

# the RUCKER FAMILY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

VOL. 25, NO. 3, DECEMBER 2014

## THE RUCKER COAT OF ARMS



Rucker

### Table of Contents

Amos Rucker ..... p. 1, 5-6

Benjamin C. Rucker..... p. 1-3

The Rucker Coat of Arms ..... p. 3-5

Wallace Morgan Rucker ..... p. 6-7

In Memoriam..... p. 7-8

Buying *Bridge Burner* ..... p. 8

Rucker Gap ..... p. 8-9

Rucker Park, Harlem ..... p. 10

## Amos Rucker of Elbert County, Georgia

Edited by Michael P. "Mike" Rucker

Amos went to war with his young master, Col. Alexander "Sandy" Rucker, of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Georgia Infantry. He was a body servant, at first showing prowess in the procurement of needed supplies when no one else could. There was always a chicken cooking on Colonel Rucker's campfire, no matter how scant the provisions were. Amos did not remain a body servant, however. Soon he found himself in the thick of battle. He was brave soldier, as he picked up the bayoneted musket of a dead member of his unit and charged the enemy line. He continued performing as a combat soldier for the remainder of the war. Attached to the staff of Gen. Patrick Cleburne, he became the servant of General Clerburne's first cousin, D. C. J. Clerburne. Amos Rucker's duty was to call the roll

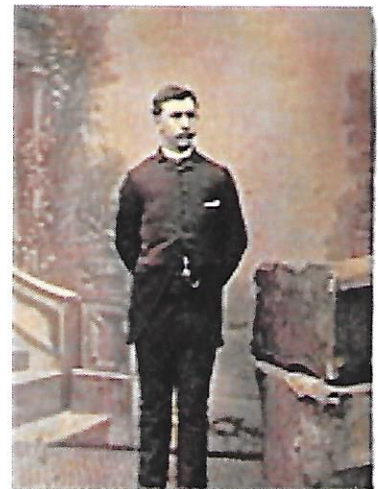
*Continued on page 5*

## Benjamin C. Rucker and the Gold Rush

by Jean Wood Brydon

By the mid-1880s, the California Gold Rush was long since past its prime, but men still continued to dig for golden treasure. One of these was when Benjamin Chappellear Rucker went from Virginia to San Francisco to seek his fortune.

Benjamin Chappellear Rucker was born 30 May 1865, Pleasant View, Amherst Co., Virginia to William Ambrose Rucker and Annie Chappellear. He was the



Benjamin Chappellear Rucker

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**Editor:**

**Jean "Jeannie" W. Brydon**

304 Charmian Road  
Richmond, VA 23226-1705  
1-804-358-3185  
rucker10@comcast.net  
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**Assistant Editor:**

**Bill Smith**

wsmith0128@ca.rr.com

**Reporter: Mike Rucker**

mikruc@aol.com

**President:**

**Christopher Rucker**

christopherrucker@msn.com

Annual Membership  
\$15.00 individual

Please send dues to

**Alice Rucker**

**Treasurer**

13331 Gridley Street  
Sylmar, CA 91342-4529  
alicerucker@aliruc@ca.rr.com

*Please notify Alice about a  
change of address*

**RFS Board Members**

Jeannie Brydon  
Anne Denton  
Mary Ann Laurence  
Alice Rucker  
Christopher Rucker  
Mike Rucker  
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Karen van der Werf

brother of Studie Rucker Wood (my grandmother) and Lillian Eliza Rucker (Marathon runner and *Newsletter* contributor Mike Rucker's grandmother), and Dana Henry Rucker (Rucker Family Society President Chris Rucker's great-grandfather).

His parents, William Ambrose Rucker (1840-1922) and Annie Chappellear (1838-1922), were married 28 Nov 1862 in Fauquier Co., Virginia after 19 months of war. One story that my mother used to tell was William and Annie were in her parents' parlor waiting to be married when a group of Yankees rode by when they noticed that there were many horses and carriages in front of the Chappellear home. They rode in to investigate. The guests saw the Yankees coming and hurried Rucker, who was still dressed in his Confederate uniform, out the back door. The wedding had to take place another time. In addition, because of the shortage of metals the couple had no wedding band to sanctify their marriage.

William Ambrose Rucker, who was in the Amherst County Mounted Rangers, Company E, 2nd Regiment Cavalry, took his bride to his parents' home in Amherst Co. which was far away from the battles taking place in northern Virginia. After the War was over, the Ruckers moved back to Fauquier Co., Virginia to "Ridgeville," a home that his father-in-law, Benjamin Chap-

pelear, purchased for them adjoining his own. Unfortunately, I do not know what the house looked like when completed as no photo of the house survives. When I visited Ridgeville in the early 1980s and I was told that only the service wing was still standing and it was too dilapidated to enter. William and Annie's son, Bayard Ambrose Rucker inherited the house and land and about 1920 built a new home across the road called "Hill Crest." This home is still lived in by his granddaughters Penny and Connie Rucker .

**California, here I come!**

Benjamin Chappellear Rucker, the second oldest of ten children, was named for his mother's father, Benjamin Chappellear. While living at "Ridgeville," Ben decided that he didn't want to be a farmer, and he was more interested in adventure. So at age 20 or 21, he travelled by Continental Railroad to San Francisco in the mid-1880s. I had always heard that he went to California to pan for gold. I talked to his son, Bayard while visiting in San Francisco, and found the true story. His son told me that Ben ran a supply cart selling much needed provisions to mining outposts from central California to Oregon. He probably made more money doing that than the majority of the miners who found little or no gold.

Still later, Benjamin ran a wholesale grocery store. He was living

in San Francisco during the Great Earthquake of 1906. Not wanting to experience another such event, he moved across the Bay to Berkeley, California. When he died in 1929, his son, Bayard, took over his grocery store.

### Son Claudie

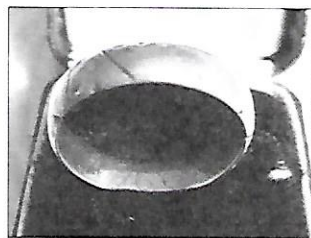
Benjamin married first on March 10, 1888, Pauline Stackhouse and nine months later, on December 17, 1888, their son Claude<sup>8</sup> "Claudie" W. Rucker was born. Unfortunately, Pauline died less than a year after Claudie's birth, on June 8, 1889 in San Francisco. This left Ben with their six-month-old son, who Ben felt he was not able to care for since he had to run his supply cart. His solution was to send the child back to Fauquier Co., Virginia to be raised by his parents. When Claudie was a teenager, he moved to Richmond to live with his aunt and uncle, William P. and Sudie Rucker Wood and work at their family business, T. W. Wood & Sons, Seedsmen. By 1920, Claudie had become "mentally ill" and was placed in Western State Mental Hospital in Staunton, Virginia. As he grew older, he was moved to Piedmont Geriatric Hospital, Burkeville, Nottoway Co., Virginia where he eventually died after 1940, never again having seen his father. My aunt, Lil Wood, told me about Claudie, where he was, and that, eventually, I would be his caretaker.

Benjamin married second Ozeita

Standiford, (1879-1941), the daughter of H. Andrew and Calista (Adams) Standiford. Ben and Ozeita had two children: a girl, Virginia<sup>8</sup> Standiford Rucker (b. May 2, 1902 in CA-d. Feb 5, 1992 in CA); and a boy, Bayard<sup>8</sup> Chappelear Rucker (b. May 13, 1907 in CA-d. May 23, 2000 in CA). Neither of these children left descendants (though Bayard was married to Dorothy Collins according to his obituary that appeared in the RFS *Newsletter*, Vol. 11, No. 2) and they never met their half-brother, Claudie. Benjamin Chappelear Rucker and who died in Alameda Co., California on August of 1929.

### The Gold Nugget

My mother told another story about this family. Benjamin sent home a gold nugget to his mother, Annie Chappelear Rucker for caring for his son. I don't know whether he purchased the nugget or someone gave it to him for payment of goods. Anyway, the nugget was formed into a wedding band for Annie, since she had never received a ring at her marriage. The ring, which is engraved "AC" inside, is now in my possession, having passed to her daughter, Sudie Rucker



Annie C. Rucker's Wedding Band

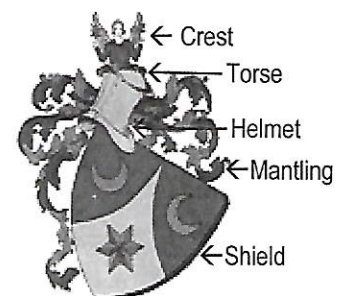
Wood, then to her granddaughter, Jean Wood Brydon, and then to me, her great-granddaughter. I'm sure the ring came to Sudie for caring for her mother in the last few years of her life.

Rucker lineages of Benjamin<sup>7</sup> Chappelear Rucker: (line 1) William<sup>6</sup> Ambrose, William<sup>5</sup> Ballenger, George<sup>4</sup>, John<sup>3</sup>, John<sup>2</sup>, Peter<sup>1</sup> and (line 2) Wm. B.'s wife Mary<sup>6</sup> Ann Dawson Rucker, Ambrose<sup>5</sup>, Reuben<sup>4</sup>, Ambrose<sup>3</sup>, John<sup>2</sup>, Peter<sup>1</sup>.

\*\*\*\*\*

### The Rucker Coat of Arms

by Bill Smith



Rucker

Before we go any further, there is no single, unique Rucker coat of arms. Sad, but true. There are in fact several, if not many Rucker coats of arms. Better news? Well not necessarily. For some reason, we Americans have a special fascination for royalty, aristocracy and their coats of arms, and many current living Americans seem to have a quest to discover if any of *their* ancestors were armigers (bearers of arms). Before I get myself in too deep too soon, let's analyze the coat of arms on the back of

our newsletter.

There are actually five different components to this drawing. First is the *crest*. The word crest should *not* be used to describe the whole *achievement* (the complete coat of arms). “Our” crest is an angel holding two six-pointed stars. In heraldry, these stars are known as gold six-pointed mullets. Many of the images of this Rucker coat of arms do not include a crest and just have the helmet resting directly on the shield. However, it is very common for German arms to include a crest. Interestingly, the crest does not rest directly on the helmet, but rests on the second element, known as the *torse*, or a kind of twisted cloth in the same colors as the shield and the mantling, which in this case blue and gold.

Next element is the helmet. This type of helmet indicates that the original bearer of the arms was a knight. This rule is not universal, and our helmet appears to be a form of jousting helmet.

The fourth element is the mantling and is always in the two primary colors of the shield (blue, gold and/or white/silver). Originally mantling was a simple cloak to protect the knight, but over time it became what we see today, something akin to an overgrown plant.

Last is the *shield* which would have originally been made of light-weight wood and covered in leather, then overlain with

canvas and sized with glue and white chalk on which the *charges* (animals, symbols, etc.) were painted. The shields used in modern heraldry have several distinct shapes and this one is a Medieval form known as *heater-shaped*.

The basic coloration of the shield is blue and silver/white on a tierced shield (divided into thirds). The objects on the shield, the as charges, are two golden crescent moons and a golden six-pointed mullet. One of the golden moons has its “horns” pointing to the left and the other with the horns pointing to the right.

Now that we have described the full achievement of the Rucker coat of arms, we need to answer the question of who can use it as their own? Like everything else associated with heraldry, there is no single, easy answer. There is no governmental agency granting new arms and governing the legal use of coats of arms in the United States, but individuals have been known to copyright coats of arms. United States citizens can copyright visual arts and logos, and a coat of arms falls into those categories. However, United States citizens cannot use or copyright a coat of arms granted by an official governmental agency from another country (and these agencies have very different rules governing which family members can use a coat of arms in an original form

or with minor differences). Many European nations have organizations that govern their citizens’ right to bear a coat of arms, including Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands (for the nobility only), Norway, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom (with separate heralds for England and Scotland). As a side note, though my English ancestors didn’t bear arms, I can apply to the King of Spain since California was once part of the Spanish Empire, and (for a price) I could acquire a perfectly legal, “inheritable” coat of arms specifically designed for me. This would apply to anyone born in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada and Texas as well.

Since I doubt that the coat of arms we use on our newsletter has a person using it as his or her personal coat of arms, and since we are not using it to make a profit, I suspect we are not breaking any laws. If we knew where Peter Rucker (or was that Peter Rucker?) was born, and when, we might be able to actually see if he had the right to “bear arms.” Since a very small proportion of immigrants to colonial North America had this right, I’d bet against Peter using the attractive arms we have on the last page of each issue – but we just don’t know.

One further, and final, “rant” has to do with the supposed origins of the surname Rucker. Many

times Medieval individuals with names exactly or similar to Rucker are mentioned in documents that describe “the” Rucker coat of arms, as if these good folks are ancestors of “our” Peter Rucker. They may be, then again, they are more than likely not. Until a straight line can be drawn between Peter Rucker and his European ancestors, we just cannot assume the route his surname has taken to reach us in the early 21st century.

As a side note, the coat of arms that is printed on the previous page and on page 10 was painted by Lillian Lee Wood, a daughter of Sudie Rucker Wood. Lil, Jeannie’s aunt, was an artist and studied in New York City.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Amos Rucker

*Continued from page 1*

after each battle, and he committed to memory the entire company. But Amos was not merely a roll caller. Before the surrender, he received a severe wound to his left breast, and a leg wound left him permanently crippled.

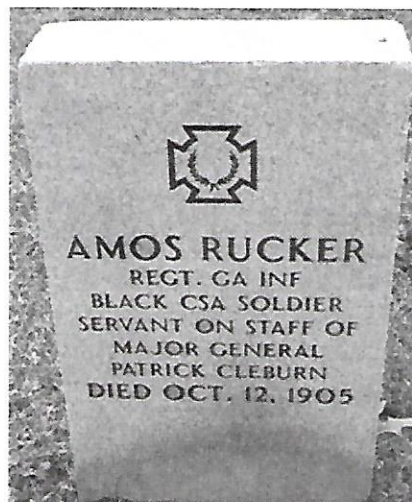
After the war Amos joined the W. H. T. Walker Camp U.C.V. (United Confederate Veterans) in Atlanta. On the second Monday of each month, he faithfully attended the camp’s meetings at 102 Forsyth Street. Proud to show his excellent memory, he often recited the names of every member of his old company, from “A to Z.” It is said that he



Amos Rucker (d. 1905)

solemnly added after each name “here” or “dead.”

Amos always said that “My folks always gave me everything I want.” It was true. The members of the camp provided well for Amos, even helping him to acquire a house on the west side of Atlanta. His attorney for the real estate transaction and for the settlement of his estate, as well as for the care of his dear wife, Martha, was John M. Slaton, a member of the John B. Gordon Camp #46, Sons of the Confederate Veterans [and later a governor of Georgia]. Old Amos was a fixture at veterans’ meetings; he never missed one until just before his death, when he



sent a message to the members: “Give my love to the boys.”

In September 1905, Amos Rucker appeared in court to testify against a man named Pease who during the previous August had spread the rumor that Rucker had died, and Pease was collecting cash for Rucker’s funeral, only to be used for Pease’s own gain. Pease was found guilty and was sentenced to thirty days in the stockade. Sadly, Rucker would die less than two months after the scam was perpetrated.

Amos Rucker died on October 10 or 12, 1905, which brought universal sorrow to Atlanta. His body lay in state, while hundreds of Atlantans representing many of the best families if the city silently paid their respects. The members of Camp Walker took care of all funeral expenses and bought a plot for Rucker and his wife at Southview Cemetery, where today, members of the Martin Luther King family are buried. Funeral services were conducted by Clement A. Evans of Atlanta, Confederate General and U.C.V. Commander-in-Chief. Amos’s pallbearers were Gov. Allen D. Candler, Gen A.J. West, Judge William Lowndes Calhoun, Jr., ex-Postmaster Amos Fox, Frank A. Hilburn, Commander of Camp Walker, J. Sid Holland and R. S. Oxburne, Confederate Veterans all.

An article in *Confederate Veteran* related to the sadness: “Very tenderly they carried the old vet-

eran to his grave, clothed in his uniform of gray and wrapped in a Confederate flag, a grave made beautiful by flowers from his comrades and friends, among which a large design from the Daughters of the Confederacy was conspicuous in its red and white." The Rev. Dr. T.P. Cleveland led the prayer, and several of Amos's favorite songs were sung. Just before the casket was lowered into the ground, Capt. William "Tip" Harrison read a poem entitled "When Rucker Called the Roll." There was not a dry eye in the place.

Today, the fine stone placed in 1909 by the U.C.V. is gone and the grave of the most beloved of black veterans is barren. Both Amos and his dear wife Martha lie side-by-side, almost forgotten. Only the sexton's map identifies the spot. It is as if someone did not want us to know about poor old Amos.

In fact, it may well be that there are hundreds of similar stories, now lost. It is our duty, however, to bring them to light. Our southern ancestors were as loyal and as loving as any ever were, black or white. The stories of "Ten Cent Bill" Yopp and Amos Rucker are clear reminders. And we will not forget.

The Rucker lineage of "Sandy" Rucker is: Alexander<sup>6</sup> Randolph "Sandy" Rucker, Joseph<sup>5</sup>, John<sup>4</sup>, Cornelius<sup>3</sup>, Thomas<sup>2</sup>, Peter<sup>1</sup>.

Mike's article is primarily extracted from *Forgotten Confed-*

*erates: An Anthology About Black Southerners, Vol. 14 (Journal of Confederate History Series)* Stackpole Books 1997, editors Charles K. Barrow, J. H. Segars and R. B. Rosenberg. The book is available on Amazon.com.

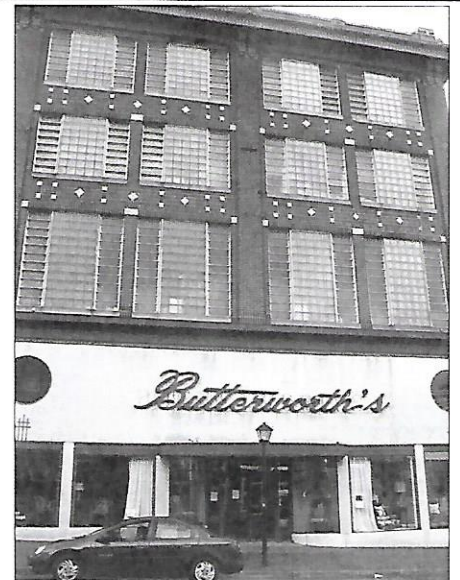
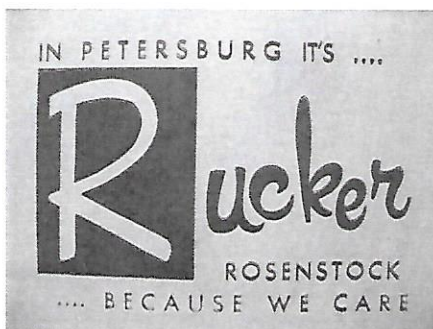
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**Wallace Morgan Rucker**  
**Prominent Petersburg, VA**  
**Businessman**  
 by Michael P. "Mike" Rucker



Wallace Morgan Rucker (1863-1938)

Wallace Morgan Rucker came to Petersburg from his rural home in Amelia County, Virginia at age eighteen and found his first job as a clerk in a local grocery store and eventually rose to become one of the most significant businessmen in the area.



Though it says Butterworth's, it began as Rucker Rosenstock in downtown Petersburg after the fire of 1899

He founded Rucker-Rosenstock Company, Petersburg's largest department store with his younger half-brother J[ohn] Alfred Rucker (1870-1963). Since 2003, the building where the department store began, is currently repurposed into various shops, under the name "The Art Center."

Wallace Rucker was president of Titmus Optical Company (a company still in operation today under the name UVEX by Honeywell), vice president of Citizens National Bank and president of the Petersburg Chamber of Commerce. His charitable contributions included chairmanship of the Petersburg Hospital. He was one of the most dominant forces in the city's civic life as a member of the Petersburg City Council and a member of the Petersburg School Board. Wallace Morgan Rucker was born March 22, 1863 in Amelia

Co., Virginia, the son of John Harvey and Martha M. (Hendrick) Rucker. He was not living with his parents in the 1870 census, but with the Thomas and Jane Pollard family of Leigh, Amelia Co., Virginia. He married for the first time on July 12, 1892 to Laura Eleanor Burton (1871-1893), the daughter of Daniel E. and Laura Burton. Wallace and Laura had a girl on June 12, 1893, who died October 24, 1893 at age 4 months and 12 days. Sadly, her mother died only 9 days after her daughter's birth. The 1900 census, lists the 38 year old widowed Wallace Rucker as a boarder, living in the same home with 83 year old Jane Pollard. Wallace is listed as a merchant in the cemetery industry, and living in Petersburg, Virginia. Wallace had married for a second time in 1904, and so the 1920 census lists him and his wife, Eva B. Cook (1876-1951—who was the daughter of Robert A. and Mary Cook) and Wallace and Eva's son John Alfred Rucker II (1911-1949) living together. Wallace Morgan Rucker died August 15, 1938 in Petersburg. Wallace, his daughter and both his wives are buried in Blandford Cemetery, Petersburg City, Virginia.

An interesting remembrance by RFS member Harvey Rucker, Wallace's grandnephew, is that as a child his great-uncle would always give him a fifty cent piece each time they saw one another.

Wallace Morgan Rucker's Rucker lineage is: Wallace<sup>6</sup> Morgan Rucker, John<sup>5</sup> Harvey, Pleasant<sup>4</sup>, Joshua<sup>3</sup>, William<sup>2</sup>, Peter<sup>1</sup>.

\* \* \* \* \*

## In Memoriam

**Charles Pickett**, 77, died August 25, 2014 at his home in Des Moines. Charles was born November 3, 1936 in Des Moines, Iowa to Cecil and Thelma (Rucker) Pickett. He was a graduate of East High School in Des Moines. On February 8, 1954 he married Sally Lou Stout (1936-2009), the daughter of Jackson and Stella Stout. Charles worked for the Iowa DOT for 34 years before retiring in 2000. He was a Boy Scout leader and enjoyed the being outdoors, a love he shared with his family. He enjoyed traveling with his wife and visiting zoos across the United States.

He is survived by his children: Gary (Alona) of Altoona, Burle (Cindy Lou) of Urbandale, Charles, Jr. (Karen) of Urbandale, Shelley (Steve) of Thayer; his grandchildren: Stephanie, Erica, Terry, Jr., Nick, Shannon, Krystal, Chelsea, Chani, Kitana; his great grandchildren: Jeremiah, Isabella, Ryan, Mason, Aubrey, Emery, Brecken; and his siblings: Donna, Robert and Ron. Charles was preceded in death by his wife, Sally, and his siblings, Shirley and Sandy.

Charles Pickett's Rucker lineage is: Charles<sup>4</sup> Pickett, Thelma<sup>3</sup> Ar-

lene Rucker, Reuben<sup>2</sup> Burton, Reuben<sup>1</sup> Sterling (and possibly Isaac<sup>E</sup>, Isaac<sup>D</sup>, Ambrose<sup>C</sup>, John<sup>B</sup>, Peter<sup>A</sup>).

**Hilda Penn Hines**, 97 died on February 21, 2013 in Greensboro, North Carolina. Hilda was born on January 4, 1916, in Madison, NC, the daughter of Howard Leath Penn and Hilda Wall Penn. She graduated from Madison High School and attended Salem College, Winston-Salem, NC. She moved to Greensboro in 1935 and the following year married Walter Andrew "Bynum" Hines, Jr. (1910-1977).

Hilda was a long-time member of First Presbyterian Church in Greensboro, where she taught Sunday School, and served as Executive Secretary for Dr. John A. Redhead and Dr. Joe Mullin, pastors of Greensboro First Presbyterian. She was a past member of the Pursers Book Club and of the Guilford Battle Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution.

Hilda is survived by her daughter, Hilda Penn "Penny" Cridlebaugh of High Point, SC, and son, Walter Andrew "Andy" Hines and his wife Nancy of Greensboro; her grandchildren, Walter Andrew Hines, IV of Mullins, SC, Natalie Penn Cridlebaugh of Newport Beach, CA, and Cameron Cridlebaugh, III and his wife, Nicole of High Point; and her great-grandchildren, Timothy and

Cameron Kelley, Tilman, Rowan and Emily Cridlebaugh, and a nephew, Ed Hines and family of Greensboro.

In addition to her parents and husband, Hilda was predeceased by her son-in-law, Cameron Cridlebaugh, Jr. of High Point.

Hilda Penn Hines' Rucker lineage is: Hilda<sup>8</sup> Wall Penn, Howard<sup>8</sup> L., Catherine<sup>7</sup> Mundy "Kate" Rucker, George<sup>6</sup> H. M., Ambrose<sup>5</sup>, Reuben<sup>4</sup>, Ambrose<sup>3</sup>, John<sup>2</sup>, Peter<sup>1</sup>.

**John Willson Rucker**, age 100, died September 6, 2013. Mr. Rucker was born in Nashville, Tennessee on July 2, 1913, to John Edmondson and Mabel Willson Rucker. He married Ruth Cunningham on September 29, 1934. John and Ruth had six children and three foster children, 17 grandchildren, 32 great-grandchildren, and three great-great-grandchildren. John's wife of 72 years, Ruth, died January 16, 2007. They are survived by their children John (Mae) Rucker Jr., Edmond (Joyce) Rucker, Thomas Rucker (Regina) Rucker, Daniel (Amy) Rucker; Mary Carol (Wayne) Estes. Evelyn (Ron) McFarland, and foster son Anthony Schiano. John was preceded in death by his sister, Enola Rucker Speer, and foster daughters Letha Schiano and Mary Ruth Gamon.

After earning an associate's degree from David Lipscomb College in 1933 he began a 45 year career working for Neuhoff

Packing Company, where he was the Industrial Relations Manager for 20 years. He retired in 1978.

Mr. Rucker was a long time member of the Otter Creek Church of Christ, and worked for the church missions program in Korea, helping to start the Korean Christian College. He helped his wife begin and build the Otter Creek Kindergarten and Pre-school.

John W. Rucker's Rucker lineage is: John Willson<sup>8</sup> Rucker, John Edmondson<sup>7</sup>, Benjamin<sup>6</sup>, Joseph Burrus<sup>5</sup>, James<sup>4</sup>, Benjamin<sup>3</sup>, John<sup>2</sup>, Peter<sup>1</sup>.

**George Rucker Elliott**, age 100, died April 19, 2013, in Cedar Rapids. Iowa, after a short illness. He was born March 7, 1913 in Keytesville, Missouri to Warren Theophilus and Gertrude Watts (Rucker) Elliott. He attended Westminster College in Fulton, MO. He earned his Master's Degree in Journalism from the University of Missouri. He then moved to Kansas City where he was the business manager for Woolf Brother's Clothing Stores until he retired in 1980. He also taught business classes at Rockhurst College in Kansas City, MO. He married Betty Ballard on February 14, 1945 in Kansas City, and moved to Cedar Rapids in 2004 to be near their family.

He is survived by his daughter Carole (David) McFarland, granddaughter Brandis McFarland Negrin and his two great-

grandchildren, JJ and Grace all of Cedar Rapids.

George's Rucker Lineage is: George<sup>8</sup> Rucker Elliott, Gertrude<sup>7</sup> Watts Rucker, Jackson<sup>6</sup> Sterling, Minor<sup>5</sup> Jackson, Minor<sup>4</sup>, Joel<sup>4</sup>, John<sup>3</sup>, Thomas<sup>2</sup>, Peter<sup>1</sup>.

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### **How to Purchase Bridge Burner**

We are extremely remiss in not letting readers know to purchase a copy of Mike Rucker's book *Bridge Burners*, discussed in the last issue of the *Newsletter*, you may contact Mike at his email address mikruc@aol.com or on the Internet from the publisher, West Virginia Book Company. The price is \$29.95 from either source although WV Book Co. will accept credit card payments while Mike requires a check.

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### **RUCKER PLACE**

#### **Traversing Rucker Gap An Adventure**

**by Michael P. "Mike" Rucker**

I had noticed the name "Rucker Gap" on various maps of Virginia and West Virginia for several years. It is located on the state line connecting Greenbrier County, WV and Allegheny County, VA.

I wondered for whom it was named and how the area might appear. So, on a bright and beautiful November morning I ap-



peared at the Greenbrier Historical Society headquarters in Lewisburg, West Virginia to ask for assistance concerning this matter. The helpful docents there promptly found that James Rucker had patented 400 acres of land near the gap in 1786.



Rucker Gap Area

They provided me with a copy of the 1786 survey description by which James Rucker acquired the land. They also gave me a topographical map of the area: I was to drive from White Sulphur Springs to Neola along WV Route 82, then turn right onto Greenbrier County Route 14 toward Rucker Gap. I passed by Route 14 because it was not marked as “Route 14” but only with a directional sign to “Mongahela Recreational Area.” I finally guessed that this was the correct road and followed it. After a few miles there was a fork in the road with a sign that Route 14 continued to the left for the “Sherwood Lake Recreation Area” and to the right a sign to Rucker Gap – with no apparent route number.

Somewhat relieved that I was on the correct road I proceeded. Promptly the road became an

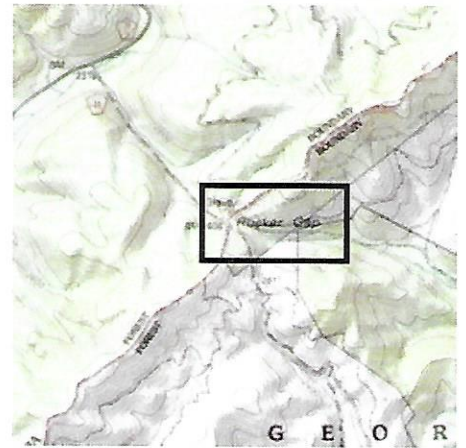
unpaved single lane trail. Had there been a place to turn around I would have done so. But it was too late. The rough road beat my car up terribly as I bounced along. The road went upward and more severely upward until at last it was only a single unmaintained lane hanging on the side of the mountain with a vertical drop of several hundred feet on the left. I was actually frightened – suppose the road would suddenly end? What if I met another vehicle? Would my remains be found if my vehicle tumbled over the precipice?

Finally, the trail reached the crest of the Alleghenies and started down the other side. I was relieved even though the road was still rough and unmaintained – and even more curvy. At length I came to a junction with a paved road and found it marked as Allegheny County (VA) 661. There is no state line marker on Rucker Gap Road!

I was left wondering: why would James Rucker have chosen such a rugged place as Rucker Gap to claim his land? Just a few miles further west in the valley the land is fertile and farmable. By examining maps later and referring to the survey plat I determined that his land was, indeed, along Anthony Creek which parallels Route 82 – good fertile land!

It would probably be impossible today to precisely identify the 400 acres granted him. The land

was along “Anthonies [sic] Creek,” but all the corner markers were trees of various species: e.g. “--- thence N67W20 to 2 sugar trees on the creek, thence N23W17 to 2 Hickories and White Oak ---”, etc. The folks at Greenbrier Historical Society informed me that this area had a thriving timber industry in the early 1800’s. I do not intend to try to locate the exact location of his land. Those trees are all long gone.



Rucker Gap from USGS Topographical Map

**Map of Rucker Gap Area**  
***Rucker Gap: N37.56 W80.00;***  
***Elevation 2605 feet.***

Note: Anthony Creek (area formerly part of James Rucker’s land) in upper left hand corner of the map.

On the Virginia side maps label the road through the gap as a “jeep road.”

In both states’ maps indicate that the road through the Rucker Gap is “Closed Winters.”

The valley on the Virginia side is labeled “Rucker Hollow.”



## Rucker Park

Arguably the most famous piece of Rucker-named real estate is "Rucker Park" or the Holcombe Rucker Basketball Courts in the Harlem neighborhood of Manhattan at 155th Street and Frederick Douglas Boulevard.

Holcombe Llewellyn Rucker (March 2, 1926 – March 24, 1965) was a playground director in Harlem for the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation from 1948 to 1964. He founded the New York City pro-am basketball tournament, that still bears his name and is the namesake of this now world-famous basketball court.

Rucker, who grew up in Manhattan, started the tournament in 1947 at a playground. He insisted that education be a fundamental part of the Rucker League, in keeping with its motto — "Each one, teach one." Through his efforts, over 700 individuals were able to obtain basketball scholarships to help finance their education.

The tournament grew into the stuff of legend in the 1960s, when many NBA stars such as Wilt Chamberlain participated.

Rucker attended City College of New York and graduated in 1962 with a degree in Education. He went on to teach English at J.H.S. 139 before he died of cancer in 1965 at age 38. He was the son of Holcombe V. and Clara Rucker.

Rucker's basketball tournament had moved to its current location in 1965 likely making Rucker Park the most famous street court in the world. 1974 the city renamed the playground, Holcombe Rucker Playground.

## The RUCKER family SOCIETY



Rucker

Jeannie Brydon  
304 Charmian Rd  
Richmond, VA 23226-1705

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

SANTA CLARITA, CA 913

10 FEB 2015 PM 3 L



First Class Mail

627 2016  
Dr. Christopher D. Rucker  
329 Farm Lake Road  
Boiling Springs, SC 29316 6403

29316540329

