

3 McKee Family Letters - 1916

McKee Family of Wooster, Ohio (p 69)

Letter 1

LETTER OF S.M. MCKEE, LEWISTOWN, PA. To
J. W. MCKEE, WOOSTER, OHIO
January 20, 1916

Mr. J.W. McKee,
Wooster, Ohio.

Dear Sir and friend,

I have promised to write you a long letter for some time, giving you a history of the McKees in my connection. You will soon begin to think that I am a small liar if I don't fulfill my promise. And I never know or heard tell of a McKee who was a liar or a drunkard, and I never heard tell of but one who was behind the barn and he was not closely related to us and was there only a short time for some misconduct.

I have a copy of the history of the Juniata Valley and the history of our connection of the McKees is in it, out of which I will give you the principal history as follows:

In 1738 when a large number of Scotch-Irish Presbyterians came to Pennsylvania, there were several by the name of McKee who settled near Lancaster, Pa. They later separated, some going to Virginia, others going to western Pennsylvania, and to what was called the far west at those times, others remaining and settling in what is now Cumberland Co., Pa., near Carlisle. One of these was (1) Andrew the ancestor of myself, here at Lewistown. The first of this branch in the Juniata Valley was Andrew McKee of the second generation in Pennsylvania. He was born and lived in Cumberland County, Pa., until after the Revolutionary war, in which he served.

Andrew {2} son of Andrew (1) was born in 1721. He served in the Revolution, and in his later years left Cumberland Co., Pa., and came to Juniata Valley where he had 115 acres warranted to him December 9, 1784, lying in Granville Township, Mifflin County, Pa., as it is today. At the time of the warrant, of course, Mifflin County, was not yet laid out but was a part of a larger county. One hundred years later this farm was yet in the family and owned by Harvey McKee. Andrew {2} married and had sons Robert, Thomas, and Andrew (3). Andrew the third was born May 29, 1780 – died December 6, 1849. He settled in Charlottesville, Albermarle County, Va., and married Martha Cannon, who was born January 7, 1774 and died September 13, 1829. And their son Robert was born August 1, 1810 -- died March 11, 1893. Robert, son of Andrew McKee the second, was born at Carlisle, Cumberland County, Pa., July 15, 1775 and died April 13, 1845. This now was my grandfather, my father's father. When he came to what is now Mifflin County from Carlisle he rode on horseback following an Indian trail, Lewistown at that time being a settlement consisting of four log houses, one of which stood on the very spot nearly where I live now. After his marriage he settled in Ferguson Valley, 2 1/2 miles northeast of Strodes Mills, where he followed his trade of blacksmithing, and became the owner of three farms. He married, July 5, 1810, Orpah Strode born April 30, 1787 - died September 22, 1876.

Their children were Andrew, born May 1, 1811, died December 30, 1905. Catherine, born February 7, 1813, died in the state of Indiana in 1855. Robert A., born April 29, 1815, died in July 1898. Mary, born January 8, 1818 - died in June 1909, Hannah, born July 31, 1820.

My father, J. Strode McKee, was born December 21, 1822. Harvey was born September 8, 1827 - died January 23, 1904. Father had one other brother who died in infancy. My father died in October 1909. He attended the public schools and grew to manhood on the home farm which he later inherited, passing his entire active life at the old McKee homestead. In his later years he lived in Lewistown, where he died. He was a life-long Democrat, and both he and my mother were members of the Presbyterian Church. He married August 14, 1861, Lucy Amelia McKee, born in Center County, Pa., October 27, 1839 - died November 7, 1905. She was a daughter of Samuel and Jane (McKinney) McKee. Father said they were of the same name but no relation whatever. The McKinney's were from Venango County, Pa., several of which still live there. I have only heard from them a few times since mother died. Samuel McKee, mother's father, was born in the year 1800 - died in November 1867. He married my mother's mother, Jane McKinney, June 7, 1821. Jane McKinney was born in October 1802 - died July 19, 1887. They resided in Nittany Valley, Center County, Pa. They had children as follows, (space will not permit me to give you their births and deaths which I have here) Sarah, Betsey, Eliza, Racheal, William, Jane, Caroline, Lucy A. My mother and John Luther, the youngest who went west in 1832, before my grandmother died, and we never heard from him since, only through a man by the name of Evans of Los Angeles, Cal, who had seen and talked with him a short time before this, but we never could get in touch with Uncle John ourselves. There were three children in our family, first a brother Samuel Bruce, born July 6, 1863 - died in infancy, myself, born July 3, 1857, one a sister, Hattie Blanche, born March 19, 1869, was killed in a railroad accident at Lewistown Junction February 2, 1902. She was going over to the depot in a bus to meet a girl friend who was coming up from Mifflintown to visit her a week. This was a very sad accident, one of the saddest that ever occurred here. My father and mother never got over her death as long as they lived. I married on November 15, 1892, Ella M. Davis, daughter of Luke Davis who lived and owned a farm at Davis Locks, halfway between Mexico and Thompsettown. It is very likely you know of this family if you lived in the upper end of Juniata County, for they settled there nearly 80 years ago now. I farmed her father's farm there 6 years after we were married. I then farmed the old McKee homestead six miles from here, which I still own, till I broke myself down and have been living in Lewistown ever since. I am a rural mail carrier and have been over 5 years. The mail business and looking after my properties is what kept me so busy. I didn't get time to answer your letter. I am off for a week now, sick with the grippe and I thought I would embrace this opportunity to write to you. I have 5 children, 4 boys and 1 girl. The two oldest, both boys, are married and live in Juniata County, one married (girl) the only child of the family and got a nice 90-acre farm along the pike below Mexico. I will have to close with best wishes to you and hope you will stay clear of the grippe. Let me hear from you as soon as you can.

Your friend,
S.M. McKee

Letter 2

Letter from J.W. McKee,
R. D, #6, Wooster, Ohio.

To S.M. McKee

Lewistown, Pa.,
1916

John McKee, our great grandfather, was born in County Down, Ireland, Sunday, August 1st, 1754. Our great-grandmother, Mary Hoge was born in Tuscarora Valley, Juniata County, PA., Saturday, January 2, 1762. John came to this country in 1752. He doubtless had a father and mother and possibly brothers and sisters, but on this point history is silent. At the age of 24 years he was married to Mary Hoge, who was only 16, by the Reverend Magill. The wedding occurred on September 15, 1778. To this union was born 6 sons and 3 daughters, Robert, our grandfather, born in Cumberland County, PA., Tuesday, January 4, 1780, and was married to Jane McIntyre in 1806 to whom was born John, Thomas, Margaret, Mary, Samuel, Sarah and Martha. Thomas McKee was born Friday, February 1, 1782. His career was farmer and schoolteacher. William McKee was born Wednesday, January 5, 1785. He was married to Elizabeth Laird, April 8, 1816, to whom was born Mary Ann, married to William Butler, December 13, 1836. Martha E. married to Abraham McKay, June 22, 1841. Sarah E. married to Samuel Cooper, March 3, 1846. John Jackson married to Elizabeth Houser, March 22, 1854. Mary McKee was born Saturday, July 7, 1787. James McKee was born Tuesday, May 24, 1791. John McKee was born Saturday, August 10, 1793. Martha McKee was born Sunday August 16, 1795. David Shogan. was born Wednesday, November 1, 1798. Sarah McKee was born February 17, 1801, married to James Maire to whom were born John, Robert, David, Mary Jane, Thomas, and Elizabeth Laird, was the eldest or youngest of the Andrew McKee family that came to this country in 1762. I have scanned your history carefully and fail to find the birth date of Andrew, your great grandfather. So for illustration and proof I have placed him 4 years older than his brother John, There may have been several other boys in the family but there is no doubt in my mind but what we two have located, and their father's name was Andrew. I have no desire to impose upon your time, but am extremely anxious to perpetuate a little knowledge of our ancestors for future generations, so if you can be interested in the matter I would be pleased to accept you as a partner in this noble work.

My grandfather, Robert McKee, was born in Juniata County, in 1780. My father, Thomas McKee, born same county, near Waterford in 1810. They came to Wayne County, Ohio in 1829. John W. McKee was born in 1846. I have a family of six children, 3 girls and 3 boys – Florence, Edna, Dale, John R., Ralph and xxx (Crystal). Two of the girls married. I have one brother (Bart) and one sister (Nancy) living out of a family of seven. We had 52 at our reunion last August and see no reason that it will not double or triple by our 2nd reunion, next August.

Direct line your family tree.

Andrew, 1 st	1721
Andrew, 2 nd	1750
Robert	1775
John Strode	1822
S.M.	1867

Direct line our family tree

Andrew, 1 st ? (David)	1721
John	1754
Robert	1780
Thomas	1810
John W.	1846
John R.	1886
Francis	19xx

You will notice how the dates come in and also that only 5 years difference between the ages of your grandfather and mine, and the name Robert being the same. Make calculation to meet with us in August, due notice of which will be given.

Yours respectfully,
 J.W. McKee,
 R. D, #6, Wooster, Ohio.

Letter 3

LETTER OF SAMUEL MCKEE, KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN TO
 J. W. MCKEE, WOOSTER, OHIO
 May 20, 1916

J. W. McKee,
 Wooster, Ohio.

My dear sir and cousin,

Your letter of February last, and your recent letter of May 9 inst. to my brother Thomas McKee of Cassapolis, Mich., were both promptly by him referred to me, therefore, I have no valid excuse no offer for not answering promptly.

For my dereliction of a real duty, I sincerely beg your pardon as I certainly know what it means to write just such kindly letters as you have written my esteemed brother and have no attention paid to them. For a period of ten years I wrote to every McKee whose address I could obtain throughout the length and breadth of the U.S., asking co-operation in the McKee picnic Association of Southwestern Michigan. The result of letters sent out by me is, that the lines of the McKee Association have been extended beyond our own father's family circle; notably among the added circle being James McKee end family of Row Ann, Ind., John McKee and family of Kokomo, Ind., Nelson McKee, his brother and their families of Luna, Ind., Wm. E. McKee of Sturgis, Mich., and Darwin McKee and family of Decatur, Mich. Our father's family is scattered from St. John's, Newfoundland to Joseph, Oregon.

From Joseph, Oregon to Wakelee, Mich., where we gather each succeeding June 1st 3,000 miles, yet a nephew who lives in Joseph, Oregon, his wife, daughter, and grand daughter made the trip four years ago this coming June. Last year a nephew and wife came from St. Johns, Newfoundland.

Our father's family contained the following sons and daughters: Hugh, John, William, Elizabeth, Daniel, Joseph, Essinqton, Thomas, Davis, James, Porter and last but not least, Samuel.

I am seventy years of age, hale and hearty. My brother Thomas is in his eighty-first year.

The above names are in the order of their birth, save that Davis was older than Thomas. Thomas and I alone are only survivors of the family group of brothers and sisters.

My own family consists of two sons and a daughter. Bert my oldest son resides in Kalamazoo, Mich. Fred is a rambler and I know not his whereabouts just at present. My daughter resides in Redlands, Calif. So much by way of introduction.

HISTORY OF CLAN

As regards the history of our people our clan has but limited knowledge. I seem to have gathered and retained about all there is known of the clan. My father could have set us right on many points, but it was neglected between father and son till it is lost. Will just add that my father was laid away the day I was thirteen years old and my knowledge of our people comes from squibs uttered in my hearing prior to that, yet they are clear as if uttered but yesterday.

Hugh McKee, our grandfather was born in Co. Tyrone, Ireland 1763. He came to America in 1783, a young man 20 years old; was in Philadelphia, Pa., when General Cornwallis handed up his sword to General Green at Yorktown. For 11 years we lose track of his wanderings, but finally find him in the little valley, Kishokaquillis, near the city of Lewistown, Pa., where he married and resided a number of years. To him were born two sons, William, the elder, born 1796 died 1818, unmarried; Davis, my father, born 1798, died 1860, to whom were born the foregoing sons and daughters.

About 1818 Hugh McKee quit the little valley of Kishokaquillis and moved west to Clarion Co., Pa., and his remains were laid to rest near the Allegheny River, in the year 1846. My father married in Clarion Co., where he reared his large family, coming to Michigan in 1855.

I was born near where the village of Sligo now stands, in Clarion Co., Pa.

My grandfather had three brothers who came to America shortly after he arrived. John, older than Hugh, a farmer, Thomas a barrister in Ireland, located in New York and practiced his profession, James, who was educated in Ireland for the ministry, located in Philadelphia, where he became principal of the City schools. My grandfather visited him in 1808 and some of his people were still connected with the schools as late as 1860.

John and Hugh seemed to be closely attached and always stayed near each other living in the same vicinity and buried in the same church yard.

While my grandfather came from Ireland, tradition tells us that he was of Scotch descent, his forbears going to Ireland from Scotland during the Scottish persecution; he at least could not speak the Irish dialect and was a rigid Presbyterian in faith.

Well brother if you tire in reading this before you get through, consign it to the waste basket and no harm done.

Now my dear cousin, our Picnic Association will meet in its 13th Annual conclave Thursday, June 22, 1916, in Thomas McKee's grove near the village of Wakelee, Mich., and 12 miles from Cassopolis, and if you or any or all of your people can see their way clear to meet with us I can assure you a hearty welcome. The invitation is broad, it covers the whole territory and all the McKee families. I have 450 miles to go but expect to be in attendance.

With kindest regards to you and yours, I remain

Sincerely yours,

Samuel McKee.