

# *The* *Story of* WISE COUNTY *Virginia*

Luther F. Addington

One of the oldest and largest families in the northern part of the present limits of Wise County is that of the Bollings. These Bollings belong to that family which traces its ancestry back to John Rolfe and Pocahontas. However, the first to come to Wise County was Benjamin Bolling who came from Wilkes County, North Carolina, about the year 1790.

Benjamin first settled on Guest River not far from the present site of Esserville. Here he built a log cabin and claimed a vast tract of land.

One day his wife went to a spring to get water and a panther sprang out at her. Returning to the cabin she prevailed upon Benjamin to go back to North Carolina. He said he would if he could sell his property.

One day a hunter came along with a rifle over his shoulder and two hound dogs at his heels. The hunter remarked that Benjamin had a good place to live. Benjamin said he wanted to sell. The hunter asked him how much he would take. Benjamin looked at the rifle and the dogs and said, "I'll sell all my holding here for that rifle and them dogs." And so, the trade was made and Benjamin and his wife returned to North Carolina. The land he sold so cheaply is today worth millions of dollars!

But he was still dissatisfied with North Carolina and again he returned to Virginia, bringing with him his wife, his son, Jeremiah and his daughter-in-law, who before her marriage was Sallie Ward, Benjamin Bolling made his second settlement on the Pound Fork of the Big Sandy. Here the Bollings still live. So completely does the name prevail in the locality that of sixty-nine pupils recently enrolled in one of the public schools, all but one were Bollings or their mothers were Bollings. The Bollings, it appears, belonged to the Old Primitive Baptist church.

Many of the early settlers of the County subscribed to the faith of this denomination, and the followers are still to be found in

<sup>9</sup> Kennedy, Ralph Emerson, *An Economic and Social Survey of Wise County*, University of Virginia Bulletin, p. 13.

<sup>10</sup> Kilgore, William J. "An Interview on the Early History of the County."

considerable numbers in the more rural sections. Benjamin Bolling lived to be 98 years old, and the rude stone marking his final resting place bears the simple inscription, "B. Bolling 1734–1832." Sallie Ward, the wife of Jeremiah Bolling, is said to have been a playmate of the young Andrew Jackson, their childhood homes being near each other right on the borderline of North and South Carolina. Also, it is said she very much disliked the young Andrew, and even after he rose to fame and had won the admiration of the whole nation, she persistently spoke disparagingly of him.

Jeremiah Bolling became the father of thirteen children, eleven of whom grew to maturity; and, of these, eight bore Bible names, which indicates the deep-seated spiritual bent of the family. Late in life Sallie Bolling was seized with the passion of returning to the home of her childhood in the Carolinas and visiting her kindred, and taking with her the young son Hosea, she set out on horseback. She riding and the lad walking, they made their journey over the rough mountain trails, fording the streams and taking the weather as it came. Lodging from time to time with the rude settlers scattered along the way, they finally arrived at their destination, only to find that after forty years of absence there remained no trace of friend or kinsman about the place of her childhood. Disappointed and sad, the weary travelers soon began to retrace their footsteps to the Pound, where anxious friends and relatives awaited them.<sup>11</sup>