

## **Emily Baker's Very Distant Relationship to The Craighead House, the Erwin Family, and Andrew Jackson**

Emily's 3x great-grandfather was William Williams (1783-1818) of Strawberry Plains, Tennessee. One of his sisters was Francis Lanier Williams (1796-1872). Fannie, as she was known, married John Patton Erwin (1795-1857), twice Mayor of Nashville, postmaster, newspaper editor, and Secretary of the Robertson Association. He was another of Andrew Jackson's political enemies. Erwin is also known for challenging Sam Houston to a duel, although it never took place.

John Patton Erwin was a first cousin of Jane Erwin, the wife of Charles Dickinson and later of John Brown Craighead. After Jane's death and Craighead's subsequent marriage to Lavinia Robertson Beck, John Patton and Fannie bought the Beck house, "Buena Vista Hill", located where the old St. Cecilia's convent now stands. The Erwins lived there until about 1860 when Fannie sold it for its present use.

The Erwins had six daughters who were famous for their musical talent, beauty, brains, and abilities to marry well. Three of the daughters remained in Nashville, marrying into the Yeatman, Hillman, and Goff families. Rebecca and her husband, Major Andrew F. Goff, owned "Glencliffe". Mary married Charles Hillman of the iron family, and Amelia married William T. Yeatman, the oldest son of Thomas Yeatman, a very wealthy banker in Nashville. William was the owner and captain of the "Tennessee", a well-known steamboat in the New Orleans trade. His stepmother, another Jane Erwin, was John Patton Erwin's sister, and, after Thomas Yeatman's death, married John Bell, candidate for President in 1860.

Fannie (Williams) Erwin had other brothers with Tennessee connections. Most prominently, John Williams (1778-1837), Colonel, US Senator, and Minister to Guatemala, led the 39<sup>th</sup> US Infantry from Knoxville to the Battle of Horseshoe Bend where he assisted Andrew Jackson in his decisive victory over the Creek Indians. The two had a falling out in later years resulting in Jackson defeating John for the US Senate seat. Interestingly, John Overton, Jackson's advisor and ally, and John Williams were married to sisters. And William Williams' father-in-law, James King, the "Iron King" of present-day Bristol, Virginia-Tennessee, loaned Jackson and Overton the money to buy the Chickasaw Bluffs, now known as Memphis.

Finally, William Williams' son-in-law (and Emily's great-great grandfather) the Reverend Thomas Stringfield (1797-1858), as a boy soldier at the Battle of Emuckfaw, (which preceded Horseshoe Bend) was wounded and thought dead. General Jackson cradled him in his arms and a life-long bond was created. In later years Stringfield visited Jackson frequently and heard Jackson's proclamation of faith shortly before his death. In addition to a life of preaching, writing, and editing Methodist papers, Stringfield bought the Knoxville *Enquirer*, a secular paper, in a futile hope of using it as a tool to heal the rift between the Jackson and Williams parties.

As we drive past the Craighead House, Emily and I often think of the connections she has with this historic house and the many people who have walked through its doors.

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June 25, 2010 Rev. Nov 2010