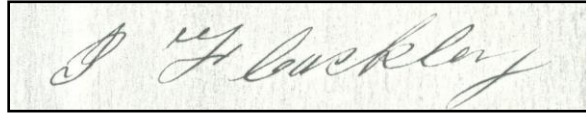


The William H. Cackley Family Moves to Illinois in 1856 -- A Letter Written in 1857 Tells Why



Signature of Jacob Fry Cackley

© Susan McNelley

In about 1856, William H. Cackley, age 70, and his wife Jenny (Gay) of Huntersville, Virginia, (later West Virginia) moved to Illinois with most of their grown children and settled on a farm near Clinton in DeWitt County. Their children included sons Claiborne, Robert, Jacob Fry, David and John G. and daughters Mary, Leah, Hannah, Ann and Sarah Jane (Sally). A few years later, William retired from active life and moved into town where he died in 1860.

William H. Cackley was a prominent citizen of Huntersville. In addition to serving as a lieutenant in the War of 1812, William Cackley was also a member of the Virginia Legislature for several terms, serving as a "Jacksonian democrat" and was a Sheriff in Pocahontas County. Why would a man in the later years of his life decide to uproot his family and move to a homestead more than 600 miles away? People often moved for cheaper land or to escape oppression. What were the specific reasons for this family?

The answer to that question is found in this letter, written by William's son Jacob Fry to his younger brother John G. in the fall of 1857. Simply put, Huntersville had fallen on exceedingly hard times; those who could were getting out of town. Jacob was newly married and his wife had just had a baby. Jacob had stayed behind for a few months to get his affairs in order. The letter is personal and poignant. Much of the spelling in the letter is phonetic which adds a certain charm to the letter. Below is a transcription of the letter, followed by the original:

Huntersville; Auctobr the 17^h, 1857

Dear Brother I received your letter this eveing I was glad to hear from you all I had gon to town to get som paper to rite to you and got your letter I have bin fixing all fall I have sold of [off] every thing but my horse and wagone. My hors [I] don't bleve [believe] that I can get what he is worth. If I can't I have anosion [a notion] to [illegible] him along with me. It is all most im posabel [impossible] to get money for any thing here the Banks has suspended and shut up half of the peapel [people]is skird [scared] half to death some of them had nead of being skird. Ben Harolde I exspect will brake he has bot about fifteen hundred head of cattel. [Illegible] is very good hear. Wheat is seling at 1 dlar per bu. the frost cot the [illegible]. Corn will be worth about 75 cts

We are all well at this time. I have a fine boy he is about five month olde he had the wooping cough vary bad he has got over it. I will starte[start] thear about the first of November I have got John Holden to hol[haul] us to Webster. He runs a two Horse hack about the Widow Ames has Moved to Rockingham and Richard Hill has gon along. John Hogsett ses he will go with me but I dont bleav [believe] he will John is making money. Did Hannah say anything about Floyde drinking? Fleming Brinkley sed [said] he was drinking. He sed he was doing vary well I have nothing more to rite of importen [importance]

Our Family History

Huntersville has improved alitel [a little]. They have put up two new [unable to read] Trask one and J. Y. Carpenter one Carpenter has re bilt the cornier [corner] hous down next the [illegible].

Gorge Gay has cum in from [illegible]. He taks [talks] of cuming by that way. The peapel [people] complanes vary much about you all not riteing to them I was at unc. Tommy Hill's this weak tell Ann that Viney Hill ses she must rite to her she has not got leter from her sence she went thar she begind to look old V Cackley Children two of them is at unc sam Gay's. Wiley is at Wm Cackleys. Thea are well I beleave at this time.

J.G. Cackley J. F Cackley

Huntersville
Quintolen the 17th 1857

Dear Brother I received your letter
this eving I was glad to hear from you
all I had gon to town to get some
paper to write to you and got your letter I have
bin fixing all fall I have sold of every thing
but my horse and wagone my hors
dont beleve that I. cond get what he is
worth ~~thats~~ if I cant I have anasion to
letk him along with one dit in all most
im posabel to get money for eny thing
hear rize the banks has suspended and
shut up half of the peapel is skird
half to death some of them had nead of
being skird. Ben Farolde I exspect will
brake he has bot about fifteen Hundred
head of cattel. crops is vary good hear
Wheat is seling at 1 dlar per bu the pros
cot the earne corn will be with about 75 cts

We are all well at this time I have a fine
boy he is about five months old he
had the whooping cough very bad he has
got over it I still start there about the
first of Nov^{ber} I have got John Holder
to hol us to Webster he runs a two
horse hack about the Widow James has
moved to Rocking ham and Richard
Hill has gone along John Hogsett he
will go with me but I dont believe he
will John is making money I did
Hannah say any thing about George
drinking Fleming Brinkley sed he was
drinking he sed he was doing very well
I have nothing more to write of my father
Hunters well has improved a little
they have put up two new sines Trask one
and I a carpenter one carpenter has
re built the corner house down next the ^{house} ~~house~~

George Gary has cum in from sooty
he toke of cuming by that way. ~~Home~~
The peapel complanes vary much
about you all nat riteing to them I was
at unc. Honey Hills this week tell
I know that Vinny Hill ses if she must
rite to her she has not got letter from
her sence she went thar she be yerd
to looks old june W buckley children
two of them is at unc sam Gary
Wiley is at Wm buckleys thengre
well. Please at this time
J G buckley J F buckley

Sources: Letter received from Cackley descendent Julie Owens; Obituary for John G. Cackley, son of William and Jenny, dated June 9, 1899. DeWitt County IL, available through the DeWitt Co. GenWeb Project. Downloaded on March 18, 2007; Price, William. *Historical Sketches of Pocahontas County, West Virginia*. Marlinton West Virginia, 1901; Reprinted Baltimore MD, Genealogical Pub Co, 2002. P. 198-9.