

**Mary Louise Pepper (1834-1874), Ancestor 21**  
**By her great great granddaughter, Linda R. Horton, 22 January 2022<sup>1</sup>**

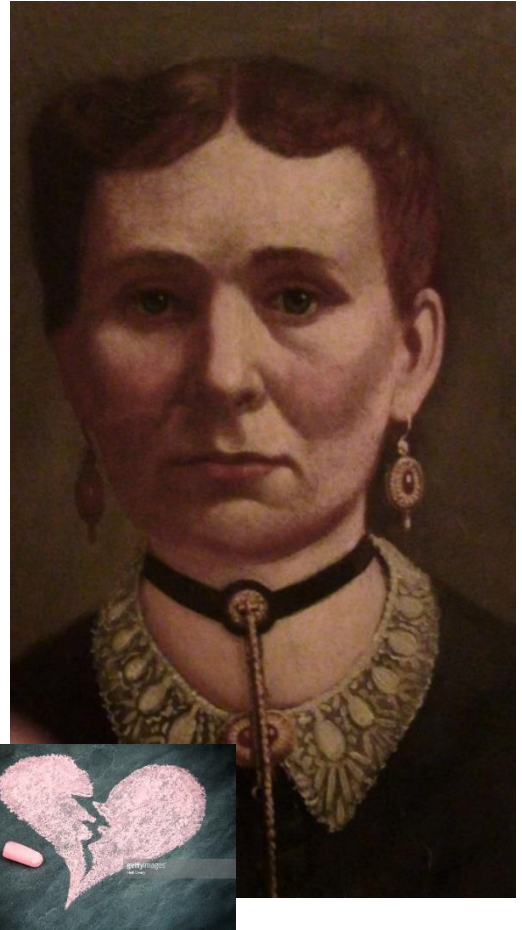
A family legend maintains that Mary Louise Pepper McCoun died in Texas of a broken heart, grieving the loss of her beautiful Kentucky home<sup>2</sup>. Certainly, she looked melancholy when the artist captured her likeness in this painting, probably commissioned by her father shortly before she and her husband, Joe, lost that home at a public auction and moved with their children to Texas in 1873. She never returned to Kentucky.

### THE LEGEND OF MARY LOUISE PEPPER

In 1856 Joe McCoun married Mary Louise “Luta,” the youngest child of Samuel and Mahala Perry Pepper, who lived just across the Kentucky River in Woodford County. The Peppers were wealthy from the family distillery business. Joe bought out the shares of his brother and two sisters in land inherited from their father, and in 1864 sold all of it for \$8687.50. The next year, Luta’s parents moved to Frankfort and her mother died. Her father sold Joe both his beautiful house on a hill and another nearby plantation that had belonged to Luta’s maternal grandparents. The sale price was \$19,000, to be paid in three annual installments. After the down payment, part of that \$8687.50 must have gone for furnishings.

A few years later, all was lost. According to Glenn McCoun, Joe “went” his brother-in-law Bob Pepper’s bond for \$90,000; this expression means that Joe agreed to put up his property as security on a bond that financed a project to build a toll road from Versailles to Mercer County by way of McCoun’s Ferry across the Kentucky River. Bob had poor credit due to bankruptcies and needed another investor to put up his property as security.

Unknown problems prevented Bob from fulfilling the contract, and Joe had to forfeit the property he had pledged. His plantation, all of his farming equipment, and household furnishings were sold at auction. Like others seeking their fortunes out west, the family went to Texas. There, Mary Louise grieved so over the loss of her Kentucky home that she died of a broken heart. (Or so said the family legend....)



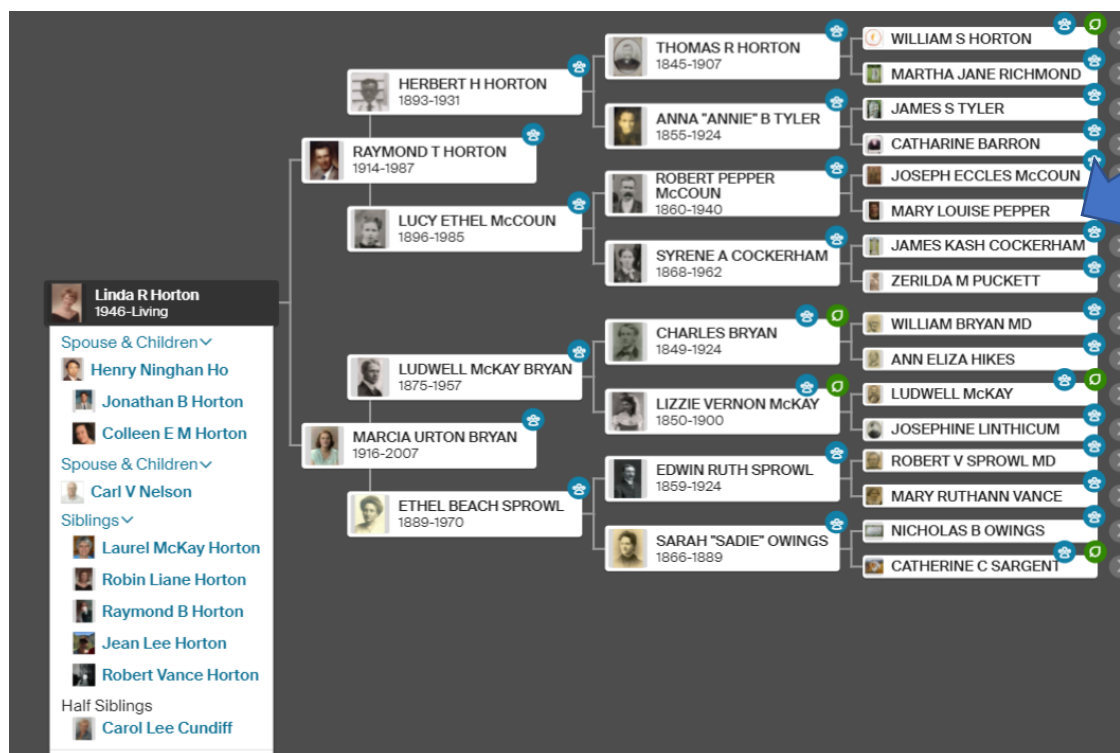
### Birth and early years

Mary Louise Pepper was born on 13 April 1834 in Woodford County, Kentucky, the youngest child of Samuel Pepper (1802-1874) and Mahala Perry Pepper (1804-1865). Her birthplace was Sweet Lawn, her parents’ mansion. Nicknamed “Luta,” at age 22 she married Joseph Eccles “Joe” McCoun (1825-1897) on 2 December 1856. In 18 years of marriage, they had eight children, six of whom lived to adulthood. Luta and Joe lived in three locations: his home in Salvisa, Mercer County, Kentucky; Sweet Lawn, which they bought from her father in 1865; and a frontier homestead in Texas to which the family moved in 1873 after losing Sweet Lawn. On 28 December 1874, Luta died in Texas, not of a broken heart, but of typhoid fever.

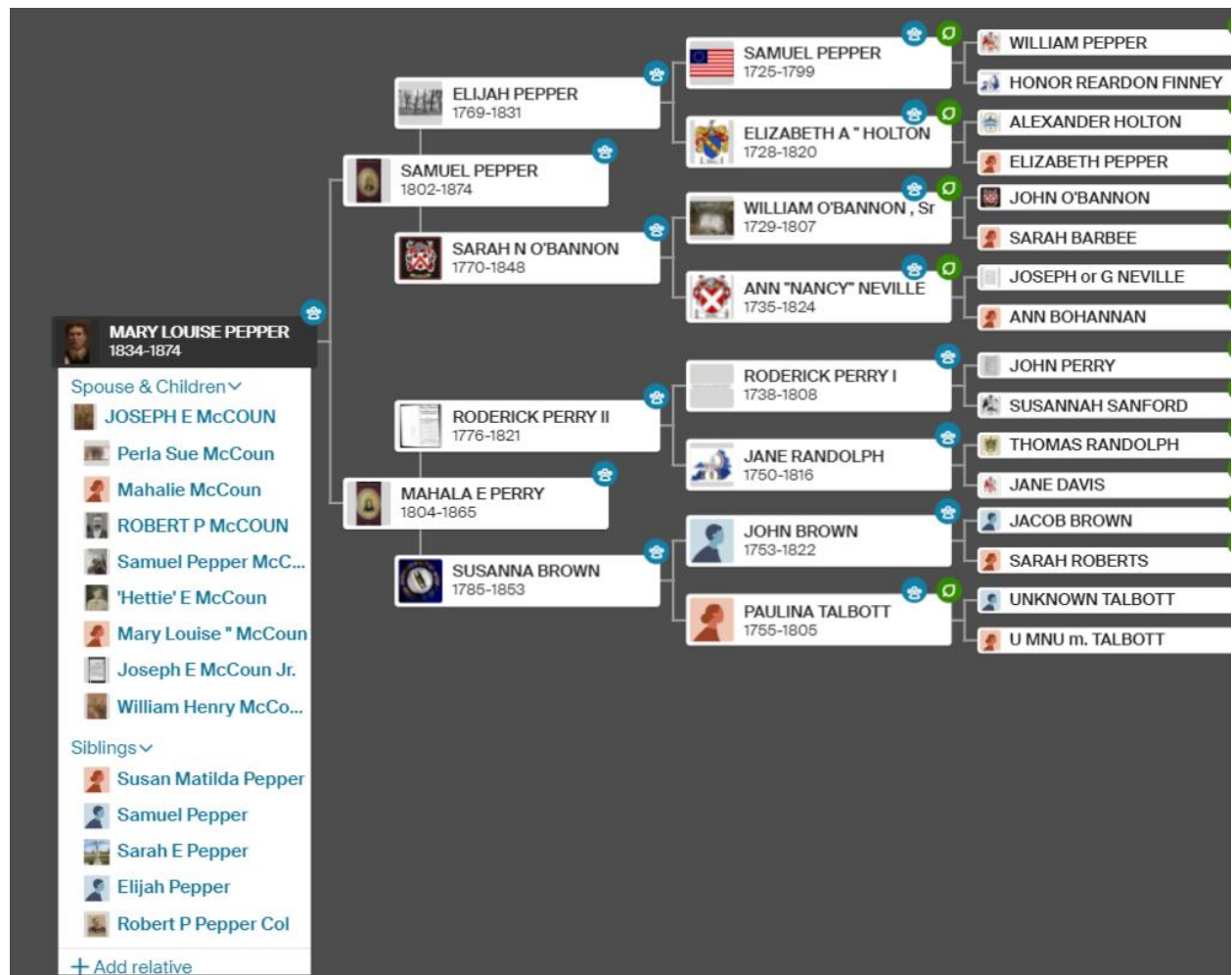
At the 24 April 1873 public auction, the highest bidder acquired Sweet Lawn for \$7075, 37 percent of what Joe and Luta had paid Samuel Pepper.

### Placing Mary Louise “Luta” Pepper McCoun on the family tree

The eldest son of Luta and Joe was Robert Pepper McCoun (1860-1940), our great grandfather. She is our closest ancestor in the illustrious Pepper branch of our family tree. To get an idea of the background of Miss Mary Louise Pepper, consider the portraits below of her parents, Mahala Perry and Samuel Pepper,<sup>3</sup> painted in February 1824, the month in which they married. In the 1800s, getting one’s portrait painted was a sign of wealth.



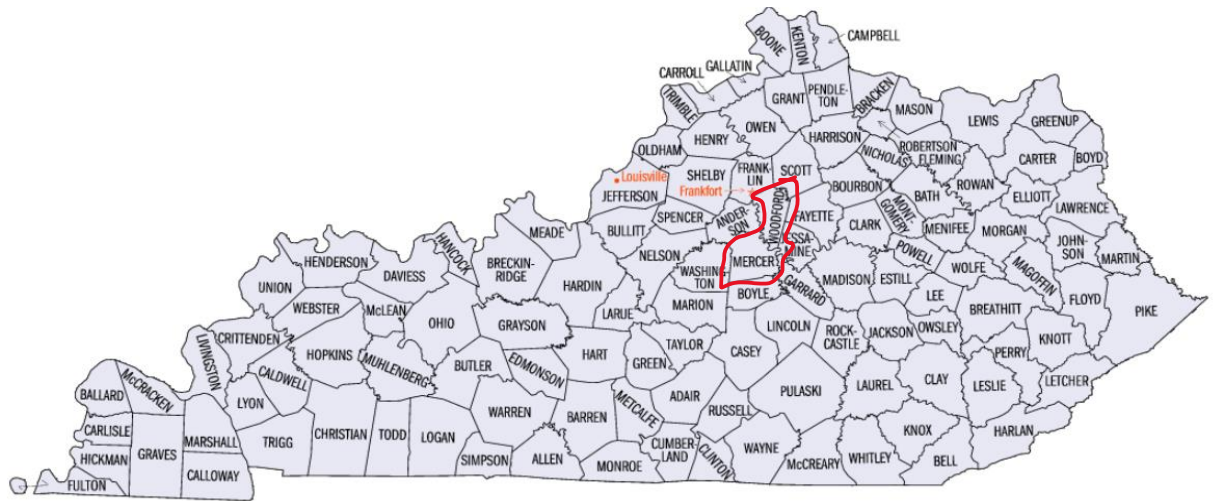
In Luta's ancestry, which was colonial American and, before that, English, Irish, and Scottish, we encounter several famous names. Her grandfather, Elijah Pepper (1760-1831), founded the Kentucky bourbon industry. His wife, Sarah O'Bannon (1770-1848)<sup>4</sup> had enough knowhow to run the distillery business for several years after Elijah's death. Sarah's brother was a famous U.S. Marine. Sarah's biography will provide information about the O'Bannons and Nevilles.



### Luta's early years, and meeting Joe

How Joe met Luta is a mystery. More than eight years his junior, she grew up in a wealthy family in Woodford County, just north of his Mercer County, on the other side of the jagged Kentucky River—and a world away. Both counties lie in the heart of the Kentucky Bluegrass Region. In the antebellum period and even today, Woodford County exudes a lush, deep-South-plantation gentility that its neighbor to the south, Mercer County, lacks but does not covet. Mercer has its own proud, rough-and-ready pioneer traditions. Until the construction in the twentieth century of bridges, the Kentucky River was a significant barrier to meeting people on the other side. Several ferries crossed the river, including one called McCoun's Ferry associated with Joe's family. His McCoun ancestors had been among Kentucky's first settlers, reaching Kentucky in the 1770s and founding a small community called Salvisa.





Luta was born in an elegant home, built for her parents in 1831 and called Sweet Lawn, shown above as it appears today. Its owners operate a horse farm known as Sun Valley Farm where, on 9 November 2021, the author and other descendants were kindly provided a tour of this ancestral home. The website<sup>5</sup> includes this information:

The Samuel Pepper homestead on Sun Valley Farm was built in 1831. The son of pioneer master distiller, Elijah Pepper, who constructed his distillery just across the lane on the banks of Glenn's Creek. Today, this extremely proud bourbon tradition is

carefully preserved by the Woodford Reserve Distillery. Samuel and his wife raised five children on their ancestral home named “Sweet Lawn,” ... tending their family, livestock and crops. They are buried in a garden graveyard on the farm.

NAMES OF HEADS OF FAMILIES	FREE WHITE PERSONS, INCLUDING HEADS OF FAMILIES																							
	MALES												FEMALES											
	Under 5	5 under 10	10 under 15	15 under 20	20 under 30	30 under 40	40 under 50	50 under 60	60 under 70	70 under 80	80 under 90	90 under 100	100 and upwards	Under 5	5 under 10	10 under 15	15 under 20	20 under 30	30 under 40	40 under 50	50 under 60	60 under 70	70 under 80	80 under 90
Samuel Pepper		1	1			1								2	2	3			2					

When Luta was born at Sweet Lawn three years after it was built, she had at least three older siblings: a nine-year-old sister, Susan, a six-year-old sister, Sarah, and a 17-month-old brother, Robert Perry “Bob” Pepper. In the 1840 census, excerpted above, three white males and nine white females were living in the household of Samuel and Mahala. The one male between 30 and 39 was Samuel, and the male between ages five and nine was Bob. There also was a male between 10 and 14 whose identity is uncertain. Some family historians believe Samuel and Mahala had two sons who died young, one named Elijah and the other Samuel. Perhaps the boy between 10 and 14 counted in the 1840 census was one of these boys. If so, he died before 1850.

One of the two females between 30 and 39 in the 1840 census was Mahala, while the identity of the other woman has not been established. She was probably a relative and may have been the mother of two girls under age five, a girl between five and nine, and a girl between 10 and 14 whose identities also are unknown. Luta was one of the two females between five and nine, while her sisters Susan and Sarah were two of the three females between 10 and 14.

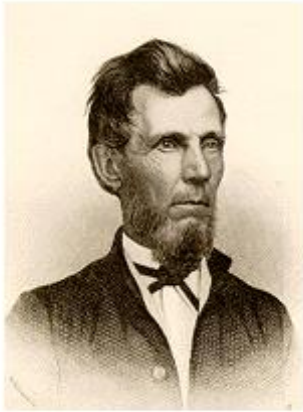
The 1850 census, below, was more helpful than earlier ones, providing the names of at least the white persons enumerated, not merely the names of heads of household. Luta was recorded as a 17-year-old living with her father Samuel, age 47, mother Mahala, age 46, sister Sarah E. age 22, brother Robert P., age 20, and Susan Edwards, age 65. Susan was Mahala’s mother, Susanna Brown Perry Edwards, twice widowed. The eldest child, also a Susan, was 25 and had married and moved to her own home. Samuel was a farmer. His real property—Sweet Lawn and the farm—had an estimated value of \$12,000, \$201,000 in 2021.<sup>6</sup> The census reports for 1840, 1850, and 1860 described Samuel Pepper’s ownership of enslaved persons. His biography provides details and discusses the ugly truth that our McCoun, Pepper, and Perry ancestors owned slaves.

Samuel Pepper	47	M		Farmer	12000
Mahala E	46	F			
Sarah E	22	F			
Robert P	20	M			
Mary L	17	F			
Susan Edwards	65	F			



## Mary Louise Pepper and Joseph Eccles McCoun met and married

1812-1875



DR. L. L. PINKERTON.

Luta's descendants might wish for a how-they-met story, a happy counterbalance to the dreadful loss of a beloved home and forced move to Texas, where she died young. Yet there is no family tradition about how Joe and Luta found each other. Perhaps a clue is provided by the records of their wedding ceremony, held at Sweet Lawn on 2 December 1856.

It was performed by a leading local evangelist,<sup>7</sup> Lewis L. Pinkerton.<sup>8</sup> Why did Pinkerton officiate at the wedding of Luta Pepper and Joe McCoun? He was not only well-known as a prominent minister in the newly formed Protestant denomination, Disciples of Christ (or simply "the Christian Church," due to its ecumenical aspirations<sup>9</sup>) but he also was a proponent of education for girls and women. Pinkerton founded two schools for girls in Midway, a town in northern

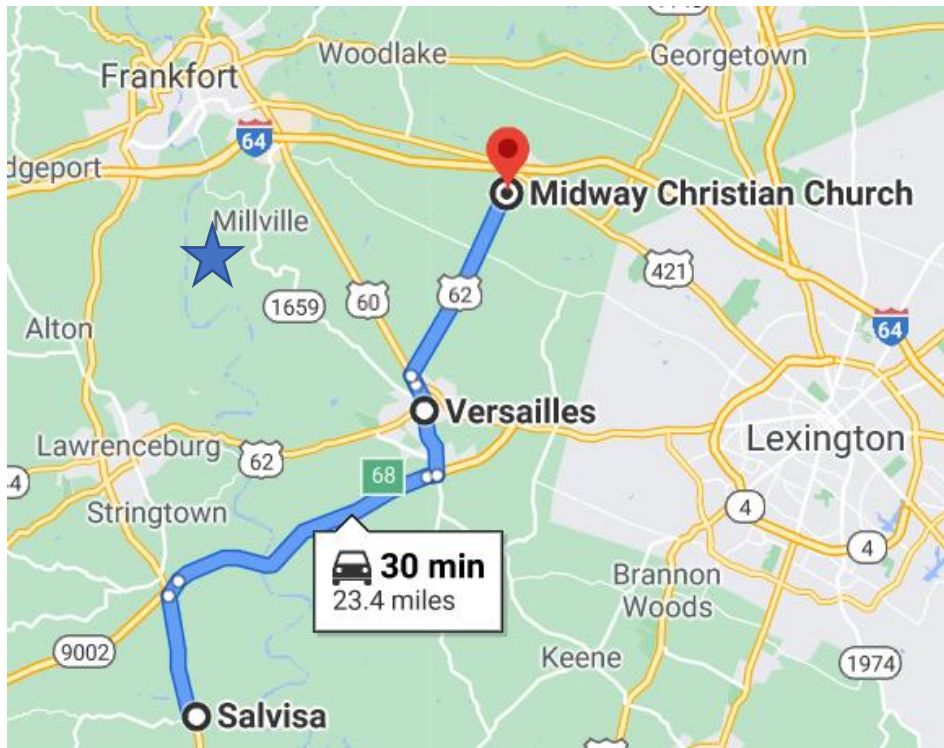
Woodford County that got its name because it is halfway between Frankfort and Lexington. In 1845 (when Luta was 11) Pinkerton started a private girls school known as the Baconian Institute with a well-to-do clientele, and four years later he inaugurated the Female Orphan School for poor girls. Both schools were viewed as highly progressive for that era, and both were predecessors of today's Midway University.

There is evidence that Samuel and Mahala Pepper believed in educating their daughters: in the 1850 census, all in the family could read and write. Perhaps they enrolled their youngest, Luta, in the Baconian Institute. It was only 10 miles from Sweet Lawn, marked by a star on the map on the next page. Some Baconian students boarded at the school. The Baconian Institute was named for the seventeenth century English philosopher Francis Bacon, whose views about the compatibility of religion and science were influential in the United States.<sup>10</sup> The Institute met in the building pictured below that today houses Midway University's president. It is only a short walk to the Midway Christian Church where Pinkerton was minister from 1844 to 1860.<sup>11</sup>

My pet theory is that, sometime in the mid-1850s, Joe McCoun and his mother, Esther read or heard about L.L. Pinkerton. Wanting to hear him preach at his church in Midway, they set off early one morning in their horse-drawn buggy. It was



about 23 miles to Midway from their home in Salvisa. Depending on the speed of the horses and how promptly they were ferried across the Kentucky River to the Woodford County side, the trip could easily require four hours each way. They probably stayed overnight in Midway.



If Luta was, indeed, an acolyte of Pinkerton, she could have attended the same service, with her parents or other Baconian Institute pupils or alumni. Perhaps Joe and Luta first encountered one another after the service, during the church's fellowship time. Young women may have served food after the service. Certainly, refreshments would be appreciated by

people like Esther and Joe who had traveled a long distance to hear the day's sermon. If my theory is correct, Luta might have caught Joe's eye when she served refreshments. The event at which Luta and Joe met may have been something other than a routine Sunday morning service. Between 1844 and 1860, Pinkerton and other preachers often held revivals at the Midway Christian Church,<sup>12</sup> another possible way for Joe and Luta to have met.

Alternatively, Luta may have been introduced to society at a debutante ball to which Joe, an eligible bachelor living not far away, was invited.<sup>13</sup> Although not members of the tony Woodford County set, the McCouns were a respectable Mercer County family, with deep roots in the area and substantial property. Young Kentuckians sometimes met at dances.<sup>14</sup> In the 1850s, when Luta and her siblings were teens and young adults, they hosted "old-time house parties" at Sweet Lawn lasting several days, and "musicians were imported from Cincinnati to play for dances held during the parties."<sup>15</sup> Informal gatherings such as quilting bees were places where young Kentuckians met. Robert McAfee (1784-1849), wrote that in 1763 his father Robert Sr. (1745-1795) met his mother, Anne McCoun (1746-1795) (a sister of Joe's grandfather), at a neighborhood quilting bee, "which was the fashionable place of the meetings of the young people in those days."<sup>16</sup>

What is certain is that Joe fell in love with a wealthy young woman who lived in another county, and they decided to get married. On the day of the wedding, Samuel Pepper and Joe McCoun executed a marriage bond, and we can see that someone had beautiful handwriting.<sup>17</sup>

Know all men by these presents that we Joseph  
 E. McCann and Samuel Pepper and his and  
 firmly bound unto the Commonwealth of Kentucky...  
 in the just and full sum of One hundred dollars  
 the payment of which well and truly to be made, we bind our  
 selves, our heirs & jointly and severally for and by these presents  
 signed, sealed and dated this 3<sup>rd</sup> day of December 1856  
 The Condition of the above obligation is such that whereas  
 a marriage is intended shortly to be solemnized between the  
 above bound Joseph E. McCann and Mary L. Pepper  
 Now should there be no lawful cause to  
 obstruct said marriage then this obligation to be void  
 else to remain in full force and virtue  
 J. E. McCann (seal)  
 Saml. Pepper (seal)

The Reverend Pinkerton completed and signed the marriage certificate.<sup>18</sup>

CERTIFICATE IN CASE OF MARRIAGE.			
I hereby certify that, on the	3 <sup>rd</sup>	day of	December 1856,
Joseph E. McCann	of	Mercer County Ky	
31	years old, born at	Mercer County Ky	
was married to	Mary L. Pepper	of	Woodford
County Ky	, aged	22	years, born at
County Ky	, and then single, by	S. L. Pinkerton	
Dated: 3 <sup>rd</sup> Decr 1856.			
Minister of Christian Church.			

A third Kentucky record<sup>19</sup> of the marriage of Joe and Luta, part of the Woodford County registry of 1856 marriages, includes a puzzling entry suggesting that Luta was a widow. In the image on the next page of the relevant excerpt, it is evident that Luta's "Condition" was described as something other than "Single:" Apparently the word was "widow," misspelled as "widdow." This entry is a complete mystery, as no record has been found of an earlier husband.



Name	Residence	Age	Condition
Mary McCoun	Midway Ky	25	Single
Mary L. Pepper	Woodford County Ky	22	Married
Mariah Craine	" "	20	Single
Louisa Hoyt	" "	18	"

It is evident that nineteenth century marriages in Kentucky required a lot of paperwork.

### Luta and Joe began their life together in his home

In the early days after their 1856 marriage, Luta may have accepted, as a temporary arrangement, moving into the Joseph McCoun House where her husband was born and now resided with his mother. That is where Luta, Joe, and two children lived at the time of the 1860 census, but the history shows that Luta wanted, and eventually got, a grander home in Woodford County, namely, the very house in which she had been born and lived before marrying Joe, shown in the photograph on page four. The 1860 census, taken 29 August, found Esther at age 68 sharing the Joseph McCoun house with Joe, 34; Luta, 24; and grandchildren Perla Sue ("Sue P"), two, and Robert P. (our great grandfather), two months old.<sup>20</sup> The value of Joe's real estate was \$8,000 (\$263,000 in 2021 dollars). Interestingly, Esther was not described as owning any real property, despite her successful litigation—discussed in her biography—that confirmed her property rights under her late husband's will and Kentucky law.<sup>21</sup> Joe's personal property was valued at \$11,100 (\$363,350 in 2021).

Joseph E McCoun	34	M	Farmer	8000	11100
Mary E	24	F			
Sue P	2	F			
Robert P	$\frac{2}{12}$	M			
Esther McCoun	68	F	/		1000

### The quest to own the "beautiful house on a hill"

Starting in the 1850s, Joe McCoun embarked on a difficult process to acquire, from his siblings and mother, substantial acreage of McCoun property that he could resell. Eventually he amassed a total of 173.75 acres from his kin, along with his own inheritance. He and Luta sold the tract to a man named John Jarvis on 21 April 1864. The sale price was \$8,687 (\$151,056 in 2021). Details about the transactions and lawsuits involved in Joe's property acquisition are recounted in Joe's biography and a *Timeline of the McCoun, Eccles, Pepper, and Perry Families*.

In early 1865, Luta's parents moved into Frankfort, and on 4 March her mother Mahala died. Two weeks later, on 18 March 1865, Samuel Pepper sold Joe and Luta his homestead, Sweet Lawn, and a little more than 205 acres, as well as an adjacent parcel of land that had belonged to Luta's maternal grandfather, Roderick Perry (1776-1821).<sup>22</sup> Preparatory steps for this sale were

likely undertaken before Mahala's death. The sale price was \$19,000, or \$326,230 in 2021 dollars, paid by Joe in three annual installments. The deed was delivered to him on 25 May 1867.

The modern map below shows Sweet Lawn, at the larger arrow, and Elijah Pepper's house, at the smaller arrow. The original distillery is marked by a star and the Perry estate by a heart. Woodford Reserve Distillery is the crescent-shaped property in the map's southwest corner between S-shaped McCracken Pike and curving Glens Creek, green trees lining its banks.



### A few good years, then all was lost

For several years, Luta and Joe enjoyed the good life in Woodford County. They no doubt enjoyed their time together in the beautiful brick house. Their family grew to seven children:<sup>23</sup>

1. Perla Sue McCoun, born in Salvisa on 13 September 1857.
2. Robert Pepper McCoun ("Rob"), born in Salvisa on 8 May 1860.
3. Samuel Pepper McCoun, born in Salvisa on 13 October 1862.
4. Esther McCoun ("Hettie"), born in Salvisa on 28 January 1865.
5. Mary Louise McCoun, born at Sweet Lawn, Millville, Woodford County, 10 March 1867.
6. Joseph Eccles McCoun, Jr, born at Sweet Lawn, 26 February 1869.
7. William H. McCoun, born at Sweet Lawn, 13 August 1871.

But seeds of future financial ruin were sown when Joe's brother-in-law Robert Perry "Bob" Pepper proposed that Joe join him in investing in a turnpike project. Joe agreed to sign for the financing, and he put up his own hard-won property as security. The turnpike was never completed,<sup>24</sup> and Joe's property had to be sold at public auction held on 24 April 1873. The *Timeline of the McCoun, Eccles, Pepper, and Perry Families* provides details.

### The family move to Texas, where tragedy struck

Destitute, Joe and Luta decided to make a new start in the Fort Worth area of Texas. This photo was taken not long after Joe and Luta arrived there in 1873. From left to right were Esther McCoun (1865-1955), called Hettie, seven years old;<sup>25</sup> Joe, age 47; baby William (1871-1875), named for his father's older brother, who had been executed in Mexico in 1857 (discussed on page 17); Luta, age 38; and Joseph Eccles McCoun, Jr. (1869-1941), age three. Four of Joe and Luta's children were not in the photograph: Perla, "Rob," Samuel, and Mary Louise. The photo was cut, but here the two parts are realigned.

The family legend is that Luta Pepper McCoun died of a broken heart after she lost her beautiful house on the hill in lovely Woodford County. Marcia Horton wrote, "The pampered life she had lived as the youngest child of a wealthy family certainly did not prepare her for the hardships of pioneering."<sup>26</sup> Romantic as is the legend that Luta Pepper McCoun died of a broken heart, the truth is that she contracted typhoid fever and, after an illness of 11 weeks, she died. The 15 January 1875



issue of the *Woodford Weekly*, a local newspaper, had this brief announcement about her death:

*Death of Mrs. Joe McCoun*— We are sorry to learn that Mrs. Jo. McCoun died at her home, near Ft. Worth, Texas, a few days ago. We understand Mr. McCoun is on his way to Kentucky with her remains, and is also bringing his family, being tired of Texas.

The announcement was followed two weeks later by the following article in the *Woodford Weekly*'s 29 January 1875 issue, reprinting an article from a Disciples of Christ newsletter:

We copy the following letter in reference to the last illness and death of Mrs. J. E. McCoun, late of this county, from the last issue of *The Apostolic Times*.<sup>27</sup>

Fort Worth, Tex., Jan. 1 '75

Mr. W. F. Patterson:<sup>28</sup>

Dear Uncle--This is New Year's night, and it is indeed a sad, sad one to me. It is with an aching heart I now address these few lines to you to inform you that my darling mother has left this corrupt earth for a brighter home on high. The morning your letter reached us, she was a corpse in the house.



After lingering along for about eleven weeks with typhoid fever, she died on the morning of the 28<sup>th</sup> of December, at half past four o'clock. A calmer, more peaceful death was never witnessed. She seemed as if she was falling into a happy sleep—happy it was indeed, for she awoke in Heaven. She died with her hands in mine. She was conscious to the last, but so very weak she could not talk. I think she knew she was passing away, for she would frequently say, "Oh, I want to talk." She would first call father, then me.

About half an hour before she died, she called father and, in about five minutes, said, "Oh! My darling," which were her last words.

Her funeral was preached by Mr. Banton, one of our preachers. She was too pure and good for the earth, therefore the Lord called her unto him, thus depriving us of the light of our family. She has gone to make the way smoothly for us—gone to meet her dear mother, from whom she has been so long separated; gone to meet her kind father, who left us only a short while ago and last, but greatest of all, she has gone to be welcomed home into Paradise by our own heavenly father, never again to know a sorrow or feel a fear. Oh! I can scarcely realize the great, great responsibility of raising and training the dear little children. I will look to God for help and strength, for I know he is too good and kind to refuse.

I never saw anyone look so natural after death as she. Such a bright happy smile was on her countenance! I looked at her sweet face after they prepared her for the last resting place, I could not help thinking how wrong it was for us to strive for one so happy as she. It was the will of the Lord to take her, therefore she should not murmur. He could no longer spare her from his band of happy angels.

Dear Uncle, please write to me soon a long letter of advice, such as I know you are capable of giving. That we may all be prepared to meet our dear friends in heaven is the prayer of

Your devoted niece,  
Perla McCoun

Typhoid fever results from consumption of food or water contaminated with *salmonella typhi* from human feces or urine. Although uncommon today in the United States,<sup>29</sup> it was a leading cause of death during the nineteenth century. The U.S. census report for 1880 provided statistics on cause of death, described as the number of deaths from a given cause amongst one thousand reported deaths.<sup>30</sup> There were, of course, numerous different causes of death as shown in the table on page 13. The reported cause that led the list was diphtheria, with 50 deaths per thousand for men and 55 deaths per thousand for females. Second leading cause of death was enteric fever (i.e., typhoid fever) with 32 deaths per thousand for both males and females.

GRAND TOTAL.....		750,893
Total: Males .....		381,969
Females .....		368,924
Unknown causes.....		
Total: Males .....		52.55
Females .....		50.50
I.—GENERAL DISEASES.		
General diseases—A.		
Total: Males .....		271.77
Females .....		290.03
1	Small-pox.....	{ M. 1.22
		{ F. 1.20
2	Measles.....	{ M. 10.69
		{ F. 11.78
3	Scarlet fever.....	{ M. 21.97
		{ F. 23.63
4	Diphtheria .....	{ M. 50.25
		{ F. 55.04
5	Whooping-cough .....	{ M. 13.78
		{ F. 17.07
6	Fever.....	{ M. 4.22
		{ F. 4.60
7	Cerebro-spinal fever.....	{ M. 4.11
		{ F. 3.92
8	Enteric fever .....	{ M. 31.74
		{ F. 31.70
9	Diarrhoea.....	{ M. 15.08
		{ F. 14.63
10	Dysentery .....	{ M. 18.83
		{ F. 18.47
11	Enteritis .....	{ M. 18.32
		{ F. 16.74
12	Cholera morbus.....	{ M. 3.16
		{ F. 2.70
13	Cholera infantum.....	{ M. 35.30
		{ F. 34.01
14	Malarial fever .....	{ M. 27.50
		{ F. 28.70
15	Erysipelas.....	{ M. 6.07
		{ F. 5.80
16	Septicæmia.....	{ M. 2.05
		{ F. 2.40
17	Puerperal septicæmia.....	{ F. 12.18
18	Veneral diseases.....	{ M. 1.78
		{ F. 1.62
19	Others of this group.....	{ M. 4.07
		{ F. 3.40

## Where was Luta buried?

The headstone for Joseph E. McCoun in the New Providence Presbyterian Church Cemetery in Mercer County, Kentucky memorializes both of his wives. Was Luta in fact buried there, or was she buried in Texas?



The earlier of the two *Woodford Weekly* articles about her death stated that, “Mr. McCoun is on his way to Kentucky with her remains, and is also bringing his family, being tired of Texas.” Yet it appears from Perla’s letter from Fort Worth, published two weeks later, that her mother’s funeral had been preached by a Disciples of Christ minister there named Banton. Also, Perla alluded to her deceased mother’s happy facial expression “after they prepared her for the last resting place.”

I believe, based on this letter, and practical considerations, that Luta’s last resting place was in Fort Worth, Texas. Although I am certain that Joe wanted to have his wife’s coffin transported to her beloved Kentucky after she died on 28 December 1874, the sheer distance, 900 miles overland, would have been a challenge. It was not until 1876 that Fort Worth had railway service.<sup>31</sup> Also, if Joe had managed to get Luta’s coffin transported to Kentucky, she probably could not have been buried with her mother and sister Susan in the Sweet Lawn family cemetery, because that property no longer belonged to the family. It would have been possible to bury Luta’s remains in another Kentucky cemetery, such as the one associated with the New Providence Presbyterian Church, but if this had been arranged there would have been a headstone just for her, instead of one erected for her husband when he died 22 years later. It

seems likely that Joe's second wife, Mary Priscilla, ordered the latter headstone and had it placed atop Joe's grave shortly after his death on 28 March 1897. Then, after Mary Priscilla died on 28 January 1930, her death date was chiseled in the stone. If my belief is correct that the remains of Mary Louise are in Texas, and not under this headstone, it is for her a cenotaph, a memorial where the body is not present, erected in remembrance of a deceased person. It was very generous of Mary Priscilla to honor Joe's first wife in an equivalent manner. Mary Louise was almost certainly buried in Fort Worth, Texas, likely on the homestead on which she and Joe had settled the year before.

The tragic death of Luta was followed a few months later by the death on 23 September 1875 of the youngest son, William, only four years old. William was laid to rest in the Pioneers Rest Cemetery in Fort Worth. There are no records indicating that his mother had been buried there.

After the deaths of Luta and William, all the children except the oldest sons, Rob and Sam, traveled to Kentucky to live with their grandmother, Esther. Joe, Rob, and Sam stayed in Texas for several years, moving from Fort Worth to Throckmorton where Joe was county judge and acquired land for a real estate development. The McCoun men herded cattle on the Great Western Cattle Trail for a while, as discussed in Joe's biography. Then Joe and Rob returned to Kentucky and worked in the timber industry. Joe married a widow who had a house and farm. The widow was a cousin, as discussed in Appendix Two. Through his work in the timber trade, Rob met and married Syrene Cockerham, who were to become our great grandparents.

The *Legend of Mary Louise Pepper*—a tale of longing, effort, success, broken trust, and loss—is equally poignant even when her descendants learn that the true cause of her death was not a broken heart due to loss of her beloved Kentucky home but rather a bacterial illness that today is rare in the United States and is treatable. Her remarkable firstborn, 17-year-old Perla, described the “great, great responsibility of raising and training the dear little children,” meaning her younger siblings. The teenager was not required to face the responsibility of rearing the younger children, because she, Hettie, Mary Louise, and Joe Jr. all returned to Kentucky to live with their grandmother. The four of them, as well as their father and brothers Rob and Sam, undoubtedly felt sadness all their lives remembering the loss of their mother.

I hope you enjoy reading these biographies as much as I enjoy writing them, even the sad ones.

Linda Horton, [lrhorton@comcast.net](mailto:lrhorton@comcast.net), 23 January 2022

### **Appendix One: Children of Mary Louise “Luta” Pepper and Joseph Eccles McCoun**

Perla Sue McCoun (1857-1942).

- Born in Mercer County 13 September 1857.
- Married James VanArsdale, Jr, 3 June 1884.
- With James, had five children: Mabel Clare, 1885-1972; Samuel Glenn, 1886-1969; Mary Louise, 1888-1983; Khleber Miller, 1890-1975; and Joseph Eccles, 1894-1954.
- Lived in Fort Worth for many years, from at least 1900 until 1940 (based on census).
- Died in Chicago on 22 April 1942.

Mahalie McCoun (1859-1859).

- Born in Mercer County, 17 May 1859.
- Died in Mercer County, 21 May 1859.



Robert Pepper McCoun (1860-1940): see his biography.

- Born in Mercer County, 8 May 1860.
- Married Syrene Cockerham 14 February 1891.
- With Syrene, had seven children, as detailed in the biography of Syrene Cockerham.
- Died 25 September 1940. Buried in Evans Cemetery, Campton, Wolfe County, Kentucky.

Samuel Pepper McCoun (1862-1944).

- Born in Mercer County, 13 October 1862.
- Remained in Throckmorton, Texas, after his father and brother Rob returned to Kentucky.
- In 1894, bought land in Throckmorton that his father had earlier sold.
- Before the June 1900 census, moved to Pueblo, Colorado. He was 34, single, renting a room at a home owned by a pharmacist, and employed as superintendent of a railway.
- 14 February 1905: married Matilda McMillan (1856-1940); they had no children together; her daughter, Henrietta was from a first marriage.
- 1910 census: Sam, 39, and Matilda, 39, lived in a home he owned free and clear (with no mortgage). He was working as an assessor.
- The 1915 Pueblo City Directory gave their address as 918 S. Union Avenue.
- 1920 census: Sam, 50, and Matilda, 50, now had living with them her daughter, Henrietta, and a grandson, plus a lodger; Sam was working as a bookkeeper in a county office.
- 1930 census: Sam, 68, Matilda, 71, and her grandson were counted plus two boarders. Sam was still a bookkeeper.
- 1940 census: Sam, 76; Matilda, 82, and Henrietta, 40, were sharing a home. Sam was an assessor for the Pueblo County government, earning \$2000 per year.
- Died in Pueblo, Colorado, 16 February 1944. Matilda had died in 1940. Buried in Mountain View Cemetery, Pueblo.



Esther "Hettie" M. McCoun (1865-1955).

- Born in Mercer County, 28 January 1865.
- Married Thomas J. Frye in Harrodsburg, Kentucky, on 24 October 1888.
- With Thomas, had five children: Thomas J. Fry, Jr, 1889-1898; Esther Eccles Fry, 1896-1971; Speed Smith Fry, 1899-1956; Emily L. Fry, 1900-1973; and Cynthia Ann Hope Fry, 1904-1998.
- Lived in Los Angeles for much of her adult life.
- Earlier, lived in New Jersey and Colorado.

- Died 16 July 1955.
- Buried in Danville, Kentucky.
- 

At right: Esther with her daughters Emily, Cynthia and Esther at what appears to be a special occasion for Hettie, possibly her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration.



Mary Louise “Lutie” McCoun (1867-before 1920).

- Born in Woodford County, 10 March 1867.
- Apparently never married or had children.
- In 1910 was 43 years old and was enumerated in the census for McAfee, Mercer County, as Loutie McCoun; she was living with her stepmother, Mary Priscilla Adams Sea McCoun and brother Joseph Eccles McCoun Jr, age 41.
- Likely died in McAfee, Mercer County, before 1920; she was not reported that year as living with Mary Priscilla and Joe, who had married Martha “Mattie” Adams.

Joseph Eccles McCoun, Jr.

- Born in Woodford County, 26 February 1869.
- In 1916, at age 46, married Martha Irene “Mattie” Adams (1873-1948), shown below; first marriage for both.
- Had no biological children but 1920 census listed 10-year-old



Harlan Phillips as an adopted son, living with them. In the 1930 and 1940 census reports, Harlan was living with them but described as a boarder.

- In 1930 and 1940 census, a nephew named Hugh Brown also lived with the couple. In the 1940 census, Hugh was 29 and doing clerical work for an automobile garage.

- Grandnephew Wilson Horton (1916-1991) lived with Joseph and Mattie for a few years in the late 1930s (between census reports); while there, Wilson met his future wife, Corrine Chapman (1921-2003).

- Died in Mercer County 19 May 1941; cause of death was prostate cancer.

- Buried with Mattie in the New Providence Presbyterian Cemetery.
- Mattie was a niece of Mary Priscilla Adams Sea McCoun, her husband’s stepmother, who in turn was a distant cousin of her husband, Joe McCoun.



On page 18 is an image explaining the relationships of Joe McCoun, his second wife Mary Priscilla, and her niece Mattie Adams who married Joseph Eccles McCoun, Jr.

#### William H. McCoun

- Born in Woodford County, Kentucky, 13 August 1871.
- Died in Fort Worth, Texas, 23 September 1875.
- Buried Pioneers Rest Cemetery, Fort Worth.
- Was named for his uncle William McCoun, his father's older brother.

*The story of little William's Uncle William:* While serving in the California Senate, William McCoun became friends with another Senator, Henry Crabb. Defeated in his bid for re-election, Crabb formulated an absurd plan to invade Mexico. Crabb was invited by a Mexican rebel named Ygnacio Pesqueira to bring a thousand fully armed Americans to the northern part of the Mexican state of Sonora. In exchange for land, the Americans were to assist Pesqueira in his civil war against the government and in his battles with Apaches.

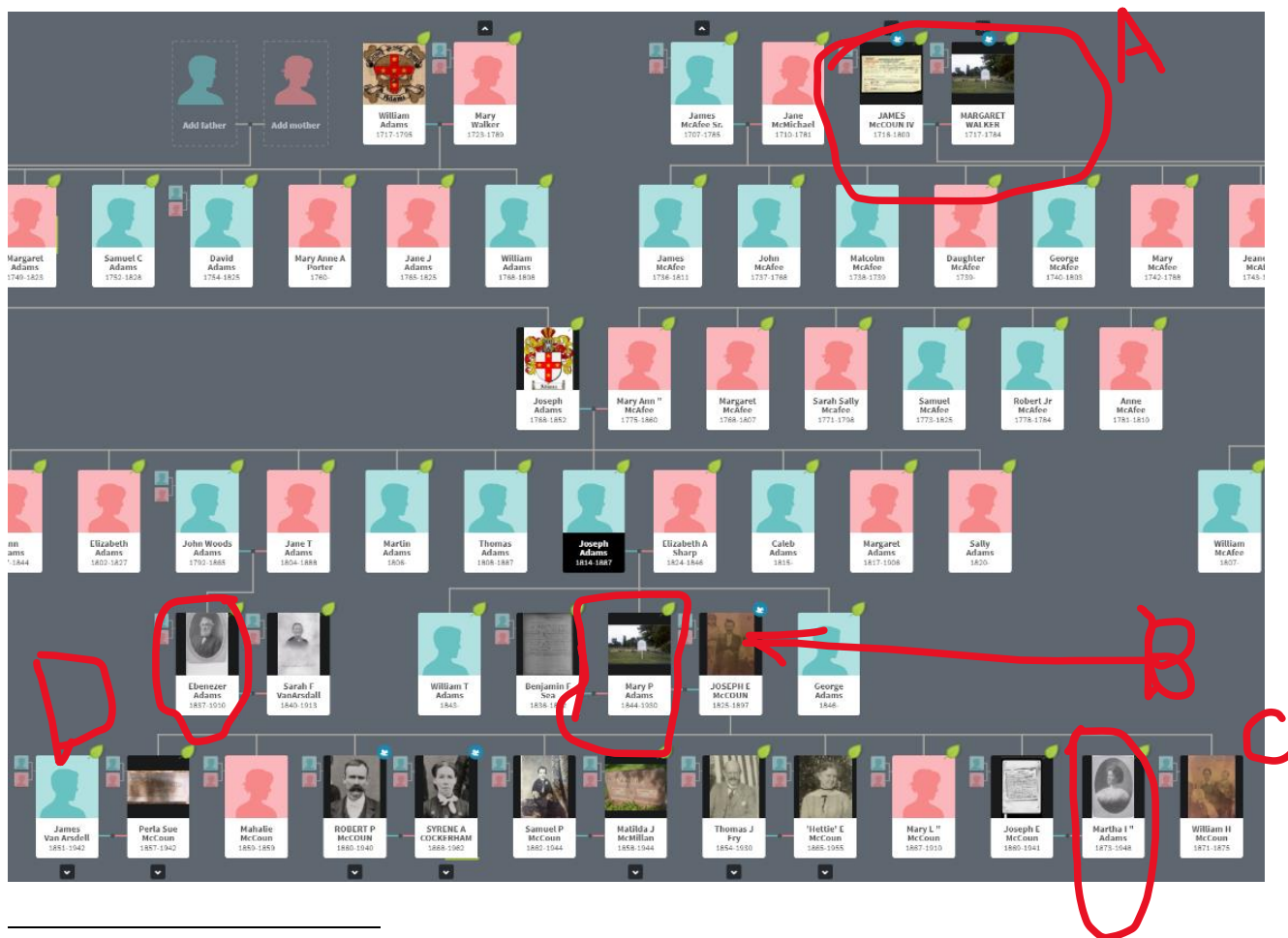
William McCoun foolishly agreed to take part in Crabb's ill-conceived plan and was among the group, led by Crabb, that reached Caborca, Sonora, in April 1857. Pesqueira had betrayed Crabb and informed Mexican authorities of the plot. When these authorities had asked Crabb what he was doing in their country, he replied that he was there by invitation and had an interest in mining. Actually, Crabb had his own secret agenda. An ardent supporter of slavery, Crabb wished his settlement of Americans in Sonora to be admitted to the United States as a U.S. slave state. His plan was a miserable failure. In the United States, there was an outcry for revenge, but, because the expedition was a private venture that was in no way authorized by the U.S. government, retaliation against the Mexico was not an option.

A large Mexican force easily subdued the Crabb group, which numbered less than a hundred men. Most who had been approached to join this foolish mission declined. Crabb, McCoun, and other Americans were apprehended and on 7 April 1857 were executed by a firing squad. Additional details are found in the biography of Esther Eccles McCoun, mother of the William who lost his life in Mexico and of Joe McCoun, husband of the subject of this biography.

#### **Appendix Two: Relationships of Joe McCoun, Mary Priscilla (his second wife), and her niece Mattie Adams who married Joe's son Joseph Eccles McCoun, Jr**

- A. James McCoun IV (1716-1800) and Margaret Walker (17) were the most recent common ancestors of Mary Priscilla and her husband Joe McCoun.
- B. Mary Priscilla is circled; she had a brother named Ebenezer Adams (circled as D).
- C. Mattie Adams was the daughter of Ebenezer Adams (D), brother of Mary Priscilla.





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<sup>2</sup> The author has updated the family legend based upon examination of land records at the Woodford County Courthouse on 7 November 2021 and other records at the Woodford County Historical Society on 9 November 2021 (newspaper reporting typhoid fever as the cause of Luta's death). The legend as reported by Marcia Horton (1916-2007) in the *McCoun Family History*, 1989, at A-23-24, was largely correct. Marcia wrote that her sources were court records in Mercer and Woodford Counties and Glenn McCoun, the uncle of Marcia's husband. Glenn and Marcia apparently were unaware that the house that Luta and Joe bought, then lost, was actually the home in which Luta was born and grew up, i.e., "Sweet Lawn." Copies of relevant deeds and of Marcia's *McCoun Family History* (a pdf file) are available from the author, Marcia's daughter Linda Horton, [lrhorton@comcast.net](mailto:lrhorton@comcast.net)

<sup>3</sup> Photograph courtesy of Claire Kincaid, who in 2018 posted it on Ancestry.com. She is a descendant of Mary Louise through her daughter, Perla.

<sup>4</sup> The biography of Sarah Neville O'Bannon will include details about her ancestry as well as the military feats of Sarah's brother, Presley O'Bannon (1776-1850). His military successes are celebrated each time the U.S. Marine Corps hymn is played and sung. His 1805 triumph against the dreaded Barbary pirates "on the shores of Tripoli" is trumpeted in the opening line, "From the halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli, we fight our country's battles in the air, on land, on sea."<sup>4</sup> The mother of Sarah and Presley O'Bannon was a Neville, a descendant of a famous family that included Richard Neville, the 16th Earl of Warwick (1428-1471), the so-called Kingmaker.

<sup>5</sup> Photograph was found at [https://www.zillow.com/homedetails/5876-McCracken-Pike-Versailles-KY-40383/246097292\\_zpid/?mmlb=g.12](https://www.zillow.com/homedetails/5876-McCracken-Pike-Versailles-KY-40383/246097292_zpid/?mmlb=g.12)

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<https://www.visitsunvalleymares.com/amenities> The statement on the Sun Valley website that Samuel and his wife raised five Pepper children was based upon a 1963 newspaper article by Bettye Lee Mastin, “Distiller Built Home of Five Little Peppers,” *Lexington Herald-Leader*, 8 September 1963. On 11 November 2021, the author accessed the Bettye Mastin papers in the Special Collections of the University of Kentucky Libraries. [Bettye Lee Mastin papers \(uky.edu\)](#) Hand-written notes by Ms. Mastin indicate that she counted as Samuel’s children not only Susan, Sarah, Bob, and Luta, but also Bob’s eldest child, Paulina “Lena” Pepper (1858-1895), his only child with his first wife, Anna Maria Kinhead (1838-1863), who after the death of her mother may have lived for a while with her grandparents at Sweet Lawn.

6

<https://www.in2013dollars.com/us/inflation/1865?amount=12000#:~:text=Value%20of%20%2412%2C00%20from%201865,cumulative%20price%20increase%20of%201%2C574.87%25>.

<sup>7</sup> Kentucky Birth, Marriage, and Death Records—Microfilm (1852-1910). Microfilm rolls #994027-994058. Kentucky Department of Libraries and Archives, Frankfort Kentucky. Cited as Mercer County Marriage Book-I, in Klimcheck, Maurie McCoun, *James McCoun & Margaret Walker & Their Descendants*, Vol. II at. 231. In 2013, the author reviewed this three-volume work by Maurie McCoun Klimcheck (1931-2017) at the Library of Congress (accession CS71.M47475) in 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Pinkerton had been raised Presbyterian but was soon influenced by the writings of John Wesley and of Presbyterian reformers such Thomas and Alexander Campbell.

[https://www.therestorationmovement.com/\\_states/kentucky/pinkerton,II.htm](https://www.therestorationmovement.com/_states/kentucky/pinkerton,II.htm) The image of Pinkerton is from this site. The Campbells embraced an inclusive form of Christianity that sought unity among the various denominations and, like Wesley, and also sought to follow more closely the evangelical, and more emotionally intense form of Christianity practiced by early followers of Christ. This religious movement is sometimes called “restorationism” and grew out of the Second Great Awakening (1790-1840).

[https://www.therestorationmovement.com/\\_states/wv/acampbell.htm](https://www.therestorationmovement.com/_states/wv/acampbell.htm)

<sup>9</sup> <https://disciples.org/our-identity/history-of-the-disciples/>  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian\\_Church\\_\(Disciples\\_of\\_Christ\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_Church_(Disciples_of_Christ))

<sup>10</sup> Daniels, George H., “An American Defense of Bacon: A Study in the Relations of Scientific Thought, 1840-1845,” *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 28. No. 4 (Aug. 1865), University of Pennsylvania Press, pp. 321-339.

<sup>11</sup> Important Dates in the Formation of the Midway Christian Church

<https://www.midwaychristian.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/mccbriefhistory.pdf> In 1852, Dr. Pinkerton sold the Baconian Institute to James Fall of Frankfort and purchased another home so as to devote all his time and energies to the orphan school. Railey, William Edward, *History of Woodford County*, Part Four, page 171.

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.therestorationmovement.com/\\_states/kentucky/pinkerton,II.htm](https://www.therestorationmovement.com/_states/kentucky/pinkerton,II.htm)

<sup>13</sup> <https://time.com/5737250/debutantes-history/>

<sup>14</sup> In a slightly later time period in the same region, in 1871 Charles Bryan of Jefferson County met Lizzie McKay of Nelson County at a “hop” held in Shelby County, Kentucky. They were the author’s great grandparents.

<sup>15</sup> Mastin, Bettye Lee, “Distiller Built Home of Five Little Peppers,” *Lexington Herald-Leader*, 8 September 1963.

<sup>16</sup> McAfee, Robert B, *The Life and Times of Robert B. McAfee and His Family and Connections*, Part II: 1750-1773. commenced 1845. <http://jtenlen.drizzlehosting.com/mcafee/life/life3.html>

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<sup>17</sup> Marriage Records. Kentucky Marriages. Madison County Courthouse, Richmond, Kentucky; Ancestry.com *Kentucky, U.S., County Marriage Records, 1783-1965* [database on-line]. Utah, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Id.

<sup>19</sup> Kentucky Birth, Marriage and Death Records – Microfilm (1852-1910). Microfilm rolls #994027-994058. Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky.

<sup>20</sup> Between Perla and Robert, there was Mahalie, born 17 May 1859, who died four days later.

<sup>21</sup> The biography of Esther Eccles includes details about her litigation to establish her widow's rights.

<sup>22</sup> Woodford County, Kentucky, Deed Book Y-94, 95, 18 March 1865. The deed includes notations in the margin referring to payment in full by Joseph E. McCoun.

<sup>23</sup> The discussion omits mention of Mahalie, who was born 17 May 1859 and died four days later.

<sup>24</sup> Klein, Daniel et al., "Turnpikes and Toll Roads in Nineteenth Century America," *EH.Net* Economic History Association. Turnpikes did not make money but offered a potentially large benefit to those with property along the route due to more efficient movement of persons and products to markets. Also, over time, toll roads became politically unpopular. [Turnpikes and Toll Roads in Nineteenth-Century America \(eh.net\)](http://eh.net) See also, Boyd, S.G., "The Louisville and Nashville Turnpike," *Register of Kentucky State Historical Society*, Vol. 24 No. 71, May 1926.

<sup>25</sup> The older sister of the author's grandmother was named Hettie Frye McCoun in tribute to this aunt.

<sup>26</sup> Horton, Marcia Bryan, *McCoun Family History*, 1989, at A-24.

<sup>27</sup> *The Apostolic Times* was a publication of the Disciples of Christ Protestant denomination. [https://webfiles.acu.edu/departments/Library/HR/restmov\\_nov11/www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/resources/discibibl.html](https://webfiles.acu.edu/departments/Library/HR/restmov_nov11/www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/resources/discibibl.html)

<sup>28</sup> That Perla's letter is addressed to her Uncle William F. Patterson is puzzling, inasmuch as he had died on 8 May 1851. His clearly marked headstone is visible in the small family cemetery in the garden behind Sweet Lawn. Perhaps Perla's letter came into the possession of the *Woodford Weekly* with the simple salutation "Dear Uncle," and the newspaper's editor surmised that Patterson was the addressee, not realizing that the man had died 23 years earlier. It seems to me likely that Perla's letter was in fact addressed to her Uncle Robert Perry Pepper, who then shared it with the *Woodford Weekly* so that former neighbors could read about Luta's last days.

<sup>29</sup> Wisconsin Division of Public Health, <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p4/p42101.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> U.S. government, Census Report, Table XV., Deaths from each cause in one thousand total deaths of which the causes are known, with distinction of sex.

[1880 Census: Volume 12. Report on the Mortality and Vital Statistics of the United States - Part II](#)

<sup>31</sup> Local Guides & Histories: Railroads in Texas from Fort Worth and Beyond, 10 August 2020, [The History of Railroads in Texas | Resources & Info \(homeadvisor.com\)](http://www.homeadvisor.com)