN COUNTS' FARM ON HAWKSBILL CREEK,  
PAGE COUNTY, VIRGINIA. (1936)

# COUNTS FAMILY



Proceedings of the First Annual Reunion

OF THE DESCENDANTS OF

JOHN COUNTS OF GLADE HOLLOW



HELD AT

CLEVELAND, RUSSELL COUNTY, VIRGINIA

SEPTEMBER 20, 1936

## FOREWORD

"Honor thy father and thy mother," saith the Lord. So important was this elemental rule of life in the days of Moses that it became one of the Ten Commandments, and it is still one of the cardinal principles in all Christian countries. Even in the ancient kingdom of China this command of ancestor worship and honor was one of the great foundation-stones of its religious life.

Love of home and family has long been strong in the Anglo-Saxon race. This characteristic followed the descendants of that race "across the sea" and took vigorous root in the wilderness of America. In the early days the sons usually, and the daughters occasionally, settled down on the parental farm, making a little community of their own. This continued until all the good farming land was occupied. Then there began another migration to find cheaper and more abundant land elsewhere, or the urge to move to cities or towns took hold of the youngsters—and away they went.

Occasionally they drifted back to the old home for a visit with Father and Mother, sometimes singly, sometimes in family groups. In the lowlands, where means of travel were comparatively good, larger groups would often gather for a visit to ancestral scenes. But not until recently have travel conditions in the mountains of Southwest Virginia permitted the assembling of relatives in large numbers. With the advent of good roads and automobiles, hundreds of miles are now a matter of but a few hours of easy travel; and relatives, who have never met before, can gather in one day at a central point, get acquainted, learn more of their ancestry, enjoy good speaking, and go an hundred miles back home for supper.

It was under these new and favorable conditions that the idea of a reunion of the Counts family emerged. On June 1, 1936, a form letter was sent to several Countses and their relatives, in which, among other things, it was stated: "For several generations the Counts Family has had a

noble and important part in building Southwest Virginia. It has been a numerous and public-spirited family in Russell and surrounding counties. The members of this family trace their ancestry back to one John Counts, who settled in Glade Hollow, near Lebanon, about 1790. . . . It has been suggested that a Counts Family Reunion—including all the descendants of the first John Counts in Russell County—be organized, and that its first meeting be held at Cleveland, Virginia, during the coming September or October. Please write me at once your opinion of this proposition; and, if favorable, please suggest a suitable date, preferably on a Sunday.”

The percentage of replies was so great and the opinions so unanimously favorable, that it was agreed that such a gathering be held at Cleveland, Russell County, Virginia, on Sunday, September 20, 1936. An announcement of this meeting was printed in several local newspapers and handbills were sent to those descendants whose names and addresses were known. A program was prepared, and a local Entertainment Committee was appointed, consisting of Joshua J. Counts, Mrs. Floyd P. Skeen, and Trigg M. Powers.

The Entertainment Committee arranged with Prof. Hiram B. Tiller and other school officials for the use of the Cleveland High School Building and Grounds for the occasion. An open-air platform was erected and other necessary details attended to. Much of the credit for the success of this meeting is due to the energetic and faithful work accomplished by this committee.

The morning of September 20, 1936, broke over Clinch Valley with heavy clouds and intermittent showers. The red clay roads of Russell became slippery and menacing. It was dreary and disappointing weather—enough to try the courage of the most interested and daring person. Yet groups began to gather early. By ten o'clock it was found that the rain would make it necessary

to hold the proceedings in the school auditorium. Here the people gathered, and before the meeting was called to order, the auditorium, capable of seating about six hundred, was overflowing.

About mid-day the sun shone out, and the crowd increased. It was generally estimated that from 1200 to 1500 people were present. At one time a check of the audience showed that there were descendants of John Counts of Glade Hollow present from Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, Nebraska, and the District of Columbia. During the lunch recess many interesting groups scattered over the school grounds, and all had a delightful time picnicking and meeting old friends and getting acquainted with other relatives and friends.

The afternoon session was held at the platform on the play-ground. Here each one in the vast throng got a chance to hear the final speakers and the closing business session.

Everyone went home in good spirits, feeling that it was good to have such a fine body of relatives and neighbors and such a great country to live in. It had been agreed that the reunion be held annually, and that the next session be held in 1937 at Sand Lick, Dickenson County, Virginia, where, as Judge Counts said, “Countses settled early.”

It has been thought appropriate and useful to have the proceedings of the first gathering of the Counts Family in Southwest Virginia published in full. This pamphlet is therefore given to the public with a hope that its perusal will prove not only interesting and instructive to the general reader, but an added inspiration especially to all the numerous descendants of that sturdy old Clinch Valley pioneer—John Counts of Glade Hollow.

ELIHU JASPER SUTHERLAND,  
Sunset Hill, Counts Family Genealogist.  
Clintwood, Virginia,  
November 28, 1936.

PROGRAM

FIRST COUNTS FAMILY REUNION

SEPTEMBER 20, 1936

CLEVELAND, VIRGINIA

1. Invocation
2. Song....."America"
3. Temporary Organization
4. Sketch: "John Counts of Glade Hollow"....  
E. J. Sutherland of Clintwood
5. Poem.....E. M. Counts of Detroit
6. Address...Hon. Richard L. Counts of Roanoke
7. Appointment of Committees
8. Lunch Period
9. Address.....Hon. John W. Flannagan, Jr.,  
of Bristol
10. Address.....Hon. Luther E. Fuller of Honaker
11. Song
12. Address.....Judge George L. Counts of Welch
13. Report of Committees
14. Election of Officers
15. Song....."Auld Lang Syne"
16. Benediction

PROCEEDINGS

The morning session was held in the auditorium of the Cleveland High School at Cleveland, Russell County, Virginia, on September 20, 1936. The place of honor on the stage was occupied by the following great-grandchildren of John Counts of Glade Hollow: Lott B. Counts and his wife, Rausie Counts, of Cleveland, Virginia; Joshua J. Counts and his wife, Mary Counts, of Cleveland, Virginia; William E. Counts, of Holston, Virginia, and Tabitha Counts, widow of Ezekiel Counts (of Joshua), of Mew, Virginia.

1. The meeting was called to order by Elihu J. Sutherland at 11 A. M.

2. The invocation was delivered by Prof. Hiram B. Tiller, of Cleveland, Virginia.

3. "America" was sung by the audience.

4. The meeting organized by electing the following temporary officers: Temporary Chairman—Elihu J. Sutherland; Temporary Secretary—W. Letcher Counts.

5. Elihu J. Sutherland, of Clintwood, Virginia, read a sketch of "John Counts of Glade Hollow." (See Appendix A).

6. Because of the unavoidable absence of E. M. Counts, of Detroit, Michigan, J. H. T. Sutherland, of Clintwood, Virginia, read Mr. Counts' poem entitled "The Counts Reunion—1936." (See Appendix B).

7. Hon. Richard M. Counts, of Roanoke, Virginia, delivered an address entitled "A Defense of the Christian Faith." (See Appendix C).

8. W. L. Counts offered the following resolution:

RESOLVED: That the presiding officer at this time appoint the following committees, consisting of three members each: Finance, Time and Place, Program, Nominations, and Resolutions. Each committee shall confer

and make its report at the time indicated on the printed program.

On motion, duly seconded, this resolution was adopted and the presiding officer appointed the following committees:

FINANCE—John C. Stinson, Chairman, R. L. Sutherland, and J. Lincoln Kiser.

TIME AND PLACE—George L. Counts, Chairman, Lott B. Counts, and William E. Counts.

PROGRAM—C. Q. Counts, Chairman, Elijah Musick and W. L. Counts.

NOMINATIONS—W. J. Counts, Chairman, Mrs. John Tate, and W. A. Counts.

RESOLUTIONS—Richard L. Counts, Chairman, L. B. Sutherland, and Charles T. Smith.

9. An hour's recess was taken. Picnic lunches were served on the school grounds. The weather having cleared, the afternoon session was held at a stand previously erected by the Committee on Entertainment on the school play-ground, to enable all the persons present to hear the proceedings.

10. Hon. John W. Flannagan, Jr., of Bristol, Virginia, Congressman from the Ninth Virginia District, delivered an address. It is regretted that no copy of his speech has been furnished for publication.

11. Hon. Luther E. Fuller, of Honaker, Virginia, Commonwealth's Attorney of Russell County, Virginia, delivered an address. It is regretted that no copy of his speech has been furnished for publication.

12. The hour growing late, all further songs on the program were omitted.

13. Judge George L. Counts, of Welch, West Virginia, delivered an address on "The Counts Family Reunion—1936." (See Appendix D).

14. The committees reported and their reports were unanimously adopted as follows:

FINANCE: "We the Committee on Finance, recommend as follows:

(1) That all funds collected be by donation.

(2) That all persons present today be permitted to pay to the Secretary-Treasurer or to any member of the Committee on Finance any amount they may desire to contribute for paying expenses of these gatherings and other necessary and appropriate expenses.

(3) That the Committee on Finance be authorized and directed to receive any such donations at any time and deliver them to the Secretary-Treasurer, who shall disburse them under the direction of said Committee on Finance.

(4) That said funds be disbursed for the following purposes: necessary expenses of reunions, printing announcements, programs, etc., record books, and such other items as are approved by a majority of the persons present at any annual reunion.

(5) That all claims for allowance against said fund be presented to the Committee on Finance, which, if it approves said claims, shall endorse and forward same to the Secretary-Treasurer for payment.

(Signed)

J. LINCOLN KISER,  
J. C. STINSON,  
R. L. SUTHERLAND."

TIME AND PLACE: "We, the Committee on Time and Place, report as follows:

TIME—Third Sunday in August, 1937.

PLACE—Sand Lick, Dickenson County, Virginia

(Signed)

G. L. COUNTS,  
L. B. COUNTS,  
W. E. COUNTS."

PROGRAM: "We, the Committee on Program, report that we have not been able to complete the program for next year, and request leave to complete and report the program to the President and Secretary-Treasurer not less than three

months prior to the next annual reunion, as reported by the Committee on Time and Place.

(Signed) E. L. MUSICK,  
W. L. COUNTS."

RESOLUTIONS: "We, the Committee on Resolutions, report as follows:

RESOLVED: That the gatherings of the descendants of John Counts of Glade Hollow be held annually, and that a permanent organization be effected today, and that it be called THE COUNTS FAMILY REUNION; and,

RESOLVED FURTHER: That at each annual meeting the presiding officer appoint the following committees, consisting of three members each: Committee on Finance, Committee on Time and Place, Committee on Program (the President and Secretary-Treasurer being ex-officio members of this committee), Committee on Nominations, and Committee on Resolutions; and,

RESOLVED FURTHER: That the President shall appoint, at least one month prior to the annual meeting, a Committee on Entertainment, consisting of three members who live in the vicinity of the next annual meeting place, whose duty it shall be to make all necessary local arrangements for a suitable place to hold the proceedings, and the entertainment of visitors; and,

RESOLVED FURTHER: That the permanent officers of this organization shall be: President, First Vice-President, Second Vice-President, Secretary-Treasurer, and Genealogist; and,

RESOLVED FURTHER: That the terms of all officers and committeemen be for a period of one year, but any officer or committeeman may be re-elected; and,

RESOLVED FURTHER: That a committee of three be appointed by the President to investigate the feasibility of purchasing a lot enclosing the Old Counts Graveyard in Glade Hollow and properly fencing and beautifying same and erecting

a suitable monument over the grave of John Counts of Glade Hollow, and report their recommendation to the next annual reunion; and,

RESOLVED FURTHER: That the Family Genealogist be authorized to publish the proceedings of this meeting for distribution to the contributors to this organization, if he thinks advisable; and,

RESOLVED FURTHER: That we express to Professor Tiller and the school officials our thanks for their kindness in permitting the use of the school building and grounds for this meeting, and that we also express our appreciation to the people of this community for their hospitality and cooperation in making this meeting a success.

(Signed) R. L. COUNTS,  
L. B. SUTHERLAND."

NOMINATIONS: "We, the Committee on Nominations, report as follows:

For President: R. L. Counts  
For First Vice-President: Wilson E. Counts  
For Second Vice-President: R. S. Sutherland  
For Secretary-Treasurer: W. L. Counts  
For Genealogist: E. J. Sutherland.

(Signed) W. J. COUNTS,  
W. A. COUNTS."

15. On motion, duly seconded, all the persons named by the Committee on Nominations, were unanimously elected as permanent officers for the term of one year.

16. The benediction was pronounced by Prof. Hiram B. Tiller.

E. J. SUTHERLAND,  
*Temporary Chairman.*  
W. L. COUNTS,  
*Temporary Secretary.*

## APPENDIX A

## JOHN COUNTS OF GLADE HOLLOW

Sketch Prepared by E. J. Sutherland  
of Clintwood, Virginia

JOHN COUNTS OF GLADE HOLLOW is the earliest definitely known ancestor of the Countses of Southwest Virginia. The large number and the solid character of his descendants make him an important personage in the pioneer annals of this section of Virginia.

I will now give you the results of over fifteen years of my investigation into the life of this man. Some of it is tradition; but most of it has been taken from the court records of Frederick, Shenandoah and Russell Counties in Virginia. While the public records of no county or city will give one a complete record of the daily or even yearly personal life of anyone, they do give something of their public life and their legal relations with their neighbors.

This John Counts, if known to most of us at all, is merely a faint, legendary person, and we have little knowledge of where he lived, what he did, or what kind of a man he was. I will attempt to reach into the fragmentary records concerning him and bring forth from the dim and forgotten past the figure of a man who looms large in the ancestral life of the Counts Family. At one time he lived heartily and roamed over the hills and valleys among which we now assemble. He lived out a long life, filled with the joys, the sorrows, the hopes and ambitions of the average American of his day. I would like to be able to bring him back, in your mind's eye, to stand here before you in his pioneer habiliments to smile at you, and to say: "Well done, my children!"

Nothing is definitely known of his ancestry, birth, relatives, and early life. Family tradition

is strong that he was "Black Dutch," which means that he was of Germanic origin. The place of his nativity is likewise unknown. It is possible that he was a descendant of some immigrant from the Rhine Palatinate, who came over to Pennsylvania, and later drifted down with the south-moving tide of immigration into the Valley of Virginia, during the eighteenth century. There were numerous immigrants of the name of K-u-n-t-z (the old German form of COUNTS), and its various spellings. Several of them settled in the Shenandoah Valley at an early date, and the Christian name of JOHN being popular among the Counts generations from the earliest records, it is difficult to trace any certain JOHN COUNTS (or Kuntz) through the public records. It is my present opinion—however not yet thoroughly verified—that John Counts of Glade Hollow was a grandson of Joseph Kuntz (or COUNTS, as he spelled it in his will in 1730), who came to Germanna, Virginia, in 1714.

John Counts of Glade Hollow first comes upon the recorded scene of action in Frederick County, Virginia. On February 9, 1764, in a civil suit on an attachment by John Counts against John Stacey, the jury found that "the defendant hath assumed upon himself in manner and form as the plaintiff hath declared and they do assess the plaintiffs damages by occasion of the non-performance thereof to be Six Pound Eleven Shilling & nine pence besides his cost." Was this the same John Stacey later found in Russell County transferring his entry of 50 acres of land in Glade Hollow to John Counts in 1791? What relation was this John Stacey to Susannah Stacey, who married Joseph Kiser, who was reared in the neighborhood of the Counts in the Shenandoah Valley, and who came to Russell County about 1783?

In August, 1765, John Bumgarner conveyed to John Counts, both of Frederick County, Virginia, 270 acres more or less on the west side of

Hawksbill Creek, which tract Bumgarner received by patent from Lord Fairfax's office, July 2, 1761, the consideration from Counts being five shillings current money of Virginia paid in hand. The witnesses to this deed were John Hite, Jacob Virtrees, and Fargus Cron. References by John Counts to this tract in later deeds provide the strongest and most conclusive evidence that John Counts of Glade Hollow lived in the Shenandoah Valley as early as 1765.

The records of Frederick County are incomplete and no other reference to John Counts has been found in them. He evidently continued to live on Hawksbill in Frederick County until the new county of Dunmore was struck off from Frederick County in 1772, and John Counts' home was included in the new county, which took the name of Shenandoah in 1776. In 1831 the new county of Page was established and the old Counts home on the Hawksbill fell into this county. The old Counts home-place is located about 3 miles northwest of the town of Luray and about one mile south of the mouth of the Hawksbill in Page County.

The records of Dunmore County show that on April 27, 1773, Matthew Maddux and his wife, Eve Maddux, (who was the eldest daughter of John Counts of Glade Hollow), executed a deed to Abraham Strickler for 200 acres, a part of the description of this tract being in these words: "thence running with a line that Thomas Hurst and John Counts made." John Counts and Magdalen were recorded as the parents of Christine, 5 months old, baptized August 22, 1773.

Unfortunately most of the County Court records of Shenandoah County are missing, thereby removing the best source of information about the early court proceedings in that section. However the deed books and other records contain some valuable data on John Counts.

On August 23, 1783, Christian Bumgarner for

ten pounds current money of Virginia conveyed to John Countz a tract of two acres on Hawksbill.

In the court files at Woodstock, the county-seat of Shenandoah County, has been found the marriage bond of Philip Counts ("C-o-u-t-s") to Anna Kiser. This bond shows they were married August 22, 1785. Jacob Raresnake, a brother-in-law of Philip, was the surety on this bond. With this bond was filed a certificate, required by law at that time, as follows:

"Shenandoah County and beekford of Virginy Phillip Coutts and Anna Kiser is ago to git mared and his father John Coutts and mother is will that they should git mared  
And Anna Kiser friends is all will that she shd get mared to the sd Coutts August the 22 1785."

On the back of this certificate are the following signatures:

her  
"ANY x KISER  
mark  
his  
JOHN x COUNTS  
mark  
ANDREW KISER."

The Virginia Census for Shenandoah County for 1783 shows one John Counts with seven persons in his family, and the census taken two years later shows only six in his family.

The last record of John Counts found in Shenandoah County was a deed which was signed by mark as "John Coutts." It was dated August 22, 1789, and conveyed to Sinnet Young 248 acres of land, described as being land conveyed by John Bumgarner to "John Coutts" by deed dated August 6, 1765. The consideration was two hundred and thirty pounds. I have not yet found any record to which John Counts of Glade Hollow signed his own name. All records found show his name by mark, and it is variously spelled. In the

deed to Young, as in the certificate for the marriage of his son Philip to Anna Kiser, it is misspelled as "C-o-u--t-s." His wife's name in this deed is stated to be "Mary," but she did not sign the deed, and a dedimus was awarded to take her acknowledgment. She evidently could not go to the court-house to acknowledge the deed. Was she sick at home, or had she already gone west to the new frontier in Russell County? There is nothing on record to show that she ever signed and acknowledged this deed, though she lived twenty-five years longer.

John Counts of Glade Hollow was a true pioneer. He could not be satisfied to stay in a thickly settled section. He wanted more room, and he sought to find it on the borders of the advancing white settlements. This characteristic of the old German wanderlust has appeared again and again in many of his descendants.

He at length tired of the crowding valley, and having heard of the rich lands on the Clinch in the far backwoods from some of his former Shenandoah neighbors, particularly the Kisers and the Kelleys, he determined to move to this new land of plenty. So he left the Valley of the Shenandoah for the Valley of the Clinch. We should remember fierce Indians still made their murderous raids on the Clinch after he came here. I am wondering how he travelled the 300 miles of rugged and almost trackless forest from Luray to Lebanon? Did he come by wagon or by horseback? Did part of the party—in true pioneer fashion—foot it with moccasined feet all these long and weary miles? Who composed the party that made this migration? What roads did they travel, and how did they cross the several large rivers that intervened between the old home and the new? We do not know.

In his deed to Sinnet Young he did not convey all his Hawksbill farm. He kept part of it and he left his son Philip on it when he came westward, and later he made Philip a deed for this land. On

September 5, 1936, I visited this old farm for the first time. I found it had long since left the hands of the Counts family. It was divided into two smaller farms by Philip Counts, and one part now belongs to Mrs. Florence E. Cameron, and the other part, on which was located the old John Counts home, belongs to the heirs of Charley Mauk. On the Mauk tract I found an old graveyard, which Mrs. Cameron told me was the old Counts graveyard. It was uninclosed and grown up with rank weeds and locust trees, one of which was about three feet in diameter. Several rough limestone head-rocks were found, but none of them had any inscriptions.

Our best present source of information about the old wanderer in his new homeland is the court records at Lebanon, and they are not complete. Again we run into some confusion by reason of there being two John Countses in this territory at that time. I cannot say definitely which John Counts—John Counts of Glade Hollow or his son John Counts of Cleveland—is referred to in all the records.

In Land Entry Book 1, page 23, is the first known Counts record in Russell County. It is dated November 20, 1787, and records that "John Counts enters 50 acres of land by part of Warrant No. 14803 dated November 9, 1783, lying & being at the Widow Lards old place between that and the River lying on both sides of a branch that runs into the river." We are now meeting on this tract of land, and evidently it was John Counts of Cleveland who made the above entry.

On June 17, 1788, the grand jury returned the following indictment: "A bill found against Obediah Payne for abusing John Countz and Robing said Countz of his papers and for forging an order in the name of Francis Hines presented by the oath of John Countz."

The Land Entry Book again shows John Counts entering land, this time on October 1, 1790, when he entered fifty acres "on north side

of Clinch River adjoining the land of Cornelius Robts Dec'd on his east line and on both sides of the path leading from sd. Roberts to Dumps Creek that crosses the low Gap." However this entry was later marked "void war't asd to Ricd. Price."

John Stacey, on April 28, 1791, transferred his entry of fifty acres in Glade Hollow to John Counts, and on June 30, 1794, said John Counts withdrew 36 acres of this entry and re-entered it. This is very evidently our John Counts of Glade Hollow, for he left this land to his son George by his will.

On June 26, 1792, the county court entered this order: "On motion it is ordered that John Counts be exempted from paying poll tax and county levies on account of his age and bodily infirmities."

His plantation in Glade Hollow was further augmented on August 28, 1792, when Robert McFarland and Ann his wife conveyed to John Counts for the sum of one hundred and fifty pounds in hand paid one hundred and sixty-six acres on both sides of Glade Hollow. On August 29, 1799, John Counts had thirty-six acres surveyed on the north side of Glade Hollow and adjoining the "tract of land on which said Counts now lives." This is evidently the thirty-six acre tract mentioned as having been re-entered in 1794. This Russell County farm is very similar to his old Hawksbill farm. It is in the limestone belt, with red clay soil, gently sloping hillsides and level bottoms.

We are now approaching the end of this patriarch's life. He sensed this and began to divide up his property among his children. On April 3, 1802, he prepared his last will and testament. On July 27th following he and Magdalene Counts, his wife, appeared before the County Court of Russell County and acknowledged a deed to Philip Counts of Shenandoah County for a tract of land estimated to contain seventy-five acres, situated on Hawksbill Creek in Shenandoah County, and

"being a part of a tract of land which was conveyed to the said John Counts by John Bumgarner" in 1765, containing at that time 270 acres, more or less, and from which he had conveyed 248 acres more or less to Sinnet Young, the residue of said original tract now being conveyed to Philip Counts.

He died just after the turn of the century, and his earthly remains were buried amid the beautiful hills and vales of Russell County. The exact date of his passing is not now known. On April 27th, 1803, his will was presented before the court of quarterly sessions for Russell County and proven by the oath of John Hargis, a witness thereto, and on July 26th, 1803, it was again presented in court and proven by the oath of Duritee Counts, another of the witnesses thereto, and ordered to be recorded. Who was Duritee Counts?

The following is a complete copy of this will as recorded:

"In the name of God Amen, I John Counts, Senior, of Russell County and Commonwealth of Virginia being old and frail in body, but perfect in mind and memory, blessed be God, but Calling to mind the Mortality of my body and knowing it is appointed once for all men to die, I do make and Constitute this my last Will and Testament in manner and form following.

And first I give my body to the Earth from whence it was taken desiring it may be buried in a Christian manner without pomp, &c., and my soul I give to God who gave it hoping it may find peace in the Arms of his Mercy, and as touching what worldly Goods and estate which I possess I give, devise and bequeath in manner following to wit:

Eve Maticks my eldest daughter I give one Shilling Mary Rarsnake I give one Shilling John Counts Junior also I give one shilling, Lissey Willard I give one shilling.

Item, I give to Harry Willard's eldest son Martin Willard Catherine my daughter one shill-





A VIEW OF JOHN COUNTS' FARM IN GLADE HOLLOW, RUSSELL COUNTY, VIRGINIA. (1931).

Fields), John, Mary (Polly) (married John Robinson) and Margaret (married Samuel Miller). Lazarus Rasnake, Polly Robinson and Margaret Miller moved west.

Philip Counts lived on the old Counts Farm on the Hawksbill, and died there about 1843. He married Anna Kiser, a sister of Joseph Kiser, the ancestor of all the Kisers of Russell County. They had two children—Jacob and Elizabeth. Elizabeth married Robert Carter and later their children moved to West Virginia and Indiana.

John Counts, Junior, lived at Cleveland, and the very land on which we are now meeting belonged to his farm. He lived on the north side of Clinch River, where his grandson, Joshua J. Counts, now lives. His wife was Peggy Kelley, and they had the following children: Sarah (married James Smith), Joseph, James, Crissa (married Richard Colley), John, Elizabeth (married George L. Jessee), Margaret (married Henry Long), Joshua, Nancy (married Jefferson Jessee), and Ezekiel. Joseph late in life moved to Mississippi, and Margaret Long moved to Alabama.

George Counts lived on the old Glade Hollow farm until about 1835, when he moved to Washington County, Virginia. He married Eve \_\_\_\_\_, and had the following children: John, Linnix, Philip, and Eva (m. \_\_\_\_\_ Fleenor). Philip later moved to Carter County, Kentucky.

On August 27th, 1931, I first visited the old Counts Farm in Glade Hollow. I found it in the possession of Mrs. Alice Gray, the widow of Henry F. Gray. She told me that she had lived there 53 years, she and her husband having gone to house-keeping in the old two-story log house known as "the Granny Counts House." There was one room in each story, and a log kitchen stood a short distance away. They were a few feet west of the fine spring now used by Mrs. Gray. The old house had been torn down about forty years, and all the other Counts buildings had disappeared.

She showed me the Old Counts Graveyard, about 200 yards west of the house on a ridge. It is in an open field without any fencing or other protection. I trampled down and pulled up enough weeds to find markers for seven graves—very old—and two sunken places indicating old graves. The markers were made from native limestone slabs and were very old and weather-beaten. I could find no inscriptions on four of the stones, and very little on two others. On the largest headstone I found the following:

“JUNE 25TH  
1814

MARY COUNTS  
WAS BORN  
1728”

The body of John Counts of Glade Hollow lies in an unmarked grave. His numerous descendants owe him a hearty apology for the long and inexcusable neglect they have shown his memory in not properly caring for his last resting place on earth. It is not yet too late to remedy this indifferent and discreditable condition.

He was a peaceful man. Few court records mention him, and none to his discredit. He was a farmer and a land-owner. Wherever he lived he wanted to own his own home. He was evidently a religious man, and two of his children belonged to the Reeds Valley Baptist Church.

John Counts of Glade Hollow has come into this world, run his long race and gone hence to receive his reward from his Maker. He came far in this land, and we may never know just how much he has meant to us in choosing the beautiful Mountain Empire for our homeland. We do know that he was the connecting link in our ancestry from the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries and from the Shenandoah to the Clinch Valleys.

May all of his descendants take just pride in his worthy life, and strive so to live that our own lives will be an honor to his name and his blood.

## APPENDIX B

## THE COUNTS REUNION—1936

By E. M. Counts, Detroit, Michigan

Descendants of John Counts of Glade Hollow,  
Assembled from near and away,  
Foregathered in the placid green valley,  
I greet you today.

\* \* \*

Somewhere on the far soil of the Rhineland,  
In days of the dim olden time,  
Our people turned their steps to the westward  
And sought a new clime.

Six miles from the same spot where we're stand-  
ing,  
When Red Men were still wont to roam,  
Came hardy old John Counts to Glade Hollow  
And hewed out a home.

In him was the fine brawn of the Teuton,  
The love of the mountainside air;  
In him, the pioneering-day spirit  
To do and to dare.

The coves that lie about us resounded,  
Echoing his broad-axe's blow—  
Loud-calling to his herds in the morning—  
The clank of his hoe.

Thrice forty-four long summers and winters  
Have passed by the site of this town  
Since John Counts put aside his old flintlock  
And laid himself down.

He fathered a strong breed that was equal  
To rigors of steeps and of stones,  
Which helped to build a paragon homeland  
That honors his bones.

The Countses and the Sutherlands, Kisers,  
And hundreds of others are sprung  
From old John who homesteaded Glade Hollow  
When Russell was young—

The Rasnicks and also the Amburgeys,  
The Smiths and the Littons are we—  
The Dickenses and Kelleys and Colleys—  
One family tree.

The Southwestern Virginia mountains  
Have bloomed as the fairest of lands,  
Responding to the strokes of our labor—  
The touch of our hands.

And here in the clean, rugged environs  
That all of us call the home sod,  
Before the tree-clad tops of the ridges  
That beckon to God,

The children of John Counts of Glade Hollow  
Had dreams of the country beyond,  
As fathers of John Counts in the old world  
Had dreams that were fond,

And some of us have followed the sunset  
Across the wide prairies, and we  
Have scaled the battlements of the Rockies—  
Gone down to the sea.

To every small point of the compass—  
To schools and to marts and to mills—  
To councils of the state and the nation,  
We've gone from these hills.

And hoping and upbuilding and toiling,  
For happiness, liberty, life,  
We go on with our searching forever  
Through calms and the strife.

Today we have paused here in our seeking  
For livelihood, glamour and gold,  
To join us in a Counts Clan reunion—  
The young and the old.

Let us in these ancestral surroundings,  
Clasp hands with our kith and our kin,  
Some forming their initial acquaintance,  
Some greeting again.

Let each in these dark days of great troubles  
That grip the whole earth in a thrall,  
Bring love and fellowship and good feeling  
To one and to all.

Revive family bonds that were broken—  
Cement the blood-relative tie—  
Before you go away from this meeting,  
And don't let them die.

\* \* \*

I fancy, my kinfolds of the Counts Clan,  
Who gather this wonderful while,  
That John Counts from his quiet grave yonder  
Will see us and smile.

## APPENDIX C

## A DEFENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Address of Hon. Richard L. Counts  
of Roanoke, Virginia

Mr. Chairman, Friends and Relatives:

We have met on this occasion in this Reunion of the Counts Family and its relatives for two purposes: first, to get acquainted, to renew acquaintances and to enjoy a day of fellowship and communion; second, to felicitate ourselves in the reminiscences of the lives of our ancestors and to commemorate their achievements.

For this Reunion and for working up an interest in the history of our ancestors we owe a great debt of gratitude to our friend, Elihu J. Sutherland.

The pioneers of any great cause deserve much credit, whether in the cause of religious, political or economic reformation, the explorations in the fields of science, art and literature, or explorations of new countries for settlement and civilization.

John the Baptist was a pioneer in the cause of Christianity, and Jesus said of him, "Verily, I say unto you, among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist."

Our ancestors were the pioneers of this great country, "The Great Southwest." They blazed the way for others to follow. They paved the way for civilization and Christianity, for cultivating the land, for schools and churches, for roads and transportation. They contended against the savage Indian and the fierce wild animals. They made this country a safe place for your children and for your domestic animals.

If none had the courage, the energy or determination to be pioneers the world would have died long ago in stagnation.

We are amazed when we come to contemplate the large number of people who are related to this family either by marriage or consanguinity. Let us name some of them: The Rasnicks, Sutherlands, Jessees, Kisers, Smiths, Dickensons, Colleys, Musicks, Kelleys, Fullers, Stinsons, Dyers, Puckets, etc. If all the relatives of this family were taken from this country there would be but few people left.

If we trace our ancestry back to the Asiatic line we will find that they sprang from that restless, adventurous, daring, Indo-Germanic race, the greatest people of modern times. In tracing the European nationalities from which they descended, we find among them the proud, aristocratic, progressive, enterprising Englishman; the quick, active, ready Scotchman; the studious, scientific, persevering German; the versatile, vivacious, determined Frenchman; the steady, peaceful, domestic Dutchman; the sloven, kind-hearted, quick-witted, pugnacious Irishman.

Once in a school at Bondtown, Virginia, I had under my tutelage a typical English girl and a typical Irish girl. One day at the noon recess they came to me with their troubles. The English girl between sobs said the Irish girl had struck her. I asked the Irish girl why she did so. With tears flowing from her frank, kind, blue eyes, she said: "She called me an old Irish, and I just struck her."

Once Creed Flanary, a well-to-do farmer and merchant at Gladeville, Virginia, had some marshy land he wanted drained. He hired an Irishman to ditch it. The Irishman knew Mr. Flanary drank occasionally, so he got a bottle of whiskey and wanted Mr. Flanary to drink with him. But Mr. Flanary wanted Pat to work, not to drink; so he refused. Pat insisted; Flanary still refused. Pat became incensed and said: "Mr. Flanary, I want you to know, sir, that one man is just as good as another, if not a darn sight better."

My grandfather Counts was a very devout

man. He believed in obeying the Golden Rule. He respected the property and rights of others. His motto was: "If you go through the farms of other people, leave the gate, bars, and other fences in as good condition, or a little better, than you found them."

He said to me when I was a little boy that a true Christian and a full head of wheat were alike in the fact that they went a little bowed.

He had a large family and kept several milk cows to furnish them milk and butter, and usually in the Fall had several calves to sell. Aunt Aily related that on one occasion a man came to buy his calves, and offered him Twelve Dollars per head for them. But Grandfather told him that Ten Dollars was enough—that he would be willing to give Ten Dollars and no more. Therefore he could have them for Ten Dollars.

As proof that this family was devoted to the Bible and the Christian faith, we note the Bible names in the family, viz: Isaac, John, Jacob, Joshua, James, Lott, Elijah, Noah, Ezekiel, Mary, Martha, Phoebe, etc. Also with them the theme of conversation was the Bible and the Christian religion.

It is with a solemn and awe-inspiring feeling that we contemplate the mouldering ruin of our departed kindred. It brings forcibly to our minds the Bible question: "If a man die, shall he live again?" Plato and other heathen philosophers taught that man is naturally or inherently immortal, and after death the immortal part goes into other animals. The ancient Egyptians thought the soul or life of man after death goes into the kine; therefore, among them the bullock is thought to be sacred.

As I understand the Bible teachings, there is no such thing as natural, inherent immortality. Eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Savior.

If a man is swallowed by a shark and is digest-

ed, and that shark is swallowed by another shark and is digested, what becomes of the man?

The atheist would say that he is destroyed forever.

But science teaches us that not one drop of water is ever destroyed. That it readily changes its form from solid, liquid or gaseous, but none of it is ever destroyed. Then, if in the labyrinth of nature not one single drop of water is ever destroyed, why believe that any part of the human body is ever destroyed?

It is quoted by Thomas A. Edison that all mankind knows of the world constitutes only a millionth of one percent of all there is to know. If this be true, then ninety-nine million, nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine parts are unknown to us. How little indeed do we know! The poet has well said: "Man knows but little here below." Shakespeare may be right in saying: "A fool thinks himself to be wise, but a wise man knows himself to be a fool." We see why Alexander Pope said: "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread." No wonder the great philosopher, Sir Isaac Newton, felt like a child playing upon the seashore, picking up here and there a few pebbles, while the great ocean of Truth lay all expanded before him.

Then who would be so silly as to doubt miracles or to doubt the wisdom and power of God to do all the things spoken of by the Prophets?

God is able by his wisdom and power to bring back every particle of our bodies and reform them into the same identical human being. In Adam we all die, but in Christ we are all made to live again.

Ezekiel was taken in the spirit of the Lord and set down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, and was made to pass by and around them, and behold! there were very many in the open valley, and lo! they were very dry. The Lord said: "Son of man, can these bones live?" He answered: "O Lord God, thou knowest."

There was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to its bone, tendon, ligament, flesh and skin, and of course internal organs, blood and secretion. The last act, a breath of life. And Ezekiel beheld a mighty army of living beings. This represents the bringing back to life of all Jewish people, which is a prefigure of all mankind.

The Bible speaks of a great day coming.

We speak of a great day when something takes place that affects the interests, welfare or destiny of the people.

It was a great day with the ante-diluvians when Noah entered into the Ark with his wife, his sons and their wives, and the animals two by two.

It was a great day with the post-diluvians when at the tower of Babel God confused their speech and dispersed them over the earth, with their various dialects.

It was a great day with the ancient Greeks when the Athenians at the Battle of Marathon whipped the host of Persians which was sent to conquer them.

It was a great day for the Romans when at the Battle of Metaurus they overcame the Carthaginians, who were led by Hannibal, one of the greatest generals of the world.

It was a great day for the Europeans when Charles Martel, or Charlemagne, led the French and German soldiers against the Turks at the Battle of Tours and overthrew the Mohammedans and hurled them back from their invasion of Europe.

It was a great day for the Allies when Napoleon was defeated at the Battle of Waterloo, and banished to the Isle of St. Helena.

It was a great day for our forefathers when General Lord Cornwallis surrendered to General Washington at Yorktown.

It was a great day for us when General Lee surrendered at Appomattox.

It was a great day for the Allies in the World War when at the battle of the Marne the German Army was turned back from their invasion of Paris.

But any and all of these great days are mere pigmies and insignificant in comparison with the great day of God Almighty at Armagedon when Satan and all his evil work will be overthrown and destroyed, and God's Kingdom set up, and as Christ prayed "His will be done on earth as it is in Heaven."

In 1853 a great natural phenomenon took place, known in history as a meteoric shower, but commonly spoken of as a falling of the stars. This produced confusion, excitement, and consternation in many places.

At one place an old colored man stood quietly gazing toward the north. On being asked why he was so quiet and calm when everybody else was so confused and excited, he said: "I'se watchin' de No'th Star, for I knows till he bust all is safe."

Let me admonish you, in conclusion: Keep your gaze upon the Star of Bethlehem, the Star of Hope, the Star of our Salvation.

## APPENDIX D

## THE COUNTS FAMILY REUNION—1936

Address of Judge George L. Counts  
of Welch, West Virginia

Mr. Chairman, Friends and Relatives:

After an absence of many years, it is always a pleasure for one to revisit the scenes of his boyhood days, where he spent his early life. It recalls to memory many pleasant recollections of days long gone by. So with these thoughts in mind, I come to this family reunion today.

It is needless for me to say that I am delighted to be here on this occasion and to have the opportunity of meeting again so many of my old friends, relatives and acquaintances, mixing and mingling with so many of the good citizens of this county, many of whom I personally knew in early life. But as memory takes its flight back through the passing years, it is marred by one sad thought, as there looms up before me the faces and forms of many that I personally knew and associated with and who have fallen by the wayside. In the language of one of our great poets, "they have wrapped the drapery of their couch about them and lain down in pleasant dreams." Their bodies today lie sleeping under the sods and dews, awaiting that great morning, when the day begins to break across the mountains of Time, when they will hear that clarion call summoning them to their reward.

I was born and raised in this county. But since I permanently left the good old County of Russell, forty-seven years have rolled down through the halls of Time, bearing upon their crest many changes wrought out by Time's rugged hand, and it has been thirty-seven years since I left the State of Virginia and took up my abode in the State of West Virginia, where I now reside. During that period of time I have become

very much attached to the little mountain state of West Virginia with its energetic and progressive people, and which has inscribed upon its flag the motto "Montani Semper Liberi," (Mountaineers Always Freeman). But I want to say at the same time that I have never lost interest in Virginia and Virginia affairs. This state has given to this nation so many distinguished men, whose names adorn the pages of history, and who by their services rendered in shaping the destiny of this nation have erected to their memory monuments of true greatness and patriotic statesmanship that have stood the acid test of time. But more especially I have never lost interest in the great Southwest, which has been called by someone an Empire within itself, with its beautiful blue-grass hills and valleys, its sparkling streams, its many prosperous and happy homes dotted among its hills and along its valleys, the land of chivalrous men and noble women. It was here among the hills of the Clinch that I dreamed my dreams, planned my plans, and laid the foundation for whatever little success I have obtained in my chosen profession.

## THE COUNTS FAMILY

The Counts family is of Germanic origin. Their ancestors originally emigrated to this country from Germany, according to the best information I have been able to obtain, about the year 1714. The family name was originally spelled *Kuntz*, and then afterwards the spelling of the name was changed to *Koontz*—some branches of this family still maintain the names of *Kuntz* or *Koontz*—and finally our branch of the family was changed to *Counts*. I have been told by some of the older members of our family that the changing of the name from *Koontz* to *Counts* was brought about by an incident occurring in a land grant to one of the members of this family—that one of the early settlers obtained a grant for a boundary of land, and that in making out this grant the

name was spelled *Counts*, and from that incident we get our present name *Counts*, and which is a branch of the original family.

The first of the present family of whom I have any definite information, and to whom all the Counts family in this particular section trace their lineage, was one John Counts, who first bought a tract of land near the present town of Luray in Page County, Virginia, in the year 1765. Then afterwards about 1790 he removed to Russell County and settled on a farm in Glade Hollow near the town of Lebanon, where he lived until he died about the year 1803. From him descended the present Counts family, now scattered throughout Southwest Virginia and other States.

This John Counts was the father of several children, some of whom followed him from Page County and also settled here in Russell County. Among them was one George Counts, who lived on the old farm in Glade Hollow until about the year 1835, when he removed to Washington County, and from whom descends the Counts family now living in that County. A daughter, Mary, married Jacob Rasnick, from whom the Rasnick family descends.

Another son, John Counts, Jr., married Peggy Kelley and settled on a farm on Clinch River where the town of Cleveland is now located. He died in 1843, leaving a family of ten children. One of his sons, James Counts, settled on a farm across Clinch River not far from where the town of Carterton is now located, where he lived and died sometime about 1870. He was my grandfather. My father was David Counts, who lived at Blackford, Virginia, and died there in 1882, where I was born and raised. One of the daughters of this John Counts, Jr., married George L. Jessee, from whom I got my name—George L. I find that many of the descendants of this John Counts, Jr., intermarried with many of the prominent families of this county and vicinity, including the Sutherlands, the Jesses, the Dickensons,

the Rasnicks, and the Smiths, and these families are today bound together by the ties of marriage.

I further find that some of the members of this family migrated west where their descendants are still living today in different western states. Also some of the same branch of our family went from the Valley of Virginia to Pennsylvania and Ohio, where their descendants are still living.

It has been my pleasure during the last few years to have some correspondence with some of these descendants now living in Oklahoma, Kansas and Ohio. Some of them have distinguished themselves in their various professions and vocations.

I have had the pleasure to know and be intimately acquainted with many of the Counts family, who live just across the line in Dickenson County, where at one time in my life I was well acquainted with and personally know many of its citizens. I recall to mind one Joshua Counts, who at one time was Clerk of the Court of that county, and who was widely known and a highly respected citizen of that county. Then there was that old veteran of the cross, Elijah S. Counts, a highly respected Elder in the Primitive Baptist Church, and who was held in high esteem by the people of his county, and had the confidence of all who knew him. He travelled over those mountain trails in his day and time horseback with his Bible and Hymn Book in his saddlebags, preaching the Gospel of the lowly Nazarene, helping his fellow man and doing good. I for one sometimes wonder if this land of our would not be better off today morally if we had some more of those old time ministers preaching "Old Time Religion." But we are now confronted with new conditions and new ideas. We have drifted far away from the traditions of our ancestors.

#### THE EARLY PIONEERS

When we take a glance back over the lives of

our ancestors and early settlers of this country—those old pioneers and patriarchs—and ponder over the many difficulties they had to overcome and the many obstacles that had to be surmounted in order to live and exist in a wild and undeveloped country with none of the modern conveniences that we of today enjoy—when we compare their day with the present, with all our modern improvements, we wonder within ourselves how they managed to exist.

But yet I am persuaded that in their way they were happy and contented. Their lives were as free as the air they breathed. They hunted where they wished and fished where they liked, and it was no man's business but theirs. There were no restrictive modern laws thrown around them to hamper them in their pursuit of happiness.

They had implicit confidence in their fellow man. Their word was their bond. They believed the Bible was literally true, and accepted it as the criterion to guide their pathway through life. Those old pioneers with their indomitable will-power, their sturdy and rugged character, blazed the way and set the milestones along life's highway that pointed to a higher civilization and the higher ideals of life which you and I today enjoy.

#### THE PAST AND THE PRESENT

When we take a glimpse back down through the halls of time, we find that the unfolding years have brought with them many changes, new ideas, new thoughts, and changed conditions. In the language of one of the old Biblical writers, "Former things have passed away." We reach the conclusion that we are living in a new age, that a new era is dawning upon us, that we are catching the vision of progress and are adapting ourselves to new and changed conditions. Today we are making advancements in every realm of thought. In every field of activity we are making new discoveries. I sometimes wonder what would be the amazement and emotions of some of those

old pioneers, if it were possible for them to come back from the shades of the past and view conditions of today as compared with that of their day and time; but let us of today live and act in the present, and with an earnest endeavor try to solve the problems now confronting us in the present day and age, and let the past be with the past.

Now, in conclusion, I want to say that I have thoroughly enjoyed my visit with you today—on this the first reunion of our family. It has truly been a pleasure to meet so many people and renew acquaintances of bygone days. Those who arranged and brought about this reunion have my hearty congratulations. And I trust it will be made an annual affair and kept alive through the years to come, and that the fires of friendship and relationship will be kept brightly burning.

I recall to my memory today an incident in my early school days, when I attended school at the old New Garden Academy at Honaker, Virginia—a school in its day and time that trained and prepared many young men and women for their life's work. On a final commencement day there was displayed before the graduating class a motto, quoted from the old Latin poet, Virgil, which ran in the Latin tongue, "Haec olim mememisse juvabit," (It will delight to remember this hereafter). And no doubt, as the passing years go cycling by, it will delight you to recall to memory this occasion, where you had the pleasure to meet again your friends and relatives, and rekindle the fires of friendship, whose flames I trust will never grow dim, but will long be a bright spot in your memory.