

Email from Barry Wood, October 8, 2003

Comments on the Origin of Walker Langford

Allen -- Your email to Shiron is generally accurate, but I would say that Walker Langford definitely came to Kentucky with his family. At least they all show up in Kentucky about the same time. The only way in which he logically would not have gone with the whole family would have been that perhaps Joseph went to Kentucky a few months or a year before his wife and children to set things up for them there, and didn't return to Pittsylvania County, Virginia to help them with the move. But I think that's unlikely. Walker was still a teenager when this was going on.

Item #2 -- In my view, the idea that Walker Langford was born in North Carolina is probably a fractured fairy tale, so to speak. There is no trace of his immediate family ever living in North Carolina in terms of any contemporary record. An account written many decades later, well after his death, said that he was a native of North Carolina. That is quoted in my mother in law's book. However, those county history-type sketches are notoriously unreliable on such matters. (One such account, of my father's great granduncle Peter Bell, said that his grandfather was a "native of Holland" when in fact the ancestor in question was born in New Jersey of parents whose only connection with Holland was that they had floated down the Rhine from Neuwied, Germany, and gotten on a transatlantic vessel at Rotterdam.)

I consider the reference to Walker's supposed North Carolina birth to be a confused echo of the fact that the family's farm at the time -- in Pittsylvania County, Virginia --was adjacent to the North Carolina line. Walker Langford was probably born within a stone's throw of North Carolina. When people in Kentucky or Indiana asked where the family had come from, the older generation probably said "Virginia, right on the North Carolina border," and the next generation just remembered the North Carolina part.

That said, Joseph Langford did have at least one probable brother, James (as well as possibly two more -- John and Thomas) who lived in Stokes County, North Carolina, then part of Surry County.

This would have been somewhat to the west of Pittsylvania County as well as south, so it wasn't adjacent to Joseph's place. I see no reason to assume that Joseph & Mary Lankford would have left their Virginia land to hang out at James' place when Walker was expected. It's possible, but if we try to find evidence of Walker's father in the records of North Carolina from 1769 and thereabouts, we are likely to be disappointed. My mother in law tried and tried, and was never able to come up with anything....

Also, Walker's siblings definitely came to Kentucky with the rest of the

family because they show up on the tax lists there as soon as they came of age (for the boys) and their marriage bonds are of record there.

Why did they go to Kentucky? Cheap land, and lots of it. Joseph Langford's tract in Pittsylvania County was adequate to support one family, but if he had divided it among all of his many children, the resulting plots would have been so small that they might have all starved.

Elisha Wallen and others of the "longhunters" journeyed to North Carolina prior to permanent white settlement and brought back to the southern Virginia / northern North Carolina area stories of the fertility of the land there. Daniel Boone, now more famous, also spread the word about Kentucky in this same region. The Langford family's move to Kentucky was part of a general and very large migration from SW Virginia over the mountains in the period immediately following the Revolution.