

Walking for Ransom

Nancy

Nancy Elizabeth Hurst was born in Wythe County Virginia in 1797. In 1806 Her parents, Thomas Hurst and his wife Sylvia Breeding, brought their family to a section of Claiborne County, Tennessee, called Big Springs, later known as Springdale. They bought land on Tye's Branch.¹ Big Springs was the site of the Big Springs Primitive Baptist Church – the oldest house of worship in Tennessee – where Nancy's father, her brother, and her nephew were all moderators for periods of time. Her parents are buried there, though the markers have eroded and become indecipherable.



Big Springs Primitive Baptist Church.

The connection of our Payne Family to this historic church, is through our Hurst and Day ancestors who are buried beneath these disappearing stones.

Nancy was twenty in 1817 when she married John Day, a Springdale farmer. They had eight children over the next twenty years, ending with my great-grandmother, Elizabeth.

<i>The children of...</i> John Ransom Day (b.1794) <i>and</i> Nancy Elizabeth Hurst (b. 1797)							
Ransom 1818	Ollie 1822	Eliza 1823	Sallie 1826	Nancy Jane 1828	Lucinda 1832	John D 1834	Elizabeth 1838

John Day, my great-grandfather, died in 1842,² leaving Nancy to a long widowhood – she never remarried.

¹ Tye's Branch is near the Springdale end of Lone Mountain Road where our "Uncle Eli" Breeding lived with his mother, our "Aunt Doll" Breeding. This is most likely a part of that land.

² I have heard he was shot, but have found no evidence of his cause of death. It does appear he died suddenly.

Nancy's youngest son, John D. Day, married in 1855, and, as was customary for youngest sons in those days, he brought his wife, Martha Bartlett, to live in the family home with Nancy. Ten months later they presented Nancy with a new grandson, Ransom L. Day.

Nancy's joy was probably short-lived. When Ransom was just a few months old, John and Martha, joined his two oldest sisters, Ollie Ward, and Eliza Hurst, and several others from their extended family of Hursts and Breedings, to look for a new start in Webster County Missouri.



On today's roads, it is a 625-mile, 10-hour journey from Springdale to Webster County. Nancy had already buried two of her children. It must have been hard for her to have three more go to live so far away.

But this was not the worst of it for Nancy. In 1859, she received word that John and Martha had both died, perhaps on the same day, but, certainly within a short time of each other. Whatever the case, they left three year-old Ransom, an orphan.



Death came far too frequently to young people in those days. It was commonplace for siblings to rear nieces and nephews along with their own children. Since John's two sisters were living near him, it seems one of them would have raised young Ransom. Perhaps it was because Nancy had bonded with Ransom in his early months, or perhaps it was because Ransom was all Nancy would ever have left of her son, John, that she, a 62-year-old grief-stricken grandmother, did such an unbelievable thing ...

Nancy walked to Missouri for Ransom.

And then she walked back.

With a four year-old.



Nancy and Ransom

Nancy's journey to Missouri and back would have taken at least a year. With John and Martha dying in mid-June, Nancy would have left in July with plenty time to have reached Webster County before snowfall. She would have over-wintered with her daughters in Webster, and then started back to Tennessee in late spring after the thaw. The trip back with little Ransom would have taken longer, but the seasons were in their favor.

I reckon that Nancy and Ransom would have arrived back to Springdale by early fall of 1860, probably in time to welcome Nancy's new granddaughter, Martha Jane Burdine, who was born in October. Elizabeth, had married Samuel Burdine from Russell County, Virginia. They set up housekeeping in Springdale on land Samuel's mother had inherited from her father and then given to her sons.

During the years prior to and during Nancy's walk, of course, tensions had been simmering throughout the country, erupting into a full boil with the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861. Tennesseans were so evenly divided in their loyalties that theirs was the last state to declare for the Confederacy. But declare, it did. In 1863 when Nancy's son-in-law, Samuel, received a conscription notice from the Confederate Army, he slipped away to Nashville to enlist in the Union Army instead.

Samuel never returned. He died of dysentery in a Union Hospital in Nashville in early 1864.³

Later, with the Confederate Army headquartered near Tazewell, and Union sympathizers being treated with suspicion, Elizabeth Burdine began to feel uneasy. She took Martha Jane and fled to the relatively safer home of Samuel's parents in Russell County, Virginia.

It was there in Russell County that Elizabeth met a neighbor of the Burdines, young Anderson Greene Payne. He was only seventeen, and was recovering from shotgun wounds to both knees that he had sustained in 1865 in the same incident in which his father, Hiram Payne, had been killed. Despite being ten years her junior and crippled for life, Anderson married Elizabeth Day Burdine in 1866; thus, connecting our family, by blood, to the valiant Nancy Day.

Anderson and Elizabeth had two daughters together, Mollie and Maggie, before they packed them up along with half-sister, Martha Jane, and headed back to Springdale in 1869.

Nancy and Ransom were waiting for them there.

The 1970 Census reveals the Anderson Payne Household to be quite an assembly. Anderson and Elizabeth, their three girls, two of Anderson's siblings,⁴ the mother-in-law (Nancy) and the nephew, Ransom L., who was fourteen by then. Ransom grew up helping with farm work and also with the small dry goods and livery business Anderson ran from

³ 620,000 soldiers died in the Civil War, and twice as many died from disease as died from battle wounds.

⁴ Sarah Payne, 9, and James Payne, 18, along with Anderson, were orphaned when their father, Hiram, was murdered in 1865. Their mother, Polly Anderson, had drowned in 1863. The nine Payne children had been spread out among several aunts and uncles in the area.

a lean-to attached to the family home. It was young Ransom's introduction into the business world.

At some point between 1870 and 1880, Ransom moved in with his aunt, Lucinda Hurst. This would have made a lot of sense, since the Payne family was growing by leaps and bounds and their house was probably bursting at the seams. Lucinda, a Civil War widow herself, had only two boys, and both were near Ransom in age. One of them was still living at home when the census was taken in 1880. Ransom was living there and listed with the job of cutting and hewing rafter logs.

Nancy Day remained with Anderson and Elizabeth, surrounded by grandchildren – a total of nine – the last six all arriving between 1870 and 1879. Nancy helped raise them all – Martha Jane, Mollie, Maggie, Henry, Eliza, Laura, Bob, Fate, and Byrd.

1880-1890 was the decade of the railroad. Trestles and tunnels were carved through the hills and hollows surrounding Lone Mountain, making way for the track that would connect Knoxville and Cumberland Gap. The building of the depot turned Lone Mountain into a bustling, growing place, and, for a time, the center of commerce for all of Claiborne County. Anderson moved his business and his family to Lone Mountain sometime between 1880 and 1893. And young Ransom Day opened a store of his own in Lone Mountain.⁵

In 1883, at the age of 87, Nancy Day died. She had carried one grandchild across two states and then raised him. Then she helped raise nine more, including our grandfather, Byrd.

She is buried at the Big Springs church with her parents and her husband, John. Think of her when you pass by and be proud that you are as much a “Day” as you are a “Payne.”

Ransom

Ransom started his business during a time of tremendous growth in Lone Mountain, and ran it for a number of years.

Around 1890, Ransom married the beautiful Lydda Barnette. Ransom was 34, and Lydda was 20. In August 1891, Lydda gave birth to twin daughters, Lillie and Bessie.

But, Lillie died in July 1892, before reaching her first birthday. Ransom and Lydda buried her in the Payne Cemetery at Lone Mountain.

The next summer, Ransom wrote his last will and testament. It offers one of the only glimpses into the kind of man the little orphaned three-year-old turned out to be:

⁵ The 1890 Census was lost, so whereas we know certain things happened, we do not know exactly when.

WILL OF R.L. DAY

I, R.L. Day of the state of Tennessee and Claiborne County being of Sound and disposing mind and memory though of feeble health and being desirous of Settling my worldly affairs while I have Strength and capacity So to do, declare and direct to following disposition of my property after my death.

First, I direct that all just debts that may exist against me at my decease be settled.

Second, I direct that the mercantile business in which I am now engaged at Lone Mountain be conducted by the executor herein after appointed till such time as he may in his discretion make a profitable disposition of same and to enable said executor to so direct the business, I direct that he have full power and authority to collect all debts of every description due me and to enable said executor to so conduct the business I direct that he have full power and authority to collect all notes and accounts and debts of every description due me and that he have authority to buy and add to the stock of goods as it may become necessary to conduct it as a mercantile business.

Third, I direct that my executor herein after appointed have full authority to invest all my property after paying all my just debts, and getting to-gether my personal estate in such away as in his judgement may be profitable to my wife and child but I desire that my said wife and child be not deprived of a home and I therefore direct that my realty be not sold unless it be to invest in other realty.

Fourth, I direct that after all my just debts are paid and such investments are made as in the discretion of the executor herein after named should be to the interest of my wife and child, take of my estate in such proportions as the law would give them.

Fifth, I hereby appoint Henry Evans sole executor to execute this instrument and direct that he qualify without giving bond.

In witness where of I here unto set my hand this 10th day of June 1893.

R.L. Day



Ransom died the day after writing his will, and was buried next to Lillie.

I know I have walked past them hundreds of times – just anonymous stones along the way to the ones I was seeking.

Now that I know them, I will stop and say hello.



Lydda and Bessie

Henry Evans, appointed by Ransom to be his executor, was directed to take over every aspect of the business in protection of Lydda's and Bessie's interests. He took his role very seriously – he married Lydda within the year.

The following year, 1894, Henry and Lydda's daughter, Nelle, was born. Lydda died in 1896 when Nelle was two.⁶

Henry's second wife was Mattie Hodges, first cousin of my grandmother, A Payne.

Bessie

Henry Evans kept his daughter, Nelle, with him, but not his step-daughter, Bessie Day. He was, after all, a widower for several years before he remarried – perhaps he could not cope with two small girls on his own.

Whatever the reason, in 1897, Anderson Payne assumed guardianship of Bessie. She lived with Anderson and Elizabeth and their son, Henry (Midler), until she married Charley Hill in 1903.

Bessie had one son and lived to be 72. She is buried in Middlesboro.

The End

⁶ I suspect, but do not know, that tuberculosis was the cause of most of the premature deaths in this story.

Sources

How I discovered Nancy's story

You might wonder, at this point, how I found this story, and how I could possibly know it is true. It is one thing to find a good story, but it is quite another to *prove* it. The task for the genealogist/historian, is to do just that – discover stories and prove them.

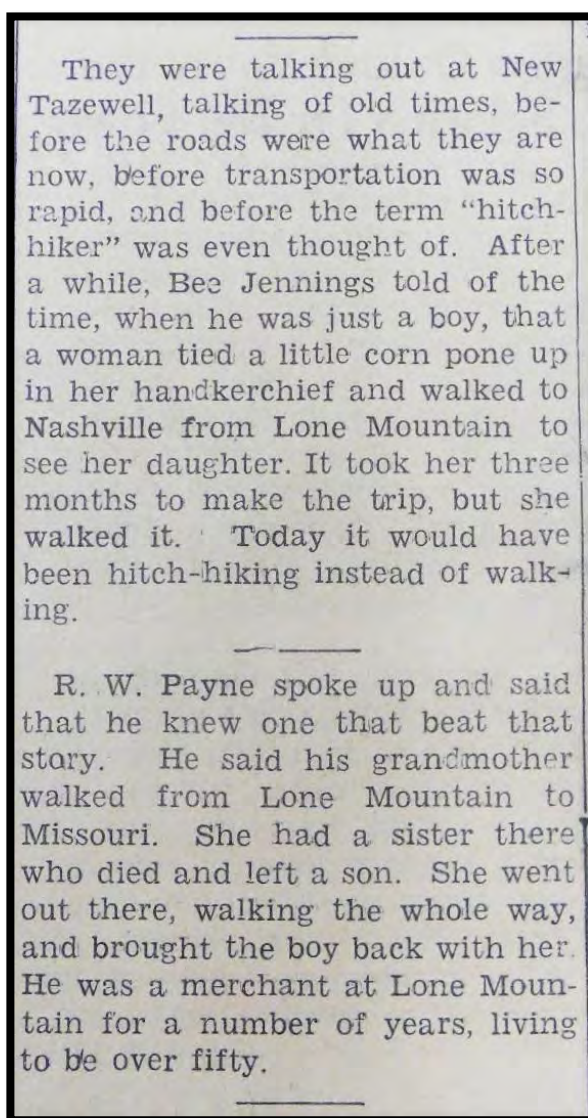
I already had most of the records I shared in this story for years, in my own files and in my “Lone Mountain Research Tree” on *Ancestry.com*. I research and file things away, and certain facts just float around in my brain. But I do not always connect pieces together until I find something completely new that causes an AHA! moment. That is how I felt when I read the article at right. It is not only the overarching proof of the story, but it was the AHA! that got me researching it in the first place.

I was going through my scans from the 1935 Claiborne Progress last week, when I came upon this article. It caught my eye because of the two familiar names: R.W. Payne, after all, is my “Uncle Bob,” the brother of my grandfather, Byrd Payne. Bee Jennings is “Uncle Bee” the brother of my grandmother, A Jennings Payne. They were both favorites of my father, Roger Payne.

Bob and Bee were close friends and partners-in-adventure throughout their lives. It was no surprise to see them hanging out together shooting the breeze with a *Progress* columnist.

I loved that.

But, while the woman in Uncle Bee's story was anonymous, I knew any grandmother of Uncle Bob (R.W.) is a great-great grandmother to me; so, I was “off to the races” the minute I read it!



They were talking out at New Tazewell, talking of old times, before the roads were what they are now, before transportation was so rapid, and before the term “hitch-hiker” was even thought of. After a while, Bee Jennings told of the time, when he was just a boy, that a woman tied a little corn pone up in her handkerchief and walked to Nashville from Lone Mountain to see her daughter. It took her three months to make the trip, but she walked it. Today it would have been hitch-hiking instead of walking.

R. W. Payne spoke up and said that he knew one that beat that story. He said his grandmother walked from Lone Mountain to Missouri. She had a sister there who died and left a son. She went out there, walking the whole way, and brought the boy back with her. He was a merchant at Lone Mountain for a number of years, living to be over fifty.

The Claiborne County Progress – 2 Jan 1935

In short order I realized two parts of it were wrong. It was not Nancy's sister who died in Missouri, but Nancy's son, John D. And the boy, Ransom L. did not live into his fifties, but rather, into his forties. But those are the type details that can turn fuzzy forty and fifty years later. The walk itself would *never* be forgotten.

Documentation

1.

"Ollie" Day Ward was born about 1820 In Claiborne Co. TN, the daughter of John "Ransom" Day Jr. and Nancy Elizabeth Hurst. She was a namesake for her mother's sister, Olivia Hurst Cheek. She married George R. Ward 7 Feb. 1848 in Claiborne Co. TN. The marriage was performed by her uncle, Rev. Hiram Hurst (her mother's brother) who was the pastor of the Big Spring Primitive Baptist Church. It is assumed the marriage was performed at the church. She was his second wife. They first came to Webster Co. MO about 1855 with some of her Breeding and Hurst relatives and Day siblings (including sister Eliza (Day) and husband George Evans and brother John and Martha (Bartlett) Day). George and Ollie went on to (what is

I found this on "Find a Grave" for Nancy's daughter, Ollie Day Ward. While not official documentation in and of itself, it confirmed dates and got me looking for records of John D.'s sisters and other family members who went to Webster County with them.

2.



Gravestone of John and Martha Day with death date of June 18, 1959 in New Hope Cemetery in Webster, Missouri, proving Ransom L. was there too. (Date is not legible in photo).

Ransom L. is two years eleven months old at the time his parents died.

This proves Ransom probably turned four on the journey back to Tennessee with his grandmother, Nancy.

3.

1860 United States Federal Census for Olly Ward

Missouri > Webster > Ozark

121	577	George P Ward	57	m	Hamm	1800	Missouri	
		Ollie	37	f				
		Amanda	12	f				1
		Ransom	7	m				1
		Martina	7	f				1
		Anton	6	m				
		Nancy	2	f				
		May J	1/2	f				
122	578	John Smith	11	m	Hamm	1800	Missouri	

1860 United States Federal Census for Eliza Evans

Missouri > Webster > Ozark

15	577	George Evans	40	m	Hamm	1800	Missouri	
16		Eliza	38	f				
17		Margaret V	16	f				1
18		Mary B	13	f				1
19		Nancy B	7	f				1
20		Lucinda	7	f				1
21		Nancy	7	f				1
22		John M	3	m				
23		George	1/2	m				

1860 Census records for the families of Ransom's aunts Ollie and Eliza show Ransom was not present with them after death of their brother, John. Also, there is NO 1860 census of our Nancy Day in Tennessee.

I have scoured every possible relative or place for a census record for Nancy and Ransom and found none.

I see this absence of documentation as strong support that Nancy and Ransom were enroute at the time the census was taken in June-July 1860 and not living in any residence

4.

1870 United States Federal Census for A G Payne

Tennessee > Claiborne > District 8

11	4	Payne A G	32	M	Hamm	1800	Virginia	
		Elizabeth	29	F	Keepinghouse		Virginia	
		Mary P	3	F			Virginia	
		Margaret	1	F			Virginia	
		Birdclimber Hartung	7	F			Texas	
		Payne Sarah	9	F			Virginia	
		James	18	M	works on farm		Virginia	
		Nancy	70	F			Virginia	
		Ransom L	14	M	works on farm		Texas	

In 1870, Nancy and Ransom are living with Anderson and Elizabeth Payne and daughters Mollie, Maggie, Martha Jane. Also in the home was Anderson's sister Sarah and his brother, James.

5.

1880 United States Federal Census for A. G. Payne											
Tennessee > Claiborne > District 8 > 107											
Family No	Name	Race	Sex	Age	Birth Mon	Relationship	Single	Married	Widow/D	Married C	Months L
32	Payne, A. G.	W	M	33		Head					4
	Elizabeth	W	F	35		Wife					
	Narcine M. J.	W	F	19		S. Daugh					
	Payne, S. E.	W	F	21		Sister					
	Mattie E.	W	F	13		Daugh					
	Maggie E.	W	F	11		Daugh					
	John E.	W	M	9		Son					
	Eliza M.	W	F	7		Daugh					
	Lucira M.	W	F	6		Daugh					
	Day, G.	W	M	4		Son					
	Robert W.	W	M	4		Son					
	Bird M.	W	M	1		Son					
	Day, Nancy	W	F	94		Widow					

in 1880, Nancy Day is still living with Anderson and Elizabeth Payne, and family has added six children. Note: Robert W. is the "Uncle Bob" who shared the "walking" story in the Progress.

6.

1880 United States Federal Census for R. L. Day														
Tennessee > Claiborne > District 8 > 107														
Street	House No	Dwelling	Family No	Name	Race	Sex	Age	Birth Mon	Relationship	Single	Married	Widow/D	Married C	Months L
10	20			Hurst, Lucinda W & H	W	F	45		Wife					Keeping House
				— Son	W	M	21		Son					Working Farm
				Day, R. L. Jr	W	M	21		Nephew					Walter

Ransom L. is living with his Aunt Lucinda and a cousin near his age.

1880 United States Federal Census for R. L. Day															
Tennessee > Claiborne > District 8 > 107															
Street	House No	Dwelling	Family No	Name	Race	Sex	Age	Birth Mon	Relationsh	Single	Married	Widow/D	Married C	Occupation	Months L
	10	20		Hurst, Lucinda W A Hs		F	45		Wife			1		Keeping House	
				— Son 7 M 21		M	21		Son					Northwestern	
				Day, R. L. 2 M 21		M	21		Nephew					Boiler	

Ransom is living with his Aunt Lucinda and his cousin. His job is working with rafter logs.

7.

Will R. L. Day
I, R. L. Day of the State of Tennessee and
Clatsop County being of Sound and dis-
posing mind and Memory though of public
health and being desirous of settling my
personal affairs while I have strength and
Capacity do by these presents direct the
following disposition of my property
after my death.

First I direct that all just debts
that may exist against me at my
decease be settled.

Second I direct that the mercantile
business in which I am now engaged
at Lone Mountain be conducted by the
executors herein after appointed I will
such time as he in my discretion
make a profitable disposition of same
and to enable said executor to so
conduct the business, I direct that he have
full power and authority to collect all
notes and accounts and debts of every
description due me and that he have
authority to buy and add to the stock
of goods as it may become necessary
to safely conduct it as a mercantile
business.

Third I direct that my executors
herein after appointed have authority to
invest all my property after paying all
my just debts and getting together my
personal estate in such way as in
his judgment may be profitable to my
wife and child but I desire that my
said wife and child be not deprived of
a home and I therefore direct that my
realty be not sold unless it be to
invest in other realty.

Fourth I direct that after all my just
debts are paid and such investments are
made as in the discretion of the execu-
tors herein after named should be to

the interest of my wife and child
that my said wife and child take of
my estate in such proportion as the
law would give them.

Fifth I hereby appoint Henry
Dransole executor to execute this
instrument and direct that he qualify
without giving bond

In witnesses whereof
I hereunto set my hand this 10th day
of June 1893

R. F. Day
signed and sealed by said R. F. Day in
the presence of us both in his pres-
ence and in the presence of each other and
at his request have hereunto subscribed
our names as witnesses.

James B. Hurst
R. F. Rose

James B. Hurst is Ransom's second cousin. B.F. Rose is the grandfather of my first cousins, Betsy and David Rose.

The US Census for 1890 was lost, but this will documents Ransom's marriage, his child, and the fact that he was a merchant in Lone Mountain who lived well into adulthood.

8.

State of Tennessee--Claiborne County.

We, *A. G. Payne* *John W. Hodges* & *W. B. Parkey*
are held firmly bound to the State of Tennessee, in the penal sum of *Two*
Thousand Dollars.
Witness our hands and seals, this *15th* day of *January* A.D. 1897
The Condition of this Obligation is such, That whereas the above bound
A. G. Payne
has been appointed Guardian of *Bessie Day*
minor heir of
R. L. Day deceased.
Now, if he said *A. G. Payne* shall well and
truly perform the duties which he or may be required by law as such Guardian, then
this obligation to be void, otherwise to remain in full force and virtue.

Acknowledged and approved in
open Court, this *15* day of
January 1897
A. G. Payne
John W. Hodges
W. B. Parkey

SEAL
SEAL
SEAL

Anderson Payne being appointed guardian of Bessie Day

9.

1900 United States Federal Census for Annerson Payne											
Tennessee > Claiborne > Civil District 10 > District 0010											
115	Parque Annerson	Head	M	W	1548	52	M	34			
	Betsy	wife	W	F	1843	46	W	34			
	Henry	son	W	M	1874	26	S				
	Lizzie	niece	W	F	1895	15	S				
	Lay, Berry	niece	W	F	1895	11	S				
	James John	Boarder	W	M	1878	26	S				
	Neel, Marian	sister	W	F	1861	39	md				

Bessie living in home of Anderson and Elizabeth (Betsy) Payne

Discussion

1.	Is Uncle Bob a reliable firsthand source?	Yes. He would have heard about this from both his grandmother who lived with him, and his mother, who was an adult when the journey took place. Also, the story is not only supported by other proofs, but it fits the timeline perfectly and no major detail is refuted.
2.	Is such a long walk even possible?	Absolutely. Walking is the oldest method of transportation and was much more common in that area and in that day than you might think. Soldiers in the Revolutionary War, walked from Camden, SC to Yorktown Pennsylvania. The settlers going west took wagons to haul things they would need with animals they would need at their destination. By and large, they walked every step of the way, averaging 8-20 miles a day depending on the terrain, and this was only possible on major trails, like the National Road and the Oregon Trail. There were no major trails in the direction Nancy was going. If she walked only 7 miles a day, it would have taken 3 months. Resting every fourth day it would take four months. There were many towns along the way in Tennessee, and better roads. There were also many rural settlers in both states. The river crossing to Missouri would have been more difficult, and there were longer stretches without towns in the southern part of Missouri. Travel by wagon or horseback would have been harder and more complicated than just walking. She was an older woman, no threat to anyone, and nothing obvious to steal.
3.	But Nancy was too old!	Nancy may have been 62, but she was much more conditioned to long walks and hard work than women today. Plus, she lived to be 87.
4.	John D. and Martha lived with Nancy, and Ransom was born in her home.	It was the custom that older sons would get pieces of family land to homestead when they married, but it was almost always the youngest son or last-married son who would stay in his father's house, bring his bride there, and care for aging parents until their deaths. John D. was Nancy's youngest son. Her only other son Ransom died in 1847, years before John D. married. It is all but certain that John D. and Martha lived with Nancy when they married and had Ransom L.

~ Amy Payne Potts
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