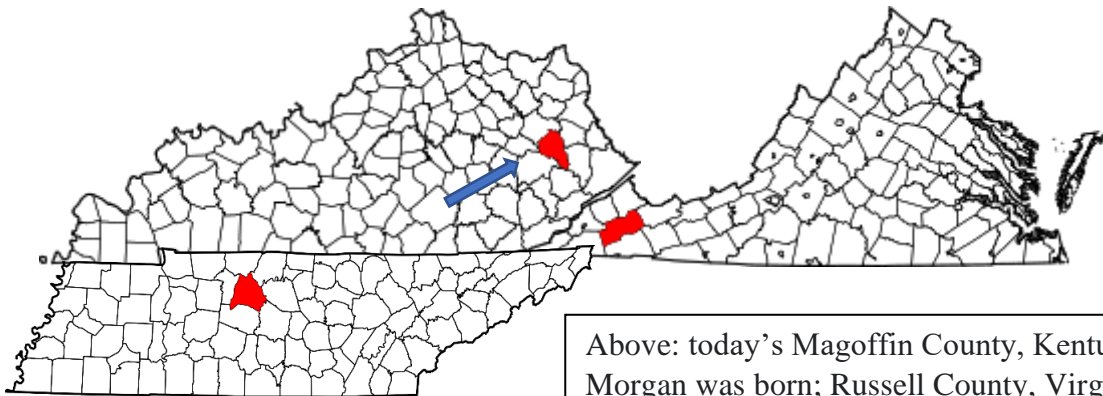


Morgan Puckett (1801-1890), Ancestor 46¹
By his great great great granddaughter, Linda R. Horton, 16 January 2022

Morgan R. Puckett was born on 17 May 1801 in what was then Floyd County, and is today Magoffin County, Kentucky. His birthplace was called Burning Fork due to a natural gas vein that, after it was reportedly ignited by Indians, burned continuously for many years.¹ This part of the Appalachian mountains is known for the presence of natural gas.²

Morgan was the second of four sons of Drury Puckett Jr. (1777-1815) and Elizabeth Allen (1779-1820). Morgan's father had migrated to Kentucky from Russell County, Virginia and it is likely that his mother hailed from the same area. In census reports, Morgan's birthplace is routinely reported as Virginia, although we know from other sources that he actually was born in Floyd County, Kentucky. He generally coupled the name "Morgan" with the middle initial, "R," but there are no records telling us what his middle name was.

As a young teen, Morgan had to grow up fast. His father Drury Puckett Jr (1777-1815) and his older brother Thomas had enlisted in the U.S. army in 1814. On 17 February 1815, his father was executed by a firing squad in Nashville for desertion from the U.S. army,³ an event that was no doubt shocking for the family and that is discussed in the biography of Drury Puckett. After his father's and brother's enlistment in the army, and especially after his father's death, 13-year-old Morgan, as the eldest son still at home, would have borne the entire responsibility for assisting his mother in running the family farm and keeping his younger siblings fed and clothed.



Above: today's Magoffin County, Kentucky, where Morgan was born; Russell County, Virginia, birthplace of his parents; and Davidson County, Tennessee, where his father was executed. The blue arrow points to north-western Breathitt County, where Morgan and his family moved in 1843.

At the age of 20, Morgan married Susan Whitaker on 24 January 1822, in Floyd County. She had been born on 24 January 1800 in Jonesborough,

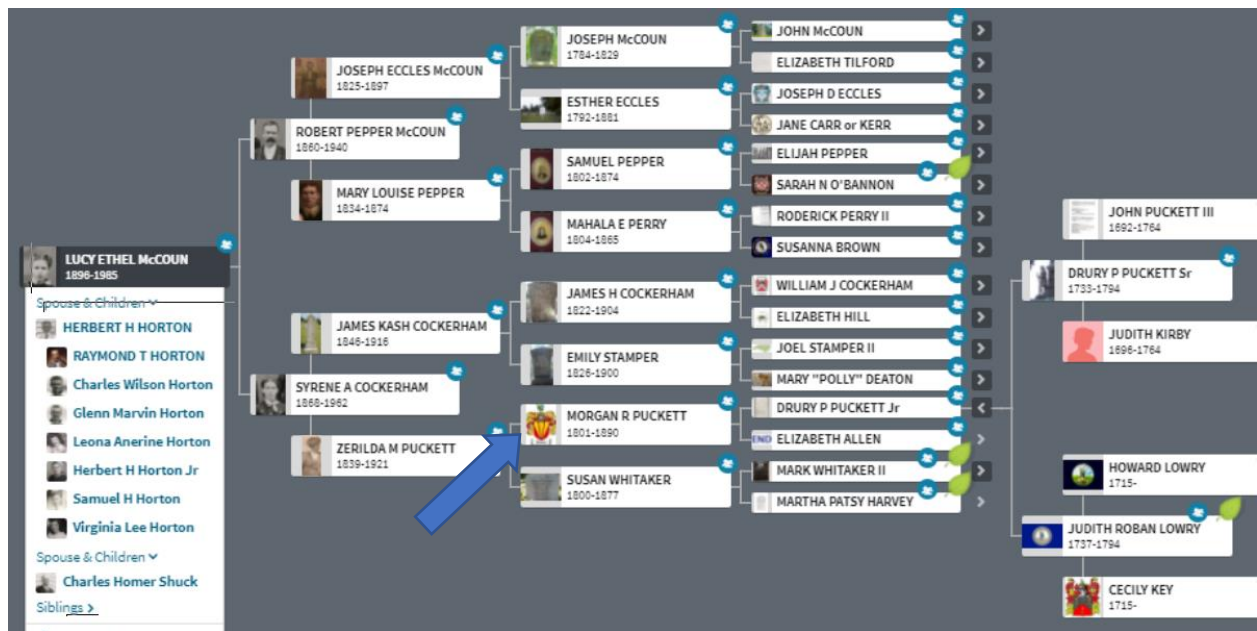
Washington County, Tennessee, part of the region covered by her father, Mark Whitaker (1760-1812), a well-known itinerant Methodist minister. Jonesborough was the home of Susan's mother, Martha "Patsy" Harvey (1772-1840). In about 1802, when Susan was a toddler, her parents had moved the family to Castlerock, Russell County, Virginia. Mark was minister of a

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congregation there. He died in 1812. About eight years later, Susan and several of her siblings moved to Floyd County, Kentucky (today Magoffin County), where she and Morgan met. Susan's mother, Martha "Patsy" Harvey moved to Kentucky some years later and taught children for several years before dying in what is today Magoffin County.

Placing Morgan Puckett in the family tree

Morgan Puckett is an ancestor of the author's paternal grandmother, Lucy Ethel McCoun Horton Shuck (1896-1985), and her mother Syrene Cockerham McCoun (1868-1962). He thus is in the McCoun quartile of our family tree. The other three quartiles are Horton, Bryan, and Sprowl. The biography of Drury Puckett recounts the history of our Puckett family in America.



The family of Morgan Puckett and Susan Whitaker

Morgan and Susan had six sons and seven daughters, and many of their children had large families as well:

1. Caleb Puckett (1822-1870); married Mary Ann "Polly" Craft; 11 children.
2. Isaac Puckett (1822-1870).
3. Meredith William Puckett (1823-1908); married Elizabeth Maloney; nine children.
4. Martha "Patsy" Puckett (1825-1892); married Reuben Fletcher; 15 children.
5. Elizabeth Puckett (1826-1877); married Greenberry Shackelford; 12 children.
6. Matilda "Tidy" Puckett (1830-1902); married Owen Miller; 14 children.
7. Benjamin Gardner Puckett (1831-1900); married Emmeline Holmes; eight children.
8. Clarinda Puckett (1834-1880).
9. Zerilda Manervia Puckett (1839-1921); married James Kash Cockerham; four children; they were our great great grandparents.
10. George Green Puckett (1840-1913); married Mary Ann White; four children.
11. John Martin Puckett (1841-1923); married Caroline Johnson; five children.
12. Polly A. Puckett (1845-1877); married John Cockerham; three children.

13. Eliza Puckett (1848-1942) was widowed three times: married Thomas Whitaker (a first cousin) and with him had four children; married David “Bud” Patton and with him had three children; married Green Patrick and with him had three children.

Until the U.S. census of 1850, only the names of heads of household were recorded with other family members counted by tally marks in columns indicating gender and age range. The 1830 census for Floyd County recorded Morgan as a man in his 20s along with a woman in her 20s who must be Susan, living with three boys and three girls (who would be Caleb, Isaac, Meredith, Martha, Elizabeth, and Matilda). A second woman in her 20s was living with the family, perhaps a sister of Susan Whitaker Puckett. With six young children, and a farm to run, Susan and Morgan might have been happy if their household had another pair of adult hands.

The Morgan Puckett household in Floyd County expanded to 12 people during the decade preceding the 1840 census. The year before the census, our ancestor Zerilda Manervia Puckett had joined the family as the ninth child. The household consisted of one male under five (John Martin); one male from five to nine (Benjamin Gardner); one male from 10 to 14 (Meredith William); two males aged 15 to 19 (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 10 to 14 (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 the other adult woman, because later reports indicate Susan could read and write).



In 1843, Morgan and Susan decided to move from the farm where they had been living—which may have been the farm owned previously by his parents—to a location 40 miles southwest. See the map on page five. In 1843, a 50-acre land grant was recorded for M.R. Puckett in Breathitt County on the Quicksand Water Course,⁴ a place that came to be known as Puckett’s Bend. The move was probably motivated by the opportunity to acquire better farmland. Although 40 miles does not sound like a great distance today, in 1843 the family, its animals, and horse-drawn wagons loaded with the Pucketts’ possessions would slowly made their way on primitive dirt roads from the mountains of Floyd County to the Appalachian foothills of Breathitt.

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 on the next page for the Morgan Puckett family, recorded in Breathitt County on 7 August 1850, we have Morgan, 49, a farmer, with his birthplace given (incorrectly) as Virginia. His wife Susan was 50 also gave Virginia as a birthplace although what is known about her parents’ lives indicates that she was born in Tennessee and at age two moved with them to Virginia. Morgan and Susan’s seven 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. The value of his real estate was reported as \$400, which is equivalent to \$14,253 in 2022 dollars.

38	38	Morgan R. Puckett	49	m	Farmer	400	400
		Susan	50	f			400
		Elizabeth	22	f			400
		Gardner	18	m	Farmer		400
		Clairinda	16	f			400

Minerva	11	f		
John	10	m		
Green	8	m		
Polly	5	f		

By the 1860 census, enumerated in Breathitt County on 28 June, several of the children had grown up 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 property worth \$1000, or \$33,487 in 2022 dollars. The five children still at home were M.W. [Meredith William], age 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, Green, and Polly all had attended school. No one was marked as unable to read and write.

I Babe	1/2	m							
M R Puckett	59	m	Farmer	1000	500	Virginia			
Susan Puckett	60	f	"			"			
Zerilda M	20	f	"			Floyd Co Ky			1
John M	19	m	{ Laborer			"			1
Green F	17	m	"			"			1
Polly A	15	f	"			B. C. "			1
M. W. Puckett	36	m	Farmer	1000	700	F. C. "			1

The Civil War and postwar lives of Morgan and Susan

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. The Puckett family living in Breathitt County probably heard discussions of battles taking place less than a day's ride on horseback away.⁵

In 1866, Manervia married James Kash Cockerham (1846-1916) at Puckett's Bend. She was 27 and he was 20, They were our great great grandparents. Their eldest child, Syrene, was born on 2 May 1868, our great grandmother. Two years earlier, Manervia's sister Polly had married James' brother John.

By the 1870 census, all the children of Morgan and Susan had left home. The census recorded Morgan, age 69, and Susan, age 70, living in their Breathitt County home with a 12-year-old child with the name, Eliza, who was attending school. She probably was a grandchild.

Susan Whitaker Puckett died on 27 July 1877 and was buried in the Puckett family cemetery in Mary, Campton County, Kentucky. Her place of death was in Wolfe County, Kentucky, probably at the home of one of her children.

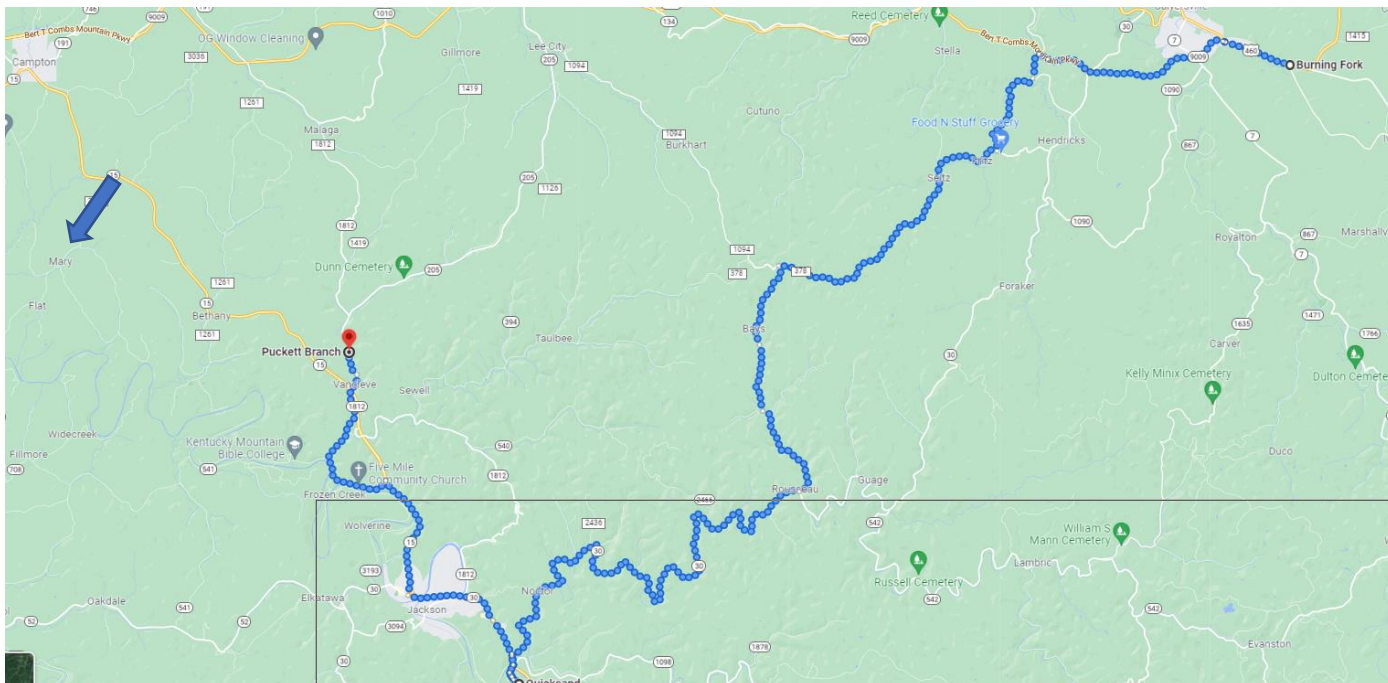
The last census report that included Morgan was enumerated on 12 June 1880. Morgan was 77 and living with his son, Green, daughter-in-law Mary Ann, and four grandchildren on a farm in Breathitt County, near a community called Frozen Creek in homage to a creek that became notably treacherous during the winter months. Morgan R. Puckett died in Wolfe County, Kentucky on 22 January 1890 at the age of 88. He was buried alongside Susan in a Puckett family cemetery in Mary, Campton County, Kentucky.

Five generations of ancestors on a map

The winding footpath on the map below shows the locations where Morgan Puckett lived—in today's Magoffin County near Burning Fork and in Puckett's Bend near Puckett Branch. Because records show that Morgan owned land in Quicksand, that community is shown as well, although the land in question was likely the farm at Puckett's Bend with an official address referred to as Quicksand.

An arrow starts at Vortex and points to Mary, the location of the Puckett family cemetery, where Morgan and Susan were born. Vortex was where the next two generations in the family—first Manervia and James Kash Cockerham, then Syrene Cockerham and Rob McCoun—farmed and raised families.

The Wolfe County seat, Campton is the gray-hued town in the map's northwestern corner. That was the home of Ethel McCoun and Herbert Horton during most of their time together before his untimely death in 1931 at age 38. Between 1914 and 1930, their seven children were born there: Raymond, Wilson, Glenn, Leona, Herbert, Sam, and Virginia.



We may think of ourselves as children of Louisville and its surrounding communities, including Jeffersontown. But we have deep roots in Appalachia. Just think, in the small rectangle of the earth's surface shown on the map on the preceding page, five generations of ancestors experienced the joys of life, as well as its trials and tribulations, while passing down their DNA to their children, who in turn passed it down to us.

I hope you enjoy reading these family history stories as much as I enjoy writing them.

Linda R. Horton, Rockville, Maryland lrhorton@comcast.net

¹ Rennick, Robert M., *Kentucky Place Names*, 2013.

https://www.google.com/books/edition/Kentucky_Place_Names/azPtlmsv24C?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=burning+fork,+kentucky,+when+was+the+natural+gas+ignited+and+how+long+did+it+burn%3F&pg=PP81&printsec=frontcover

² Anderson, Warren H., and Dever, Garland R., *Mineral and Fuel Resources Map of Kentucky*, 2001.
https://kgs.uky.edu/kgsweb/olops/pub/kgs/mc26_12.pdf

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 Key events in the Civil War are included in the biography of Manervia Puckett Cockerham's father-in-law, James Henry Cockerham (1822-1904). James' 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.