

Robert Vincent Murray

In my first few days of genealogical exploration, I came across a rough, handwritten note :

“Robert V. – killed in store in Catawba”

This note was bundled in the inherited works of Phil Mace & Kathryn Murray Hooks. I had never heard of him nor heard any of the family speak of him. The association to the family was that he was the brother of William Alexander Murray who was the Murray to start Murrays' Mill in Catawba NC. William is also my Great, Great Grandfather. Okay, I have a GGG Uncle that I presumed was murdered but I don't know about it. How can this be? It amazes me that we lose so much information in such a relatively short time. After asking around, I found out that no one else had heard of him either. He became an enigma to me. Still is.

Checking the Catawba Co. Cemetery Index gave me dates to work with. I reasoned that the local paper would have had a write-up on it. It had been years since I had used microfilm and I did not know what I was doing then. I fumbled through spooling the 1896 Newton Enterprise on the reels. My head cocked to the side, I was already scanning the text. I was immediately side-tracked by all the snake oil ads. Amazing claims, “guaranteed to work”, to cure ailments that I could not begin to understand what they meant in our time. The librarian had been sitting next to me, helping another patron with their microfilm problem. She reached over and turned the lens on my machine. I uprighted my head realizing that I had been resembling a retriever listening to a squeaky wheel. I smiled, blushed, and got serious about looking.

I found various clips in the first few months as I try to determine what is happening with John W. Setzer, the man who stood as the potentially accused. That they were considering between murder and manslaughter had me perplexed as to the unknown circumstances. I noticed another murder trial was nearing end. Thomas Covington had evidently got himself into a world of trouble. I felt that reading this was pertinent to my case as I might learn a few things of the time period and how they handled such cases. I saw, in particular, that this Covington case had been going on for two years at that point. I looked at the clock and noticed that it had taken me two hours to read or scan January through March. It was also nearing the library's closing time.

I had to walk away, gaining very little knowledge and only being that much more hungry to find out. The library in Newton is about 100 miles from my home in Stokes County. This is going to take some special attention.

I have never gotten back to the microfilmed copy of the Newton Enterprise but I have been blessed with learning several key pieces to the mystery. The internet can be an amazing thing; Carolyn Setzer Sigmon was able to provide these pieces via email (Thank You!). It is far better than any original information that I have. I hope that more light will be shed on what has been an ever-growing mystery to me. I hope to pursue with more information from the Newton Enterprise, the Catawba Co. Coroner's Office (or whatever entity held a medical report), additional court records, and records of attorney J. W. Sigmon if they still exist. I do not know if a separate police or sheriff's report would have been available. Any ideas about places to look for documentation? Any other newspapers that would cover this?

Robert Vincent Murray was born in newly formed Alamance Co. NC on Dec. 23, 1849 to Lambert & Elizabeth Haney Murray.

He is listed as Vincent, age 1, in the Alamance Co. NC Census of 1850 pg. 84 in #163, house of Lambeth Muray, 41, Tailor, and wife Eliza, 37. Others listed.

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He apparently moved to Catawba Co. before or about 1869 (1st record of his father that I have is 1869 Tax Scroll of Newton Twp, Catawba Co.)

Information this family found 1880 U. S. Census Catawba Co., NC where they are living with his parents Lambert and Elisabeth Murray.

1880 census: Catawba Twsp, 243/243, living with his parents.

Killed by J. Setzer -- Continuing study in Newton Enterprise 1896

Notes from Carolyn Setzer Sigmon ;

He was found dead in his bed following a fight at J. W. Setzer's store in Claremont. J. W. was said to have hit Robert {who was drunk and

had accused Setzer of being interested in Fannie } with a piece of stove wood. Investigation by authorities resulted in no charges being filed in the matter.

Catawba County Appointments vol. 4:238, Administrator J. W. Sigmon appointed 3 February 1896.

Catawba Co. Cemetery Index, Vol.4 (lost page # but Bethlehem is Cemetery #13)

He married Frances Malinda Sigmon (b.11/15/1853 d.6/23/1945) on August 22, 1878 in Caldwell Township, Catawba Co. NC – [Catawba Co. Marriages (1842-1880) p66]. A conflicting source has Catawba Co. Register of Deeds ML - no license and gives marriage date as February 1, 1874.

I only know of one child from this union. Pearl H. Murray was born August 16, 1879. She died May 20, 1881 and was buried at Bethlehem UMC where Robert & Frances attended church.

About Frances from Carolyn Setzer Sigmon;
Fannie was buried in St. Mark's Lutheran cemetery, Claremont NC. She was a cobbler, or shoe repairer; also she helped prepare the dead for burial since there were no undertakers. After she and her sister Kate were widowed they lived together in Claremont.

Bethlehem Methodist Register, pg. 83: c Oct. 1896 by JFE.

She attended school as listed in the Register of Common School in District No. 8 County of Catawba : Teacher: Huldah Rockett, commencing November 12, 1860. Catawba Cousins, Vol. 9 No 1 pg. 25.

Alan Murray
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