The Rickmonds: A Railroad Family

First Generation

1. **James Rufus Rickmond** was born 16 February 1849 in Scottsburg, Halifax County, Virginia, and died 20 January 1931 in Dan River, Pittsylvania County. He married **Mary Elizabeth Crowder** on 25 January 1871 in Halifax County. She was born 13 March 1853 in the same county, and died 7 April 1931 in Spencer, Rowan County, North Carolina.

JAMES RUFUS’S PARENTAGE

James Rufus, or Rufus, as he was known to his family, was born before civil birth registration began in Virginia. Absent a birth record, the following independently-created evidence confirms his parentage:

- On 15 March 1884 his father, H. J. Rickman, made a will naming Rufus as one of his six sons.
- Rufus’s marriage record identifies his parents as H. J. and Harriet A. “Ruckman.” Rufus likely supplied the information for the record.
• Rufus's death certificate designates his parents as Henry “J?Ricjmand” and Harriet Tuck. The informant was his son who most likely knew his grandfather and grandmother as they died when he was fourteen and eleven, respectively.9

RUFUS'S LIFE STORY

Rufus spent his formative years in Halifax County on his father's farm. The county lies in the fertile Piedmont countryside of Virginia—east of the Blue Ridge mountains and west of the Coastal Plain.10 Rufus's father, Henry, purchased the land from Cain Tuck, his father-in-law, in 1849 for three hundred twenty dollars.11 Valued at only five dollars more ten years later, it was one hundred twenty-eight acres, modest in comparison to some of the neighbors, with only about one third improved. The farm produced little—just three bushels of peas and beans and forty bushels of potatoes for the year, with no wheat, corn, or oats.12 Halifax County was the largest producer of tobacco and oats in the state by 1850, but Henry's farm reportedly produced none in 1860.13 With ten mouths to feed it is a wonder that the family survived on this meager amount of produce. They likely had help from Rufus's maternal grandmother's farm nearby, as it was about five times larger and produced one hundred bushels of wheat, one hundred sixty-five of Indian corn, twenty-five hundred pounds of tobacco, peas and beans, potatoes, oats, and fifty pounds of butter.14

Rufus was twelve when the Civil War broke out in 1861 and too young to serve. By 1864 another change in the conscription law reduced the minimum age to seventeen, but Rufus was still not old enough to be enlisted.15 There is no evidence he ever served in the conflict.16 When

15. Elizabeth was enumerated one line down from Henry. See 1860 U.S. census, Halifax Co., Va., ag. sch., p. 734, line 22, Elizabeth Tuck. Elizabeth was Cain Tuck’s wife. See Halifax Co., Va., Marriage Bonds 1:111, Tuck–Arrington, 23 February 1822; Halifax County Clerk; FHL microfilm 31,918.
he was twenty-one in 1870, he worked as a farm laborer along with his brother Wilson, aged eighteen. The family farm reportedly had less improved land than in 1860—just forty acres—but the value of it had increased to five hundred seventy-two dollars. It was now producing wheat, Indian corn, and fourteen hundred pounds of tobacco. The war had left the county, state, and the South in a social, economic, and agricultural upheaval. “Lands which before the Civil War were worth four and five times their present rating, after the war were thrown out of cultivation, because neither capital nor labor was to be had for the proper working of them.” Add to this the droughts of 1864 and 1867–1869 and perhaps this is why in 1870 he decided to leave farming and begin working for the Richmond & Danville Railroad.

THE RAILROAD LEGACY BEGINS

Running directly through the village of Scottsburg where Rufus was born, the railroad was a source of employment for many neighbors and for a young man the railroad must have presented an opportunity for adventure and a more lucrative occupation than that of a farmer. Perhaps also as one of six sons Rufus’s prospects of inheriting enough land to support a future family may have been slim.

The Richmond & Danville was chartered in 1847 and was essential in bringing grain and tobacco to market. By the Civil War it was also an important mode of transportation for the Confederacy. At the close of the war it was used to retreat from Richmond, as it was one of the few remaining railroads still in use by the Confederates. Known as the “first railroad war,” the Civil War left the South’s railroads and economy devastated. Most of the railroads, however, were repaired, reorganized and operated again. Rufus may have come along at just the right time and


17. 1870 U.S. census, Halifax Co., Va., pop. sch., Roanoke Twp., p. 37 (penned), dwell. 293, fam. 294, Henry J. Rickman household; Ancestry (http://www.ancestry.com : accessed 27 April 2018); NARA microfilm publication M593, roll 1650; citing FHL microfilm 553,149.


the right place to take advantage of an opportunity for a more prosperous life. He launched what was to become a long railroad career by starting at the bottom—working as a brakeman—between Richmond, Virginia, and Greensboro, North Carolina.25

Another probable reason for taking a job with the railroad was to support a family. Rufus married neighbor Mary Elizabeth (Bettie) Crowder, only seventeen, in 1871.26 But in 1874 tragedy struck. Near Sutherlin, in Pittsylvania County, Rufus fell from the top of a box car and was injured when a chain broke while he was applying the brakes.27 The job of brakeman was extremely dangerous and consisted of climbing onto the top of a moving train and administering the brakes by hand, leaping from car to car to set each brake wheel individually. This procedure was performed in all types of weather and times of the day.28 Rufus survived the accident but took on less strenuous duties. Though injured, he was fortunate to be retained by the railroad. By 1880 he and his family moved to adjacent Pittsylvania County where he worked as a railroad bridge watchman.29 A bridge watchman’s role was to “follow every train with a bucket of water, to extinguish any hot cinders that may have fallen from the engine.” He also had to keep an eye on his assigned bridge, prevent non-railroad employees from crossing it, and report any damage.30

THE AMERICAN DREAM: HOME OWNERSHIP

In 1882 at the young age of thirty-three, Rufus became a homeowner. He purchased a half-acre of land with a house lying directly alongside the railroad in Danville, Virginia, for one hundred dollars.31 The rear of the property dropped steeply down to the railroad tracks below, his great-granddaughter recalls.32 Only a railroad family could appreciate this location with all its accompanying noise and dust.

Rufus also served as switchman and station policeman.33 A switchman’s job traditionally was to

32. Interview with Betty Rickmond Tomlinson (Jacksonville, Fla.), 10 November 2015, great granddaughter of Rufus and Bettie (Crowder) Rickmond; notes privately held by the author. Betty Tomlinson was named after her great-grandmother Bettie, who died in 1931 when Betty was four. She recalled visiting her great grandparents’ home in Danville and was photographed there.
hook train cars together using links and pins—another occupation fraught with danger. These cars frequently were mismatched in size and sometimes moving. The advent of The Safety Appliance Act of 1893 meant the job was somewhat easier and safer with the invention of automatic coupling. Apparently he suffered no major accidents and retained all his fingers and toes. Station police preserved order on the train and around the station where they were assigned. They could arrest vagrants and drunk or disorderly persons and those seeking to avoid paying their fares.

Rufus’s father died in 1885 leaving land to only his youngest son, Ulysses; second wife, Susan; and daughter, Martha. Rufus and his four other brothers were to divide property given to their step-mother after she died. It was fortunate Rufus chose to work on the railroad.

In 1896 the Richmond & Danville Railroad was acquired by Southern Railway. By 1921 at the age of seventy-one he had served fifty years and held the rank of captain, his duties being watchman and ticket gateman at the Danville Station. He and Bettie celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary that same year with a party at the home of their son, John Henry, superintendent of terminals at Spencer, Rowan County, North Carolina. Both Rufus and Bettie were reported to be in excellent health. While it was not uncommon to see railroad employees over the age of sixty-five, Rufus was still working at age seventy-nine.

Rufus died in 1931 at the age of eighty-one after a short illness. At his death he had served sixty years on the railroads. His continuous employment, at times working dangerous occupations, enabled him to own his own home and provide a secure life for his family. Because railroading was a tight-knit community with “newcomers often coming from the families veterans,” Rufus ultimately created a gateway for a long history of railroad employment and prosperity for the
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Rufus left his personal property and real estate to his wife and after her death to be equally divided between his son, John Henry, and daughter, Fannie.46

MARY ELIZABETH’S (BETTIE) PARENTAGE AND LIFE STORY

Bettie was the daughter of John C. and Mary Crowder.47 Although her death certificate lists her parents as William and Harriett Crowder, it is undoubtedly an error. The names were originally listed as “unknown” and at some point crossed through. Bettie’s son, J. H. (John Henry) Rickmond was the informant and he may not have recalled his grandfather’s first name as he was about fifteen when John Crowder died.48 Harriet was his other grandmother’s name, so that may explain the inconsistencies. However, Bettie’s marriage register is the more reliable source for her parents’ names as Bettie herself was likely the informant. Although not proof of parentage, she also appears in the household of John and Mary Crowder in 1860 and 1870.49

Bettie came from a family of three brothers and three sisters.50 Hers was a farming family similar to that of Rufus—her father owning about one hundred acres where he grew wheat, Indian corn, oats, tobacco, peas and beans, and sweet potatoes.51 After marrying at seventeen she had her first child one year later while she and Rufus were still living in Scottsburg.52 In 1876 a daughter was born followed by a son two years later.53

Things were about to change for the Rickmonds. In 1880 the population of sleepy little Scottsburg was eighty-seven.54 But a move to the industrial city of Danville brought the family to a vastly different locale, leaving behind the home they knew for the uncertainties ahead. Though

47. For Bettie’s parents see Halifax Co., Va., Marriage Register 3:71, no. 188, Ruckman–Crowder, 25 January 1871.
50. Ibid.
51. The Crowder family was listed four lines down from the Rickmonds in the 1870 agricultural census. See 1870 U.S. census, Halifax Co., Va., ag. sch., Roanoke Twp., unnumbered page, line 8, John C. Crowder; *Ancestry* (http: www.ancestry.com : accessed 27 April 2018); NARA microfilm publication T1132, roll 12.
53. Halifax Co., Va., Register of Births, no. 321, Fannie B. Rickmond, 2 December 1875 and no. 474, Jas. B. Rickmond, 20 April 1878; FHL microfilm 2,046,940, item 1.
still in the Piedmont region Danville’s population in 1880 was well over seven thousand.\textsuperscript{55} Serviced by Rufus’s employer, the Richmond & Danville Railroad, it was an important tobacco processing center and mill town. Grain as well as increasingly important textile products were processed there by water power derived from falls on the Dan River. But it was becoming a rather unpredictable place. The industries attracted many single men and with them came problems with alcohol, gambling, and prostitution. Added to the mix was a population of over fifty percent African Americans whose power was growing.\textsuperscript{56} Tensions were high. In 1882 the mayor of Danville shot his own chief of police.\textsuperscript{57} In November 1883 a race riot broke out due to a minor incident between a white man and two black men resulting in the death of five people.\textsuperscript{58}

Faced with the uncertainties of a new location, Bettie surely took refuge in her family, her recently purchased home, and her religion. A lifelong member of the Baptist church, she became a charter member of the North Danville Baptist Church about 1887.\textsuperscript{59} Now known as the Moffett Memorial Baptist Church, it was named after Rev. John R. Moffett, Bettie’s pastor, who was slain in the streets of Danville in 1892 by a local attorney.\textsuperscript{60} Moffett was a staunch prohibitionist and known for his outspoken views.\textsuperscript{61} “The church was numb after the trauma of the first pastor’s death.”\textsuperscript{62} It undoubtedly was a violent and trying time for Bettie and her family.

Sometime before 1900 Bettie and Rufus lost two children—James B. and an unnamed child.\textsuperscript{63} She lived long enough to know her great grandchildren. Her great granddaughter Betty Richmond Tomlinson recalls Bettie’s practice in later years of always setting an extra place at the table for her son, John Henry, in case he “dropped in.” His railroad job in Spencer and the location of his parents’ home next to the railroad tracks allowed him to easily hop a train and visit with his mother over lunch in Danville.\textsuperscript{64} Bettie reportedly also had a habit of squirreling away all kinds of silver money in her wardrobe because she didn’t believe in paper money or depositing it in banks. When

\textsuperscript{55} Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/; accessed 30 April 2018), “Danville, Virginia.” In 1880 the population was 7,426.


\textsuperscript{59} For lifelong church membership see “Mrs. Rickmond To Be Buried Here Today at 2:30 p.m.,” The Bee, Danville, Va., 8 April 1931, page 1, col. 5; Newspapers.com (https://www.newspapers.com/image/47554054/). For Danville church membership see Victor Edsel Mantiply, A History of Moffett Memorial Baptist Church, Danville, Virginia, 1887–1987 (Lawrenceville, Va.: Moffett Memorial Baptist Church, 1987), 1–3.


\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{62} Mantiply, A History of Moffett Church, 13.

\textsuperscript{63} The 1900 census stated that Bettie was the mother of four children, two of which were still alive. See 1900 U.S. census, Pittsylvania Co., Va., pop. sch., Dan River Dist., ED 77, sheet 17B, dwell. 336, fam. 337, Mary E. Rickmond. James B. was listed in the 1880 census with his family. See 1880 U.S. census, Pittsylvania Co., Va., pop. sch., ED 175, J. R. “Bickman” household. The youngest son’s name is unclear but is consistent with the name Jamie or James, he is two years old and fits with an 1878 birth. No death record was found for him searching “Virginia Deaths and Burials, 1853–1912” at FamilySearch using search terms James B. Ric*m*n* and his birth year. He was not found in the 1900 census using search terms James B. Ric*m*n* and his birth year and born in Virginia. He likely died between 1880 and 1900.

\textsuperscript{64} Betty Richmond Tomlinson, interview, 10 November 2015.
her John Henry discovered it he would take it to the bank and deposit it for her.65

After Rufus died, Bettie moved to Spencer to live with her widowed daughter, Fannie.66 A few months later at the age of seventy-eight, Bettie passed away.67 Rufus and Bettie are buried in Leemont Cemetery in Danville in the family plot.68

Rufus and Bettie Rickmond had four children:

+ 2

i. JOHN HENRY RICKMOND, born 2 November 1871 in Scottsburg; died 18 July 1937 in Greenville, Greenville County, South Carolina.69 He married Virginia (Jennie) Willie Myers on 1 June 1892 in Pelham, Caswell County, North Carolina.70

ii. FANNIE ELIZABETH RICKMOND, born 28 December 1876 in Halifax County;71 died 30 June 1971 in Birmingham, Jefferson County, Alabama.72 She married George Starks Perkinson 24 December 1895 in Neapolis, Pittsylvania County, Virginia.73

iii. JAMES B. RICKMOND, born 20 April 1878 in Halifax County;74 died perhaps 1880–1900.75

iv. UNNAMED CHILD.76
Second Generation

2. **John Henry Rickmond** was born 2 November 1871 in Scottsburg, and died 18 July 1937 in Greenville. He married **Virginia Willie Myers** on 1 June 1892 in Pelham. Jennie or Willie, as she was known by either name, was born 1 January 1873 likely in Pittsylvania County, and died 21 November 1933 in Greenville.

**JOHN HENRY’S PARENTAGE**

John Henry's parents were named in the following independently-created records:

- His marriage license states he was born to J. R. and M. E. Rickmond. John Henry undoubtedly provided this information.
- John Henry was identified in his father's will, along with sister Fannie and was appointed the executor.
- John Henry's son C. J. was the informant on his father's death record and named his father's parents as J. R. Rickmond and Bettie Crowder.
- Lastly, although no relationships are given on the gravestones, John Henry and his wife Jennie, are buried next to Rufus and Bettie in the Rickmond/Perkinson family plot in Leemont Cemetery in Danville.

**LIFE STORY**

John Henry moved with his family from rural Halifax County to the more industrial area of Danville between 1878 and 1880. Danville was a hub of the Richmond & Danville Railroad

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78. Caswell Co., N.C., Register of Deeds, Marriage licenses, File Box G, 1889–1893, no. 279, Rickmond–Myers, 1 June 1892; FHL microfilm 540,254.
80. Caswell Co., N.C., Register of Deeds, Marriage licenses, Rickmond–Myers, 1 June 1892. J. R. is undoubtedly James Rufus and M. E. is Mary Elizabeth.
83. Leemont Cemetery, Rickmond and Perkinson family graves.
84. John Henry’s brother James B. was born in Halifax County in 1878. See Halifax Co., Va., Register of Births, no. 474, Jas. B. Rickmond, 20 April 1878. By 1880 the family was living in Pittsylvania County. See 1880 U.S. census, Pittsylvania Co., Va., pop. sch., ED 175, J. R. Rickman household.
where his father Rufus was employed. It must have been an exciting experience for a young boy to not only have a father who worked on the railroad, but to have the railroad right in his own backyard.\(^{85}\) In 1889 at age seventeen he, too, joined the railroad, beginning as a yard clerk.\(^{86}\) “Family connection represented probably the most important asset in securing employment for all grades of railroad workers.”\(^{87}\)

John Henry steadily took on more responsibilities, becoming a brakeman in 1897, followed by freight conductor in 1900, by which time he had moved to Salisbury, Rowan County, North Carolina.\(^{88}\) He bought his first property at age twenty-eight in Spencer, which consisted of a quarter-acre lot on the south side of the Southern Railway.\(^{89}\) In 1906 he was promoted to passenger conductor at age thirty-five. By 1907 he was train master of the Danville division.\(^{90}\) A master of the train works directly for the superintendent, overseeing all trainmen, ensuring they know the rules and are following safety precautions. In addition, he makes sure there are no train delays and that cargo is promptly loaded and unloaded.\(^{91}\) His new position brought new challenges. In 1910 he appeared before the North Carolina Corporation Commission to testify regarding a train wreck occurring in Raleigh where two people were killed and several injured.\(^{92}\) In 1916 he was promoted to superintendent of terminals in Salisbury–Spencer.\(^{93}\) A few days after taking over his new post the area experienced heavy rains which delayed trains and washed out bridges; as a result, some trains were canceled completely and many others were moved to sidings to relieve congestion. He was up to managing the upheaval, however, and had community support—the newspaper reporting he was “handling the situation in a splendid manner.”\(^{94}\)

Safety issues and strikes were especially troublesome for the railroad industry. In March 1920 a series of near misses between locomotives and travelers crossing to board trains necessitated John Henry to issue safety orders reminding his rail employees to obey the federal law as well as the Southern Railroad rule to never block the gangways.\(^{95}\) The situation worsened as four people were hit in April. Again, the local newspaper backed John Henry’s efforts and stated that “… Supt.

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88. For residence see 1900 U.S. census, Rowan Co., N.C., pop. sch., Salisbury Twp., ED 114, sheet 213A, dwell. 381, fam. 401, John H. “Richmond” household; Ancestry (http://www.ancestry.com : accessed 27 April 2018); NARA microfilm publication T623, roll 1216; citing FHL microfilm 1,241,216.
91. Richmond and Danville Railroad Company, Rules for the Government of the Transportation Department, 34–35.
Rickmond was doing all in his power to enforce the rule of the company and the federal law…"96  
In August John Henry implemented a new plan which rerouted the arriving tracks to alleviate the dangerous passenger crossing.97  
Train strikes in 1920 and again during the Great Railroad Strike of 1922, were vexing. The latter, one of the largest strikes ever to hit America was due to shopmen’s wages being cut.98  
Although the engineers, firemen, conductors, and brakemen did not strike, there were major work stoppages around the country.99  
In Salisbury the situation became so tense that the governor of North Carolina ordered in the National Guard to keep order. However, the workers would not go back to work in the presence of the troops. Later that same day John Henry’s office announced that the passenger trains, manned by railroad officials and others, had cleared the terminal after the troops were ordered to be removed.100  
John Henry’s career path followed a typical pattern at first.101  
He was a brakeman by age 25, freight conductor at 28, and passenger conductor by 35. But he broke the mold when he rose to the position of trainmaster still at 35 and superintendent of terminals at 44.102  
Employment on the railroad was not without its benefits—decent wages, fringe benefits, and opportunities for advancement encouraged workers to remain with their company.103  

JOHN HENRY’S CIVIC LEADERSHIP AND FRATERNAL AFFILIATIONS  
In addition to his demanding work schedule, John Henry was active in his local community. He suggested to the newspaper that the city “clean up streets and improve sidewalks.”104  
He used the local paper to express support for a bond issue to improve area schools “regardless of cost.”105  
He spoke at the Kiwanis Club during a special session on the topic of health matters.106  
Holding a Third Degree in the Beulah Lodge of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows John Henry was also a member of the Greensboro Masonic Lodge.107  
In Salisbury he and another Southern official

98. A shopman belonged to a large category of railroad workers that included machinists, carpenters, etc. that built and repaired the railroad cars and engines. See Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org : accessed 2 May 2018), “Railroad shopmen.”
101. For a general pattern of railroad career progression see Licht, Working for the Railroad, 150.
103. Licht, Working for the Railroad, 125. For fringe benefits see J. H. Rickmond and wife Southern Railway Company pass, 1937; Tomlinson Family Papers, privately held by Leslie W. Tomlinson, [ADDRESS FOR PRIVATE USE,] Helotes, Tx. It entitled the bearer to ride Southern Railway at no cost. This printed card was passed from Rickmond’s son Maurice (1893–1986) to his daughter Betty Rickmond Tomlinson, from whom the author inherited it.
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formed a local chapter of the Masonic Southgate club, composed of fifty-two Master Masons, all railroad men.\(^\text{108}\)

By the time of his daughter Blanche’s marriage in 1936, John Henry was bedridden.\(^\text{109}\) He died the following year.\(^\text{110}\) He named Blanche executrix of his estate, leaving her his household and kitchen furniture. The remainder of his property was to be divided equally among all his children.\(^\text{111}\) John Henry, his father, and brother-in-law bought cemetery plots in Danville City Cemetery in 1899.\(^\text{112}\) It is there that he and his wife are buried along with an unnamed infant son.\(^\text{113}\)

**JENNIE MYER’S PARENTAGE AND LIFE STORY**

Jennie was born 1 January 1873, one of seven children of illiterate farmer Robert Myers and Jane T. Myers who married 22 April 1869.\(^\text{114}\) Her father served as a private in the 38th regiment of the Virginia infantry known as the Pittsylvania Regiment.\(^\text{115}\) He was one of the ninety-four men in his unit who were captured at Dinwiddie Court House in April 1865 and released two months later near the end of the war.\(^\text{116}\) Her father died when Jennie was just twelve.\(^\text{117}\) To help support


111. J. H. Rickmond will, Greenville Co., S.C., citing document dated 2 March 1934; Tomlinson family papers, privately held by the author, [ADDRESS FOR PRIVATE USE,] Helotes, Tx. This typed will bears the signature of J. H. Rickmond [John Henry Rickmond] and three witnesses. The document was passed from his son Maurice Rickmond (1893–1986) to his daughter Betty Rickmond Tomlinson, from whom the author inherited it.


their family, she and her sisters worked in the Danville textile mills, where Jennie was a mill hand. 118 “The Southern textile industry relied in large part on the labor of children. Between 1880 and 1910, roughly a quarter of all textile workers were under the age of 16.” 119 Small hands were more adept at some of the close work required in the preparation and dressing of looms. Jennie’s sister Maggie was a drawing-in hand. This work consisted of drawing the warp (lengthwise threads) through the eyes in the loom’s harness in preparation for inserting the weft (crosswise threads) to make cloth. 120 Ida, her other sister, was a spooler, using a machine to combine thread from multiple bobbins, then winding it to be used in the weaving process. 121

Jennie’s first children—twin boys, Maurice and Nathaniel—were born in Danville on 5 October 1893. 122 Nathaniel died the following day. 123 Two more children were born to Jennie and John Henry. 124 After John Henry was promoted to freight conductor the family moved to North Carolina, where three additional children were born. 125 While her husband was advancing his career at Southern Railway and performing civic and fraternal duties, Jennie’s focus was on her family and settling in each new community where they moved. 126 Her children participated in numerous


122. The family Bible records the birth of Maurice Herman Rickmond and an unnamed twin on 5 October 1893. See Rickmond Family Bible Records, “Deaths,” image 3. For that birth date Nathaniel “Richmond” appears in the county birth register, but no Maurice. See Pittsylvania Co., Va., Birth Register, 1893, Nathaniel Richmond, 5 October 1893, pg. 1088 (stamped), line 136; Library of Virginia, Richmond; FHL microfilm 2,046,957, item 1. Although his surname is spelled Richmond, this is undoubtedly the record for the twin to Maurice, as his father is J. H., his mother is Jennie, and the birth date is the same as listed in the family Bible for Maurice. The register appears to be written all at one time, in one hand, and arranged in alphabetical order. Although there is a column to note multiple births, every listing on the page is for a single birth, and all occupations for the fathers, but one, are recorded as “farmer.” These details may indicate the list was copied from another source and may not have all the details of the original. This boy is undoubtedly the unnamed twin from the Rickmond’s Bible.


124. Ibid, “Births.” Nellie Ruth was born in 1895 and Lester Lee in 1897.


activities from Sunday school and youth groups to Eastern Star and Boy Scouts. 127 Scholarship was undoubtedly important as Blanche and William appeared on the honor roll. 128 Blanche, the only child of the family to attend and graduate from college, became a school principal. 129 Maurice and Clarence served in the navy during WWI, while her youngest son, William, served in the army in WWII. 130 Maurice, Lester, Clarence, and Nellie all worked in some capacity for Southern Railway. Together with their father and grandfather this family served one hundred one years with Southern. 131

While certainly proud of the achievements of her family, Jennie had her share of losses. When she was eight her brother Christopher died, followed by her father four years later; son Nathaniel passed away a day after he was born. 132 Her mother and sister Gertie died when Jennie was in her forties and in her fifties another sister Maggie May died. 133 After the birth of her fourth son, Clarence, Jennie became deaf. 134 Tragically Jennie’s oldest daughter Nellie, married only three
years, succumbed suddenly to appendicitis in 1928. Jennie died at age sixty in 1933 after a long illness and is buried in Danville in the family plot.

John Henry and Jennie Rickmond had seven children:

1. MAURICE HERMAN RICKMOND, twin, born 5 October 1893 in Danville; died 5 September 1986 in Mount Airy, Surry County, North Carolina. He married Effie Golden Baxley, 16 March 1921 in Rowan County.
2. NATHANIEL RICKMOND, twin, born 5 October 1893 in Danville; died 6 October 1893. He was most likely the unnamed infant whose remains were moved to the family burial plot in 1933.
3. NELLIE RUTH RICKMOND, born 8 October 1895 most likely in Danville; died 3 May 1928 in Ft. Myers, Lee County, Florida. She married William Walter Watson, 1 January 1925.
4. LESTER LEE RICKMOND, born 4 November 1897 in Danville; died 4 January 1959 in Monroe, Union County, North Carolina. He married Wilma E. Horton, 4 May 1925.

137. The fact that two boys were born on 5 October 1893 was noted in the family bible. Only Maurice survived. See Rickmond Family Bible Records, “Births,” image 3. For corroboration of Maurice’s birth date see also Maurice Herman Rickmond, SS no. 704-16-2536, 20 January 1937, Application for Account Number (Form SS-5), Social Security Administration, Baltimore, Maryland.
140. Pittsylvania Co., Va., Birth Register, Nathaniel “Richmond,” 5 October 1893, p. 1088, line 136; Library of Virginia, Richmond; FHL microfilm 2,046,957, item 1.
143. Rickmond Family Bible Records, “Births,” image 3. Her siblings born immediately before and after her were both born in Danville. No birth record has been found for her in the county or state registers. For corroboration of birth month and year see 1900 U.S. census, Rowan Co., N.C., pop. sch., Salisbury Twp., ED 0114, sheet 23A, dwell. 381, fam. 401, Nellie “Richmond.”
144. Florida State Department of Health, Nellie R. Watson, death certificate no. 7804, 3 May 1928; Bureau of Vital Statistics, Jacksonville. Her birthdate is given as 1897 which is later than that stated in the family bible to which the author gives more credence.
v. CLARENCE JEFFERSON RICKMOND, born 11 July 1903 in East Spencer, Rowan County, North Carolina;\(^{149}\) died 29 March 1983 in Rockledge, Brevard County, Florida.\(^{150}\) He married Theda Brown Klutz, 30 October 1922 in Rowan County.\(^{151}\)

vi. BLANCHE AUDREY RICKMOND, born 1 February 1906 in Spencer; died 13 November 1997 in Clemson, Pickens County, South Carolina.\(^{152}\) She married her sister’s widower William Walter Watson 20 December 1936 in Greenville.\(^{153}\)

vii. WILLIAM HARRISON RICKMOND, born 25 June 1908 in Greensboro, Guilford County, North Carolina;\(^{154}\) died 29 December 1967 in Greenville County.\(^{155}\) He married Joe Lee Street 9 November 1932 in Columbia, Richland County, South Carolina.\(^{156}\)

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**Third Generation**

3. **Maurice Herman Rickmond** was born 5 October 1893 in Danville;\(^{157}\) died 5 September 1986 in Mount Airy.\(^{158}\) He married **Effie Golden Baxley** on 16 March 1921 in Rowan County.\(^{159}\) She was born 10 January 1899 in Red Springs, Robeson County, North Carolina;\(^{160}\) died 1 June 1989 in Jacksonville, Duval County, Florida.\(^{161}\)

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154. Greenville Co., S.C., delayed birth certificate no. 256 (issued 1943), William Harrison Rickmond; Probate Court, Greenville. Actual birth was 25 June 1908.


157. Maurice Herman Rickmond, SS no. 704-16-2536, 1937, Application for Account Number (Form SS-5), Social Security Administration.


MAURICE RICKMOND’S PARENTAGE

Maurice was born to John Henry Rickmond and Jennie/Willie Myers. Proof of his parentage is evidenced in the following independently-created records:

- Maurice's marriage certificate identifies his parents as J. H. and Willie Rickmond.162
- His application for a social security number names his parents as John Henry Rickmond and Willie Myers.163
- Maurice was listed as one of five living children in his father John Henry’s will.164
- His death record designates his parents as John Henry and Jennie Myers. His wife Effie was the informant and knew both of her husband's parents, as she was introduced to her husband by his father.165

LIFE STORY

Born in Virginia, Maurice and his family moved to Salisbury by 1900.166 Like his father, most of the men in his neighborhood were employed by the railroad.167 At seventeen he still attended school, no doubt due to his father's income being sufficient to support the family.168 By nineteen Maurice followed in the footsteps of his father and grandfather before him and joined the railroad.169 He began as a freight agent, working his way up to brakeman in the Danville Division by age twenty-three.170 When WWI broke out he served in the navy and was rated Radioman Third Class and served on a transport ship, likely due to his experience as a railroad telegraph operator.171 He was discharged on 30 September 1921 and that same year re-employed by Southern Railway, indeed fortunate to have a job, with all the returning servicemen.172

Maurice's father introduced him to his future wife, Effie Baxley.173 They married in a small wedding in 1921 and by 1930 had two daughters, Frances and Betty, and owned their own home in Asheville, Buncombe County, North Carolina.174 However, the Depression took its toll when

162. Rowan Co., N.C., marriage certificate, Rickmond–Baxley.
163. Maurice Herman Rickmond, SS no. 704-16-2536, 1937, Application for Account Number (Form SS-5), Social Security Administration.
164. J. H. Rickmond will, Greenville Co., S.C., citing document dated 2 March 1934; Tomlinson family papers, privately held by the author, [ADDRESS FOR PRIVATE USE:] Helotes, Texas. This typed will bears the signature of J. H. Rickmond [John Henry Rickmond] and three witnesses. The document was passed from his son Maurice Rickmond (1893–1986) to his daughter Betty Tomlinson, from whom the author inherited it.
165. Surry Co., N.C., Maurice Herman Rickmond, death certificate no. 71-421, 5 September 1986. See also Betty Rickmond Tomlinson, interview, November 2014. The author holds a four-generation photo of the Rickmond family complete with Effie and Maurice, Jennie and John Henry, Rufus and Bettie, and Frances and Betty Rickmond.
166. 1900 U.S. census, Rowan Co., N.C., pop. sch., ED 0114, sheet 23A, John H. "Richmond" household.
167. Ibid. See lines 7, 10, 16, 18, 19, 22, 38, 41, and 46 for occupations of neighbors.
172. Ibid.
Maurice was put on furlough from the railroad in 1931. Even though the Rickmonds had the income from three teachers who boarded with them, they were still not able to keep their home. Instead, they moved around the corner to a smaller house. The family made ends meet by opening a modest food establishment called the Bluebird Ice Cream Store, offering inexpensive food such as hotdogs, hamburgers, pies for a nickel a slice, and, of course, ice cream. Some of the patrons urged Effie to make chili dogs like the tasty ones at Saucy Sandwich, a nearby establishment, but in a less desirable part of town. Effie offered one of the local boys who frequented her store a nickel to bring her a Saucy Sandwich chili dog so she could taste it and determine why they were so good. She then added her version of chili dogs to the menu. They must have been successful because later they were able to open another restaurant, but in a better location.

Like his father and grandfather, Maurice was no stranger to dangerous railroad jobs. Around 1928 Maurice had a serious fall from a freight train outside Asheville. Thankfully a passerby found him, put him in his car, and drove him to the hospital where he remained for a month, being kept flat on his back on wooden boards. Another time, nearly at his retirement, he was hit in the head when two young men sitting on an overpass threw rocks at the train in which he was riding. His cheek bone broken and requiring surgery, Maurice did not press charges. He did not want the boys to have the incident on their records. Later they came to see him in the hospital and apologized.

Maurice retired on 21 October 1959 after forty-seven years with the railroad. His last occupation was conductor in Asheville. His pension amounted to one hundred fifty dollars per month which allowed him and Effie to move to a mobile home village in Fort Myers, Lee County, Florida, to live a long-awaited retirement. Maurice died 5 September 1986 at the age of ninety-two in Mt. Airy.

EFFIE BAXLEY’S PARENTAGE AND LIFE STORY

Effie Golden Baxley was the daughter of Nelson Baxley and Virginia Ellen MacDonald. She was born in Red Springs. Nelson died in 1902 and Virginia died the following year leaving Effie and three siblings orphaned. Likely unable to care for his step-brother and -sisters, Nelson’s son Colin by an earlier marriage took them to Thomasville’s Baptist Orphanage in April 1904. The oldest child, Dicey Melinda, died from typhoid fever; the youngest, Katie Belle, was taken in by a farmer and his wife, leaving Effie and her brother Roland to grow up in the orphanage.
Roland ran away in 1916. However, Effie remained at the institution and thrived. She believed she had a varied and rich education, with piano and voice lessons, anatomy, biology, and domestic arts education. During her residence the orphanage grew to be the second largest in the United States. Yet it was not too big to take individual notice of its residents. The orphanage followed Effie through the years as evidenced in newspaper clippings found in her school files. One praised Effie and remarked “I believe she is the most all-round woman I have ever known—she can do anything.”

In June 1918 she left the orphanage to live with Mrs. F.V. Barrier in Salisbury for her eleventh year of schooling. She cooked and cleaned for her landlady in payment for room and board. Later she was hired to teach elementary school. After marriage Effie raised two active girls, whom she taught to cook, sew, and manage thrifty households. She passed many of her recipes down to her daughters and their families, the most famous being “See Red Relish.” Scholarship was important in this family as well. Both girls were on the honor roll and attended college, Frances graduating from Biltmore College in 1942.

After her girls were grown Effie had more time for church and service activities. She belonged to a local Baptist church group and hosted evenings at her home. She held office in the Ladies Auxiliary of the Order of Railway Conductors, a service organization for wives of railroad conductors that assisted widows and children of conductors. Effie died at ninety-one on 1 June

Roland, no. 814; Effie, no. 815; and Katie, no. 816.

184. Ibid., individual file for Roland, no. 814.
187. Miscellaneous Baxley children newspaper clippings, 14 Sep. 1939–1949, unidentified newspaper; Tomlinson family papers, privately held by the author, [ADDRESS FOR PRIVATE USE,] Helotes, Tx. Photocopies were obtained in 2005 from microfilmed records of the Baptists Children's Homes of North Carolina, Inc.
188. Ibid.
189. Sallie L McCracken, Research Secretary, Baptists Children's Homes of North Carolina, Inc., Thomasville, NC, unstated recipient, letter, 23 Oct 1959, verification of orphanage records for Effie Baxley; personal correspondence, 1959, Tomlinson research files, privately held by the author, [ADDRESS FOR PRIVATE USE,] Helotes, Tx., 2015.
191. The author enjoyed many delicious jars of this relish.
1989 at the home of her daughter Betty in Jacksonville.\footnote{Duval Co., Fla., Effie B. Rickmond, death certificate no. 574041, 1 June 1989.}

Maurice and Effie had two children:


ii. BETTY BAXLEY RICKMOND, born 1 August 1924 in Asheville.\footnote{Buncombe Co., N.C., birth certificate no. 633, Betty Baxley Rickmond, 1 August 1924; Register of Deeds, Asheville, North Carolina.} She married James Addison Tomlinson on 5 August 1944 in Washington, D.C.\footnote{District of Columbia, marriage certificate no. 270877, Tomlinson–Rickmond, 5 August 1944; District Court Clerk, Washington, D.C.}

CONCLUSION

Three generations of men chose a profession that was risky, yet yielded rewards—one that led to the American dream of home ownership and prosperity. Through accidents, furloughs, world wars, and the Depression, the Rickmond men remained disciplined, loyal, and competent railroad employees. Their wives steadfastly maintained stable family relationships even with the long hours and dangerous work of their men, raising the next generation of railroaders wherever the railroad sent them.