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BYRD NANCE

Byrd Nance, school teacher, farmer, merchant, and post master, was born 28 June 1858 at Combs, Madison County, Arkansas, the son of George Washington Nance, Jr. and Mary Shasten, who were married 14 February 1845 near Petersburg, Illinois, by Samuel Smith, J.P.

By 1878, when Byrd was twenty years old, the family was living at Honey Grove, Fannin County, Texas, and Byrd left home to live with his brother, Frank Nance, at Hindsville, Arkansas. Frank had also left home in Texas to return to Arkansas. Frank, later a very successful merchant in Madison County, was teaching school at that time, and Byrd studied under him. Later Byrd went to school at Carrollton to Professor Watson who taught subscription school in the old church building which stood by the Carrollton Cemetery. After his study with Professor Watson, he taught school near Carrollton, where he married one of his students, Nancy Camelia Jenkins on 9 October 1883. Oddly enough, since she was the pupil, Nancy was a year older than Byrd.

Family history says Nancy was a beautiful girl, 5 ft. 6½ in. tall, dark auburn hair and clear skin. She was born 15 August 1856 in Cleveland (Bradley County), Tennessee, where her mother, Nancy (Whitehead) Jenkins, died when Nancy Camelia was a child.

Nancy's father, John Jenkins, brought his two daughters, Delilah Jane and Nancy Camelia, ages 6 and 4

respectively, to Arkansas about 1860. The family traveled by wagon train accompanied by John's parents, Thomas and Levetty Jenkins, John's brothers and sisters and a number of other people. (Thomas and Levetty were residents of Polk County, Tennessee in 1850, and the 1880 census listed them as residents of Boone County, Arkansas). On the trip Nancy suffered a very serious illness which the family called "Brain Fever." As a result of this illness, she lost the sight of one eye.

When Nancy and Byrd were married, she was living near Carrollton at the home of her aunt, Jane Jenkins Harper (Mrs. Jess Harper). A family story says that when Jane (John Jenkins' sister) was 15 years old and the family was living close to Carrollton, she took corn to Carrollton in a one mule cart to get it ground into meal for the family. Bush whackers attacked her and took her corn, cart and mule. Nancy (Jenkins) Nance often told how the family lived on wild greens in the spring after they came to Arkansas, and dug up the dirt floor of the smoke houses and boiled the dirt to get salt.

John Jenkins and his brother, Abe Jenkins, fought with the Confederate Army in the Civil War, listing their address as Carroll County, Arkansas. They both served in Co. A, John M. Harold's Regiment, Arkansas Cavalry, 1861-1865. John was wounded and was discharged 27 March 1865. Abe was discharged in April 1865.

After reaching Arkansas, John married Elizabeth Brown in Carroll County and had ten more children: Thomas Jefferson, b. ca 1862; Sarah, b. ca 1867; Tillman S., b. ca 1868; William A., b. ca 1870; Tilford D., b. ca 1872; Rhoda, b. ca 1874; Partelia, b. ca 1877; Mary who married Ragon Morris; Baxter; and Martha, who married Ragon Morris after Mary's death.

Byrd and Nancy moved to Batavia, Boone County, Arkansas ca 1884. Land records show that Byrd Nance bought a farm there from Francis Rea on 3 July 1885. Price of the farm was \$300.00.

Mr. Nance farmed, taught school, and later owned and operated a general mercantile store, all at Batavia.

On 9 November 1912, Nancy Camelia Nance died, leaving two children still at home, Doris aged 14, and Durward, aged 10. Grief for the loss of his wife, and unpaid bills by his customers, among other things, forced him into bankruptcy. After the loss of his store, the family moved to Alpena where Byrd became postmaster, serving in that capacity until his death on 25 July 1920. At the death of her mother, Doris took on the duties of housework, laundry and cooking for the family. When they moved to Alpena, Doris served as assistant postmaster also.

Doris remembers her father as a large man --

5 ft. 11 in. tall, weighed 235 pounds, had hazel brown eyes, grey hair and was very bald.

The Nances were members of the Methodist Church, but joined the Presbyterian church when one was built at Batavia. He was very conscientious -- very careful to be thoughtful and pay honest debts. Mottoes Byrd Nance lived by were: "My word is my bond," and "Think twice before you speak." He was quiet and very studious -- always taking courses of different kinds. He had a lot of medical books which he studied. ~~a lot~~. At one time he considered becoming a doctor, but family responsibilities and lack of money ended these thoughts.

After Doris married and was gone from home, Mr. Nance married a Mrs. Eva Cupp, resident of Kirksville, Missouri, on 18 March 1920. He died 25 July 1920 and is buried at Alpena cemetery.

Eight children, all born at Batavia, ~~were born~~ were born to Byrd and Nancy Nance: Grover Cleveland, b. 4 August 1884, m. Elsie Roberts; Ada Lee, m. Jim Jones; Jefferson Scott died when four months old; Leslye Mae, m. Louis O. Heintz; Jessie Esther, m. David Woodward; Doris Inez, b. 19 May 1898, m. Rue Whitaker; Durward Otis, b. 8 December 1900, d. 11 May 1938 in the Philippine Islands while serving in the U. S. Army; and John Roy, who died at the age of one year.

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Proven Nance lineage is: Zachariah Nance, Sr., m. Susannah Duke Sherman, both born in VA; Zachariah Nance, Jr., b. 5 May 1760 VA, d. 22 December 1835, m. 1785 Jane Wilkins in Virginia; George Washington Nance, Sr., b. 29 March 1798, VA, d. 20 March 1889, ILL., m. Elizabeth Martin in Kentucky; and George Washington Nance, Jr., b. 17 Aug 1824, Greensburg (Greene Co.) KY, d. 6 January 1910 at Batavia, Ark., m. 14 February 1845 in Menard County, Illinois to Mary Shasten.

Zachariah Nance, Jr. fought in the Revolutionary War, enlisting at the age of 16 and serving with George Washington at Valley Forge.

In 1846, George Washington Nance, Jr., enlisted in Capt. A. D. Wright's company of infantry, and went to the Mexican War. He was at the battles of Vera Cruz and Cerro Gordo, and received a sunstroke at one of the above mentioned places. After returning from Mexico, he married Mary H. Shasten, who was born in Illinois 13 April 1831. To this marriage were born nine children: Rebecca, wife of J. J. Morris; Frank; Byrd; Ellen, wife of John Atchley; Scott; Stamper, and three others who died before 1889, unmarried and names unknown. This family lived in Dallas County, Texas for seven years; moved to Madison County, Arkansas, locating at Combs near St. Paul; lived there until 1863, when they moved back to Illinois. In 1869 they returned to Madison County, Arkansas; in 1873 went to Greene County, Missouri for about a year; returning again to

then to Texas,
Madison County, and ~~was~~ ^{was} living in Illinois in 1889.
Later he moved again, this time to Fannin County,
Texas, where his wife, Mary, died on 21 January 1904
at the age of 74.

George lived for a time in an old soldiers
home near Petersburg, Illinois, then came to Batavia
to live with his son Byrd. He died in Batavia on
6 January 1910, and was taken by Byrd to Honey Grove,
Texas, to be buried beside his wife.

He was a farmer, carpenter and mechanic. It is
said he could make anything out of wood. He was also
a spinner of tall tales, entertaining all around with
his experiences in the war and stories from his past.

Mary Nance was a very religious woman. George
described her as being the best woman he ever knew.
George was converted at the age of 75, learned to
read and write, and memorized several chapters in the
Bible. He had 10 brothers and four sisters, all who
married and had large families.