

Email from Barry Wood, October 12, 2003

The Thomas Langford Murder

I really don't know where the murdered Thomas fits in. From the fact that he was from Pittsylvania, we might surmise that he might have been a nephew of Joseph Langford's, or even a brother.

The received wisdom on Joseph's brother Thomas, according to Bruce Edwards' book "The Langfords and Lankfords of Virginia" is that he was the Thomas Langford whose will was proved in Albemarle County, Virginia in 1822. The will mentions a grandson James H. Langford, so clearly this was a man of at least middle age.

Benjamin Langford, Joseph's most famous brother, had a son named Thomas. Curiously, this brother died on a visit to Kentucky. A match? Not necessarily, because the story told of this Thomas is he died from a fall off his horse on the occasion of a visit to his sister Mary (Langford), widow of Richard Todd, in 1787. Is this possibly a confused version of the 1798 murder of Thomas Langford by the Harpe gang?

Mom Hall's book references an 1806 marriage for this Thomas Langford in Albemarle County (page 60), but obviously that could not be correct if this was the Thomas Langford who died in Kentucky almost two decades earlier. I imagine that the Thomas who married in 1806 was of the succeeding generation, or a son of one of Benjamin's brothers. Benjamin's will by all appearances names all of his then-living children, but does not mention a son Thomas. That's consistent with the story that this Thomas had died on the Kentucky trip.

Sorry I can't be more definitive about this.

To give you some context for the Thomas Lankford who lived in NC southwest of Pittsylvania County in what is now Stokes County (but then Surry County), and who some believe was a brother of Joseph, here are the Lankford entries from that area out of the 1786/7 census of North Carolina:

1786 Surry Co., N.C. State Census

Capt. Gaines' District, Taken by Matthew Moore

William Lankford - 1 male over 16 years old, 1 male under 6, 3 females

Thomas Lankford - 1 male over 16, 2 males under 16, 3 females

John Lankford - 1 male over 16, 2 males under 16, 4 females

William Lankford - 1 male over 16, none under; 1 female

(This was posted by Linda Boyd Lawhon on the Lankford Genforum.)

Can't say that this is the same Thomas Lankford who later went from Pittsylvania County, Va. to Kentucky only to be murdered. Somewhere I have extracts from the 1800 census of Surry County. If Thomas is still listed there then obviously he's not the one who was murdered in 1798.