

## **The McCollum family of the Ford's Mountain area**

In 1824, Newman McCollum and his family came to the territory that was soon to become Fayette County. Newman was born in Chester County, South Carolina to Scotch-Irish emigrants. His father died in 1782 when Newman was a very young man and the only male child remaining, leaving him to care for his mother, sisters and the large Carolina plantation. Newman's mother, called "beloved Ann", inherited the plantation and Newman was the benefactor of "all other lands". He married young and his first wife died early in the marriage with no surviving children.

Henry then married an English lady, Elizabeth Guise, and together they parented four children: daughter Elizabeth, born in 1794, Henry, born in 1796, James K., born in 1800 and Joseph, born in 1802. Newman's wife, Elizabeth, is believed to have died not long after Joseph's birth.

Records show that in late 1823, Newman sold the land in Carolina and began the trek to Alabama bringing with him, his mother, his 29 year-old unmarried daughter, Elizabeth, his son James K. and family, and 21 year-old son Joseph, also unmarried. James K. was a teenager when he took Sarah "Sally" Carter as his wife. When they left South Carolina for the laborious trip to Alabama, twenty-three year-old James K. and Sally had two toddler-age daughters and an infant son. Also along on the trip were all the family slaves from the Carolina Plantation.

Newman's oldest son, Henry McCollum, and his wife Annie (Wilkes) and their young children chose to remain behind on their farm that abutted Annie's family land in Chester County, South Carolina. Henry came to Fayette County to visit his family (some say to check out the land before also relocating here) during the summer of 1826. He did not survive to return home. He and his young brother-in-law had traveled by horseback from Chester County and Henry died from appendicitis on the return trip. He was twenty-nine years old.

Newman and his son, James K, had acquired large land grants in Fayette County in 1824. Newman, James K and Joseph continued acquiring more government-issued land by purchase or land grants for the next 30 plus years. Newman and his sons built a grist mill and later a saw mill. The community that grew up around the mills was called McCollum's Mill until the property was purchased by the Hubbert family and renamed Hubbertville. James K also purchased several lots in the town of Fayette Court House which he later sold to his brother Joseph.

Newman built a large two-story plantation house on his property near the Sipsey River where he, Elizabeth, Joseph, and "beloved Ann" lived. Thirty year-old Elizabeth married George Washington Patterson and after the birth of their sixth and last child decided to move to Texas once that state had been established.

James K. and Sarah McCollum chose to settle on the banks of New River, a branch of the Sipsey. The family slaves processed and "burned the bricks for the foundation and chimneys of their home, "built without a nail in it" from timbers on McCollum land. They parented 9 children. Sarah was a very devout woman. James supposedly possessed many of the Scottish-Irish traditions and inherited the characteristics of his paternal grandfather, Henry – "appeal to him and you find an aristocrat; offend him and face the eternal warrior". His sentiment and benevolence toward the McCollum family slaves is said to be reminiscent of the old Scotch-Irish attitude.

James K. was considered a “well-to-do” planter and land speculator. However, his later endeavors showed his business decisions were not always based upon sound judgment and honesty. He was always heavily in debt. Some of this debt may be attributed to plain bad luck. One story told about James K. relates to his returning from a trip to Mississippi and finding the Sipsey River had flooded and ruined all his crops. It is said that he walked to the riverbank and removed his expensive new hat and flung it into the raging waters. He then looked toward heaven and shouted, “you’ve taken everything else, you might as well have this too”. Even his father, Newman, must have had little faith in James K.’s abilities since he specified in his will that his youngest son, Joseph, who was more conservative, was to be the executor of his estate.

James K. took great interest in Fayette County civic affairs from the time of his arrival in 1824 and became well known throughout the county. He entered enthusiastically into politics and was elected to serve in the Alabama House of Representatives for the 1830-1832 term. He ran for the Alabama Senate in 1834 but was defeated. After his defeat, he continued to be involved in politics and was reelected to the House of Representatives in 1849 and again in 1851. He was reported to have been a very aggressive voice for Fayette County. James K. was narrowly defeated in the election of 1853 and returned to presiding over the family plantations, grist mill and saw mill.

Newman McCollum died in November of 1857. Newman’s youngest son, Joseph, (who had married Elizabeth Roberts after the death of his grandmother “beloved” Ann in the early 1840’s) tried to probate the will in December of that year. Newman had been a very wealthy man and apparently a very benevolent man. His records showed numerous loans he had made that were never repaid. Because of the many assets which were owned jointly by James K., Joseph, and Newman, and because James K. had weighty mortgages on many of those assets, probating the will became an onerous job. James K. objected to many of the decisions of Joseph and of the court, even appealing some decisions to the Alabama Supreme Court. James K. eventually had to sell most of his assets to cover his debt to the estate. James K. died in 1872. The estate was finally settled in 1882, twenty-five years after Newman’s death. Joseph died five years later in 1887.

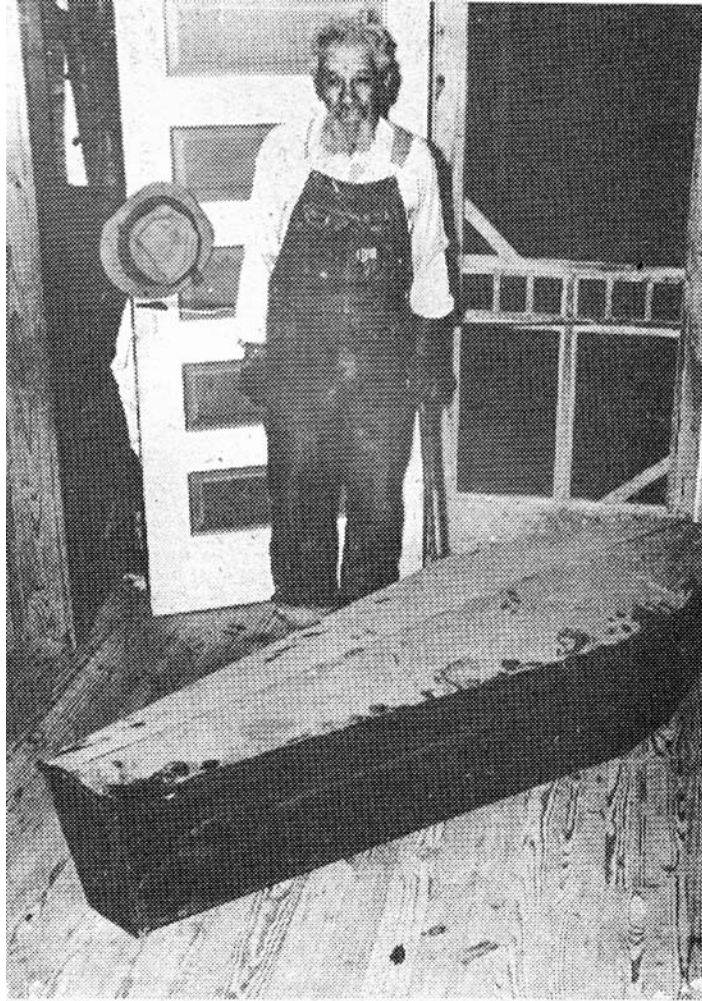
One cannot completely tell the McCollum story without including Perry “Sie” McCollum. Sie was a slave born in 1848 and was supposedly fathered by James K. All stories state that Sie was well loved and respected by all his white relatives and they by him. In an article printed in the Fayette Banner in the early 1940’s when Sie was well over 90 years of age, Sie told the story of being hanged by the Home Guards during the Civil War. The Home Guards believed that Sie, who was a young boy at the time, was feeding deserters thought to be hiding in the woods. (Among those deserters was probably Newman Theodore McCollum, son of James K., who hid from the Home Guards to keep from going into service. According to family legend, Newman Theodore finally joined the Confederacy near the end of the war and carried Sie with him.)

Sie said the Home Guards caught him and carried him to a large oak tree, put a rope around his neck and threw the rope over a limb of the tree. Then the Captain said he would give Sie one more chance to tell where the deserters were. When Sie didn’t say anything, they pulled the rope and jerked Sie into the air. Sie said he went whirling around and his tongue flopped out and he thought he was dead. But the soldiers decided that Sie didn’t know anything and they cut him down, “fo the breath leaked out”.

Sie also told of the night in 1866 when his master, James K. McCollum, burned the courthouse in Fayette Court House, supposedly to destroy records of his debts. Sie was a teenager when James K. McCollum, took him into town, gave him a pistol and told him to stand watch while he (James K.) burned the courthouse. Sie was then sent to Mississippi to hide out for a while. No charges were ever filed and Sie never told anyone about the incident until his later life.

As a young boy, Sie had been given to James K.'s daughter Leah Catherine who married Andrew McCaleb. Sie gained his freedom after the Civil War but like most of the McCollum slaves he chose to stay with the McCollum family. According to deeds in the possession of Bill McCollum, great-grandson of Sie, Sie "purchased" a large tract of land from Andrew and Leah McCaleb. Sie later purchased land from John and V. V. Box, accumulating about 400 acres of land. Sie married Nellie Tyre and they had 6 sons and 2 daughters. One of their sons was named James or Jim and one daughter was named Leah.

Fifteen years before his death, Sie went to a blacksmith shop and had himself measured for his coffin. Once the coffin was built, he brought it home in a wagon and placed it under his bed. The bed had belonged to James K. and according to Fred McCaleb many of the white McCollums tried to buy or bargain for that bed. Sie would pull the wooden coffin out and show visitors how he fit into it, saying the he was ready for the Master to call him home. Sometime after that, he purchased a tombstone and had his name and date of birth inscribed on it. The Master finally called Sie home in October of 1944. He was 96 years old.



*Information for this article was acquired from the "Hollingsworth-McCaleb Quarterly" published by Larry E. Whitehead and from Bill McCollum.*