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—ROOTED IN HISTORY: The Genealogy of Harry S. Truman —

"I am sure that the good old Saxon name Tru Man is just what it purports to be and [has] nothing whatever to do with Normandy or what spewed out of it."

So wrote **President Harry Truman** to his cousin **Mary Ethel Noland** in March 1952. He was commenting on the coat of arms marked "Tremaine" that another cousin, **Ralph Truman**, had brought to the President. The President said that he believed the "Tremaine thing is a lot of bunk." But, he conceded, "Maybe I'm wrong. Anyway as I've told you so long as we don't find Captain Kidd, Morgan the Pirate or J.P. [Morgan] either, for that matter, in 'the line' I'm satisfied."

President Truman occasionally received inquiries from people interested in his family genealogy, and he usually referred them to Miss Mary Ethel Noland - known to family and friends as Ethel - who served as the family historian. Truman found humor in his cousin's fascination with the subject. For example, in 1946 when a friend raised a question about the President's kinship to another family of Trumans, the President replied that he did not pay too much attention to these things, but that his cousin Ethel Noland was a "nut on the subject."

He continued, "I think [she] has all the facts, although she spent most of her time trying to prove that the family were Virginians and came over with the followers of Charles I and I always tell her the first Truman to come to this country was the son of the old man who established Truman's Brewery in England in 1666. Ethel, of course, doesn't like it when I say I think this relative belongs to the branch of the family which I support."

Miss Noland eventually compiled hundreds of pages of letters, family lore, and other genealogical data that comprise the most complete record of Truman family genealogy. The material is now in the collections of the Truman Library, along with information donated by other Truman family researchers.

Mary Ethel was the daughter of **Joseph Tilford Noland** and **Margaret Ellen Truman**, who was a sister of the President's father, **John Anderson Truman**. Early in this century, the Nolands lived on Delaware Street in Independence, across from the present Truman home, which was then the home of Madge Gates Wallace and her family. It was in 1910 that young Harry made that fortuitous journey across the street from the Noland's residence to the Gates Wallace home to return a cake plate, a journey that launched his courtship of **Bess Wallace**.

President Truman's ancestry includes the names **Gregg, Shipp, Goodnight, Tyler, Holmes, Scott, Duvall** and several others, some still unknown. His ancestry was predominantly English, with a few German, French, and Scottish lines. Most of the families came from Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries, with many of them settling first in Virginia and later moving west to Kentucky.

The name Truman is found among Englishmen who emigrated to America in the 1660s, although the connection between the President and those Trumans is unknown. **William Truman, Sr.**, who died in 1797, seems to be the President's earliest documented Truman ancestor. The Truman family lived in Virginia, then moved to Kentucky around 1800. Dorothy Malloy, author of a lengthy genealogy titled *Saga of the Taney Rainbow Trails*, claims, "Very little is known about the Trumans of Virginia, for they tended to mend their own fences and kept away from politics and land disputes which might have brought them to the attention of provincial courts."

Most of President Truman's ancestors of the Revolutionary War period have been identified. It appears that all of his male forebears of that era served the Patriot cause in the war. Those on his mother's side who helped throw off British rule were Michael Goodnight, **John Gregg, William Scott**, and **Jacob Young**; on his father's side were **Richard Shipp, James Holmes**, and **Robert Tyler**. No record has been found of the senior William Truman's role in the war, perhaps because of the destruction of records in some parts of Virginia during the years of conflict with British forces.

Another early ancestor of President Truman was a French Huguenot, **Mareen/Marin Duvall**, who immigrated to Maryland in the 1650s. He is thought also to be an ancestor of actor Robert Duvall. Marin's granddaughter,

Elizabeth Duvall, married **Edward Tyler, Sr.** in 1714 and the couple moved to Kentucky. Their grandson, **Robert Tyler**, is said to have helped Daniel Boone's brother, Squire Boone, establish the first white settlement in Shelby County, which they named Boone's Station. During the Revolutionary War, Tyler served as a soldier on the Kentucky frontier.

According to Mary Ethel Noland, family lore has it that when Captain Tyler was gone on his periodic forays against the British, his wife **Margaret** had to defend the family home against Indian incursions. On one occasion Margaret Tyler drove her intruders from the door, "only to have them attempt to gain entrance by coming down the chimney. This she prevented by smoking them out with a feather bed stuffed into the fireplace." After the war, Captain Tyler moved his large family to Jefferson County, Kentucky where he built for them a large, substantial stone house. Robert and Margaret Tyler's eldest child, **John**, born June 11, 1775, was reportedly the first white child born in Kentucky. Their daughter, **Nancy Drusilla**, born in 1780, married **Jesse Holmes**, and became Harry Truman's great grandmother. Another of Mr. Truman's ancestral families was the **Doniphans**. In February 1952 Truman wrote to Walter Gifford, American Ambassador to Great Britain, asking his assistance in resolving a genealogical question. The President explained that he had a cousin in Independence whose hobby was genealogy, who had discovered that a Captain **Alexander Doniphan** was "one of the Virginians who happened to be connected in some way with my family." He added that he was "not particularly interested in ancestry," and shared Mark Twain's opinion that "if you search far enough in the past for your ancestors you will usually wind up with a gibbet and I have always been afraid that might happen." But, he wrote, if the Ambassador had someone in his office who could get information on Doniphan, it would be appreciated. The President enclosed a note saying that Doniphan "came from Plymouth County, Devon [England] to collect some debts from a man in Maryland," and ended by adding, "I hope this will not cause you too much bother but you know a fellow has to get along with his relatives." We know now that Alexander Doniphan (16531717) was indeed Truman's ancestor, through Doniphan's son, **Mott**, and grandson, **Anderson**.

Harry Truman's father's mother was **Mary Jane Holmes**. Her grandfather, **James Holmes**, had the most distinguished war record of all of Truman's ancestors. He served in the Revolutionary War under Colonel Daniel Morgan of Morgan's Raiders fame, and participated in the battles of Trenton, Brandywine and Germantown.

Shipp is another important name in Harry Truman's ancestry. The middle initial "S" in Truman's name stood for the names of his two grandfathers, **Solomon Young** and **Anderson Shipp Truman**. According to a book-length genealogy of the Shipp family, Anderson Shipp Truman's great-grandfather was **Thomas Shipp**, born in 1727. He was a merchant and a sheriff in Caroline County, Virginia, and served in the Revolutionary War before his death in 1777. Thomas' son, **Richard Shipp, Sr.** married **Elizabeth**, a daughter of **Anderson Doniphan** of Brunswick Parish in Stafford County, Virginia. Their daughter, **Emma Grant Shipp**, was born in 1787 in Caroline County.

Emma married **William Truman, Jr.** on August 28, 1807, in Woodford County, Kentucky. They moved to Shelby County and eventually had twelve children, the fifth being named **Anderson Shipp Truman**, the President's grandfather. In 1846, Anderson married **Mary Jane Holmes**, the daughter of **Jesse** and **Nancy Holmes**, in Christianburg, Kentucky, and soon the couple moved to Jackson County, Missouri.

William Scott, another ancestor, was born in 1747 and died in Jefferson County, Kentucky in 1823 or 1824. Very little else is known about him. Scott's daughter, **Sarah** - also known as Sally married **David Gregg**, born in 1767 or 1776, son of **John** and **Ann Gregg**, about whom even less is known. David and Sally's daughter, **Harriet Louisa Gregg**, married **Solomon Young** in 1838 in Shelby County, Kentucky; the couple became Harry Truman's maternal grandparents.

There is an engaging story of the search for the names of Solomon Young's ancestors. The Young family Bible apparently burned in the fire that destroyed their farm home in 1893, a year after Solomon's death. Thus that genealogical source was not available in the 1970s when three family history researchers, working independently, began seeking records of their own Young ancestors. All three traced their ancestry back to Youngs in Shelby County in the early 1800s. In 1815 there were ten Young householders on the county's tax lists, so the challenge was to identify which one was their ancestor and perhaps Solomon's as well.

Their search became focused on one individual - **Jacob Young** - who was born about 1764 in North Carolina and who married **Rachel Goodnight** in 1792. Jacob and Rachel settled in Shelby County before 1800, and raised a family of five sons and six daughters. After Rachel died in 1828, Jacob remarried and had at least two more daughters by his second wife. He died in 1836 in Jackson County, Indiana.

While sharing their Young family information, the researchers examined the first volume of Truman's memoirs, *Year of Decisions*, and noted that he mentioned visiting his mother's aunt, Hettie Powell, in St. Louis in 1901. The researchers had already found that Jacob Young had a daughter "Hetty". Further checking confirmed that Hetty had married Isaac Powell in 1853. So it was the clue left by the pen of Harry Truman himself that ultimately solved

the puzzle of his grandfather Young's ancestry. Solomon Young, who married Harriet Louisa Gregg, was one of Jacob and Rachel Goodnight Young's eleven children. He was born April 24, 1815 in Shelby County, Kentucky.

The family researchers found evidence that Jacob Young had a German immigrant ancestor whose name was spelled "Jung". They also discovered that the Goodnights were originally "Gutknechts" from Germany. Truman himself, in William Hillman's *Mr. President*, is quoted as saying that his ancestry included German nationality, but that fact does not always appear in articles about his forebears.

The Young researchers also found proof that Jacob Young was a Revolutionary War veteran. In fact, his pension papers provided almost all the information they could find about him. Jacob and his older brother, **Andrew**, were born in North Carolina and both served in the war. In applying for a pension many years later, Jacob Young said that he enlisted, with his brother, for a ten month term in the army "eight or nine months before the Battle of Eutaw Springs," which took place on September 8, 1781 about thirty miles from Orangeburg, South Carolina. Signing on as a trumpeter, Jacob was a member of Captain Burn's Troop of Light Horse; the record is silent on whether he participated in the Battle of Eutaw Springs.

Michael (Gutknecht) Goodnight, Rachel Young's father, was also credited with "patriotic service" in the Revolutionary period. He took his family through the Cumberland Gap in 1778, into Kentucky or as they probably called it, 'Kaintuck' - and settled at Harlan's Station, southwest of present day Lexington. Three of Michael's nephews were serving as soldiers at Ruddell's Station, 50 miles to the northeast. Only three years later, when the war was finally ending in the east, Michael and his brother George were both killed by Indians.

The Truman and Young family stories began to come together in the 1840s when both families came to Missouri. In 1841, Solomon and Harriet Young responded to the westering urge and took their two children into Missouri, settling in western Jackson County. Between 1839 and 1856 the family grew to nine children, the seventh of whom was **Martha Ellen**, (Truman's mother), born November 25, 1852. The other children were **Susan Mary**, **William Andrew**, **Sarah Ann (Sallie)**, **Harrison**, **Elizabeth**, **Laura Jane**, **Ada**, and an unnamed male baby, probably stillborn.

Meanwhile, **Anderson Shipp Truman** and his wife, **Mary Jane**, also settled in Jackson County, on a farm rented from Dr. Johnston Lykins near Westport in an area now part of Kansas City, Missouri. Mary Jane's mother, **Nancy Tyler Holmes**, gave the young couple a wedding gift of several slaves. According to the 1850 census, they owned three slaves, all female, ages 30, six and three.

In 1853 the family, which by then included three children, moved north across the Missouri River into Platte County where they occupied a farm between Parkville and Barry. In the 1860 Federal census, Anderson Truman reported real estate worth \$7,000 and \$3,400 in personal property. The family remained in Platte County while the Civil War swirled around them. Although sympathetic to the Southern cause, Anderson signed an oath of loyalty to the Union on April 28, 1863. Guerrilla bands from both sides spread fear throughout the region, but the Trumans did not suffer the depredations from Kansas "Redlegs" that would afflict the Youngs. The Truman family returned to Jackson County in 1866, to live on a farm two miles north of Hickman Mills, in an area later known as Holmes Park.

The children of Anderson and Mary Jane Truman were **William Thomas**, born in 1847; **Margaret Ellen**, 1849; **John Anderson** (future father of President Truman), 1851; **Emily Ricks**, 1855; and **Mary Martha**, 1861.

In 1844, Solomon Young began purchasing land in Jackson County's Washington township, and by the late 1860s he owned almost two thousand acres in various sections of the county. In 1850, according to the Federal census, the family's property also included two slaves, a 23-year old male and an 18-year old female.

When Martha Ellen Young was born on November 25, 1852, the family was living on what became known as the Parrish Farm, located in the area around present day 36th and Prospect streets in Kansas City, Missouri.

According to the Federal census, by 1860 Solomon had accumulated \$35,000 worth of real estate and \$14,000 in personal property. Of one thousand other heads of household in Solomon's census district in 1860, he was the tenth wealthiest in real estate and twenty-eighth in the value of personal property. Because he was not listed in 1860 among the slave holders in the country, it is not clear whether the family's property included any slaves at that time.

In 1861, when Kansas "Redlegs" made their first raid on the family's property, the Youngs were living southeast of Kansas City near Hickman Mills. Although they sympathized with the South, we may safely surmise that neither the Trumans nor the Youngs engaged in the infamous raids carried out by the "Border Ruffians" in the 1850s or by their successors, the Quantrill band.

The ambitious and enterprising Mr. Young was a man of many talents. He began to lead freight wagons over the Western trails in 1846, and later freighted to Sat Lake City, Utah and San Francisco, California. But he did not travel to Santa Fe or to Oregon. On one occasion he drove a large herd of cattle to California. It was during those times while he was away that some of the "visits" to the family farm by Union troops took place. Despite the fact that he had signed an oath of loyalty to the Union on July 15, 1862, encounters with marauding Union troops continued. Young Martha Ellen, Truman's grandmother, never forgot the mistreatment of her family that she witnessed during what she termed the "War Between the States."

A year or so after the war, Solomon Young ended his freighting career and settled down to the life of a welltodo farmer. If a "country gentleman" or a "gentleman farmer" is one who disdains work and uses others to do all his labor, Solomon Young would probably not fit that category. Still we may surmise he had respect for the finer things, because he sent his daughter Martha Ellen to the Baptist Female College in Lexington, Missouri, to complete her education. Meanwhile, in 1867 he built a new home on a large farm south of Hickman Mills, on land costing \$30 per acre.

Compared to the Youngs, the Anderson Shipp Trumans were a family of modest means. In 1880 the family lived on a 200 acre farm just north of Hickman Mills, and located about three miles from the Young farm. John Anderson Truman lived there with his father (his mother had died in 1879) and managed the farm. The 1881 county history described him as an "industrious and energetic young man." His youngest sister, Mary Martha, kept house for her father and brother.

In the 1870s, members of both the Young and Truman families attended the Blue Ridge Baptist church which stood near the entrance to the Solomon Young farm. Perhaps this is where President Truman's parents, **John Anderson Truman** and **Martha Ellen Young**, became acquainted. They were married on December 28, 1881 in the Solomon Young home. The couple moved to Lamar, Missouri, where their son, **Harry**, named for his uncle **Harrison Young**, was born May 8, 1884. In the next five years, two more children were born: **John Vivian** and **Mary Jane**. John Anderson Truman died in 1914, and Martha Ellen Young Truman died in 1947, having lived to see her son in the White House.

It has been said that one way to have someone else research your ancestry is to be elected President of the United States. Gary Boyd Roberts' book, *Ancestors of American Presidents*, includes ancestor tables for the Presidents. Additional sections of the book provide interesting sidelights on Mr. Truman's ancestry. One section lists the kinships among American Presidents. Many of them share common ancestors who were predominantly early New England colonists. Amazingly, Franklin D. Roosevelt and George Bush are each related to fifteen other Presidents, with William Howard Taft related to fourteen, and Gerald Ford and Calvin Coolidge related to thirteen others.

Harry Truman, however, was among those who were related to none of the others. It was thought at one time that Truman's Tyler ancestry was also that of President John Tyler, but current scholarship casts doubt on this claim. Further research on Truman's unknown ancestors may yet uncover links to others of our nation's chief executives.

Roberts' book also lists the royal kinships of America's Presidents. Again, Mr. Truman had none. But he still had a connection to both other Presidents and royalty through his wife, **Bess Wallace Truman**. She shared common ancestry with at least one President, Woodrow Wilson, and with the late Princess Diana.

Mr. Truman's family roots may not have been presidential or royal, but his Anglo-Saxon ancestry was typical of the Missouri family farmers of his time: a class of energetic, sturdy farmers and agrarians whom Thomas Jefferson described as the backbone of America.

By Niel and Verna Gail (V.G.) Johnson

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