

PREFACE

My interest in my family history began when I was about twelve years old. I remember my father brought home a small ledger book that he told us contained a handwritten account of the life and times of my great-grandfather, Isaac W. Underwood. It was fascinating to read those words written so many years before by a man I had never met. He told us of his great-grandfather who had, "come down from Philadelphia, Pa., following the game that was then plentiful in that wilderness area". He told of being born near the same place where his great-grandfather had settled along the banks of a branch of the Runnetbag Creek at the foot of the Blueridge Mountains in Franklin County, Va. The disappointing thing about the little book was that Isaac did not give the first names of the ancestors that he wrote about; not even his own father. It was years later that I finally found his father's name listed in the census records for Patrick County, Virginia. (So you won't accuse me of the same oversight, his father's name was Samuel and his mother's name was Rebecca.)

Perhaps the worst thing that can happen to one who is doing genealogical research is to fall victim to wishful thinking.

We have such a strong desire to find that missing ancestor that we accept, without sufficient proof, the wrong person. It really bothers me a lot, because I have a situation in this work where I do not have absolute proof of the connection I have claimed. I am referring to Samuel Underwood (No. 006) as being the son of Samuel and Anne Underwood of Orange County, N. C. Let me present my case, and you be the jury:

Isaac Underwood said in his journal that his great-grandfather came down from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and settled along a branch of Runnetbag Creek in Franklin County, Virginia. He said that he raised a large family and that he was married twice.

Samuel (006) was born in Chester County, Pennsylvania (just southeast of Philadelphia), and as a young man of about seventeen, came down to North Carolina with his parents. There he married, had fifteen children and at least one grandchild, and about the year 1783, he moved to Franklin County, Virginia, and settled down on the banks of Roaring Run Branch of Runnetbag Creek. His children and grandchildren also moved to the same area, but a few years later (1791 - 92).

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The U. S. Census records show his grandson, Samuel (008) as having been born in North Carolina. The Samuel in North Carolina paid land taxes up until 1782; the Samuel in Virginia paid land taxes in 1783. If I could find the marriage record for Samuel and Missiniah, or for their oldest son, I would be totally convinced. As it stands, I have about a 1% doubt. I hope that 's good enough. If I am wrong, the only other possibility I can come up with would be that Samuel (006) was the son of Joseph, the brother of Samuel (004) and son of Alexander (003). This may be the same Joseph who bought land in Bedford County (later Franklin) Co. Va., in 1764, but there is no record of his children except for one son, John, and a daughter, Elizabeth.

I heard stories about one of our ancestors being a Cherokee. I was proud to think that I had Indian blood in my veins, even if it was only a small percentage. My research indicates that the Indian ancestor was named Missiniah, my great-great-g r e a t - g r e a t - g r e a t - grandmother. (one could make a pun and say, "that's really great!, but I won't) In a correspondence with Mrs. Irene V. Funston of Sierra Vista, Arizona, she states, "The legend in my family has

also been that there was a Cherokee Indian ancestor, and I still have high cheekbones and a 'Roman' nose, although am light complected, or complexioned." Since Mrs. Funston has traced her ancestry back to Jesse Underwood, the son of Samuel and Missiniah, that makes Missiniah our nearest common ancestor. And since I can document that there are no Indian ancestors farther back than Missiniah, that leaves her as the only possibility.

I would like to give credit here to the many relatives who provided information to me about their families, and to my wife, Mildred F. Underwood (Mickey), and my daughter Sandra Underwood Weidner (Sandy), who were a great help during the research phase of this project. Together we spent many hours staring at the dimly lit microfilm readers at the National Archives Building and scanning through hundreds of volumes in the Library of Congress. We also visited dozens of county courthouses in Virginia and North Carolina. I would also like to give credit to Mrs. Pauline Smith, of Eden North Carolina, for the wealth of information she gave me on her grandmother, Sarah Underwood Boulding. She was able to locate the

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Family Bible of Isaac W. Underwood, my great-grandfather, and to provide me with copies of the information from that important source.

I must share with you one of my experiences. It seems that at every place we visited in our research, we met a very nice gray-haired lady who knew where to find everything we wanted to look at, and who knew the local history. It was quite funny. Now when I visit a new place to do research, the first thing I do is look for the RLGHL (Resident Little GrayHaired Lady). I don't mean this as a put-down to these lovely ladies. They have been a valuable source of information to me, and I'm sure to others as well. I hope they will always be there.

I consider myself a novice at genealogical research, but I have learned a little over the years. I will list a few things I've learned that may be of help to others who decide to trace their family roots.

1. Perhaps the most important thing I have learned is that nothing you have been told can be considered to be absolutely accurate. We tend to believe that official documents in courthouse records, and federal government census records are accurate. Well, often they are not. All of

these records were recorded by humans. We all know that some people lie, some are forgetful, and some like to liven up an old family tradition by telling the story just a little bit differently than the way it was told to them. You can usually trust the information you find in Wills, but census records are full of errors.

2. When you find someone listed, say, as John, Jr. , and another listed as John, Sr., don't jump to the conclusion that they are father and son. If two people with the same name live near each other, they may have been referred to as Jr. and Sr., even if they are not related. I know of one case of a man and his grandson listed as Senior and Junior, respectively.

3. Documents found in the record books at county courthouses are copies of the original documents recorded there by the Clerk of the Court, and quite often mistakes are made in the transcription. Names may be spelled wrong, and in one case, I found two parties transposed.

4. Don't rely on information obtained from the published work of others. Go directly to the source of the information if at all possible. This also saves you the trouble of having to

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give credit to a lot of sources. Besides, it's a lot of fun searching through those musty old books in quaint little county seats.

PLAN OF THE WORK

This work is centered on Isaac W. Underwood, my great-grandfather. Part I is devoted to his ancestors. The name of the direct ancestor is underlined. Except where the information collected on an individual is large, only the direct-line individual is given a number. For all others, a note may be given to indicate where more information may be found concerning them. The note will usually refer to a UFA number, where UFA stands for *The Underwood Families of America*, compiled by Lucien Marcus Underwood, edited by Howard Banker, reprinted by Gateway Press, Inc., Baltimore, Md., 1976. In a few instances I have found errors and omission of relevant facts in UFA. I will cover these instances with a footnote at the appropriate place in the text.

Part II of this work is devoted to Isaac W. Underwood, His Life and Times. Most of the information for this section comes from the little ledger book left to us by Isaac. This

little book is a real family treasure and I hope it will be carefully protected. Isaac bares his soul in his writing, and after having read the book, one comes away with the feeling that he really knows this man. I have included most of what he wrote in Part II. I have omitted quite a bit of the poetry because of the sheer volume of it. I have taken the liberty of omitting the article he wrote on Predestination, which was published in the Zion Landmark. It is very long and has no genealogical value. I hope that he would not have been offended by my omissions. Isaac admitted that his spelling wasn't the best, and in a way, I'm grateful that it wasn't, because he spelled words the way he pronounced them, inadvertently giving us an insight as to how he must have talked. For example, he wrote of his wife's mother as being, "peart to get around". His wrote "peart" would be pronounced "pert" by us today, but I remember my father pronouncing the word as "pyeert", or as Isaac said, "peart". In presenting Isaac's journal here, provincialism's such as "peart" will be written as Isaac wrote them; however misspellings and punctuation errors will be corrected. Isaac says at one place in his journal, "If

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any grammatical errors are found in any of the writing in this book (which I expect there is many) I want them corrected. As I am not so good at punctuation, there will be many errors of that kind found. Please correct them". We will do our best, Isaac.

The third section of this work is devoted to the descendants of Isaac, both male and female.

Part IV will be a short story written by William Matterson Underwood, describing his boyhood days. He gives his parents the name of Smithers, and calls himself little Madge, but it is fact, not fiction.

Part V will be a short essay on the life and times of the author (if Isaac can do it, why not I).

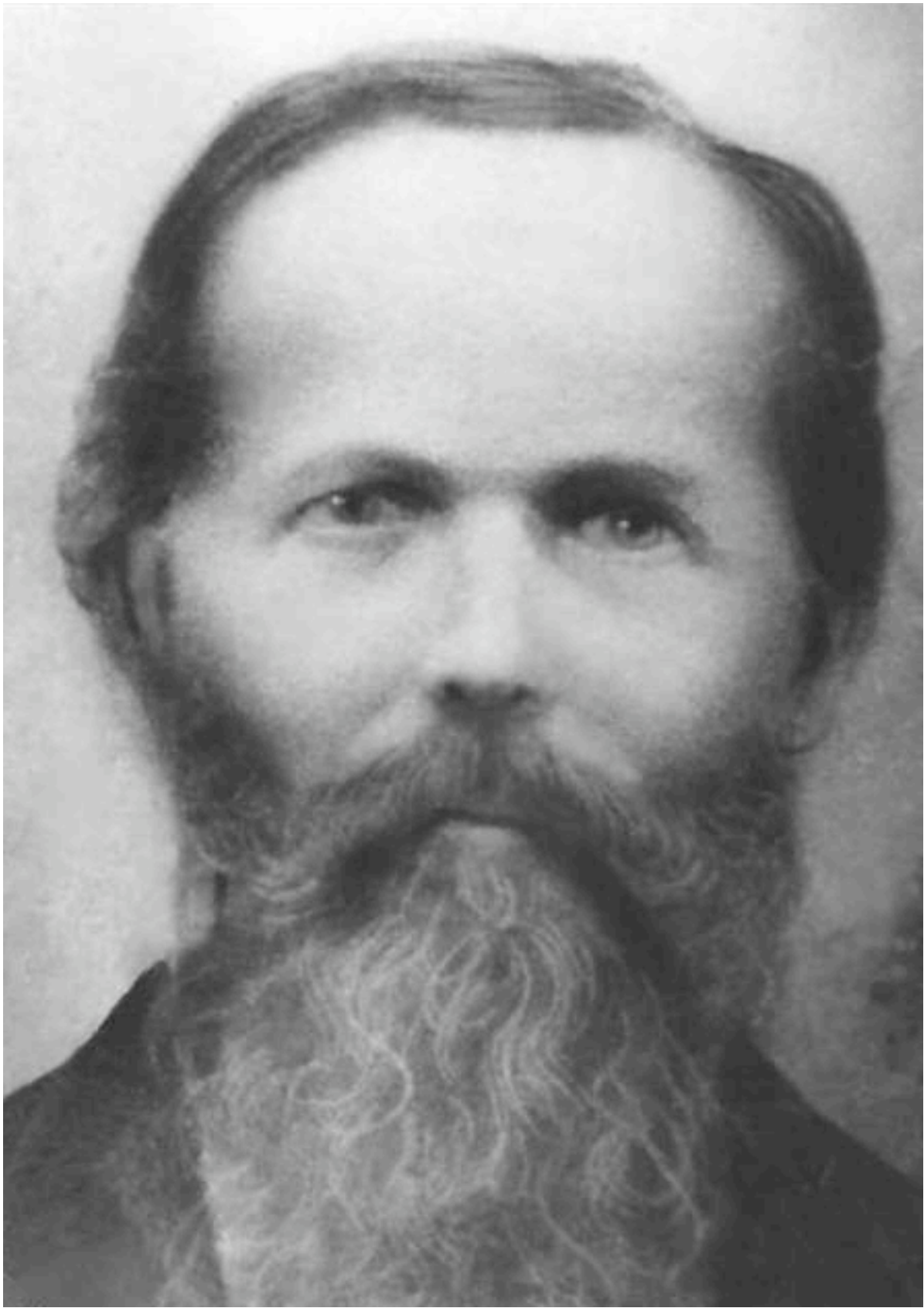
Part VI will include most of the information I have collected during the research

period, such as census data, marriage records, and death records.

Part VII will be a few broken segments of family lines. These lines will be descendants of Samuel and Missiniah, but one or more generations will be missing between Samuel 006 and the earliest person shown in the line. We will list the father of the first listed in a line, and if that connection is questionable, we will so indicate with a question mark, so: (?). Since this part was written before Part II was finished, we did not know what the first number in this section would be, so we started a new numbering system, starting with 501 for the first subject. These numbers will not be referenced in Part I.

Willie B. Underwood

Victoria, Virginia
March 12, 1988



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The name Underwood is of distinctly English origin. It probably derived from the person's occupation; perhaps a woodcutter, or one who gathered firewood for sale. The word *underwood* occurs in very old land descriptions, ". . . *the woods and underwoods* . . .", meaning the timber trees and the smaller undergrowth or underbrush which had value as firewood. It is also possible that the name was bestowed in a derogatory sense, meaning one of short stature. Many people believe that it refers to those living in the forest, or the edge of the forest.

The founder of the line of Underwoods treated in this work was Thomas, born somewhere in England circa 1625. Unfortunately the Christian name Thomas was a very popular name among the Underwoods of that period. To make matters worse, many of those named Thomas Underwood had wives named Elizabeth, as did our Thomas. It would be a formidable task to trace the line back in England. A search of the passenger lists of ships arriving in Maryland and in Pennsylvania in the year 1650 did not turn up any Thomas or Elizabeth Underwood, yet we know that they arrived in Maryland that year.

It is hoped that someone

will take up where this writer has left off and add to our knowledge of this Underwood line. There are probably hundreds of descendants of Samuel and Missiniah (see No. 006 in the text). They had seven sons, all of which were living at the time of Samuel's death, and all of the sons had children. It also would be nice to follow, through to living descendants of Samuel's brothers, Henry, Alexander, Benjamin and James (James is fairly well covered in UFA¹). It is hoped that the information given in Part VI will be helpful to those who would continue this work.

As of this writing (August 1987) there is one problem area that we have not been able to resolve to our complete satisfaction: Who was the grand-father of Isaac W. Underwood?

¹ THE UNDERWOOD FAMILIES OF AMERICA compiled by Lucien Marcus Underwood, Edited by Howard Banker; reprinted by Gateway Press of Baltimore, maryland, 1976.

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The only possible candidates are the following:

Samuel (008)
Joseph (010)
John (011)
Seth (012)
Emanuel (013)
Jesse (014)
William (015)

This is a very long list, but several of them can be eliminated quite easily by use of the facts that we have. The correct person:

1. Lived near the same place where Isaac was born; that is, in Franklin County, along Runnetbag Creek.

2. Lived to be eighty-six years of age, according to Isaac.

3. His wife lived to be seventy-eight years of age.

4. He had a son born in 1813.

Using the above information, we can eliminate Joseph, since he was living in Montgomery County when Isaac was born, and we believe we can identify all of his sons.

John lived in Patrick County in 1810, and moved to another state shortly after that. We have no record of any sons.

Seth did not have any sons of the right age, and he appears to have moved out of state at about the same time John did.

Emanuel is shown in the 1820 census records as having two sons born between 1810 and

1820; however the 1830 census record shows these two sons as having been born between 1815 and 1820. One of these has been identified as Robert Underwood, leaving one who appears to be at least two years too young. Emanuel died some time before the 1850 census was taken, making him between fifty and seventy when he died. He doesn't qualify.

Jesse Underwood died in 1850 at the age of between sixty and seventy. He named all of his children in his Will, and Isaac's father was not among them. This eliminates him as a candidate to be Isaac's grandfather.

We decided at one time that the correct candidate was William. He had three sons born between 1815 and 1820. It is quite possible that one of these was actually two years older. But we recently found William's death record which showed him dying on June 16, 1859 at the age of 74 yrs. 5 mos. 11 days. That eliminates William.

We have eliminated everyone except Samuel (008). Samuel was actually our first choice, and we only began to have doubts after reading Isaac's journal. Samuel had a son born between 1810 and 1815 according to

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the census report for 1830. That son was not listed in the 1840 census, indicating that he had married since 1830. He lived most of his long life in Franklin County. He signed the Marriage Bond for Isaac's father, as Samuel Senr., and Isaac's father signed it as Samuel, Jr. Samuel also signed as a witness, the accompanying letter signed by John Hollins, giving permission for his daughter, Rebecca (Isaac's mother) to marry Samuel Underwood, Jr.

Samuel's wife, Docia, was shown in the 1870 census record for Franklin County as being seventy-eight years of age. If she had died that year, (she died before the 1880 census) then she would have died at age seventy-eight as Isaac said in his journal.

Unfortunately, Samuel is shown in the 1880 census report as being ninety years of age. Isaac said he died at the age of eighty-six. This is really the main discrepancy between what Isaac said and what the records show. We find it hard to believe that Isaac didn't know that his grandfather lived to be over ninety. We can't doubt the accuracy of the census records, because to do so, we would have to claim that eight census records were wrong, which isn't very likely.

If Samuel (008) is really Isaac's grandfather, then we must explain the age discrepancy. We have found no other errors in Isaac's journal. We have found other errors in official records which did not agree with what Isaac said. For example, he said his mother died at the age of seventy-three. The death record shows that she died November 1, 1887 at the age of eighty-three. If she had been eighty-three in 1887, then she would have been seventy-six in 1880. The 1880 census shows her as being sixty-six, which agrees with Isaac's version.

Either Isaac was mistaken in saying his grandfather died at the age of eighty-six, or his grandfather didn't know his own age (it wouldn't be the first time *that* happened), or we have the wrong person selected as Isaac's grandfather. So take your choice. We feel that we have done our best to get this thing right, and unless we find information to the contrary, we will stick with our conclusion that Samuel (008) is Isaac's grandfather.

There are other discrepancies in Isaac's journal as compared to the recorded facts as we have found them. Isaac says that his great-

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grandfather was the first to settle in Franklin County, and that he lived to be one hundred years of age and was married twice. Well, it was his great-great-grandfather who first settled in Franklin County along the Roaring Run Branch of Runnetbag Creek. There is no indication the he married twice, and he died in 1803 at the age of sixty. The only ancestor of Isaac's that lived to be nearly one hundred was the one we have chosen as his grandfather, Samuel (008); and it appears that *he* was married twice.

It is not uncommon for people to get stories of their ancestors mixed up. The stories were handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation, and each time the

story was told, it was probably embellished a little to make it sound more romantic. Generally, in such stories, the basic facts are more or less true (perhaps exaggerated), but very often the facts are attributed to the wrong person. We believe that Isaac got the facts regarding his grandfather and great-grandfather mixed up. You might be surprised to learn that very few people know anything at all about their great-grandfather, much less their great-great-grandfather!

Well, if it were too easy, we would not enjoy doing this work. We hope you enjoy reading it.