

Hughes Family

Pioneers Blazed Forest Trails, Fought Indians, French, British

By WILBUR C. MORRISON

William L. Hughes, of Hacker's creek, has a new line of descent for the historical Hughes family of West Virginia, which associates it with Joseph Hughes, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and the more he studies the Hughes history the deeper his conviction that he is on the right track in tracing the family's origin. The only missing link is the parentage of Thomas Hughes, who was slain by Indians in April, 1778, near Jane Lew.

If Hughes succeeds in identifying that Thomas Hughes as a son of another Thomas Hughes, who was an uncle of the signer of the Declaration, he will have the new line of descent established as the correct one.

Many Hughes Lines

There are many Hughes lines in the United States. Genealogies showing the families under different names, such as Huse, Hewes, Hews, Hughs, Hewghs, Hu, Hugh and other variants. Some are typically Welch, others French, but trace in America principally English.

William Hughes, then known as Hewes, is established by credible research, as the great-grandfather and the grandfather of Thomas Hughes, who had a son, Thomas, whom William L. Hughes is convinced, was the same Hughes that was slain in 1778. The man whom the Indians killed was the father of the famous Jesse Hughes, Indian fighter in this section in pioneer days, and of other Hughes men and women, including Jonathan Hughes, great-grandfather of William L. Hughes.

West Virginia historians declare the Hughes family came from Virginia to this section. However, they fail to give the place and date of birth of Thomas Hughes, who came to Hacker's creek, settled there and was killed in 1778 near what is now Jane Lew. His sons and daughters are represented as born on the South Branch river in Hampshire county, West Virginia. Be that as it may, the father or some of his ancestors could easily have come to that section from New Jersey, it is pointed out by William L. Hughes.

Lands Taken Up

Certificates issued to settlers in 1781 show lands taken up by sons of Thomas Hughes as early as 1770. Thomas Hughes preempted

287 acres on the West Fork river, adjoining lands of Elias Hughes to include his settlement made in 1773. Elias Hughes had lands on the West Fork river prior to 1772.

Edmund West assigned to Thomas Hughes, Sr., 400 acres on Sycamore Lick run, a branch of the West Fork river, opposite lands of Thomas Hughes, Jr., to include the senior Hughes' settlement made in 1773. Elias Hughes pre-

empted 400 acres on the West Fork river, adjoining lands of James Tanner to include his improvement made in 1770. Jesse Hughes, another son of the senior Thomas Hughes, took up 400 acres to include his settlement made in 1770.

Fight with Indians

Members of the Hughes family had enlisted in warfare with Indians as early as 1772, when a party of settlers from Hacker's creek, said to have been composed of William White, William Hacker, Jesse Hughes and John Cutright, attacked Capt. Bull, a Delaware chief, and his five families of relatives at Bulltown, Braxton county, and killed Bull and all other occupants of the village.

Other Indians avenged this attack six years later, whether intentionally or not, when the first week in May, a war party of twenty Indians visited the Hacker's creek section and in a surprise attack shot Thomas Hughes, Sr., and Jonathan Lowther to death. The same party also killed Isaac Washburn as he was fording Washburn's run. After he fell from his horse, the savages tomahawked and scalped him. Washburn's gun was found seventy years later near where he was slain.

Exploring Party

Jesse Hughes as early as 1868 along with his father, Thomas Hughes, William Hacker, John and William Radcliff and John Brown, all members of an exploring party headed by Samuel Pringle, visited Hacker's creek.

John Jackson, accompanied by his sons, George and Edward, settled at the mouth of Turkey run, higher up on the Buckhannon river where Bush's fort was later built, and Alexander and Thomas Sleeth near Jackson's location.

The Hughes, William Hacker, the Radcliffs and Brown took up no lands, but contented themselves with hunting, and in this way supplied an abundance of meat to

those who were clearing their land. In their hunting incursions into the forest, they became familiar with the surrounding country. On one of their expeditions, they discovered and named Stone Coal creek, near what is now Weston. They thought the creek ran into the Ohio river and followed it to its confluence with a river, which they named West Fork, a name it has retained to this day.

Improves Land

Samuel Pringle had improved land down a creek from the Buckhannon river, by agreement, before an exchange was made with John Hacker who had improved a site on the Buckhannon river, which Pringle had picked out for himself, and when Hacker moved to the land down the creek, the latter took the name of Hacker's creek and has retained the same. These improvements were made in 1769 and 1770.

Thomas Hughes and family had come from Muddy creek to the Pringle settlement shortly before the exploring expedition was made. The year before or in 1768 he and others had settled near the mouth of Muddy creek on the west side of the Monongahela river at a point later known as Carmichaelstown.

On Hacker's Creek

After Thomas Hughes had settled on Hacker's creek, as noted, he did invaluable service in defending the border against Indian incursions and depredations. In September, 1784, a party of Indians fired at Henry Flesher, an old man and founder of the town of Weston, wounding him as he was on the way home from his day's labor in the field. He succeeded in escaping to his home. That night he and his family sought safety elsewhere and lay in the woods during the night. One young woman made her way to Hacker's creek, where Thomas Hughes, Jr., immediately departed to find the others. He found them early the next morning and safely escorted them to the Hacker's creek settlement.

Indians

Indians made their appearance the latter part of April, 1778, in Hacker's creek neighborhoods and along the West Fork river, and the inhabitants took refuge at West's

Jim says you will enjoy reading this

Hewes Declaration of Independence Hewes

fort on the creek and at Richards' fort on the river. Leaving the women and children in the forts during the day under the protection of a few men, the others worked on their farms in companies. As a company of men was thus engaged the first week in May in a field later owned by Minter Bailey on Hacker's creek, some building fence, others ploughing and still others doing various lines of farm work, the men were unexpectedly fired upon by Indians, and Thomas Hughes and Jonathan Lowther, a son of Col. William Lowther, were slain.

Campaign of Revenge

After the murder of Cornstalk, Shawnee sachem, by white men at the fort at Point Pleasant in 1777, that tribe began a campaign of revenge, and the middle of June the following year as three women were out in the field from West's fort on Hacker's creek picking berries, four Indians, lying in wait, attacked them. A bullet passed through the bonnet of a Mrs. Freeman and screaming aloud, she and the other two women ran toward the fort. A pursuing Indian thrust a spear through Mrs. Freeman's back, cleft the upper part of her head with a tomahawk and carried it away to save the scalp.

Jesse Hughes and John Schoolcraft, in making their way to the fort, observed two Indians standing by a fence, looking at the men at West's fort. The white men avoided them without discovery, but when they arrived at the fort and learned the fate of Mrs. Freeman, Jesse Hughes immediately went with others to bring in the corpse. Jesse started to lead the others to where he had seen the Indians, but before they had reached the spot, an Indian was heard howling like a wolf, and Jesse's party moved forward in the direction from which the sound came. Jesse howled in like manner, and being instantly answered, the white men ran to a point of the hill and saw two Indians approaching. Jesse Hughes fired and an Indian fell. The other took to his heels and escaped. The Indian who fell also got away while the other was being pursued. He left a track of blood, but a heavy shower of rain wiped out all trace of him and pursuit was abandoned.

Hughes is Amazed

In Jesse's party on this occasion were Charles and Alexander West, Charles Hughes, James Brown and John Sleeth. When they passed the Indian who had been shot, Jesse Hughes thought his wound would prevent his getting away and was amazed upon the discovery of his disappearance.

In the spring of 1780, Jesse Hughes led a party which rescued families from West's fort, which was being besieged by Indians, who had invested the fort some time. Hughes undertook the res-

cue at his own hazard. Frequent Indian incursions in 1778 had caused inhabitants to desert their homes the next year for the fort, but unwilling to give up their improvements, a few families returned to their places of abode during the winter, and when spring approached move back into the fort. Soon after their arrival Indians invested the fort. The occupants were in no position to go out and fight the Indians, and as they knew not when to expect relief, if any, they had reached the point of despair, when Jesse Hughes left the fort at night, broke by Indian sentinels, ran speedily to the Buckhannon fort, where he prevailed upon a party of men to accompany him to West's fort and rescue its occupants.

Relief Party Arrives

The relief party arrived before daylight. Abandonment of the fort was decided upon, and its occupants and rescue party reached Buckhannon fort without attack on the part of Indians, although the latter resorted to every artifice to separate the party so as to gain advantageous opportunity to make an attack. Jesse's strategy foiled the foe.

In April, 1781, Indians passed up Leading creek in the Tygart's valley, killing inhabitants and burning settlement houses as they went. Spies were sent out from Clarksburg to watch their movements and savages were discovered on the West Fork river, near the mouth of Isaac's creek. The forts were immediately warned.

Collects Company

Col. William Lowther collected a company of men and, going in pursuit, came within view of their encampment on a branch of the Hughes river, ever since known as Indian creek. Jesse and Elias Hughes were left to watch the movements of the savages, while the rest of the company retired a short distance to refresh themselves and prepare to attack the Indians the next morning. Five Indians fell in the attack and the others fled, leaving all their shot bags and plunder and all their guns except one. White captives were rescued, but one, a young Rony, was killed in the attack by Indians. Rescued men told Col. Lowther a larger party of Indians was expected hourly to join those who had fled, and pursuit was deemed inadvisable. Mrs. Alexander Rony, whose husband had been slain at Leading creek and whose son was killed in the attack, was one of the rescued. Daniel Dougherty was another.

December 5, 1787, a party of Indians and a white man, Leonard Schoolcraft, invaded the Hacker's creek settlement and took captive Martha, a daughter of Jesse Hughes. She remained in captivity until the next year when her father ransomed her. It was in this raid, Edmund West, Sr., an

old man, was tomahawked in answer to his prayer for his life. Mrs. West, wife of Edward West, Jr., was tomahawked in her home as was also the latter's brother, aged 12. The aged woman and her grandson were scalped and the house plundered.

Girl Left for Dead

An eleven-year-old daughter of John Hacker and sister of Mrs. West was left for dead, but lived not only to tell of the West massacre, but to be married and rear a family. As the Indians left the West home, they dragged the Hacker girl by the hair a distance of forty or fifty yards from the house, threw her over a fence and then scalped her. She showed no signs of life and Schoolcraft said, "That is enough," but an Indian had thrust a knife into her side and they left her for dead. The knife came in contact with a rib and did not injure her much.

Tomahawked

Jesse Hughes was summoned by the elder Mrs. West to go in search of her aged husband and it was he who found the victims of the

massacre. The West lad was found standing in the creek about a mile from where he had been tomahawked. Brains were oozing from his head, yet he survived three days, suffering in the extreme. Mrs. West lay dead in her home. The little Hacker daughter had made her way to the home of the elder Wests, where she was found in bed.

Narrow Escape

Jesse Hughes himself narrowly escaped the Indian tomahawk death. In September, 1790, as a member of Nicholas Carpenter's cattle drovers' party, as Jesse fled from an Indian attack a few miles from the Ohio river on the way to Marietta, a tomahawk grazed his head as he attempted to free himself of his leggins so as to outrun his pursuers. He succeeded in outdistancing them. Carpenter and son were slain.

It was Jesse Hughes who carried to West's fort news of the massacre of Mrs. John Waggoner and three of her children on Jesse's run about the middle of May, 1792, and the capture of two Waggoner girls and the son, Peter, aged 8, who lived with Tecumseh's Indians until 1812, in the meantime marrying a squaw and rearing a family.

Brains Beaten Out

One of the murdered Waggoner children was found a mile from the house with its brains beaten out with a club and the scalp torn from its head. The lifeless bodies of Mrs. Waggoner and two others of her children lay a short distance farther away, mangled in the most barbarous and shocking manner.

That Jesse Hughes hated Indians there can be no doubt in view of the fact that his passions were naturally aroused against them by the murder of his father

and a cousin and because of their treacherous depredations. His activities in dealing with them made his career a bloody one. But, he was a wonderfully brave and courageous Indian scout and made many heroic sacrifices in behalf of the early settlers. He played an important part in forging the path of civilization, although it is true no tribesman was safe in his presence.

Large Family

Thomas Hughes, Sr., the man killed by Indians, had a large family. The name of his wife is not definitely known but is said to have been Mary Baker Hughes.

On South Branch River

Jesse Hughes, famous Indian fighter, the first son and third child of Thomas Hughes, Sr., was born in 1751 on the South Branch river in what is now Hardy county, according to West Virginia histories. He died in a woodland near Ravenswood in the fall of 1829.

Jonathan Hughes, son of Thomas Hughes, Sr. and great-grandfather of William L. Hughes, was born March 25, 1753, in what is now Hardy county, West Virginia, then included in Hampshire county, Virginia. His wife, Sarah Abigail Hughes, was a daughter of Edward Jackson. They were married in 1785. She was born at Dover, N. J. in 1765, and died in 1841 or 1842 at Salem, where she was buried in the Seventh Day Baptist cemetery. Her father, born in 1841 in New Jersey, died in 1870 in Harrison county. Her mother, Martha Miller Jackson, died in 1762.

At the time he first made application for a pension as a Revolutionary-war veteran, Jonathan Hughes lived in Jefferson county, Indiana, but in Gallia county, Ohio, when he made his second application March 19, 1834, giving his age as 81 years. He enlisted about May 1, 1775, in Greenbrier county under Capt. John Cook to serve on frontiers against Indians and was stationed at the Ellis fort on the Little Levels of Greenbrier county. He lived and died about 1845 on Middle Island creek, Doddridge county.

Indian Spies

John Ewins Joseph Edwards and he were appointed Indian spies from the fort. Hughes was on the frontiers until the last of December and then dismissed to return whenever called upon. He took the field again in May, 1776, and performed the same kind of service until the last of September.

In the spring of 1777, Hughes was called to Maj. Rennick's fort on the Big Levels of Greenbrier county, and served under Capt. Andrew Hamilton. A few days after his arrival at the fort, a call was issued for volunteers to reinforce a small fort called McCoy's on Muddy creek. Hughes volunteered, with James Briggs, William Hamilton and William Gilkinson, and the party stopped at

the fort a few days until ordered back to Rennick's.

Hughes was then appointed an Indian spy and ordered to draw rations for eight days, stay out until the rations were exhausted, then draw eight days' more rations and continue scouting. He performed this duty until the end of September. In the summer of 1778 he went from Greenbrier county to Hampshire county, and in the spring of 1779 was enrolled in the company of Capt. George Bell, and appointed ensign. His commission is on file, and is dated November 9, 1779, signed by Thomas Jefferson. With it is filed an oath of allegiance, dated July 2, 1778, and a certificate of service in Capt. Cook's company, dated October 20, 1780.

On the March

About the middle of May, 1780, Jonathan Hughes was called out with Capt. Bell's company, and under command of Col. Morgan marched from Big Capon up Lost river to its head, thence over the South Branch mountain. At the summit there was a minor engagement with Tories, who were defeated with a loss of one killed and one wounded. After a month's service, the regiment returned to Hampshire county.

Pursues Deserters

Shortly afterwards, Hughes was ordered out by Capt. Bell to pursue deserters, and was thus engaged a week. With his papers is filed a discharge for the years of 1775, 1776, and 1777, dated October 20, 1780, signed by Capt. Cook.

At the close of the war, he resided in Hampshire county until sometime in the winter of 1783, when he moved to Wilkes county, North Carolina, living there until 1808, when he moved to Harrison county, this state. He moved to Gallia county, Ohio, January 28, 1829, where he spent most of the rest of his life, except three or four months in 1833, when he taught school in Jefferson county, Indiana, and his last years at the home of the late Lodawick Davis west of Salem, W. Va. His pension was granted to him as a resident of West Virginia, on his request, his children then living in that state.

Anderson Hughes, a son of the first Jonathan, died February 20, 1876, in Gallia county, Ohio. He enlisted in a company commanded by John Walkup in the War of 1812, and was honorably discharged April 13, 1815. He married Pamela Matthews, who died about May, 1854. He next married Mrs. Delilah Cress in May, 1856, in Gallia county. She was the widow of George Cress, who died in August, 1840. In 1881, at the age of 73 she applied for a pension. Her application was rejected.

Fabled Turkey Story

The identity of the lad who figured in the fabled turkey story about Jesse Hughes has never been certainly established. One authority says the lad was James Tanner, a brother of Jesse Hughes's wife.

Another declares it was James McCullough, who was preparing to shoot an alleged turkey gobbler on the hillside in the forest, when Hughes, learning the boy's intention, persuaded the latter to stay where he was while Hughes himself circled around to the rear of where the turkey's gobbler came from and creeping stealthily through the bushes saw an Indian sitting on a chestnut stump, surrounded by sprouts. The Indian was gobbling and watching for some one to come from the fort to kill the supposed turkey.

Hughes shot the savage before he became aware of Hughes's approach, took off the scalp and presented it to the lad who was waiting for the turkey. The boy was overcome when he learned of his escape from sure death he would have met had he gone hunting for the "turkey."

The incident appears to have taken place at West's fort instead of Clarksburg, as told by some. Jesse Hughes never resided at Clarksburg, although he spent much of his time about Nutter's fort, near here. His scouting expeditions extended all over the Virginia border and western Pennsylvania.

Some Old Guns

Mute reminders of pioneer members of the Hughes family and their warfare with Indians were recently unearthed by Harper Peck, 109 Summit court, Clarksburg, while exploring an ancient log house near West Milford. He first found the first week in April an old gun which bore the initials of Elias Hughes and the date 1774, deeply cut in the brass heel plate, as well as the words, "West Fork Fort." The old flint-lock contained two balls. It is now in the possession of O. G. Radabaugh, 759 Locust avenue, Clarksburg, and was on exhibition at a recent Hughes reunion.

Peck with his friend, James McCullough, went back to the old house July 15, and in a search of the premises found two more old guns similar to the first. On the brass heel plate of one of these were the words and figures: "West Fork Fort, 1774, Elias Hughes." Five notches had been cut on the wood stock of the gun, evidently signifying the number of Indians who had been killed by its use. It was in poor condition but had evidently been a fine firearm.