

Drury Puckett (1777-1815), Ancestor 92
By his 4x great granddaughter, Linda R. Horton, 19 June 2021

Enlistment in the Army—and Execution by Firing Squad

In 1814, Drury Puckett was a farmer living with his wife and four sons in Floyd County, Kentucky, today Magoffin County. He was a native of what is today Russell County, Virginia who had moved to Kentucky as a young man, in the 1790s.

Perhaps the news reached him by local newspapers (or by word of mouth) that, on 24 September 1814, British troops had invaded the City of Washington, the still-new U.S. capital, and had burned both the White House and the U.S. Capitol Building. He may have heard, also, that the battleground had then moved to Baltimore Harbor, where British ships' cannon balls bombarded Fort McHenry.¹ Drury's father, whom we shall refer to as Drury Senior, had fought for American independence in the Revolutionary War. It might have seemed to his namesake son that that the independence won by his father's generation would be lost unless his generation fought as their fathers had. Drury Junior's eldest son, Thomas, age 18, had already enlisted.

So, like others, Drury Puckett, born in 1777, enlisted as a soldier on 22 September 1814. A 36-year-old private, Drury was described as a farmer in Russell County, Virginia, with blue eyes and fair hair and skin.² Although he had in fact been living in Floyd County, Kentucky for some years, the army may have counted Kentucky recruits as Virginia recruits, inasmuch as Kentucky had been part of Virginia until 1792.

*Drury Puckett
Private
Russell Co., Va.*

5	10	Bl. Eyes	Fair	36	Farmer	Maple	On	Sept 22
1814								

When he enlisted, Drury could not have foreseen that, on 17 February 1815, less than six months after enlistment, he and seven others would be executed by a firing squad³ in Nashville, Tennessee for the crime of desertion from the army.⁴ The order of execution came from none other than Andrew Jackson, a legendary officer who had led the army leader in Tennessee and who led the enlistment drive in frontier areas. Later he would become U.S. president.



We have no details about whether it was true that Drury deserted and, if he did, his reasons for it. The article on the next page offers clues. Many men deserted from one unit, then enlisted in another, to collect an enlistment bonus. Cash was hard to come by in those days, and the cash bonus for re-enlistment may have been too tempting to pass up. Or maybe Drury thought it time to get home to help his wife and sons with spring planting. Also, for his day, he was an old soldier and may have concluded he really was not cut out for military life. Lastly, if he saw any action, it probably involved hair-raising

skirmishes with First Americans at frontier locations such as Alabama, far from his Kentucky home, rather than defense of the young nation's capital or independence.

We do know that, at the time Drury's life was ended by a military firing squad, the War of 1812 was over. On 24 December 2014, a treaty had been signed in faraway Ghent that ended the War. Neither the United States nor Great Britain saw much point to continuing a war that led to great loss of life and materiel on both sides. Britain was heavily involved in continental Europe in the Napoleonic Wars while the U.S. Army was at war with Indians who resisted the westward movement of American settlers.

Even after word finally reached Andrew Jackson and other officers that the War of 1812 was over, the Army was not about to let men go home who, like Drury, had signed five-year commitments, when troops were needed for the ongoing Indian Wars, such as the Creek War of northern Alabama.⁵

The execution of Drury Puckett and others was reported on a website entitled *Executed Today*:⁶

1815: Eight deserters by order of Andrew Jackson

February 17th, 2014 Meaghan

(Thanks to Meaghan Good of the Charley Project for the guest post. -ed.)

On this day [February 17] in 1815, eight young men condemned for desertion during the War of 1812 were executed by firing squad in Nashville, Tennessee.

They were brought out to be shot one by one, as there weren't enough people available to form a firing squad large enough for the group of them.

Desertion was rife during this inglorious conflict, according to Wikipedia:

The desertion rate for American soldiers in the War of 1812 was 12.7%, according to available service records. Desertion was especially common in 1814, when enlistment bonuses were increased from \$16 to \$124, inducing many men to desert one unit and enlist in another to get two bonuses.

We're not sure how well these eight got paid off in life ... only that they collected their last check in lead.

1. Nathaniel Chester, age unknown, a member of the Corp of Artillery.
2. Benjamin Harris, 38, a private in the 44th Regiment. Born in Virginia and raised in New Orleans, Louisiana, he enlisted on March 26, 1814, and deserted on July 1.
3. John Jones, 33, a private in the 2nd Rifle Regiment. He'd enlisted for a five-year stint on July 25, 1814, in Fauquier, Virginia. The date he deserted has not been recorded.
4. Jacob King, 20, a private in the 1st U.S. Artillery. He was born in Pennsylvania and enlisted on March 28, 1814, for five years. He deserted on July 12.
5. James McBride, 21, a native of Virginia. Records about his military service are unclear: some reports are that he enlisted on April 20, 1813, and other accounts give the date as July 22, 1814. It's possible he deserted twice; this was a common practice, as noted above.
6. William Myers, 19, a private from Georgia. He enlisted on March 27, 1814; it's unknown when he deserted.
7. Drury Puckett, 36, a member of the 2nd Infantry. (Almost certainly the son and namesake of this Drury Puckett.) Like Harris and McBride, he was from Virginia, and he had enlisted there for five years on September 24, 1814. The record says he deserted on December 31, but this is surely in error, because by then he had already been sentenced to die.
8. John Young, age unknown, from Winchester, Virginia. He enlisted on October 3, 1814 and deserted after a mere five days.

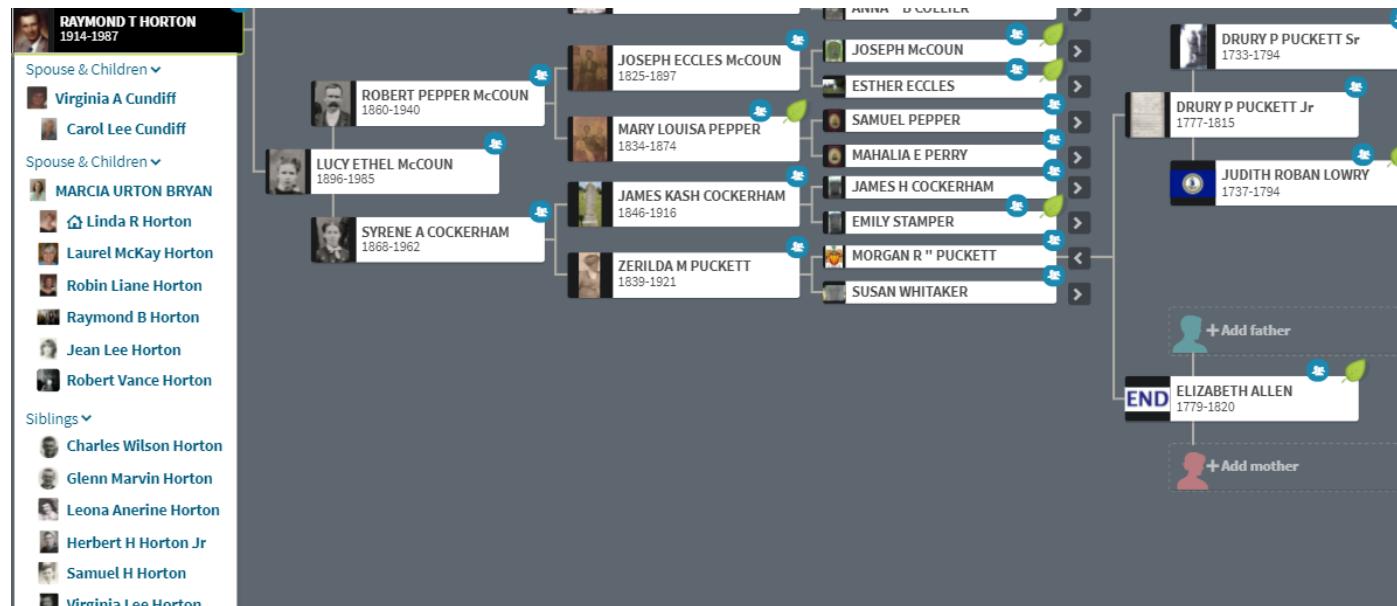
General (and future President) Andrew Jackson affirmed their sentences on January 28, pardoning five others at the same time. This was twenty days after Jackson fought the Battle of New Orleans, the final major conflict in the war. This day's event was the largest mass execution in Tennessee history.

The End of the War of 1812

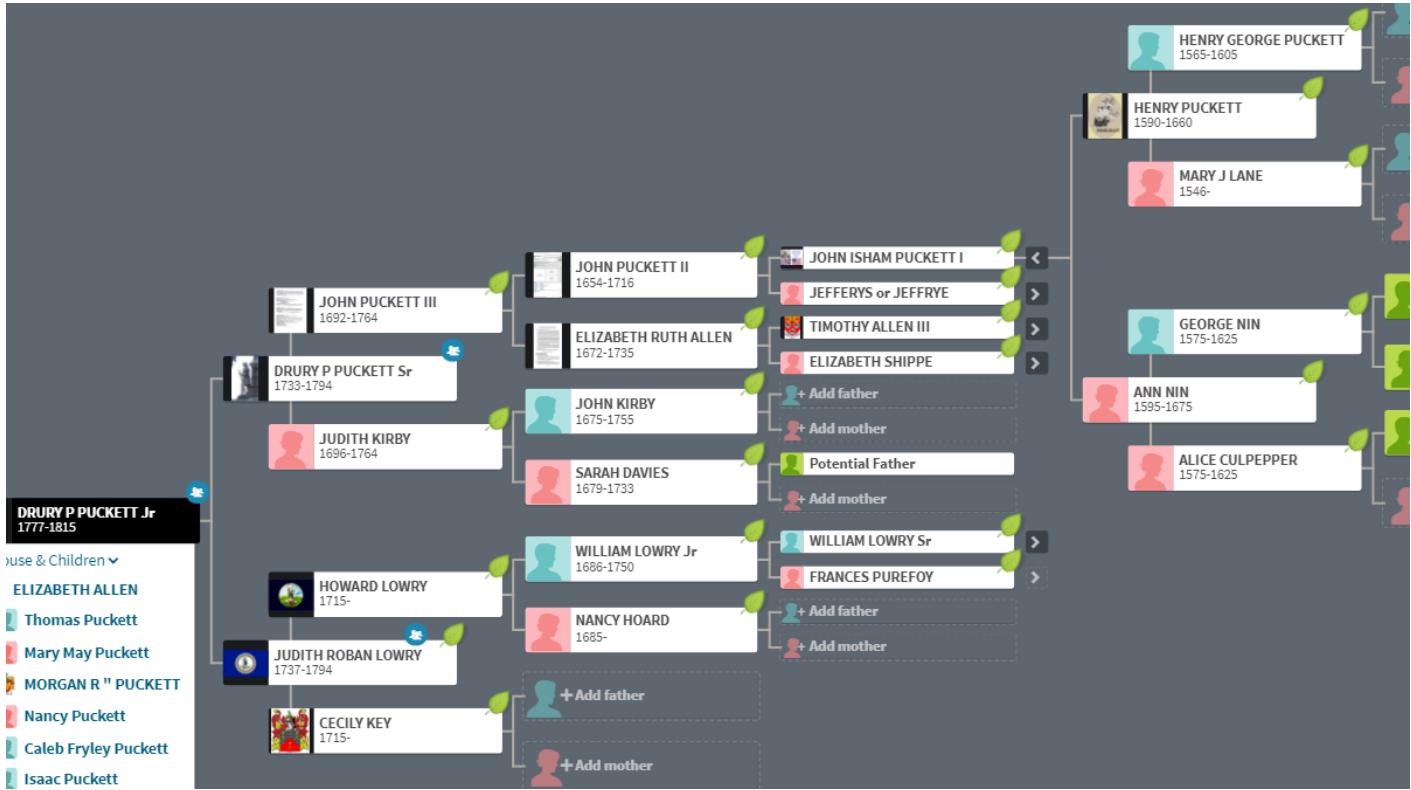
- 1812, 18 June. The U.S. declared war because of British restrictions on trade stemming from its war with France and belief its expansion was undermined by British alliances with First American tribes. Popular politicians like Henry Clay and other “Warhawks” demanded war.
- This timeline does not attempt to recount all the key mileposts in the war but only those pertinent to Drury Puckett.⁷
- 1814, 24 August. The British army burned Washington, DC.
- 1814, 13 September. The British navy bombarded Fort McHenry in the Baltimore Harbor.
- 1814, 1 December. Peace delegates convened at Ghent.
- 1814, 24 December. The Treaty of Ghent was signed to end the War; Britain ratified it.
- 1815, 8 January, The Battle of New Orleans was fought; General Andrew Jackson did not know that the war was over.
- 1815, 16 February. The U.S. Senate ratified the Treaty of Ghent.
- [1815, 17 February. Drury Puckett and other soldiers were executed in Nashville.
- 1815, 18 February. The Treaty of Ghent was declared; the War of 1812 was over.
- 1815, 20 February. The captain of the USS Constitution engaged HMS Cyane and HMS Levant, not knowing the war was over.

Placing Drury Puckett II on the Family Tree

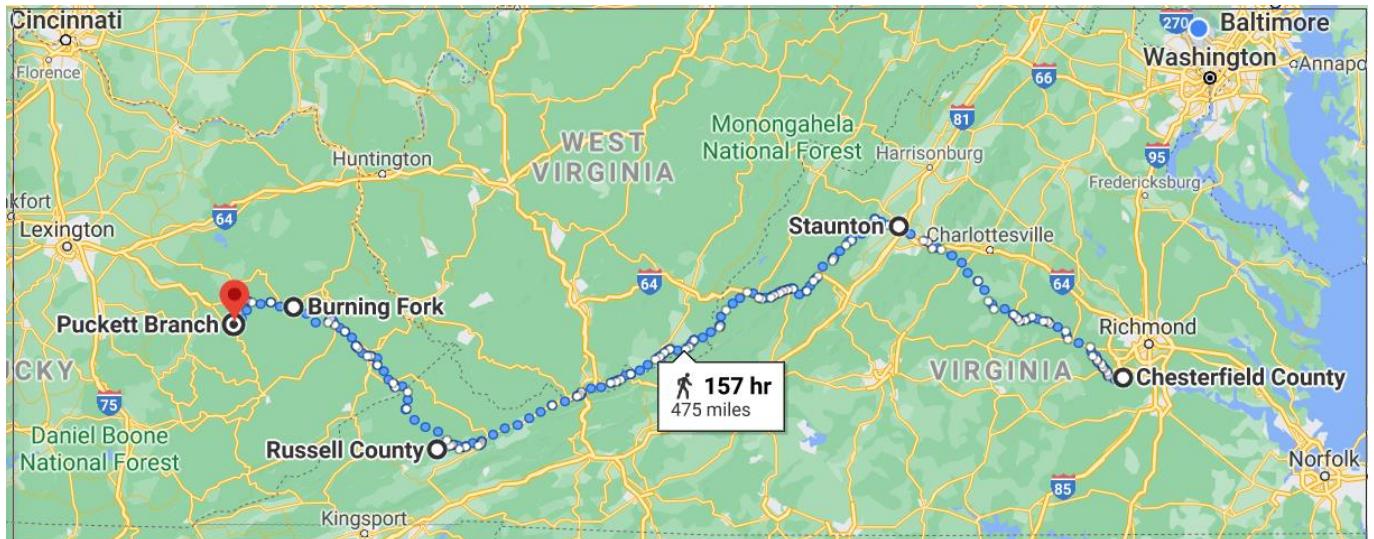
Drury Puckett was the great great great grandfather (4x great grandfather or 4th GG) of the children of Raymond Thomas Horton and his siblings and their first paternal first cousins. Drury's ancestors had been early migrants to colonial Virginia: John Puckett I (1619-1677), his great great grandfather, had left England in 1637. Drury's ancestry is believed to have been 100% English for many generations.



The origin of the surname, Puckett, is unknown. One theory is that it was originally Huguenot (French Protestant) in origin and might derive from French surnames such as Pouquette or Pouquet, meaning the son of Puck.⁸ Puck was a malicious fairy or demon in medieval folklore, well-known today due to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.⁹ Others assert that the surname Puckett is of Anglo-Saxon origin or refers to the pocket on an article of clothing. In some families, the pronunciation of the name involves emphasis on the second syllable: puhKETT rather than PUHkett.



Our Puckett family, after arriving in America, took several generations to migrate westward to Kentucky, as shown on the map below.



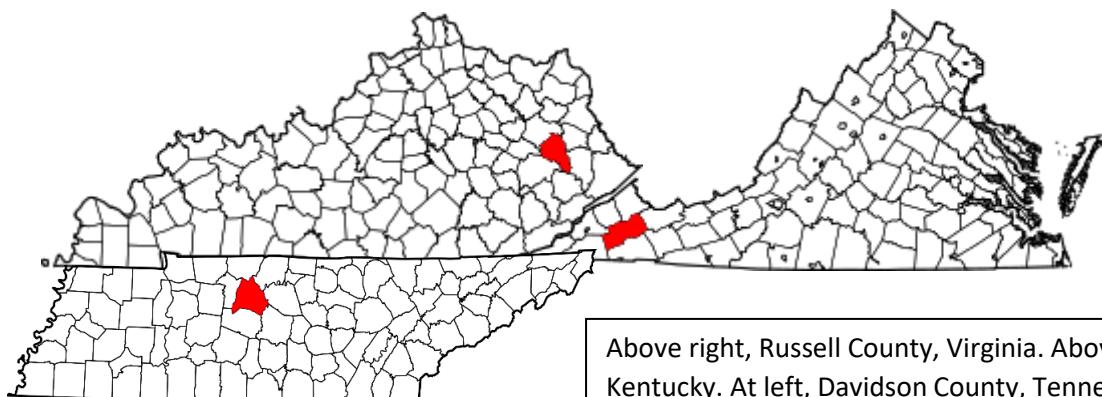
The first three generations in America, John Puckett I, II, and III, lived in Chesterfield County on the James River near today's Richmond. Drury Puckett Senior was born there in 1733 but as a young man

moved to Augusta County, near today's Staunton, where he married Judith Lowry. Most of their children were born there. Later the family moved down the Shenandoah River Valley in a southwesterly direction to Washington County, today Russell County, where the younger Drury Puckett—the subject of this biography—was born along with two more children. Drury Senior and Judith lived in Russell County the rest of their lives until both died in 1794. Their heirs sold their property they had inherited on 20 July 1797; the indenture document¹⁰ contributes to understanding family members. Several of their children, including the younger Drury, migrated to eastern Kentucky in the mid to late 1790s.

The Earlier Life of Drury Puckett II (1777-1815)

Before his ignoble end, Drury Puckett's life had been typical for a man of his era. In 1777, he was born in what is today Russell County (shown in red in the modern map of Virginia, below right). He was the seventh of nine children of Drury Puckett Senior (1733-1794) and Judith Lowry (1737-1794).¹¹

By the mid-1790s, Drury had migrated to Kentucky, settling in an area that today is near a town called Burning Fork in Magoffin County (in red in the modern Kentucky map, below left). At the time, this part of Kentucky was in Mason County and in 1800 it became part of Floyd County.



Above right, Russell County, Virginia. Above left, Magoffin County, Kentucky. At left, Davidson County, Tennessee, location of Nashville, where Drury was executed in 1815.

In about 1795, Drury married Elizabeth Allen (1779-1863). It is believed that she migrated, probably with her parents, from the same part of Virginia where Drury's family lived. She is called a brick-wall ancestor because we do not know the identity of her parents. Hundreds of family trees on Ancestry.com say her parents were a couple who lived in Connecticut and never set foot in Virginia. It is implausible that they could be her parents, if she were born in the southwestern corner of Virginia, as all sources say.

Drury and Elizabeth had six children in 12 years, two of them daughters about whom we have no information—they may have died young—and four sons who lived to adulthood. Their lifespans, names, and spouses were:

- 1796-1818, Thomas Puckett, who married Polly Ramy; two children; at age 18, he had enlisted in the Army on 10 September 1814, twelve days before his father's enlistment.
- 1800-? Mary May Puckett.
- 1801-1890, Morgan Puckett, our great great grandfather, who married Susan Whitaker in Floyd County on 24 January 1822; the ninth of their 13 children was Zerilda Manervia Puckett (1839-1921), the mother of Syrene Cockerham McCoun (1868-1962).
- 1803-? Nancy Puckett.

- 1806-1887, Caleb Fryly Puckett, who married Rosette M. Maddix (1808-?); one of their eight children, born in 1831, was named Serena (one of three cousins who may have been namesakes of Syrene Cockerham McCoun).
- 1810-1870, Isaac Puckett, who married Katherine Keeton (1806-1871); six children.

At the time Drury enlisted in the army, following the lead of his 18-year-old son Thomas, there were three sons still at home to help his wife with the farm: Morgan, age 14, Caleb, age seven, and Isaac age four. Morgan, our ancestor, may have been expected to function as “man of the household” in the absence of his father and older brother.

We may never know what led Drury Puckett to desert the army, whether it was to re-enlist in another unit and collect an enlistment bonus, or whether he believed it was time to get back to his Floyd County farm, where his family needed him.

Whatever his motivation in leaving the army when and how he did, we should be grateful that Drury had started his family before joining the army, because his descendants from him would exist.

Genetic Genealogy and the Puckett Family

There appear to be many people living today who descend from Drury Puckett. For those of us who do, it is a good thing that he produced several children who would themselves have children.

YDNA Results. The YDNA results of a Puckett male in our family place him in the R-M269 haplogroup. A haplogroup is a genetic population group of people who share a common ancestor on the patriline. Haplogroups are assigned letters of the alphabet and additional refinements consisting of additional numbers and letter combinations.¹² YDNA is handed from a father to his son, who passes it to his son, and so forth. Because YDNA is relatively stable over centuries, and because a surname often follows a patriline, YDNA can be useful to genetic genealogists.

This is not surprising that our Pucketts’ YDNA haplogroup is R-M269. Referred to as the Western Atlantic Modal Haplogroup, it is the most frequently occurring Y-chromosome haplogroup of males in Western Europe and in countries such as the United States to which European people migrated.¹³

The line of Puckett males going back in time from Morgan to Drury Junior to Drury Senior, John III, John II, and John I all share the same YDNA. On average, in each century there will be one or two mutations that can help genetic genealogists determine the likely closeness of the kinship between two men who are YDNA matches, through estimation of the genetic distance to the common patrilineal ancestor. This is an area of science in which phenomenal progress has been made in recent years. The number of men in Haplogroup R-M269 (also called R1b) who have done more advanced testing has enabled production of a descendant tree for this haplogroup depicted in the image in the footnote.¹⁴

Autosomal DNA Results. AncestryDNA’s ThruLines™ identified 77 DNA matches of Linda Horton who are believed to descend from Drury Puckett (1777-1815) and Elizabeth Allen.

If you test with AncestryDNA and link a tree to your own results, the Ancestry’s computer searches for situations in which an individual who is your DNA match has in his or her tree an ancestor who appears in your tree. Some of the people you match will not have well-developed trees yet, in many cases, they provided Ancestry with enough information that the company could fill in the blanks and postulate for your match a lineage back to the common ancestor. The implication is that the segment of DNA shared

by you and your match may have come from the common ancestor. Although ThruLines™ results are not 100% accurate, genetic genealogy hobbyists have found ThruLines™ a fairly accurate predictor of the common ancestor it identifies as the possible source of the shared DNA passed down to you and also to your match.

There are many people who do a DNA test with Ancestry but do not link a tree to their results, or they link a tree with few ancestors in it. Even in such cases, the “shared matches” tool on Ancestry enables you to identify at least the branch of your family tree where the common ancestor would be found. Analysis of new matches on Ancestry includes use of the “shared match” function and color dots to mark matches as associated with one branch or another. Over time, one can figure out from shared matches the likely branch of the family tree in which the common ancestor will be found. The colored dots are simply a way to preserve the results of his analysis. Analysis of shared matches to which colored dots have been electronically attached will, over time, result in production of a list of AncestryDNA matches with whom the shared ancestor appears to be in a certain part of the tree—in this case, the one-sixteenth of Linda Horton’s ancestry represented by Zerilda Manervia Puckett (surnames include Puckett, Whitaker, Allen, Lowry).

Through use of shared matches and colored dots, Linda Horton has more than 900 matches with whom the common ancestor was in the Puckett ancestral branch tree of our Puckets and associated families.

¹ A poet named Francis Scott Key who observed the attack on Fort McHenry composed a poem, *The Star-Spangled Banner*, that later would be set to music and become the national anthem of the United States.

² Register of Enlistments in the U.S. Army, 1798-1914; (National Archives Microfilm Publication M233, 81 rolls); Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1780’s-1917, Record Group 94; National Archives, Washington, D.C.

³ The image is one of several at

https://www.google.com/search?q=image+of+firing+squad&rlz=1C1CHBD_enUS884US941&sxsrf=ALeKk03J0fM48Y3Eu2o979rGyOb5r9dGFA:1624053563304&tbo=isch&source=iu&ictx=1&fir=ZyzZxEMUpVaKM%252C4vsJHRUoiNN3HM%252C_&vet=1&usg=AI4_kQ1AgoGH7OOR3I13B-fd0f0eFxBCw&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjjgvL9lqLxAhUwElkFHcePAj8Q9QF6BAgEEAE&biw=1280&bih=646#imgrc=cMHXltaBGmBqtM

⁴ <http://www.executedtoday.com/2014/02/17/1815-eight-deserters-by-order-of-andrew-jackson/>

⁵ <http://www.executedtoday.com/2014/02/17/1815-eight-deserters-by-order-of-andrew-jackson/>

⁶ See War of 1812 Timeline for details. <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/war-1812-timeline>

⁸

Russell County, Virginia
Deed Book 1, Page 315
Executed 20 Jul 1797

This indenture made the twentieth day of July in the year of our Lord One Thousand seven Hundred and Ninety Seven between George Puckett and Lucy his wife, John Puckett and Sally (Sarah) his wife, Ericus Smith and Rosanna his wife, Daniel Price and Judah (Judith) his wife, Caleb Fryley and Besty his wife, George Fennell (Finney?) and Phebe his wife, Drury Puckett, and Nancy Puckett heirs of Drewery

Puckett deceased and Roben (Robert) Puckett of Russell County and Commonwealth of Virginia of the one part and Jesse Vermillion of the said county of the other part witnesseth that the s'd George Puckett and Lucy his wife, John Puckett and Sally his wife, Ericus Smith and Rosanna his wife, Daniel Price and Judath his wife, Caleb Fryley and Betsy his wife, George Fennel and Phebe his wife, Drury Puckett, Nancy Puckett, Roben Puckett for - pounds current money to them in hand paid by the said Jesse Vermillion the receipt whereof they do hereby acknowledge hath granted, bargained and sold by these presents do grant, bargain and sell unto the s'd Jesse Vermillion a certain tract or parcel of land containing one hundred and fourty acres lying and being in the said county of Russell adjoining the spurs of the River Mountain and cornered as follows viz

Beginning on the end of a spur of the River Mountain near the head of a steep hollow at a black oak and a white oak running thence S. 56 degrees E. 80 poles crossing a small branch to a maple and white oak S. 14 degrees W. 50 poles crossing the s'd branch to a sugar tree on the side of a brushy hill S. 54 degrees W. 168 poles to a black oak and two white saplings in the head of a hollow N. 24 degrees W. 108 poles to a large chesnut on a old line then with the old line N 60 degrees E 153 poles to the beginning together with the appurtenances unto the said Jesse Vermillion his heirs and assigns and the said George Puckett and Lucy his wife, John Puckett and Sally his wife, Ericus Smith and Rosanna his wife, Daniel Price and Judath his wife, Caleb Fryley and Betsy his wife, George Fennell and Phebe his wife, Drury Puckett, Nancy Puckett and the s'd Roben Puckett will forever warrant and defend said tract of land with its appurtenances unto the s'd Jesse Vermillion his heirs and assigns against the claims of all persons whatsoever in witness whereof the said George Puckett and Lucy his wife, John Puckett and Sally his wife, Ericus Smith and Rosanna his wife, Daniel Price and Judath his wife, Caleb Fryley and Betsy his wife, George Fennell and Phebe his wife, Drury Puckett, Nancy Puckett and Roben Puckett have herein unto suscribed their names & affixed their seals the day and year first above written.

George Puckett - seal
Lucy Puckett - seal
John Puckett - seal
Sally Puckett - seal
Ericus Smith - seal
Rosanna Smith - seal
Daniel Price - seal
Judath Price - seal
George Fennell - seal
Phebe Fennell - seal
Drury Puckett - seal
Nancy Puckett - seal
Robin Puckett - seal

At July Court 1797,

This indenture of bargain and sale of land from George Puckett and Lucy his wife, John Puckett and Sally his wife, Ericus Smith and Rosanna his wife, Daniel Price and Judath his wife, Caleb Fryley and Betsy his wife, George Fennell and Phebe his wife, Drury Puckett, Nancy Puckett and Roben Puckett to Jesse Vermillion was exhibited in court and acknowledged by the s'd George Puckett, John Puckett, Ericus Smith, Daniel Price, Caleb Fryley, George Fennell, Drury Puckett, Nancy Puckett, Roben Puckett, and Lucy, Sally, Rosanna, Judith, Betsey, & Phebe their wives being privly examined as the law directs and ordered to be recorded.

Deed from the heirs of Drury Puckett Sr. to George Puckett

This file was contributed by: Edwin M. Puckett in Hester Elizabeth Garrett, *Some Pucketts and Their Kin*; [ISBN 0806313676](#)^ [Puckett Genealogy and Puckett Family History Information](#), geni.com.
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puckett>

⁹ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/puck-fairy>

¹⁰ Creek War, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creek_War

¹¹ A family history researcher, Timothy Puckett, produced a useful timeline of the life of Drury Puckett, Senior.

Drury Puckett Sr (1733 – 1794) Timeline

There are a lot of confusion and incorrect records for Drury, Judith, and their children. I am going to outline where they lived based on actual records and counties forming. Many records have the children living in counties that were not formed yet.

Note: Drury is not in my line but his brother Daniel is so I am working on his siblings to see if I can break down one of my brick walls.

- 1733 – 1748: Drury born and lived in Henrico County.
- 1749: Chesterfield County formed out of Henrico County and the part the Puckett's were living in so did not move.
- 1749 – 1757: Lived in Chesterfield County. We know he enlisted in the army in 1757 in Chesterfield.
- 1758 – 1761: Unsure when he moved from Chesterfield County to Augusta County but it was after 1757.
- 1762 – 1776: Married in Augusta County in 1762. Six kids were born here - George, John, Rosanna, Judith, Phoebe, and Elizabeth.
- 1769: Botetourt County formed. Some have kids born here but the only possibility is Phoebe.
- 1777 – 1786: Lived in Washington County based on tax lists and one court record. Drury and Nancy were born here.
- 1786: Russell County formed out of Washington County so Drury and family did not move.
- 1786 – 1794: Lived in Russell County. This is where Drury and Judith also died. Drury did not die in Augusta as a couple of records depict and many trees. His estate is settled in Russell County. Augusta County is at least 250 miles away and unreasonable in the late 1700's that he would be there.

1. Timothy W Puckett
2. William Albert Puckett Jr
3. William Albert Puckett Sr
4. Benjamin Puckett
5. Samuel Puckett Jr
6. Samuel Puckett Sr
7. John Puckett III
8. Daniel Puckett (1718 – 1794) – Drury's brother
9. John Puckett III
10. John Puckett II
11. John Puckett I (1619 – 1677)

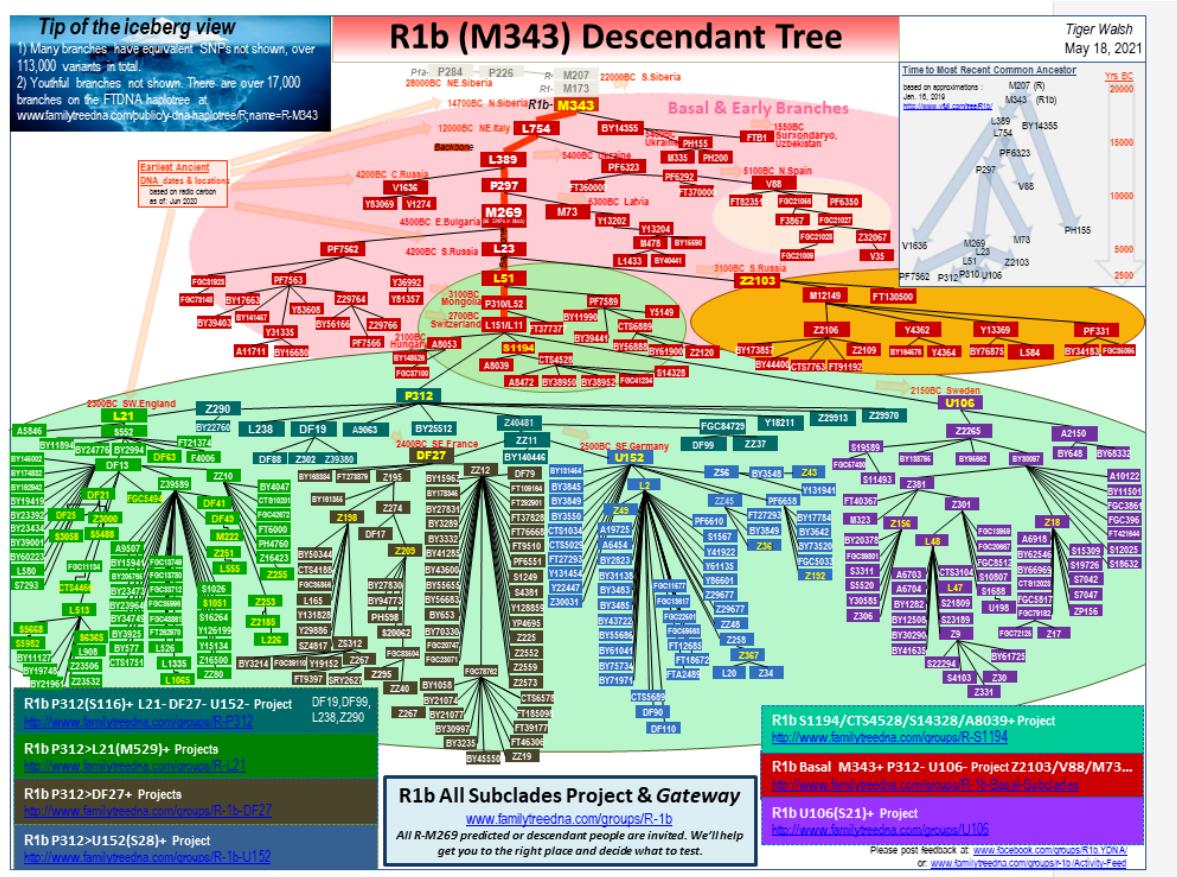
Compiled by Tim Puckett on 08/17/2016

https://www.ancestry.com/mediaui-viewer/collection/1030/tree/31832383/person/18133762293/media/a80780bf-72c1-49a0-be3e-1ca37626f579?_phsrc=SWn3622&usePUBJs=true

¹² The statement in the text is derived from the definition of haplogroup used by the International Society of Genetic Genealogy. <https://isogg.org/wiki/Haplogroup>

¹³ See website of the International Society of Genetic Genealogy. [https://isogg.org/wiki/Haplogroup_R1b_\(Y-DNA\)](https://isogg.org/wiki/Haplogroup_R1b_(Y-DNA))

¹⁴ <https://www.familytreedna.com/groups/r-1b/about/results> In order for a man in haplogroup R-M 269 to determine where in this tree he falls, he must participate in a higher-level test such as Big Y-700, offered by www.familytreedna.com.



You are not expected to be able to read and interpret what appears above. The purpose of including this diagram is simply to demonstrate the sheer complexity of YDNA data analysis and the necessity for a man whose initial test results places him in R-M269 to do higher level testing if he is to derive any benefit from the results.

Although no Puckett cousins have tested at a high enough level, we have available to us highly refined YDNA test results for other key branches of our family represented by these surnames: Horton, McCoun, Cockerham, Richmond, Bryan, Sprowl, McKay, Owings, and Vance. Linda Horton has sponsored some of these tests while, for others, she has access to the results through collaborations with male cousin test takers.