

Zerilda Manervia Puckett Cockerham (1839-1921), Ancestor 23¹
By her great great granddaughter, Linda R. Horton, 10 December 2021



Without doubt, Zerilda Manervia Puckett was one of our more interestingly named forebears. At left is a photo of a woman by that name, and I wish I could say that this was our great great grandmother, but it is not. Although our ancestor lived in the age of photography, and we have quite a few photos of her daughter, our great grandmother Syrene Cockerham McCoun, family history researchers have unearthed no photos of our ancestor, Zerilda Manervia Puckett (1839-1921).

The woman in the photo was our ancestor's niece, the daughter of our great great grandmother's brother. The Zerilda in the photo went by the nickname "Rilda" and was born in 1859 to Benjamin Gardner Puckett and his wife. Our ancestor was then 20 years old, and she in 1872 returned the favor by naming her eldest son Benjamin Gardner in honor of her brother. Perhaps our cousin in the photo looked like her namesake aunt: an aunt and a niece do share a lot of DNA.¹ Even if the niece and aunt looked nothing alike, we still might enjoy the splendid outfit. Did Rilda buy it in Los Angeles, where she spent most of her life after migrating there from Kentucky via Colorado?

Turning to our actual ancestor, in this biography she is referred to as Manervia, because that is the name she appeared to favor toward the end of her life. "Manervia" was used in the 1900 and 1920 census reports. Other records such as the census reports for 1850 and 1910, her headstone, and her daughter's death certificate spelled her name more conventionally, as "Minerva," famous as the Roman goddess of wisdom. "Zerilda" was used in the 1860, 1870, and 1880 census reports.

Manervia was born in 1839 in Floyd County, Kentucky, in the eastern corner of the state. She was the ninth of the 13 children of Morgan R. Puckett (1801-1890) and Susan Whitaker (1800-1877). When she was a young girl, she moved with her parents and siblings to Breathitt County. In 1866 she married James Kash Cockerham (1846-1916) at a place called Puckett's Bend. At the time, she was 27 and James was 20. They were the parents of four children, one daughter and three sons, born between 1868 and 1881. For while they ran a boarding house near the timber felling industry, then they moved into Campton where they ran a hotel and livery stable. After James died in 1916, Manervia bought a small house in Campton (see photographs on page 9), where she lived until her death in 1921.

Manervia's birth predated the advent of birth certificates in Kentucky.² Census reports varied concerning her birth year. Manervia's headstone states that she was born on 12 Aug 1836, a date that is considerably earlier than what the 1850 census—the earliest one mentioning Manervia—said was her birthdate. The 1836 birthdate aligns with family legend that she was 10 years older

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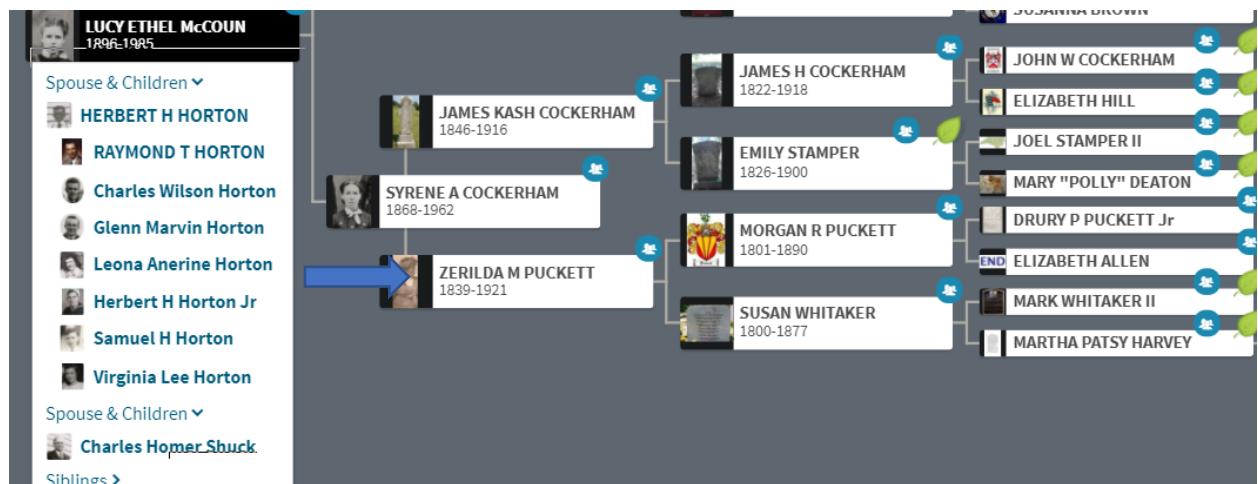
than her husband. However, based upon the census reports, I believe that her birthdate was 1839—perhaps 12 August 1839—and that she was seven years older than her husband.

Manervia and her siblings were the second generation of Pucketts to be born in Floyd County, in a location now in Magoffin County near a small community called Burning Fork. Her father, Morgan Puckett, had been born there in 1801. Manervia's mother, Susan Whitaker, was born in Russell County, Virginia, where her father, Mark, was a Methodist minister. Susan traveled to Kentucky with her brothers.

As a young teen, Morgan had to grow up fast. His father Drury Puckett Jr (1777-1815) and his only older brother had enlisted in the U.S. army in 1814. His father was executed on 17 February 1815 by a firing squad in Nashville for desertion from the U.S. army.³ After his father's and brother's enlistment in the army, and especially after his father's death, 13-year-old Morgan as the oldest son would have borne the entire responsibility for assisting his mother in ensuring that the farm produced what the family needed. It is possible that the farmland where Morgan, Susan, and their children lived until 1843 had earlier been farmed by his father.

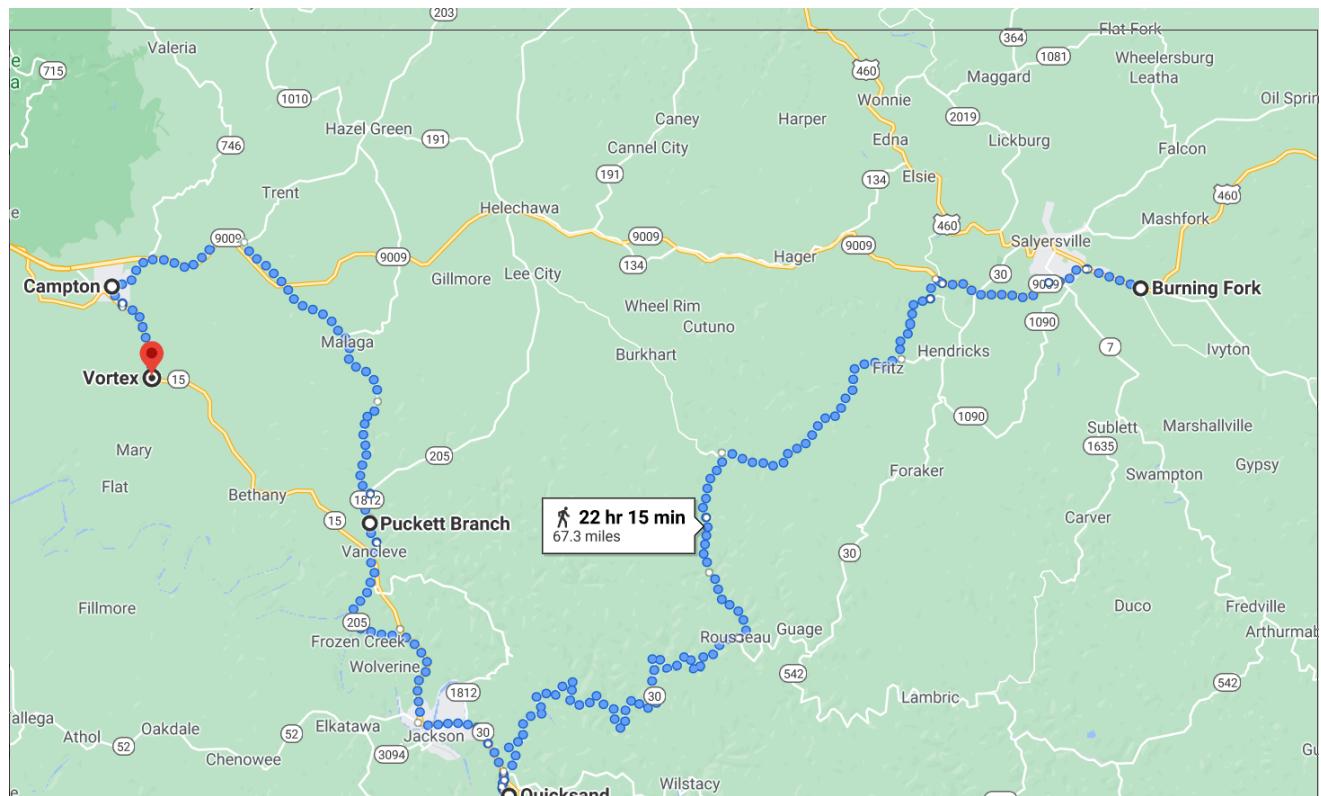
Placing Manervia on our family tree and on a map

Manervia was our grandmother's grandmother. She was someone whom our grandmother, Ethel McCoun Horton Shuck (1896-1985), knew, and knew well. Ethel spent her early years living with her Cockerham grandparents, Manervia and James. That is probably where she developed a preference for living in town rather than in the country. Even when Ethel's father, Rob McCoun, bought a farm in Vortex, a small community three miles from Campton, Ethel often stayed in Campton with her grandparents. At age 14, Ethel was living with them when the census takers recorded the members of the household of Manervia and James Cockerham.



For more information about this branch of the family, see the biographies of Manervia's great grandson, Raymond Thomas Horton; her granddaughter Ethel McCoun Horton Shuck; her daughter Syrene Cockerham; her husband James Kash Cockerham; his parents James Henry Cockerham and Emily Stamper; her father, Morgan R Puckett* and mother Susan Whitaker*; and her grandfather Drury Puckett, Jr. (An asterisk marks each biography that, as of 10 December 2021, has not yet been completed.)

The map below shows the three locations where Manervia lived—today's Magoffin County near Burning Fork, Puckett's Bend near Puckett Branch, and Campton—as well as the location, Vortex, where her son-in-law Rob McCoun and daughter Syrene had a farm.



Manervia's early years

The 1830 census recorded Morgan as a man in his 20s, and Susan, as a woman in her 20s, living with three boys (Caleb, Isaac, and Meredith William) and three girls (Martha, Elizabeth, and Matilda), all under age five. A second woman in her 20s was living with the family, perhaps a sister of Susan Whitaker Puckett. With six children under the age of five and a farm to run, Susan and Morgan could have needed the help.

The household expanded to 12 people during the decade preceding the 1840 census for the Morgan Puckett family in Floyd County, by which time our Manervia had joined the family. The household consisted of one male under five (John Martin); one male from five to nine (Benjamin Gardner); one male from ten to fourteen (Meredith William); two males aged fifteen to nineteen (Caleb and Isaac); one male from 30 to 39 (Morgan R Puckett); one female under five (Manervia); one female from five to nine (Clarinda); three females from ten to fourteen (Martha, Elizabeth, and Matilda); and one female from 30 to 39 (Susan Whitaker Puckett). Of these family members, three were employed in agriculture (probably Morgan and sons Caleb and Isaac), and one person over age 20 was unable to read and write (probably Susan).



In 1843, a fifty-acre land grant was recorded for M.R. Puckett in Breathitt County on the Quicksand Water Course.⁴ At that time, the family moved from Floyd County to Breathitt County, where they settled in a place called Puckett's Bend.

A family story repeated to the author's mother, Marcia Bryan Horton, by our great uncle Glenn Reynolds McCoun claimed that Manervia had come to Kentucky in 1843 at the age of seven, leading a cow over the mountains.⁵ Manervia and her parents indeed did migrate when Manervia was a very small girl, and the move was westward from a more mountainous part of Kentucky (Floyd County) to a part of the state (Puckett's Bend in today's Breathitt County) which likely had better farmland. The distance would have been about 55 miles southwest of where the family had lived, probably over poor wagon roads. Manervia might well have been assigned the task of leading a cow.⁶



With the 1850 census, the U. S. government began recording the names of all family members, not simply the heads of household, along with information about age, gender, occupation, real estate value, and birthplace. As shown below, for the Morgan Puckett family, now recorded in their new home in Breathitt County on 7 August 1850, we have Morgan, 49, a farmer with real estate worth \$400, and birthplace given (incorrectly) as Virginia. His wife Susan was 50 and she WAS born in Virginia. The children still at home, all born in Kentucky, were Elizabeth, 22; Gardner, 18, a farmer; Clarinda, 16; Minerva, 11; John, 11; Green, 8; and Polly, 5.

Family Number: 37	R. Puckett	49	m	Farmer	400	Dr.
	Susan	50	f			W.
	Elizabeth	22	f			M.
	Gardner	18	w	Farmer	"	
	Clarinda	16	f			"

Minerva	11	S
John	10	W
Green	8	W
Polly	5	S

Wolfe County was formed in 1860 from parts of Breathitt, Morgan, Owsley, and Powell counties.

By the 1860 census, enumerated in Breathitt County on 28 June, several of the children had reached adulthood and struck out on their own, leaving at home only Morgan R, age 59, Susan, age 60, and five children. Morgan was still a farmer (note the fancy "F" in Farmer) with real

estate worth \$1,000; Susan, age 60; M.W. [Meredith William], age 26 or 36, a farmer; Zerilda M., 20, a farmer; John M, 19, a farm laborer; Green F, 17, a farm laborer; and Polly A, 15. Zerilda, John M, Green F, and Polly A all had attended school. No one was marked as unable to read and write.

The U.S. Civil War was fought between 1861 and 1865. Kentucky remained part of the Union and never joined the Confederacy. However, several key battles took place in Kentucky, notably in 1862 when the Confederacy launched an effort to wrest the state from the Union. Manervia as a single young woman living with her parents in Breathitt County probably heard discussions of battles taking place less than a day's ride on horseback away. Key events in the Civil War are included in the biography of Manervia's father-in-law, James Henry Cockerham (1822-1904), whose name appeared on Union rolls—although, as an older potential recruit, he never served—while two of his younger brothers died in prisoner-of-war camps after joining, then deserting, the Confederate army.

Manervia married James Kash Cockerham in 1866 at Puckett's Bend when Manervia was 27 and James was 20. The year of marriage is from the 1900 census report, which asked how many years each married person had been married. James Kash had been born on 25 June 1846 in Owsley County, Kentucky, the son of James Henry Cockerham and Emily Stamper (1826-1900). They had moved from Wilkes County, North Carolina to Kentucky in the 1840s. Two years earlier, James' brother John had married Manervia's sister Polly.

Compared to most couples at that time, Manervia and James got a late start raising a family. For their era, their family was small: they had one daughter and three sons. Glenn Reynolds McCoun told the author's mother that Manervia and one of her sisters became very skillful at weaving because "they married so late and there wasn't much else to do."

On 2 May 1868, their first child, Syrene, was born to James and Manervia. The 1870 census enumerated on 12 August in Wolfe County, Hazel Green post office showed the young family as follows: James K Cockerham, 23, farmer; Zarilda, 30, keeping house; Sarena, 2.

James Cockerham	23	W.M.	Farmer	500	Kentucky				
Zarilda	30	F.W.	Keeping House	500	Kentucky				
Sarena	2	F.W.		500	Kentucky				

Other relatives lived nearby:⁷

- James' brother, William 22 and wife, Gilly Ann Sebastian Cockerham 23; they had just wed.
- Uncle Martin and Aunt Lydia King Cockerham and their children.
- James' brother, John F and Polly Puckett Cockerham.

In May 1872, Benjamin Gardner Cockerham was born, the eldest of the three sons of Manervia and James. He went by "Gardner." Their second son, Archalaus Congleton "A.C." Cockerham was born 19 July 1876.

Family Name	Age	Boarding	Occupation	Residence
Coceram James W m 33		1	House Carpenter	Kentucky
Zarilda M W 40		Wife	Keeping House	Kentucky
Sireny W 12		Daughter	Keeping House	Kentucky
Benjamin W m 9		Son		Kentucky
Archilas W m 3		Son		Kentucky
Morgan Puckett 78				Kentucky

Shown above is an excerpt from the 1880 census, counting on 12 June in Wolfe County: James K. Cockerham, 33, house carpenter; Zarilda M., 40, keeping house; Sireny, 12, keeping house; Benjamin, 9; Archilas, 3; and Morgan Puckett, 78 (Manervia's father), boarding.

The 1890 census reports were destroyed in a fire, but other sources provide information about key developments in the lives of Manervia and her husband, James during the 1880s and 1890s. Sometime between the 1880 census and the 1900 census, James and Manervia Cockerham ran a boarding house for men working in the Wolfe County timber industry. His occupation in the 1900 census was described as hotel landlord. By the early 1900s, the white oak timber was about gone, and there was no longer any demand for a boarding house for lumbermen. Soon after 1900, James and Manervia acquired and operated a livery stable, boarding and renting out horses. Also:

- Their youngest son, Harvey Scott, was born on 12 July 1881.
- In about 1883, they had a photo made of their three sons, shown below.
- On 14 February 1891, their daughter Syrene (1868-1962) married Robert Pepper McCoun (1860-1940). They met when Rob and his father were staying in her parents' boarding house.
- On 24 November 1891, the first grandchild of Manervia and James was born. Glenn Reynolds McCoun was the oldest child of Syrene and Rob McCoun.
- Manervia and James moved from the country into Campton in the early 1890s. Syrene and Rob McCoun's family lived with them for several years.
- On 9 February 1893, their eldest son, Gardner, married Lou Kash.

The three sons of James and Manervia Cockerham in about 1883 were:

Benjamin Gardner
"Gardner," Harvey Scott, and Archalaus Congleton
"A.C." Sketches about each son and his colorful life are appended to the biography of James Kash Cockerham.

Because Manervia was no doubt happy when things were going well for a child, and miserable when things were not going well, the discussion of Manervia's life that

follows will include interludes about events in the lives of the sons. For details about Syrene's



life, see her biography, **Syrene Cockerham McCoun (1868-1962)**. It is likely that Manervia experienced sadness and anxiety by some of the things that happened to her sons. Here is the first interlude reporting several such events involving her son, A.C.:

Sometime before September 1896, A.C. Congleton (the middle son) was convicted for carrying a concealed weapon. We know this because, on 2 September 1896, A.C. was denied a pardon for a conviction for carrying a concealed weapon, according to a Louisville *Courier Journal* article. No incarceration records for A.C. have been found.

According to the 21 April 1898 *Hazel Green Herald*, A.C. fired a shot at Sam Faulkner in Campton, "then left and has not been heard from since."

Not two months later, A.C. was 120 miles away, in Spencer County, Kentucky, where on 17 June he married a first cousin, Mollie C. Puckett. Her father, John Martin Puckett, was Manervia's brother.

The 25 August 1898 *Hazel Green Herald* stated that, "Prof. A.C. Cockerham and wife will teach in the Shelbyville graded school." Shelbyville is 110 miles from Campton, the seat of Shelby County, which is adjacent to Spencer County.

Manervia and James were probably relieved that A.C. appeared to be getting his life in order after two altercations involving firearms. As shall be seen, neither the marriage to Mary nor the teaching job would last.

In the 1900 census for Campton, enumerated on 1 June, only one of the four children of Manervia and James was still at home: Harvey, age 20 was working as a photographer. James and Manervia had been married 34 years. His occupation was described as hotel landlord. His age was listed as 52 and hers 55: their ages actually were 53 and 60. Their granddaughter, Hettie McCoun, age 6, was living with them along with a 45-year-old servant named Rebeca Peters, a widow with eight living children out of the nine to whom she had given birth. Everyone in the household except Hettie could read and write (and she soon would attend school and acquire these skills).

In the 1900 census for Southville in Shelby County, enumerated on 14 June, A.C. and Mollie were attending school and living with her parents, John and Caroline Puckett.

Apparently, the Wolfe County police were not after A.C. for the April 1898 shooting. The *Hazel Green Herald* reported that, on 26 July 1900, A.C. and his wife of Shelby County were visiting his father, James.

22 August 1901: The *Hazel Green Herald* published this story about the eldest son, Gardner: *A son of Jim K. Cockerham, the one who married a daughter of Little Caleb Kash of Bear Pen, was on Tuesday tried before Judge Center and a jury on a writ of lunacy and being found of unsound mind was ordered sent to the Eastern Asylum at Lexington.*

Gardner's mental illness, resulting in at least three hospitalizations in an asylum in Lexington, must have been tremendously upsetting to his parents, especially in an era when such illness was so poorly understood.

The youngest son, Harvey, married Mary Jane Horton in Marion Indiana (180 miles north of Louisville) on 16 June 1904 when he was 23. He said on his application that he was born in Indiana, which was untrue. Mary Jane said she was born in Canada, which also was untrue. Both were born in Wolfe County. She was the daughter of Harvey N. Horton (a brother of our great grandfather, Thomas Richmond Horton). The marriage was reported in the *Indianapolis News*. Both were of legal age, and it is not clear why they married in Indiana, far from home.

21 April 1905 Gardner was readmitted to the Eastern Asylum, according to the *Breathitt County News*. The article said his mind became "unbalanced" after witnessing the shooting death of a man named Ellis Wright.

The 1910 census report below, made in Campton on 14 May, showed three people in the household: James, Manervia, and their granddaughter Ethel McCoun. James' occupation was liveryman, and he owned the property (which included a house as well as a livery stable) free and clear of any mortgage. All three family members could read and write.

214	219	Cockerham, James K	Heads	in 7 65 m 144
		McLain, Mollie	Wife	F m 7 6 m 144 44
		Mollie, Puckett	Daughter	F m 14

Caron's 1910 Directory for Louisville listed Archalus C. Cockerham, salesman, Ouerbacker-Gilmore Company, wholesale grocers at 319 West Main Street in Louisville; A.C.'s residence was 136 W. Bayly Avenue. Apparently, the marriage to his cousin Mollie did not work out, although no divorce record has been found. In the 1910 census, Mollie had remarried or was at living with another cousin named William Puckett. They had a one-year-old son.

Harvey was listed with Mary in the 1910 Census for Louisville. They had been married for five years and had no children. He was employed as a streetcar conductor. The Caron's 1910 Directory also listed Harvey in this position and provided their home address.

Harvey should have stayed in Louisville for Christmas 1915. Whatever joy his parents felt at his visit did not last long.

While in Campton in December 1915, Harvey was shot in the left leg by a man named Dale Woodson. Harvey was transported to the Good Samaritan Hospital in Lexington, probably by his brother A.C. There Harvey died on 22 December. Cause of death was surgical shock due to the gunshot wound in his leg. His brother, A.C., was the informant on the death certificate. On 20 January 1916, the Louisville *Courier Journal* reported as follows:

Wanted for Alleged Killing.

Campton, Ky., Jan. 19—A warrant has been sworn to for Dale Woodson, charging him with the killing of Harvey Cockerham. Woodson and Cockerham had difficulty on the streets of this place and Cockerham was wounded in the leg with a shotgun and afterwards died in the hospital at Lexington. Woodson, just after the shooting, made his escape and is said to be somewhere in Tennessee. Gov. Stanley has been asked to issue a reward for his capture.

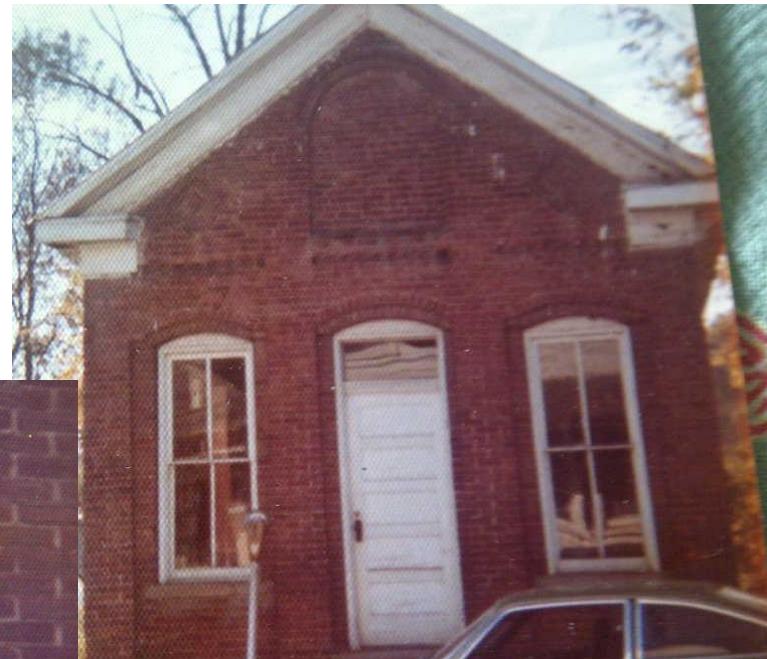
Not long after the death of their youngest son, James Kash Cockerham died in Campton on 30 August 1916. The family story is that James was thrown from a horse and eventually died from the injuries in 1916.⁸ His death certificate, however, states that he died of tuberculosis of the bowel. The biography of James Kash Cockerham provides details about intestinal tuberculosis, a rare disease that is most commonly associated with consumption of unpasteurized milk but can be transmitted from horse-to-human, i.e., by an infected horse in James' Livery Stable. A. C. Cockerham was the informant on his father's death certificate.

December 1916 was the date of Gardner's next, and last, readmission to the Asylum, based on a statement in his death certificate that he had resided there seven years, four months, and six days. He died 21 March 1924, after James and Manervia both had died. Cause of death was chronic myocarditis (inflammation of the heart) with epilepsy reported as a contributory cause of death. Was Harvey's epilepsy mistaken for "lunacy"?

In 1917, A.C.'s WW I draft registration card gave his address as the La Salle Hotel in St. Louis, Missouri. His birth date was given as 16 Jul 1876 and age as 42 years old. He said he was native born and described his occupation as traveling salesman. He also reported a crippled left hand.

After James' death, Manervia sold the house with the livery stable and moved into a smaller house on Main Street in Campton. The 1920 census for Campton recorded "Manervy" age 82, living alone on Main Street in Campton.⁹

We have several photographs, taken in about 1970 of the house in which Manervia lived during the last years of her life.



Note 1
Campton, Ky.
Ethel Shuck's sister
Nancy in front of the
house their grandmother
(their mother's
mother's house) her name
was 'Grandma' Cockerham'.
She moved here after ~~the~~
~~she~~ closed the boarding house
she ran (and owned) in Campton.

Manervia's granddaughters, Nannie McCoun Strong and Ethel McCoun Horton, children of Syrene and Robert McCoun, decided to visit the home where their grandmother once had lived.

Perhaps one of their brothers, Glenn or Caesar, was with them that day and took the pictures.

On 30 Jan 1921, Manervia died in Campton, Kentucky. I have not found a death certificate for her. Soon after her death, a funeral was held. It was attended by the Herbert Hilary Horton family, as shown in the photo below. From left to right, Ethel, her husband Herbert holding Leona, and their three sons, Raymond, Glenn, and Wilson.

Manervia was buried in the Evans Cemetery in Campton. Her headstone is shown at right. The inscription on the headstone reads:

Minerva Cockerham

Born Aug 12, 1836

Died Jan. 30, 1921



A.C. Cockerham married Laura Thyms in Missouri in about 1921. They had one son, born in St. Louis, Missouri, on 13 December 1921. He was named James Henry Cockerham, probably for his great grandfather, James Henry Cockerham. James Henry was the only child born to the sons of Manervia and James Kash Cockerham. Accordingly, the only descendants living today of this couple descend either from their daughter Syrene (our branch of the family) or from James Henry Cockerham (1921-2005), who had two sons and numerous grandchildren.¹⁰

I hope you enjoy reading these biographies as much as I enjoy writing them.

Linda Horton, 10 December 2021

¹<https://thegeneticgenealogist.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Shared-cM-Project-Relationship-Chart.png>

² The earliest Kentucky birth records were in 1852; statewide registration of births was required starting in 1911; and compliance was achieved in 1920.

https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Kentucky_Vital_Records

³ <https://www.executedtoday.com/2014/02/17/1815-eight-deserters-by-order-of-andrew-jackson/>

⁴ Jillson, Willard Rouse. *The Kentucky Land Grants*. Louisville, KY, USA: Filson Club Publications, 1925. Original data: Jillson, Willard Rouse. *The Kentucky Land Grants*. Book 18.

⁵ Horton, Marcia Bryan. *A History of the McCoun Family* compiled as a Memorial to my husband, Raymond Thomas Horton (1914-1987). 1989. At A-25.

⁶ Art by Eugenii Grigorieff was found on this website: <https://www.shutterstock.com/image-illustration/girl-village-leads-cow-grazing-1288713505>

⁷ Gulden, Bella, *The Family of James Kash and Zerilda Minerva Puckett Cockerham*, 18 March 2018; posted on Gulden Family Tree on Ancestry.com <https://www.ancestry.com/account/profile/00d7833f-0003-0000-0000-000000000000?compareToTestId=02055BEE-4793-40BB-B2DA-FF1CBF1313E1>

⁸ Horton, Marcia Bryan. *A History of the McCoun* supra, note 5 at A-25.

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¹⁰ Records about A.C.'s life after his parents' and brothers' deaths included some unusual features:

- The 1930 census said he was born in Kentucky but that both his parents were born in Scotland.
- In July 1932, he had the middle finger of his left hand amputated. This operation was reported in the *Hazel Green Gazette* even though he was living in Missouri.
- The 1940 census said he was born in Scotland and had more than five years of college. He was a traveling salesman for a wholesale drug company with substantial income (\$2400 was reported, which is more than \$46,000 today).
- On 12 September 1941 when A.C. registered for the draft, he was living in a hotel in St. Louis, Missouri and reported that his nearest relative was his deceased mother (not his wife, Laura). It is not known if Laura had died or if they had separated. A.C. did not serve in either war, probably due to his age.
- Between the 1940 census, when he was living with Laura and his son, and his death in 1953, A.C. married a third time, to a woman named Daisy Schloss who was informant on his death certificate. The only marriage certificate found for A.C. was for the first marriage to his cousin.
- His 24 September 1953 death certificate said his birthplace was Edinburgh, Scotland.