

# Hall Countians who migrated to Cave Springs

By SYBIL McRAY

So many families from this section of Georgia migrated to the northwestern part of the state that Jackson County has been referred to as "the mother of Floyd County." However, many Hall Countians also moved to Floyd, Polk, Newton, Chattooga, Gordon and other western counties.

Several families located in Cave Springs about 15 miles from Rome. This small village situated eight miles from Cedar town and 10 miles from the Georgia-Alabama line still shows signs of antiquity: old homes, ancient store buildings and towering oak trees.

One of the pioneers who possessed the Cave Springs land where the print of the moccasin had faded from the soil" was William Simmons. It is believed that he influenced his parents and relatives, then living in Hall County, to migrate to that section. This was the area that grew with a "vim" once the Indians were out of the way and their lands thrown open to the white settlers.

The parents, two brothers, a sister, and later an aunt, Elizabeth Simmons Etris, all residents of Hall County, joined William Simmons in Cave Springs. Two other brothers, Edward and Charles Rice Simmons, chose to remain in Hall County and descendants of these two men live in Gainesville to this day.

Richard Simmons Sr., a Revolutionary soldier, was born in Virginia, Dec. 17, 1771, died in Floyd County, January 1864. He married Frances Smith, born Aug. 1776, and died 1855. Both Richard and Frances Simmons are buried in the old cemetery Cave Springs. Richard Simmons Sr. left a will recorded in the Floyd County courthouse.

Will No. 134, Will of Richard Simmons.

"In the name of God Amen  
I, Richard Simmons of the

County and state of Georgia ... to Nancy Simmons and her heirs two slaves, and to my grandson William Rice Simmons, this home and lot where I now live... to my son, James, a certain Negro man, by the name of Andy and to my son Charles Rice in trust for his heirs a certain Negro man by the name of Henry and to my sister Elizabeth Simmons a good and sufficient support during her life... all my lands to be sold and the money divided equally with the following names: James Simmons and James Simmons in trust for Charles Rich Simmons heirs, J.R. Simmons, R.S. Simmons heirs, Edward Simmons heirs, William Simmons heirs, and heirs of my daughter Sarah Gill share and share alike... this 24th of January 1863. (signed) Richard Simmons."

Two sons, a daughter, and sister of Richard Simmons were married in Hall County. "Book A, 1819-1839, Hall County Marriages":

Cert. No. 895, Joshua R. Simmons — Agnis A. Gill, Jan. 14, 1836

Cert. No. 991 Charles R. Simmons — Sarah Ellison, Nov. 23, 1837

Cert. No. 1075 Josiah H. Gill — Sarah R. Simmons, Nov. 12, 1839

Cert. No. 682 Peter Etris — Elizabeth Simmons, Dec. 18, 1831

William J.S. Simmons, son of Richard and Frances Simmons, was married in Floyd County July 19, 1839 to Anne E.

Richardson, daughter of Armistead Richardson and Elizabeth Griggs of Cave Springs, Ga. William and Ann Simmons were parents of three children: Rebecca Lloyd, Richard and William Jr. In 1850 Census Floyd County: William Simmons, age 46, born N.C.; Richard, L., age 10; Rebecca, age 7; William, age 3. The wife Ann had died by this time.

Edward Simmons, son of Richard Simmons Sr. was born May 21, 1799, N.C. He died Aug. 13, 1853, Hall County and is buried in the Redwine Methodist Church Cemetery. He was married in North Carolina to Nancy Erwin. The 1850 census of Hall County: Edward Simmons, age 50, born N.C.; N. wife, age 48, born N.C.; R.L., son, age 23, born N.C.; J.W. (John W.) 18, born N.C.; W. (William), age 15; M. (Mary E.) age 13; S. (Sarah), age 11; M. (Matilda), age 7; Sarah Erwin, sister to wife, age 40, born N.C. Nancy Simmons, her sister Sarah Erwin, and several other members of the family are buried at the Redwine Church. Many people still remember John W.W. Simmons of Hall County. He was a grandson of Edward and Nancy Simmons.

James Simmons, son of Richard Simmons Sr., was born April 17, 1802, Spartanburg, S.C., and died at his home near Jasper, Pickens County, Ga. June 22, 1894. When he was less than a year old the family moved to Rutherford County,

N.C. where he married Elizabeth J. Ramseur in 1831. James Simmons came to Georgia and first settled in Hall County where he remained for about a year and then moved on to Gilmer County. He was there before the Indians were removed from that region and helped General Scott in their removal. He was a delegate to the Secession Convention in 1861 and voted against Secession. He was one of six delegates who signed the Ordinance as PROTEST. P.M. Byrd of Hall County also was one of the six who signed this ordinance; however, both men did all they could to help the cause of the South after the secession. James and Elizabeth Simmons had the following children: William Adolphus, Phillip R., Richard L., Leander A., Sarah F., Henry R., Franklin S., Julia A.

## Herald Item

The following item was written about James Simmons in the Pickens County Herald: "The Indians had known Mr. Simmons as an upright and honorable gentleman whose word could be trusted...at first they were disposed to resist any attempt to remove them. They often said they would fight the State of Ga. It was at this critical time that the wise council and honest spirit of James Simmons served the country most effectively. The Indians consented to bring their guns and deposit them at the house of Mr. Simmons to be turned over to the government

and receipted for."

Richard Shelton Simmons, son of Richard Sr., was born Aug. 22, 1811, North Carolina and died in Floyd County August 1860. He married Sarah C. Leake of South Carolina. Richard and Sarah Simmons lived in Hall County for several years and Richard Simmons is listed as a school teacher in the early records of this county. The family had moved to Floyd County before 1850. Both Richard and Sarah are buried in the Cave Springs Cemetery. Their children were: Frances E., Oliver, Webster, Albena, Richard. The son Oliver Cromwell Simmons spent 25 years in the North Georgia Methodist Conference as pastor of the East Point Church.

Joshua R. Simmons, son of Richard Simmons Sr., was born 1812, North Carolina and died in Floyd County. He married Agnes A. Gill in Hall County. He taught school while in this county before moving to west Georgia. Agnes Gill was the daughter of Josiah Gill by his first wife. Children of Joshua and Agnes Simmons: Calvin, Richard R., Mary F., William R., Martha J., Margaret, Agnes, Helen.

Charles Rice Simmons, son of Richard Simmons Sr., was born 1816, North Carolina and died in Hall County Feb. 19, 1898. He is buried in the Alta Vista Cemetery. He married in Hall County (1) Sarah Ellison. He married (2) on June 9, 1850 Lavina Bowen in Hall County. Charles Rice Simmons was a

well-known attorney in Gainesville. Children of Charles R., and Sarah Simmons: James, William B., Pillona, Sarah. Children of Charles R., and Lavina Simmons: Mary E., Benjamin F. (or Bascombe), Emma, Caroline (Carrie), Walter.

The Richard Simmons family made a contribution to Hall County history and members of the family moving to Floyd County are mentioned in the history of that area. From: CAVE SPRINGS AND VAN'S VALLEY, James Coffee Harris c1927, Rome Library, "...we have already mentioned the families that founded and sustained the Methodist Church...it is perhaps true that the Simmons family by reason of their greater members and their activities in the work of the church contributed more than any other family to its life and growth.

Richard Simmons...with three of his sons, William, Joshua and Sheldon and his daughter Sallie, who married Major J.H. Gill all of whom had children born in Cave Springs, remarkable for their physical strength and noble bearing, all the men being more than 6 feet in height. In moral character they were all as splendid as they were strong in body and they gave to their church their unstinted devotion."

Another noteworthy fact: Simmons Street in Gainesville was named for William Benson Simmons.