

JOHN BENJAMIN HUCKSTEP and MARTHA ANN BYRANT

John Benjamin Huckstep was born on December 19, 1827 in Missouri and died on January 7, 1901 in Crawford County, Iowa. On October 21, 1851 he was married to Martha Ann Bryant in Jacksonville, Morgan County, Illinois by C.W. Lewis, M.G. ¹

Martha Ann Bryant, the daughter of Isabel Rankin and William Halley Bryant, was born June 7, 1833 in Overton County, Tennessee. In the fall of 1834, William Halley Bryant and his wife, Isabel Rankin Bryant, plus their four children, James, Thomas, Margaret, and Martha Ann left Flat Creek, Bedford County, Tennessee for their new home in Morgan County, Illinois. They were accompanied by James and Margaret Massie Rankin, Isabel's parents, and Isabel's two younger sisters, Susan and Margaret Rankin. The party was quite large as many people were moving from the South to the new states in the Northwest Territories of Virginia that had been changed to the states of Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. While enroute the party stopped for several days in Sevier County, Tennessee in a vicinity called Henry's Crossroads which has the post office address of Kodak, Tennessee. They visited William Bryant's uncles who lived about ten miles from Sevierville, Tennessee. ²

When the party reached Kentucky Margaret Massie Rankin, Isabel Rankin's mother, wanted to go to Great Crossings, Scott County, Kentucky which is three miles west of Georgetown, Kentucky on the road that leads from Georgetown via Stamping Ground to Frankfort, Kentucky. Margaret Massie Rankin's parents, Edmund Massie II, age 87, and Mary Dabney Winston-Massie, age 94, were living in the vicinity of Great Crossings with Anne Massie Adams, their daughter. The Massie's home during their active years had been Grant County, Kentucky and the State of Virginia

It had been a long distance out of their way to visit in Great Crossings, Kentucky so, after some discussion, the party decided to stay extra time in the area. This was a good decision as Mary Dabney Winston-Massie died in October of 1835 and Margaret Massie Rankin was always happy that they had visited her mother. Mary Dabney Winston-Massie was described as being very careful of her appearance and dressed neatly in black. Mary and Edmund were very spry for their age. Edmund was described as a very jovial person that people enjoyed meeting. It was reported that people visiting the Massie home did not wish to leave because the family was so friendly. ³

Edmund Massie II and his wife Mary Dabney Winston-Massie must have moved to Kentucky from Orange County, Virginia about 1792. Edmund II states in his Pension Application No. 16462 of Campbell County, Kentucky, and dated October 8, 1832, that he came from Virginia to Kentucky forty years earlier. While a resident of Albermarle County, Virginia Edmund II enlisted in the cause of the American Revolution and he served three months guarding prisoners at the barracks in Albermarle County. While a resident of Orange County, Virginia he enlisted and served three months as a private in Captain Grave's and Edward Moore's Virginia companies. In Saffell's Revolutionary Soldiers on pages 256 and 266 are given members of Col. Daniel Morgan's 11th and 15th Virginia Regiments. It lists the following:

Company No. 11 as it stood November 30, 1778 Edmund Massey private

After leaving Great Crossings, Kentucky the Rankin-Bryant party stopped to visit Isaac Massie,

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Isabel Massie Bryant's brother, who lived on Massie Creek near Palmyra, Macoupin County, Illinois about ten miles from Carlinville, Illinois. Isaac Massie had come to Illinois in 1830.

The party then went to Morgan County, Illinois and settled on the Major Simm's farm near Jacksonville, Illinois. William Halley Bryant taught school that winter in a log school house on the Simm's farm. In the spring of 1835 the family moved to Jacksonville and lived in a house on South Main Street. William Halley Bryant superintended at Hendenberg's and March's carding factories in 1836-1837. At that time Jacksonville, Illinois was slightly smaller than Chicago, Illinois and had less than one thousand people. St. Louis had five thousand people at that time.

William Bryant moved to Tennessee from Virginia at an early age with his parents. He was very skilled as a mechanic and it was reported that very few excelled him in mechanics. ⁴

The 1835 Illinois State Census, Morgan County, page 61, line 20 lists the following:

William W. Briant ⁵	males	0-10	3
		30-40	1
	females	0-10	2
		30-40	1

The 1835 Census also reports one carding machine and one wool mill in Morgan county.

The earliest Federal land purchase in Morgan County by the Bryant family was on July 2, 1831. Arthur and John H. Bryant purchased land together as partners and paid cash and not from land warrants for military service. A John Bryant purchased lots in Jacksonville in December of 1833.

In 1838 William Halley Bryant opened a business with a Mr. Davis in Jacksonville, Illinois but William Halley Bryant died on August 8, 1838 a victim of an epidemic ⁶ that had been in Illinois for several years. After the death of William Halley Bryant on August 8, 1838 and James Rankin in December 1838 there were no adult male family members remaining. Isabel Rankin Bryant moved her family to the home of her parents, James and Margaret Massie Rankin near Jacksonville.

Margaret Rankin, daughter of James and Margaret Massie Rankin; Isabel Rankin Bryant and her children, James, Thomas, Margaret Clendenin, Martha Ann, Christopher "Lum", and Mrs. (James) Margaret Massie Rankin then moved into a cabin on a Mr. Becraft's land after the death of James Rankin. This home was very crowded with the two families. In 1838 they moved into part of the home of Mr. Hart H., Sr. and Margaret Officer Massey on the Diamond Grove Stock Ranch which was west of Jacksonville. The Massey's were very close friends of the Bryant's.

The children then went to live in neighbor's homes. James Bryant, age 11, went to work for Thomas Carter Huckstep. James Bryant later married Sarah Lucy Huckstep, the daughter of Thomas Carter and Jane Bowles Maddox Huckstep on August 25, 1850. Thomas Bryant, age 9, went to work for Hart Massey. ⁷

Martha Ann Bryant, age 5 at her father's death, later lived with Thomas and Samantha Weswell

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who were related to William Cullen Bryant according to Florence Lemcke. The 1850 Illinois Census, Morgan County, page 310, lists Martha Ann Bryant, age 17, born in Tennessee, as living in the Thomas and Samantha Weswell home. The Census reports would indicate that the Thomas Weswell's and the Thomas Carter Huckstep's were neighbors. James Bryant, Martha Ann's brother, was listed in the 1850 Illinois Census, page 310, as living in the Thomas and Jane Bowles Maddox Huckstep home.

At age seven Margaret Clendenin Bryant went to live with her paternal step-grandmother, Jane Overton Bryan(t) Moore (wife of James Moore), in Clinton, North Carolina. She later lived in Petersburg, Virginia with a half-sister of William Halley Bryant. In 1844 Margaret Bryant, about age 14, returned home for the funeral of her mother, Isabel Rankin Bryant. Margaret Clendenin Bryant remained after the funeral and lived with her maternal grandmother, Margaret Massie Rankin. Margaret Massie Rankin, wife of James Rankin, was very lonely after so many deaths in her family. Margaret Rankin Massie had lost her husband, her sisters, Susan and Margaret Rankin, and her son-in-law William Halley Bryant in 1838-39. Margaret Clendenin Bryant married John Miller on December 31, 1845.⁸

Mr. Hart Massey Sr. came to Morgan County, Illinois in 1827 from St. Lawrence County, New York along with his father Silas Massey. They first settled in St. Charles, Missouri in 1826. Margaret Officer came to Morgan County, Illinois with her father from Tennessee. She married Hart Massey, Sr. in 1834.

Mr. Hart Massey, Sr. was known as a very kind, moral, honest, hard-working and dear person that would help all in need. His hospitality was famous to all immigrants who came to Jacksonville, Illinois. It was said that it was never too late at night for Mr. Massey to show a newcomer the way to his home and give him a cordial welcome. Mrs. Massey, daughter of William P. and Sallie Officer of Eastern Tennessee, was described as an immaculate housekeeper. Mr. Hart Massey, Sr., was born in 1811 and died June 25, 1879 and Margaret Officer Massey died on July 2, 1889.

Katherine Eugenia Huckstep Smylie signed an affidavit on September 17, 1942 stating that the Jacksonville, Morgan County, Illinois records incorrectly lists her mother's maiden name as Briant instead of Bryant. She attested that she was the fourth daughter of John Benjamin Huckstep and Martha Ann Huckstep whose maiden name was Martha Ann Bryant.⁹

James and Thomas Bryant¹⁰ later became Methodist ministers. The first Methodist Church in Illinois was in Jacksonville. Isabel Rankin Bryant was a Presbyterian in Tennessee but joined the Methodist Church in Jacksonville, Illinois.

On June 27, 1844 Isabel remarried to Jeremiah Sager¹¹ who owned a stone quarry in Jacksonville. Isabel Rankin Bryant contracted typhoid fever in the fall of 1844 and died November 24, 1844. Isabel Rankin Bryant was buried with her husband, William Halley Bryant, her two sisters, Susan and Margaret, in the cemetery known as East Side Cemetery of Jacksonville, Illinois. The Cemetery was later laid out in lots and the location of their graves was lost. The Daughters of 1812 have selected a spot and marked it for William Halley Bryant who served in the War of 1812.

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The children of John Benjamin and Martha Bryant Huckstep included:

1. The first two children were born in Jacksonville, Illinois were William Thomas Huckstep born on January 7, 1853, and Jane Ann Huckstep born on March 3, 1854.

2. The five other children were born in Iowa including Rose Ella, March 3, 1857; Emma Isabel, August 22, 1859; Katherine Eugenia, March 31, 1864; Lenora Bertha, March 10, 1873; and James Bertram, March 10, 1873.

The first settlers in Crawford County, Iowa were in May of 1849 locating about three miles southwest of Vail, Iowa on the East Boyer River.¹² This first settlement in Crawford County was by Cornelius Dunham in Dunham's Grove near Vail, Iowa.¹³ In 1850 Jessie Mason settled near Deloit, Iowa in an area that was called Mason's Grove.¹⁴ In April 1855 Crawford County was established. From 1849 until 1855 Crawford County was attached to Shelby County, Iowa.¹⁵ In 1857 the town of Deloit, Crawford County, Iowa was founded near Mason's Grove.

In 1855 and 1856 eight families left the Jacksonville, Morgan County, Illinois area and settled in the Mason's Grove near what was to be Deloit, Crawford County, Iowa. This group included John Benjamin Huckstep, George King, William Todd, Edwin Cadwell, Tracy Chapman, Morris McHenry, Esau McKim and Joseph Brogden. John B. Huckstep originally purchased ten acres of land from Benjamin and Christiana Wicks on December 3, 1855.¹⁶ Later John Benjamin Huckstep and family homesteaded on what was later known as the "*McCook*" farm in Milford Township, Crawford County, Iowa. The land cost \$1.25 dollars per acre. John Benjamin Huckstep remained on this farm for the rest of his life.¹⁷

In October of 1856 the first religious society or "*Class*" in the county was founded with seven members and John Benjamin Huckstep was one of the founding members of this Methodist Episcopal Church.¹⁸ The first minister was Rev. William Black and after the sermon the church society was formed.¹⁹ On June 7, 1857 the first Sunday School was formed in the same church.

The 1856 Iowa Census, Crawford County, Milford Township, page 929 lists the following:

	Age	Bir.Pl.
John B. Huckstep	25	MO
Martha A. Huckstep	22	TN
William T. Huckstep	3	ILL
Jane A. Huckstep	2	ILL

In 1856 John B. Huckstep was a member of the militia and owned eighty acres. He harvested sixty bushels of wheat from three acres. He harvested three hundred bushels of corn from twelve acres. He sold one hog for twenty-one dollars and six cattle for one hundred and fifty dollars. That year he family made five hundred pounds of butter. There were one hundred sixty-nine persons in Milford Township and only two hundred and thirty-four in all of Crawford County.²⁰

The family lived two dwellings from Celinda Richardson Dunham, daughter of Cornelius Dunham, the earliest settler of Crawford County. After the death of her husband, John Dunham,

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from typhoid fever Celinda Richardson Dunham married Tracy Chapman, also an early settler.

²¹Their daughter, Celinda Chapman, married James M.C. North. Tracy Thomas North, son of Celinda Chapman and James M. C. North, later married Ethel Amelia Huckstep Baker, mother of Leonard Albert Baker and grandmother of Phillip L. Baker, M.D.

In 1865 there were three townships in Crawford County which included Milford, Denison, and Union. Prairie fires were an annual event. Trains and stages went from Denison to Boonsboro, Iowa. Mail arrived and departed from Denison east and west three times per week and two times per week north and south. In 1865 Denison had one hundred and one citizens and Deloit has sixty nine citizens. ²²

The farmer's directory of Crawford County, Iowa in 1892 includes: W.T. Huckstep, J.B. Huckstep, Jas. Pacht, and J.M.C. North.

The first homes were cabins of logs hewed and put together that were without doors as a blanket was used to cover the doorway. A fire-place was built to furnish warmth and used for cooking but the cabins were drafty and often snow filtered into the cabins. The prairie land had to be broken, fences built, and crops planted. There was a constant struggle for food and clothing for the family with the clothing for the family usually made at home. Meat was from hunting deer, quail, and rabbits and the first fruits were wild gooseberries, grapes, plums, choke-cherries, and strawberries. Later orchards were planted and other tame fruits started. As the country was more settled the native grass disappeared as did most of the wild fruit. The days were long and work was hard especially during the summer months. Crude implements were used for farming and wood which was the only fuel was cut for the winter.

The Sioux Indians were a constant threat and the family was always on guard as the Indians often would steal horses and other things. On one occasion the Sioux were camping on the Huckstep farm when several men went to the camping place to confront the Indians. One of the Indians shot at John Benjamin Huckstep with a bow and arrow and John returned fire with his single shot rifle killing the Indian. ^{23 24}

John Benjamin Huckstep broke the ground for the W.A. McHenry residence in Denison, Crawford County, Iowa using a yoke of four oxen. This job took him three days; one to travel to Denison, one to break the lot, and one to return to his home in Milford Township near Deloit, Iowa. This home is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. ²⁵

The 1880 Iowa Census, Crawford County, Milford Township, page 44, lists the following:

	Age	Bir.Pl.	Fr.Bir.Pl.	Mo.Bir.Pl.	
John B. Huckstep	53	MO	VA	MO	farmer
Martha A. Huckstep	46	TN	VA	NC	keeping house
Rosie Huckstep	23	IA	MO	TN	attending school
Katie E. Huckstep	16	IA	MO	TN	attending school
James B. Huckstep	7	IA	MO	TN	attending school

The 1900 Iowa Census, Crawford County, Milford Township, page 15, Dwelling # 108, Family # 108 lists the following:

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		Birth Pl.	Fr. Birth Pl.	Mo. Birth Pl.	Yr. Married
Huckstep, J.B	73	MO	VA	MO	48
Martha	63	TN	VA	NC	48
J.B., Jr.	27	IA	MO	TN	2
Nellie	20	IA	ENG.	ENG.	2
Florence	1	IA	IA	IA	

Nellie Huckstep was a daughter-in-law and Florence Huckstep was a granddaughter.

John and Martha Ann Bryant Huckstep were described as “...of the heroic stuff of which our pioneers were made—people of sterling Christian character such as leave a lasting impression in Crawford county. They helped organize the first Methodist church in the county. In such atmosphere their daughter Rose was born and reared.”²⁶ John Benjamin Huckstep and Martha Ann Huckstep are buried in the Vail Cemetery, Vail, Crawford County, Iowa along with John Benjamin Huckstep’s sister Jennie Huckstep. Jennie Huckstep was a school teacher, never married, and died of typhoid fever.

Source:

What Does America Mean To You?, Vol. I and Vol. II, Evelyn Jeanette Ownbey,
Chicago, Illinois, 1941-1962

Homer Hucksteps Remain on the Farm, by Ruth Burnside, *The Denison Bulletin*,
August 1, 1963; Denison, Crawford County, Iowa

Portrait and Biographical Album, Morgan and Scott Counties, Illinois, Chapman Brothers, 1889

History of Crawford County Iowa, in 1875, A.T. Andreas, 1875

Florence Lemcke, personal records

Molly Kennedy, researcher, Springfield, Illinois

Phillip Leonard Baker, family information

Phillip Leonard Baker, M.D.

Topeka, Kansas

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¹ Morgan County, Marriage Book B, page 80, No. 2487

² *What Does America Mean to You?*, Vol. I-II, Evelyn Ownbey, 1942-1962, Blue Island, Illinois

³ Ibid.

⁴ *History of Morgan County, Illinois: Past and Present*, Donnelley, Loyd, and Co. Publishers, 1878, page 568

⁵ The Bryant name was spelled Briant on the 1835 Morgan County Census and also in the 1851 Morgan County Marriage record of Martha Ann Bryant to John B. Huckstep. Katherine Huckstep Smylie, daughter, filed an affidavit in the State of Oregon, County of Josephine, on September 17, 1942 stating that the name should be Bryant

⁶ Asiatic cholera had been in the area for several years

⁷ *History of Morgan County, Illinois: Past and Present*

⁸ *History of Morgan County, Illinois: Past and Present*

⁹ Affidavit, State of Oregon, County of Josephine, Katherine Huckstep Smylie, September 17, 1942

¹⁰ *Autobiography of Rev. Thomas J. Bryant, Thirty Five Years a Member of the Illinois Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, Archives and Special Collections, Pfeiffer Library, MacMurray College, Jacksonville, Illinois, 1890

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- ¹¹ Morgan County Marriage Book B, Page 43, 1271
- ¹² *The History of Crawford County, Iowa, in 1875*, A.T. Andreas, Andreas Atlas Co., Chicago, Illinois, 1875
- ¹³ *The History of Crawford County, Iowa, in 1875*, page 10
- ¹⁴ *A History of Crawford County, Iowa*, page 10, The Denison Newspapers, Richard Knowles, Publisher, 1987
- ¹⁵ Crawford County in 1865, The Iowa State Gazette, James T. Hair, 1865, Bailey and Hair, Chicago
- ¹⁶ Crawford County Deed Book A, page 145, 1855 “*Know all men by there Presents that we Benjamin E. Wicks and Christiana Wicks his wife of the County of Crawford and State of Iowa in consideration of the sum of eighty dollars in hand paid of John B. Huckstep of the County Crawford and State of Iowa do hereby sell and convey unto the said John B. Huckstep the following described premises situated in the County of Crawford and State of Iowa.....this day of December 3 1855*”
- ¹⁷ *At 80 Years Homer Hucksteps (sic) Remain on the Farm*, Ruth Burnside, Denison Bulletin, Denison, Iowa, August 1, 1963
- ¹⁸ *History of Crawford County, Iowa, in 1875*
- ¹⁹ *Crawford County in 1865*
- ²⁰ 1856 Iowa Census, Crawford County, Milford Township
- ²¹ *A History of Crawford County*, Denison Newspapers, Richard Knowles, Publisher, 1987, pages 334, 337, 360
- ²² *Crawford County in 1865*
- ²³ *At 80 Years Homer Hucksteps (sic) Remain on the Farm*
- ²⁴ *The Old Settlers Picnic*, Crawford County in Early Days, N. L. Hunt, 1933
- ²⁵ *History of Crawford County*, page 60
- ²⁶ Obituary of Mrs. Rose Truesdell, The Glidden, Iowa, Graphic, March 8, 1917