

# Our Difference

by

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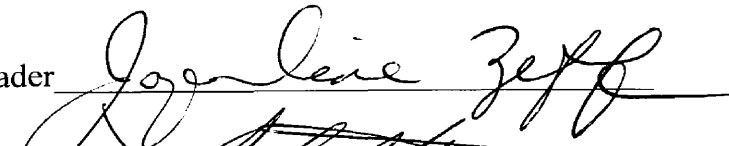
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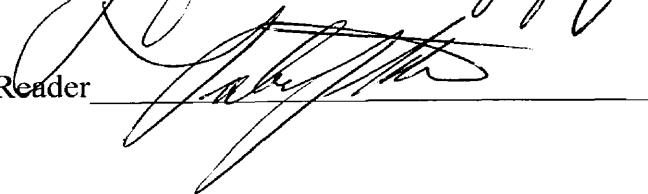
American Culture

21 August 2000

First Reader

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jennifer Zeff", written over a horizontal line.

Second Reader

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Thanks go to my family for their support in the production of this Research. A special thank you to my mother Carol and wife Laura for their help with: the research, interviews, the traveling to Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia and editing. Without the support of my family this would never have been completed.



**My mother Carol and daughter Savannah, descendants of a Melungeon heritage.**

Early in the last century (1800) when the white folks first came here, the Melungeons was already here, a 'hold' all the good land, but didn't want to just take from the Melungeons brutal-like. Well, it wouldn't a been no trouble if the Melungeons was ordinary heathen Indians. They woulda 'just kicked' em out. But there they was sorta 'livin' liked civilized folks and they was 'speakin' English, an 'on top o' all that they was believing Christians. But their skins was brown on account 'o' their Injun blood in 'em' too. Then they passed a law saying 'nobody with nigger blood could vote, or hold office, or testify in court.' Then they went to court and before long they got hold 'o' that good bottomland. So there wasn't nothing left for the Melungeons to do but move up on the ridges.

Brewton Berry, *Almost White*

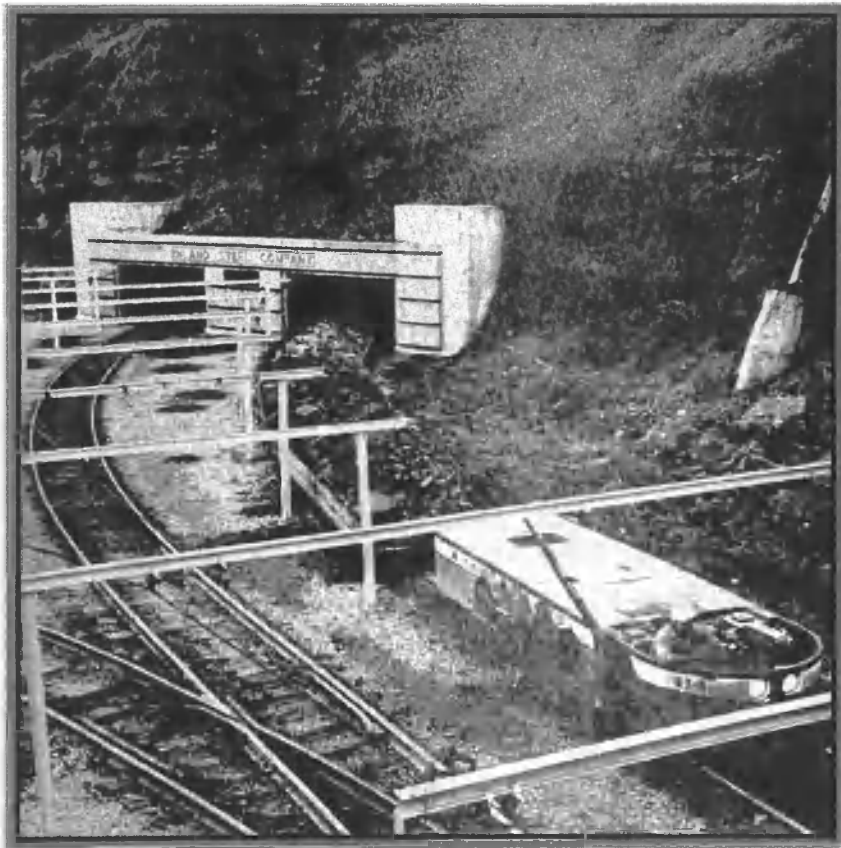


Figure 1: The drift-mouth of the Price mine of Inland Steel at Wheelwright, Ky. 1960

Chapter 1: The Move from the Land He Loved

**Figure 2: Jay P. Gibson in 1945<sup>1</sup>**

In the spring of 1947 my grandfather, Parnel (Jay) Gibson, moved from Cumberland, in Harlan County, Kentucky to Wheelwright, in Floyd County, Kentucky. This was a move of approximately seventy miles across the mountainous region of Eastern Kentucky. This move has been questioned by my immediate family for many years and has never been explained; the older generations refuse to talk about it. I asked him why he moved from his home when I was a teenager. He simply looked at me and said that there are some things that we don't need to revisit.

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<sup>1</sup> All photos are from the Gibson family collection of photos.

In Harlan County, Jay worked for United States Steel in their coal mine at Lynch. In the 1940's, United States Steel was the leading manufacturer of steel in the world, business was good, employment was stable, and the wages were high. In the Lynch coalmine he was an assistant mine foreman in charge of a crew of miners. The position of assistant mine foreman held the responsibility of supervising a crew of miners in a section of the mine. This was a prestigious position in a powerful company where he had worked since he was only fourteen years old. He had established himself as a valuable member of the United States Steel mining team and appeared to be moving through the ranks to become an upper level supervisor. In this mine he worked with his brother-in-law Tilmer Barger who had also attained the position of assistant mine foreman. I talked with Tilmer and he told me, "It was a very political place and your grandfather simply did not fit the politics to move any higher in the company." When I asked him what he meant by politics he simply said, "Jay was not from the right family, could not belong to the right church, and would never be allowed in the right circles" (Barger). I pressed the issue but he was unwilling to talk about it any more saying that there are things that needed to be left alone. I later found this comment reflected

the opinions of other members of the older generation. An interesting note is that Tilmer Barger was from an impoverished family from high in the hills of Kentucky, yet he managed to be accepted into the "politics" of the mining company.

The Lynch mine was just over Black Mountain from Jay's childhood home in Appalachia, Virginia where both of his parents lived, and he maintained many childhood friends. Jay was very close with his family and took every opportunity to spend his time off visiting with his parents. In addition to his parents, he also had two sisters who lived in the immediate area. He was always close with his sisters, particularly his younger sister, Eloka, and her husband Tilmer. If Jay wasn't spending time with his parents, he was boating and fishing with his sister's family.



**Figure 3: Jay with his parents Walter Brownlow and Mary Eliza in 1940**

My grandfather loved the water; he liked to keep a ski boat and his favorite pastime was fishing. He would sometimes fish for up to twelve hours straight, staying out all night. The area around Lynch, Kentucky and Appalachia, Virginia has an abundance of lakes and rivers for fishing and other water sports. After he moved from the Lynch area, he bought a trailer on Norris Lake and journeyed back to this setting nearly every weekend, a difficult trip through the winding narrow roads of Eastern Kentucky.

In the spring of 1947 my grandfather left his family in Lynch to go in search of a "better opportunity for his family" (Pauline Gibson). He interviewed and accepted a job with Inland Steel Corporation in Wheelwright, Kentucky



as an equipment operator. This was a reduction of responsibility, prestige, and was a move far from his parent's and sisters' families. He stayed in a boarding house for six months while he established himself with the company and leased a house for his wife and children. Years later my grandfather told me that he always hated Wheelwright. He felt that the area around Lynch was more beautiful, and a better place to raise a family. He refused to put a Floyd County "tag" on his car. He always drove over the mountains to register his car in Lynch with a Harlan County "tag". He simply could not accept the fact that he lived in Floyd County and believed that his return to the Appalachia area on the weekends and maintaining his vehicle registration in that area maintained a connection that he wished not to sever.

While still in Cumberland he had enrolled all of his children in St. Stephen's Catholic School, just a mile from their home. I talked with my grandmother and she told me that the schools in Cumberland were far better than the schools in Wheelwright. She went on to say that in Cumberland she could put her children in Catholic schools, which she believed to be the best schools, but in Wheelwright she had no choice but to enroll them in the public schools. His oldest child, Larry, was in the sixth

grade the year that they left the area. His second oldest child, Don, was in the third grade, and my mother, Carol, the youngest, was in the first grade. I asked my mother what she remembered about schooling and her life in Cumberland. She told me that one of her earliest memories was of her father pulling her aside on the first day of school and telling her that she might run into some problems at school and how she should handle the situation. He told her that she was different from the other children at school and that she might be called names or teased because of her dark features and hair. He instructed her to simply tell the teacher and the other children that she was an Indian and to hold firm to that story. My mother has black hair, high cheekbones, and dark skin. She maintains the features that are associated with Native Americans, with the exception that she has blue eyes, the same as her father. I asked her older brothers Larry and Don about comments that their father had made to them prior to their going to school. They both said that their father had never mentioned a difference to them. My mother explains that this is because they were not different from the local population. They took their traits of lighter skin and hair from their mother, who was of German ancestry.



**Figure 4: Larry (1952), Don (1950), and Carol (1948) Wheelwright, Kentucky.**

Why would a man leave a supervisory position with United States Steel, move from a town he loves to a town he hates away from his family and friends, and jeopardize the education of his children by taking them out of a good school system? What is there to Tilmer Barger's claim that my grandfather could not move any higher in the company ranks because of "political reasons"? What was behind the insistence that my mother explain that she was Indian when she entered the first grade? Why was there fear that my mother would be a victim of discrimination based on her physical appearance?

My mother closely resembles her father while her brothers resemble their mother. My mother had Indian like features and her brothers had light hair and skin

similar to persons of German-Irish descent. What is there about his family history, the idea that he was of Indian lineage? My mother said that it was apparent to her, even at elementary school age, that she was not Indian but something that was regarded as lower, but she did not know what. A visit to Sneedville, Tennessee, the hometown of my grandfather's parents and grandparents provided the answer. He was from a group of pre-recorded Americans commonly known as the Melungeons. It was this labeling of Melungeon that caused my grandfather to move his family far from his home in hope that his children would escape the oppression that had surrounded his ancestors. He may not have realized it, but he was following a pattern that his ancestors had followed for four hundred years. He was moving in hopes of securing a place of acceptance for his children, he was trying to find a place where a family that was trapped somewhere between black and white could exist without oppression and ridicule. The history of this family shows that events and attitudes of the past have a direct impact on the actions of the present generation.

## Chapter 2: What is a Melungeon?

In the mountains of Eastern Tennessee, Southwest Virginia, Western North Carolina, Eastern Kentucky, and Southeastern Ohio lived a mystery people commonly referred to as the Melungeons. When the first European settlers arrived in this region of the Appalachians in the 1790's they found tribes of Indians, but living outside of the Indian tribes they also found these dark skinned people who came to be known as Melungeons.

The greatest concentration of Melungeons was in Hancock County, Tennessee. They were located high on Newman's ridge in the valleys parallel with the ridge along Blackwater creek in the Blackwater community, in Fisher Valley, as well as in Lee and Scott Counties of Virginia. In later years there was a migration of



**Figure 5 Chestnut Ridge in Hancock County Tennessee. This is the ridge where the Gibson Clan established themselves following the Civil War.**

these people into Hardin County, Kentucky and later into the Carmel area of Southern Ohio. In order to understand the Melungeon people it was necessary to study not only where they resided last, but also to trace their migration and to examine the choice of places for migration. The migrations of Melungeons to Kentucky and Ohio occurred later, dating to the mid to late 1800's, so a closer study of Tennessee and Virginia migrations was necessary to discover who these people were and how they gained their status.

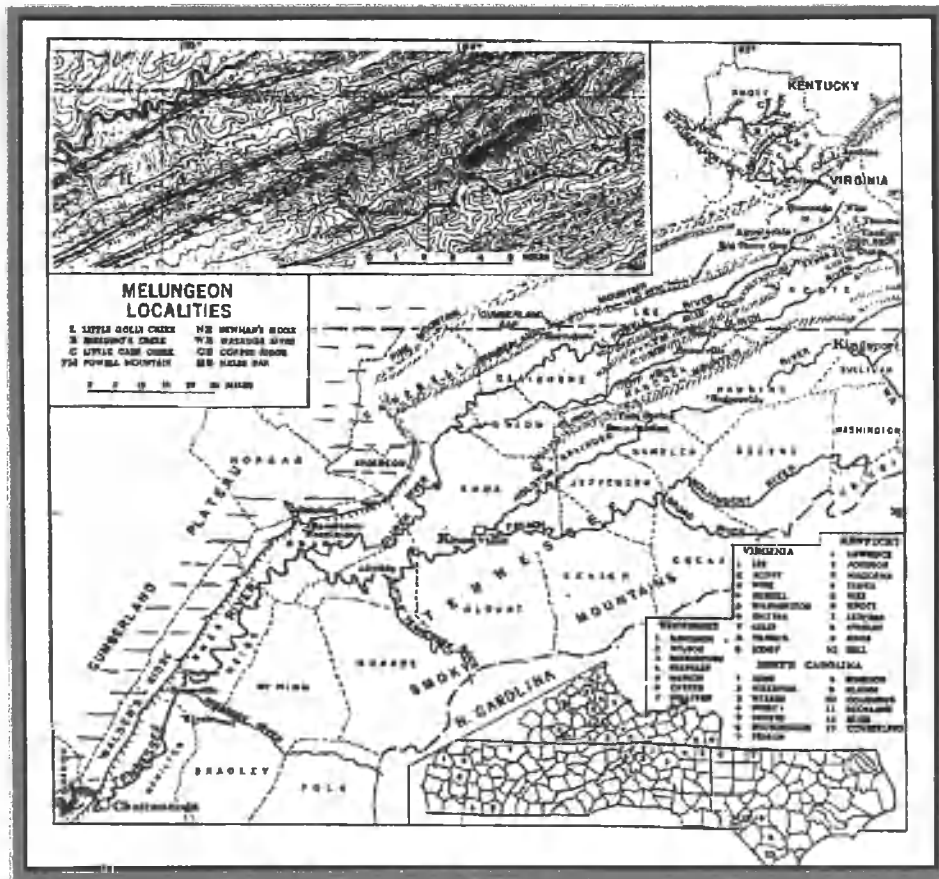


Figure 6: Map depicting concentrations of Melungeons or other mixed-blood groups. (USGS, Jonesville Quadrangle, 1891)

These clans of the mountains have hidden themselves away from the general population in an effort to avoid discrimination due to their physical appearance and cultural differences. The Melungeons proved themselves to be a proud and independent people who existed by "hacking and grubbing out a habitation in the Appalachian wilderness.. they asked of their surrounding neighbors only to be left alone, to live in peace. They received in return economic deprivation, intolerance, prejudice, and discrimination" (Price 5).

The primary reason for this discrimination was due to their physical appearance. Because of their



**Figure 7: Jay P. Gibson displaying Melungeon features of curly black hair, gray blue eyes, olive skin, and high cheek bones. 1950**

appearance many Melungeons could and have been mistaken for races varying from Negro, to Caucasian, to Indian. In 1889, Swan M. Burness, M.D. described the Melungeons as

...dark, but of a different hue to the ordinary mulatto, with either straight or wavy hair and some have cheek bones almost as high as the Indians.

(Ivey 166)

This description suggests the tone of the skin to be significantly different from that of mulattos whose ancestry can be traced to African and Caucasian bloodlines and the facial structure was also different.

This combination of features showed them to be neither:

They have dark skin and straight black hair. Yet their skin is neither copperish nor blackish-rather, it has an olive-like darkness to it. Their eyes range from coal black to brown to deep purple to grey. Many have high cheeks suggesting Indian ancestry, but unlike the round-headed, broad-faced Cherokees who once inhabited the land, the Melungeons have thin lips and narrow faces. (Price

1)



Price's more modern description derived from interviews with the elderly population of Hancock County Tennessee in the 1940's, described the skin tone to be an olive color. He also provides additional insight about other features that are helpful in discovering the origins of these mysterious people.

Also lending insight to the origins of the Melungeons was the term Melungeon itself. The term Melungeon has been spelled in a variety of ways over the past two centuries. It was spelled Melungin in 1813 (Waylan 37), Malungeon in 1840 (*The Whig* 3), and Malungeon in 1890 (Allen 10). Local historian Jonnie Gibson Rhea included that there were two additional spellings of Malungin and Melangin. The modern spelling Melungeon was not used until the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The first record of the term in a publication is in the October 7 edition of the West Tennessee newspaper *The Whig*. In this article the term was revealed as being derogatory in nature.

We have just learned, upon undoubted authority, that General Combs, in his attempt to address the citizens of Sullivan County, on yesterday, was insulted, contradicted repeatedly, limited to one hour and a half and most shamefully treated and

withal an effort was made to get an impudent  
 Malungeon from Washington Cty, a scoundrel who is  
 half Negro and half Indian and who has actually been  
 speaking in Sullivan, in reply to Combs! (*The Whig*)

While the origin of the term is uncertain, the  
 etymology of the word is revealing. The most accepted  
 origin of the word is me'lange which is the French term  
 for "mixed" derived from the observation that the  
 Melungeons are of obvious mixed ancestry. There is also  
 the possibility that that term is derived from the Greek  
melas which means black or dark. The Afro-Portuguese  
 words melungo or mulango, which is translated as shipmate  
 or soul mate, could lead to a revelation of the origin of  
 these people. Yet another of the popular origins is the  
 term Melun-can, which is a Turkish word from the Ottoman  
 Empire, which is pronounced the same as Melungeon. "It  
 means cursed soul or one whose luck has run out."  
 (Kennedy xviii). A far less complimentary origin of the  
 word would be derived from the combination of *mal* and  
*injun*, which would suggest that Melungeons were simply  
 bad Indians. It could just as likely be a combination of  
 mulatto and injun or Mullins and Goens, which were two  
 surnames of early Melungeon families. Each of these

etymologies has merit and each leaves doubt, but each does reveal a background to be investigated.

The difficulty in accepting the French term is due to the limited French influence in the Appalachian region. There is evidence of French traders passing through the area but their presence is so limited that it leaves great doubt that they could have had an impact upon the name of a people. In addition to this lack of presence, there is the question as to why they did not name other similar ethnic populations of Melungeons where they did have a notable presence. The French are historically present in Louisiana, yet the dark-skinned mixed populations there are known as "redbones", apparently derived from the French *Os Rouge*. Another dark skinned group in Louisiana were known as the Cane River Mulattos. Here are two cases of the French in contact with Melungeon like people, yet no record of the usage is recorded.

The Greek melas is descriptive of the skin tones of the Melungeon population, yet there is no evidence of any Greek colonization or even presence in the Appalachian regions in America's early history. Furthermore, since the education levels of the first settlers generally were

low the likelihood of their knowing and using Greek terminology was low.

The Afro-Portuguese Melungo meaning shipmate or the Portuguese Melungo meaning, "white man" (Mira 25) is more likely the origin of the word, due to the exploration and colonial efforts of the Portuguese nation in the 14<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> Centuries.

Additionally the Ottoman-Turkish Meluncan lends merit to the definition due to the presence of Turkish immigrants on the Iberian Peninsula and their presence on Portuguese sailing vessels during this period. Various shipwrecked Portuguese vessels were recorded as having been lost on the American coast and there were reports of individuals in colonial America referring to themselves as Turkish (Kennedy 120-123).

Just as equally probable is the idea that these people were simply named by the native populations that lived near them in the Appalachian area. When the first white settlers came to the area they may have been told that these people were called Melungeon so the term was adopted. There is no record of a Cherokee term that is similar to Melungeon. But the name may have been used by any of the many native peoples who were destroyed with the immigration of white explorers and settlers.

In addition to this etymological study, the theory of unidentified populations must be considered. The tri-racial isolate theory was developed by Professor Edward T. Price in 1950 to identify the origins of pockets of unidentified racial groups throughout the country.

The people must be racial mixtures of white and non-white groups, Indian and/or Negro peoples, presumably providing the latter blood in the absence of evidence to the contrary; they must have a social status differing from that accorded whites, Indians, or Negroes in the area in such a way as to throw them generally together in their more personal social relationships; they must exist in such numbers and concentration as to be recognized in their locality as such a group and usually to be identified by a distinguishing group name. (5)

This is an easy catch all definition for any of many select groups that once resided in isolation throughout the United States; however, this definition assumes that these pockets are all the same. In reality, each group is distinct with a unique history.

Stemming from this tri-racial theory is the idea that the Melungeons are the descendents of Juan Pardo, a

Spanish explorer who established colonies on the Atlantic Coast of Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina into a colony known as Santa Elena. It is theorized that the descendents of these pre-English colonies were forced inland with the establishment of the English colonies and the demise of the Spanish Armada. These immigrants migrated to stay on the fringe of society and intermarried with the other "rogues" of society to include freed slaves and Indians (Kennedy 99-101).

The real question that leads to the discussion of the origin of the Melungeon people is related to their status in society. When the North American colonies were first established there was a disproportionate ratio of male colonists to female colonists. As a result there was a high rate of inter-breeding between the various races present. It was not until the colonies became established and began to see themselves as "civilized" that there was a concern for racial heritage. In the early southern colonies the primary concern was for survival and attainment of wealth with little concern for ethnic background. It was only after the areas became civilized that there was any concern about who you were (Mira 192-93). This became of primary importance with the importation of slave labor. It became necessary to

differentiate between who was in which class. As a result of slave labor it became necessary to be white and of great detriment to be anything but white, regardless of the level of darkness. As the state assemblies took pressure from the ruling classes of the colonies it became necessary for the "mixed classes" to migrate to the fringes of the civilization. This process repeated itself, forcing the minorities into the less desirable areas of the American landscape. These mixed people migrated to escape inequalities in the law, to be able to live in peace, and in many cases to escape the constant threat of servitude due to the tone of their skin (Kennedy 124).

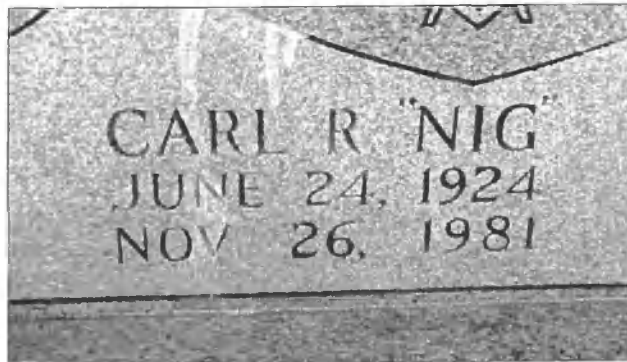
As early as the census of 1790 the leaders of the colonies determined that it was necessary to record the race of the population as being: white (of Northern European stock), black, Indian, or Free Person of Color. There was no consideration for other ethnic populations in the categorization of the American population, thus anyone with Mediterranean heritage was regarded as "of color". In her essay Playing in the Dark, author Tony Morrison discusses what it means to be of color as it pertains to American Literature:

There is no romance free of what Herman Melville called "the power of blackness," especially not in a country in which there was a resident population, already black, upon which the imagination could play; through which historical, moral, metaphysical, and social fears, problems, and dichotomies could be articulated. The slave population, it could be and was assumed, offered itself up as surrogate selves for meditation on problems of human freedom, its lure and its elusiveness. This black population was available for meditations on terror—the terror of European outcasts, their dread of failure, powerlessness, Nature without limits, natal loneliness, internal aggression, evil, sin, greed. In other words, this slave population was understood to have offered itself up for reflections on human freedom in terms other than the abstractions of human potential and the rights of man" (37-38).

Brent Kennedy reflects on this effect of color on his mother who attended Wise High School in Virginia. He mentions that she had an outgoing personality and was liked by nearly everyone in the school, but her dark complexion did haunt her.



How does one selectively forget the shame of being Melungeon? Of a well-meaning but long-suffering grandmother who bundled you up so miserable during the scorching summer months? Granny loved 'Little Nancy' and was doing all in her power to prevent another child of the family from reliving her own painful nightmare. Better to look 'crazy like a Melungeon' and sweat buckets in mid-July than to darken and pay the price of ostracism... to be called 'Black Nash' by insensitive townsfolk. To be accused by a college teacher of having not properly washed- and sent back to the showers in from of your classmates- when your own cleanliness exceeded that of your tormenters. And to take that second bath, knowing full well that nothing would change. To have your neck scrubbed to the point of bleeding in an attempt to remove unremovable melanin. (67-68)



**Figure 8: Gravestone of Carl Gibson, known all his life as "Nig" because of his dark skin. Gravestone is in Gibson Cemetery on Chestnut Ridge in Tennessee.**

In an attempt to rationalize their darkness and non-association with local Indian tribes the Melungeon populations have countered in turn of the century interviews that they were not colored but that they were "Portyghee" (Ivey 166).

FPC soon gave way to 'mulatto' as census takers lost patience with those melungeons seeking to hold on to their lands. On several of the old census records one can see the term 'Port.' crossed through and 'mulatto' written in its stead. (Kennedy 13)

By the 1800's many within the Melungeon clan were indeed mulatto, due to the oppression of being "dark skinned". As late as the 1940's there was evidence of census takers, including the registrar of vital statistics for Virginia, arbitrarily dividing people into two races: black and white (Kennedy 13). As a result of this labeling process that has taken place over the last two centuries, many melungeons went into hiding, living high up on inaccessible mountain ridges, and refusing to be counted, thus appearing to have virtually come from nowhere.

Because of this inaccessibility and the mistrust that has been developed on both sides there is little documentation of their existence: of their births, marriages, deaths, or their daily lives. This isolation is increased due to the stereotypes that are created with prejudices of early publications such as Will Dromgoole's The Melungeons, in which he refers to a Melungeon as a "Portuguese nigger" (472-73).

To be Melungeon is to be on the margins of American society, to be an outcast, to be mistrusted, to be despised because of your cultural difference, because of your color difference, because you were not allowed into the mainstream of society and your children were not allowed to develop with the surrounding community. In an interview with Brent Kennedy he related to me that it is only in the last twenty years that to be called a Melungeon was not a complete insult. And it is only in the last ten years that people are beginning to treasure their unique lineage.

The difficulty that lies ahead for those who seek to know more about their Melungeon ancestors is the lack of documentation, the presence of many origin legends, and a fear that lingers in the older generations that if you expose yourself as different in American society that it

will be used against you or future generations. An additional difficulty lies in differentiating between the myth and the truth about the histories of the United States and the people who were responsible for its settlement.

### Chapter 3: Legends and Myths of Melungeon Origin

There are many legends and stories that have been told over the years in an effort to explain the origin of the Melungeon people. A group of people that are "discovered" in the middle of the nearly inaccessible highlands of the central Appalachian chain is bound to conjure stories of fantasy mixed with historical support. Listed below are a series of origin stories and theories that attempt to explain the presence of a native non-Indian population in the midst of the Appalachian wilderness. These stories were gathered from interviews with residents of Hancock County, from family members, and from Bonnie Ball's book The Melungeons.

#### Lost Colony

One of the more popular theories is that the Melungeons are descendents of the survivors of the lost colony of Roanoke Island who existed by intermarriage with the local Indian population. This claim dates back to the earliest discovery of the

Melungeon population and ties the Melungeons in with the Lumbee Indians of Robeson County, North Carolina who were found by the French Huguenots in 1708 and were reported to have lived in a civilized manner similar to Europeans (Ball 37). This theory is supported by the knowledge that the first Melungeons encountered--as well as the Lumbee--are said to have spoken a form of Elizabethan English and the fact that the Melungeons have English surnames. Many early discussions on the origins of the Melungeon clans supposed that the Melungeons were of English descent based on these findings.

To counter those who would label the Melungeons as English, the Melungeon population themselves have always refuted the idea that they have any English or Indian background. Brent Kennedy counters the Elizabethan English references by noting

...By the 1750s--when the first great waves of English and Scot-Irish settlers came down the Valley of Virginia...the Melungeons were speaking a broken form of Elizabethan (that is sixteenth-century) English and carrying English surnames as well ...and given England's heavy trade with

Portuguese during the Elizabethan period, we would expect many Portuguese to speak at least some English. (121)

He believes that the Melungeons simply took on English surnames in order to fit in with the migration of the ruling class.

#### The Descendents of Madoc

The Welsh Prince Madoc ab Owain Gwynedd is reputed in English literature to have discovered North America in the late 12<sup>th</sup> Century. The legend describes how Madoc sailed from Wales in ten ships and discovered America. Not only did Madoc discover the "New World" but he also is reputed to have taken his explorers into the Southern Appalachian Mountains. Local historian Johnnie Rhea explains that this legend became popular when a local student read Robert Southey's epic poem Madoc and made the connection that there is a remote possibility that Madoc and his men were the fathers of the Melungons.

There is no support of this theory of the Melungeon origin. There is not even clear evidence that Madoc even existed, let alone explored America, and developed a group of what are known as "white

Indians". Samuel Eliot Morison refutes the legend of Madoc as myth and discounts any connection of the Welsh to the North American continent (Bell 84-87).

#### Lost Tribe of Israel

A theory that is based on the reading of the Bible and a lot of speculation is that the Melungeons are the descendents of the lost tribes of Israel. This theory was brought about when a collection of Second Century Hebrew Bar Kokhba coins was discovered in Eastern Kentucky (Kennedy 90). This discovery of Jewish coins coincides with the Book of Mormon, in which the ancestry of the Native North Americans is a result of the migration of the tribes. The story goes that with the break up of the Northern Tribes of Israel in 722 BCE as a result of being defeated by Assyria, the tribes dispersed and were forced out of their lands, causing them to migrate to North America and eventually settle in the Appalachian area of Tennessee. The twist here is that this arrival in North America is the fulfillment of God's promise to deliver the tribe to the Promised Land. This legend is loosely supported by the discovery of second century Jewish coins in the Tennessee Appalachian Mountains.



Of course the question is, how did these Jewish outcasts possess second century coins when they vanished from Israel before the time of Christ?

#### Descendents of Carthage

A small portion of the Melungeon population interviewed by John Gamble of the Tennessee News and Observer in 1964 held to the idea that they were the descendents of ancient Carthage. Their claim was that after the fall of Carthage to Rome, the remaining Carthaginian population intermarried with the Moorish population of North Africa and migrated to Portugal. They claim that there was a heavy Moorish/Carthaginian population on the exploration vessels of the Portuguese fleets and that they ultimately ended up on the coast of South Carolina as a result of shipwrecks.

This theory does gain support from the similar skin coloration of North Africans and the Melungeon population. It is further supported by the "seventeenth-century French, upon encountering the Melungeons in east Tennessee, thought them to be not Indians but 'Moors' and Moors are the direct descendants of the Carthaginians" (Kennedy 91).

This theory is further supported by a court case in which a half-Melungeon girl living in Hamilton County, Tennessee was sued by the family of her father to deny her right to the family inheritance on the condition that she was Melungeon. If she had Negro blood the marriage of her father and mother was illegal, making her an illegitimate child and not legally eligible to inherit her father's estate. The girl was defended by Judge Shepherd of Tennessee, who argued that the Melungeons were of Moorish descent, which is not Negro. "Shepherd's oratory convinced the court the girl had no Negro blood but descended from the very 'Moor of Venice' spoken of by Shakespeare in Othello" ...He assured the court that 'dark color cannot be bred out of them' and used her lack of flat feet and kinky hair as supporting evidence" (Elder 27). Shepherd admitted that he had no proof of the link to the Moors of North Africa but won the case nonetheless (Shepherd 34-40).

Further evidence of the link to North Africa is revealed in the discovery of early Carthaginian artifacts in Mexico: "When the Spanish arrived, the relics were already here" (Bain and Lewis 123). This report shows the Carthaginians had a presence in early

America, but there is no link to the mountains of Appalachia.

Christopher Columbus reported in his journal that during his fourth voyage to the New World he encountered a galley-type ship larger than his own. A giant canoe he called it, eight feet across, with a palm-covered "pavilion" in the middle (Kennedy 125). This description of the large canoe is a description of the Moorish galleys that were being used in the Mediterranean at the time of Columbus' voyages. Columbus' son Ferdinand observed that the ship was manned by forty men and women and that they carried copper tools and forges for working metal. He also observed that they wore a manner of dress similar to that worn in Granada and that the women covered their faces "like the Muslims of Grenada" (Taviani 217). Columbus' nephew observed that the sailors of these Moorish like vessels "tattoo their arms and bodies by burning in Moorish-style designs" (Taviani 219).

#### Shipwrecked Portuguese Sailors

From explorers' first encounters with the Melungeon population, the clans have claimed to be Portuguese or shipwrecked Portuguese. The Melungeons

claim that their forefathers were Portuguese explorers who were laying claim to the lands of both North and South America.

An interesting note on the Portuguese population is the diversity of their ethnicity and religion and the apparent acceptance of outside cultures. The modern people of Portugal are the descendents of Iberians, Celts, Moors, and English, who later intermarried with Africans and Asians as they expanded their trade routes. Portugal is a "melting pot" of races and religions.

The presence of dark skinned Portuguese in the mountains of North Carolina is support by an advertisement for two runaway slaves.

...a tall yellow Fellow, named Emanuel, about 6 feet high, six or seven and Twenty Years of Age; hath a scar on the outside of his left thigh, which was cut with an Ax; he had on when he went away, a blue jacket, an Ozenbrig shirt and Troufers, and a worsted Cap; he speaks pretty good English, and calls himself a Portugueze (Jones 86).

It is likely that this "escaped slave" is a Melungeon who is attempting to escape servitude. It

does show a presence of Portuguese in the hill country of North Carolina in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> Century.

### Basques

Living in the foothills of the Pyrenees Mountains in southern France and northern Spain are the Basques, the mystery people of Europe. The language of the Basques is unrelated to any known language, and the origin of these people is a historical mystery. The Basques are noted as being accomplished navigators and there is speculation that they had discovered and visited the New World a century before Columbus. (Hadingham 34-42) "One of Columbus' pilots, Juan de la Cosa Vizcaino, was a Basque Navigator" (Elder 26). Vizcaino is reputed to have been an accomplished cartographer and may have charted the first map of the New World.

"In 1977 Canadian archaeologists unearthed artifacts from the mid-1500s. Sunken galleons at Red Bay, Labrador, yielded evidence of Basque whalers" (Elder 27). These ships contained Iroquois Pottery along with beads and Basque pottery made in the Pyrenees region of France, which directly links these explorers to the Indian populations of North America. If these traders were working the eastern coast of the

United States, it is believed that they would have lost ships. The survivors would in turn attempt to migrate to a locale that was similar to where they lived in Europe. The clannish and isolationist nature of the Basques is mirrored in the early behaviors of the Melungeon people. Additionally the Basques were from the mountainous regions of Spain and Portugal which could have led them to refer to themselves as Portuguese for identification purposes. However, there are no documented reports of Basques in the Appalachian regions of North Carolina or Tennessee and archeological work has revealed no presence.

#### Shipwrecked Sailors

In the exploration and colonization of the New World there were hundreds of ships sent out from England, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, and other nations. As these ships explored, colonized and traded, many were lost due to the hazards of shipping. Of these ships that were lost "there are indications shipwreck survivors approached the 10,000 mark" (Wright 42). These survivors were of various ethnic backgrounds and would not easily assimilate into the dominant English speaking colonies. These survivors

would be forced inland to the less civilized areas and would have to interbreed with the native populations.

In addition to the "legitimate" explorers there were also the pirates who sailed the seas along the coast of North and South America. These pirates of various ethnic origins are known to have intermarried with the Indian population as well as Negroes. These intermarriages created a tri-racial group of people, but there is no connection of these people migrating to the mountains of Appalachia.

Of course many of these stories that have been told over the years are very loosely based on fact and some may not have any merit whatsoever. It is necessary to examine these myths and stories to derive some sense of the possible origins of these people. With the absence of documentation due to the remoteness of Sneedville, the idea that these people were simply mixed outcasts and did not need to be recognized in writings, and the lack of ability of the early Melungeons to write has created a situation that makes it difficult to realize their true story in a typical way.

**Chapter 4: Jay Gibson's Family Lineage**

Jordan Gibson, Sr, b. 1740, d. 1830-1840?  
m. ?

Tennessee Gibson, b.?, d.?

Jordan Gibson, Jr, 1794, d. 1850-60  
m. 1834

Abigail Collins, b. 1794-1806 d. ?

Thomas Gibson, b. 1819, d. 1879  
m. 1856

Celia Roberts, b. 1832, d. 1888?

John Douglass Gibson, b. 1864, d. 1938  
m. ?

Sarah Elizabeth Trent, b. 1868, d. 1944

Walter Brownlow Gibson, b. 1896, d. 1959  
m. 1916

Mary Eliza Trent, b. 1900, d. 1957

Jay Parnell Gibson, b. 1919, d. 1984  
m. 1936

Jena Pauline Grace, b. 1916

Carol Jeanne Gibson, b. 1942  
m. 1960

Frank E. Hall, b. 1939

John C. Hall, b. 1964  
m. 1983

Laura Elaine Matzenbach, b. 1964

Savannah Kaye Hall, b. 1983  
Sami Grace Hall, b. 1995



As would be expected there is not much that is known about the early ancestors of my grandfather. There is solid evidence linking him to his great-grandfather Thomas Gibson, and less than solid evidence to link him two generations earlier to Jordan Gibson, Sr. As is common with tracing the lineage of Melungeon ancestry, records prior to Jordan are simply not available and the records of Jordan, Jr. and Jordan, Sr. are questionable.

Jordan Gibson, Sr. (also recorded as Jonathan Gibson, Jr.) is reported by the 1790 census to reside in Wilkes County, North Carolina. He is listed as the head of the household with one male child 16 or older, three male children under 15, and one female under 15. Little is known about his life leading to the Revolutionary War. His involvement in America's Independence is documented in Revolutionary War Pension Record No. R-3-995. This document, maintained by the National Archives has an affidavit from Charles Gibson's file that states Jordan Gibson saw service during the war. Jordan next appears in the 1810 census of Hawkins County, Tennessee and in the 1809 Hawkins County Tax list as owning 100 acres; in this case as Jordan, Sr. with a son named Jordan, Jr. He

is again shown in the 1830 census of Hawkins County as Jordan, Sr. but does not appear in later census reports. There is nothing known of Jordan's wife Tennessee except that she is noted as being the wife of Jordan in census records. Unfortunately women's names did not appear on land documents and there is no available record of marriage.

Of interest in the exploration of Melungeon research is the way that Jordan Gibson, Sr. is counted in the census reports and the county tax lists. In the 1809 tax list Jordan is noted as owning 100 acres and as having one white poll. This shows that he was the only male over 21 living in his residence, thus he is eligible to cast one vote at the polls on election day. The interest of this lies in the fact that he was regarded as white in this tax list. In the 1830 United States Census Jordan is listed as FC, which notes that he is "free colored" and is not eligible for the same rights as the "white" citizens of Hancock County. The Hawkins County Registrar's Office Entry Books B and C note in 1830 that Jordan Gibson purchased 300 acres (165), 100 acres (40), and 180 acres (84) on Newman's Ridge. The entry books do not show whether Jordan, Sr. or Jordan, Jr made this

purchase, but these are the only two Jordan Gibsons the census records show to live in Hancock County in 1830. 1830 is the year that the Registrar's Office indicates that the majority of the acreage on Newman's Ridge was purchased in what is known as Walter Sims Big Survey. The 1830 census that listed the dark complected people as "FC" created a need for these families to move to the less desirable locations in the mountains, which would provide them with isolation. The fact that Newman's Ridge was being surveyed and sold in the late 1820's indicates that the supply of the more desirable bottomland had been exhausted and that there was pressure for land availability that would drive the less desirable people into those parcels.

Jordan Gibson, Jr. was born ca. 1794. The 1850 census record of Hamilton County Tennessee shows Jordan Gibson to be 57 years old and born in 1794. The 1850 census is the first year that birth dates and ages were listed. Jordan Gibson, Jr. also appears on the 1830 United States Census record as the head of a household and is listed as "FC" free colored. He is listed as having three male children under ten years old, he as being between 36-55, one female child under

ten years old, two female children 10-24, and his wife being between 24-36. The report concludes that there are a total of eight "FC" residing in the family.

Some of the land parcel purchases on Newman's Ridge can be suspected to have been made by Jordan, Jr. but cannot be clearly identified. He is known to have married Abigail Collins on August 25, 1834 (Tennessee Marriage Records). The Collins family is also noted as being a common surname for Melungeons in Hancock County and are listed on the 1830 census as "free colored".

Thomas Gibson was born in 1819 on Newman's Ridge. Little else is know about him until he is noted as marrying Celia Roberts in 1856. The Surgeon General's Office of the War Department, Record and Pension Division has an affidavit filed on August 8, 1878. This file shows Thomas Gibson to have served as a Private with Company F, 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment, of the Tennessee Volunteers from December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1861 until his discharge October 6, 1864. The applications for pension filed by both Thomas and Celia following Thomas' death provide much information about Thomas and his life. Thomas served during the Civil War for the Union, and while serving the United States he contracted

Tuberculosis which led to his early discharge and ultimately to his death in 1879. The rolls indicate that Thomas was "absent sick" in Barboursville, Kentucky, was transferred to General Hospital at Lexington, Kentucky for treatment on April 20, 1862 "with Pleuritis (Chr), and later transferred to General Hospital No. 1 in Louisville, Kentucky on Sept 3, 1862 "with Chronic Rheumatism". He was returned to duty on May 12, 1863.

The affidavit has Thomas swearing that prior to the war he was a farmer and following the war he attempted to continue to farm but was unable due to the "injuries above stated received while in the service of the United States". Additionally the document notes the names of his children with John Douglass Gibson being born on August 27, 1864. The document also provides a description of Thomas upon his discharge from the army. This description states Thomas is "age 59 years, height 5 feet 6 inches, complexion dark, hair black, eyes black". This description fits the noted characteristics of the Melungeon population of Hancock County.

test of Pension &  
 county of Hancock; On this 16 day of May 1878. Personally  
 appeared before me Arthur W. Baleson  
 clerk of the County Court, a Court of records within & for the  
 county & State aforesaid. Thomas Wilson, who being sworn  
 according to law, declares, that he is the identical Thomas Wilson  
 he was enrolled on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of December 1861, in the 9<sup>th</sup> of the  
 Tennessee Infantry, Co. commanded by Captain <sup>in the war of 1861</sup> ~~W. H. H.~~ and was  
 honorably discharged at Kingsville on the 6 day of November  
 '64, that his personal description is as follows: - Age 37 years,  
 height 5 feet 6 inches, Complexion dark, hair black; eyes black,  
 that while a member of the organization aforesaid, in the service  
 and line of his duty, at Flat Lick Ky in the State of Kentucky  
 in or about the day of November 1862, he taken the Chills &  
 fever, & was sent to Flat Lick Hospital to receive medical treatment; &  
 from there he was sent to Barboursville Ky & received medical treatment there; &  
 from that place he was sent to Lexington to Gen Hospital, & from  
 that place he was sent to the Hospital at Louisville Ky & from there  
 to his command, &

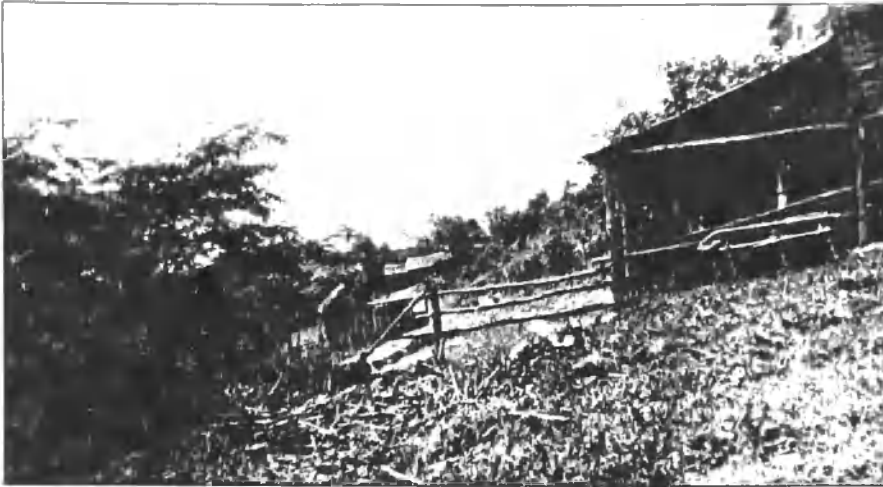
Figure 9: Declaration for Pension, 1884. Note the personal description of Thomas.

Upon his discharge from the Army, Thomas used his war earnings to purchase a 400-acre section of land on the top of Chestnut Ridge, to the southwest of Sneedville, across from the Clinch River. This was a heavily forested and virtually isolated parcel of land. Thomas and his family constructed a log home on the land near the ridge. This was the home that Thomas lived in until his death in 1879.



**Figure 10: Thomas Gibson's log home on Chestnut Ridge. Constructed in ca. 1865.**

Thomas died on November 24, 1879 from the illnesses that he contracted in the service. His application for pension was not responded to in his lifetime. His wife Celia applied for a Widow's pension in 1884 when she became ill and "can scarcely support herself...she is destitute to the necessities of life... that she has a chronic disease of her breast and lungs and bleeding at the lungs and she believes to be beyond the reach of medical aid, and has been so for years". On Oct 10, 1884 she was awarded \$12.00 per month for the remaining four years of her life.



**Figure 11: View of the Gibson log house from the barnyard**

With the death of both of his parents John Douglass Gibson, born in 1864 took possession of his parents homestead and began to make his living as a farmer. There are no records to indicate his marriage to Sarah Elizabeth Trent but they did raise thirteen children on the acreage at the top of Chestnut Ridge. John Douglass was noted as being a silent man, who spoke only when spoken to and believed in no nonsense. He did little to alter the original form of the log home and rarely came down from the mountain to visit the nearest town, Sneedville. They were a subsistence family, living off of the harvest of the farm. His wife Sarah Elizabeth would ride a mule down from the hilltop once a week to trade extra eggs for wheat flour and sugar at a small country store.





**Figure 12: John Douglass & Sarah Elizabeth, ca 1935**

Gladys Gibson moved in with John Douglass and Sarah Elizabeth when she married their youngest son, Mack in 1932. She was originally from Ohio, and recalls the hardships of life on Chestnut Ridge even in the 1930's. She noted that they both were hard working people who took great pride in their way of life. While she is willing to talk about life on the ridge, she is not willing to talk about Melungeons. She simply said that that is a topic best left alone.

My great-grandfather was born and raised on the ridge beginning in 1896. Walter Brownlow was the first Gibson of this family line to move off of the

farm. He moved away from home when he was only sixteen years old to become a lumberman. He met and married a local girl in 1916 and moved to Wise County, Virginia "in hope of finding a better life" (Pauline Gibson). In Wise County "Brown", as he became known, was hired into United States Steel as a coal miner. "Coal mining was the highest paying job in the mountains and he believed that they could successfully raise a family as a coal miner"(Pauline Gibson). Walter found out that while the wage was high for the area, it was also a dead end job that would not allow him promotion possibilities. He wanted to live life for the moment, but it was his wife Mary Eliza who believed in saving (Hall).



**Figure 13: Brown and Mary Eliza in Appalachia. Ca 1940**

"In her first deposit she put away five dollars"  
(Hall). But with each paycheck she put away a little more so that her family could get away from the mines. In 1945 they had enough money in the bank to buy a Gulf service station and to get out of mining. She was regarded as being a hard working woman who did not believe in any nonsense.

While Brown was still mining, he was the father of three children: Ella May, Jay Parnell, and Eloka.



**Figure 14: Ella May, Jay, and Eloka in Cumberland at parents' gas station. ca 1945**

Ella May was born partially blind. An operation to repair her sight while she was a baby caused more harm and she spent her life only able to see what was less than a foot in front of her face. Eloka struggled her entire life to

escape the mountains. Finally in 1963 she convinced her husband Tilmer that there were greater opportunities for their children outside of Appalachia. His family moved to Tampa, Florida and has prospered. Eloka said that some people were regarded as "the darkies" and that they were regarded as "unclean". She would not comment on how she fit into the society of Appalachia. Again silence.

My grandfather was the middle child. When he was still living he spoke a lot about what it was like to be one of the poorest children in the school. He said he was embarrassed by the clothes that he had to wear to school; he was embarrassed because he had to bring his meals from home and that the food that his mother packed for him was different from the regular children. Of particular concern to him was that his bread was homemade and the wealthier children had store bought white bread. In the ninth grade he quit school. This was a decision made by both him and his father. He did not want to go back because of the ridicule he had experienced. His father got him a job in the coal mines loading coal. He was only 15 years old. After a short while he wanted to go back to school, but his father simply told him, "Your schooling days are over boy, it is time to act like a man"(Pauline Gibson). I remember him telling me this story when I was a boy, and the tears

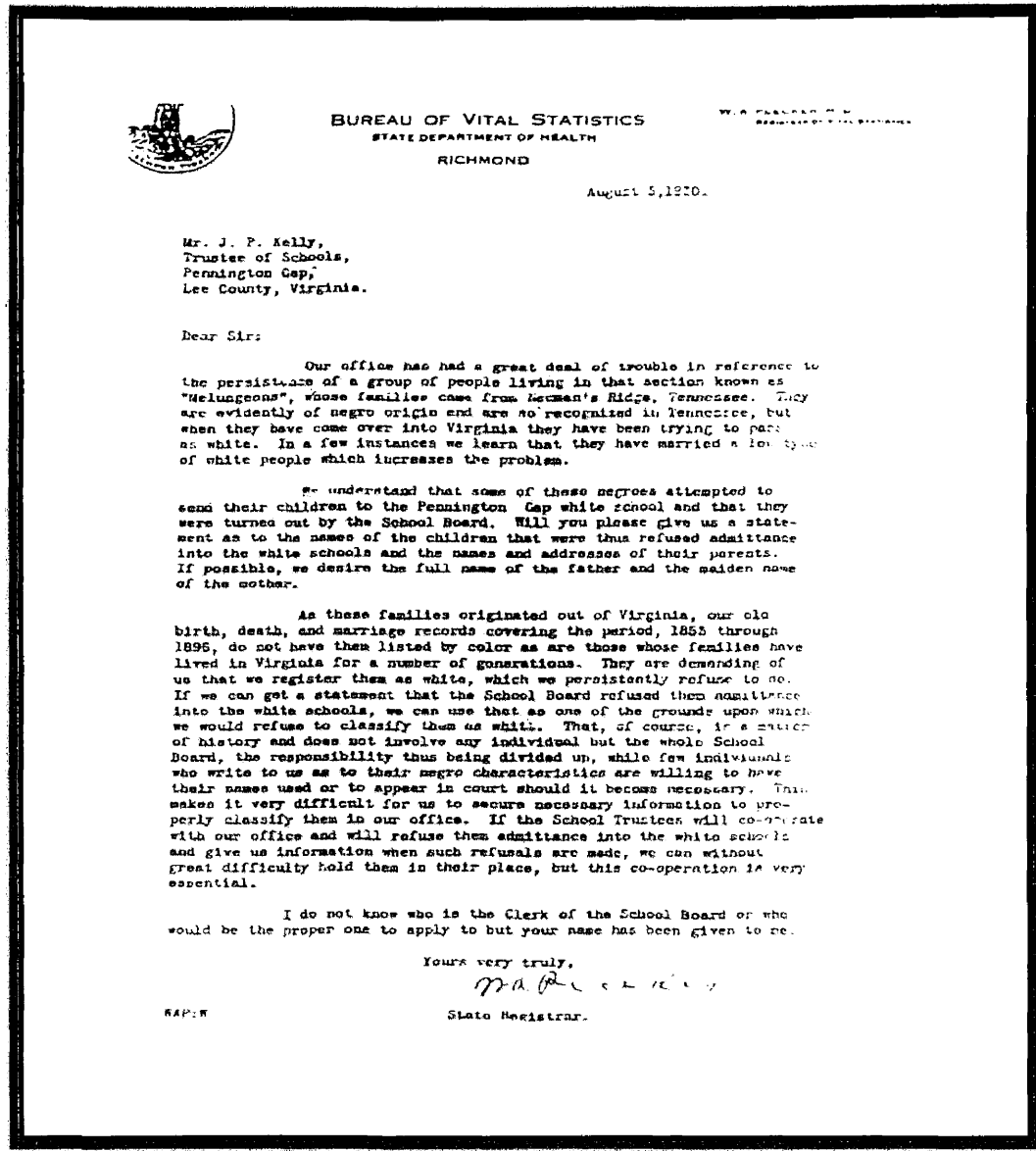
would well up in his eyes. He told me that his father told him that schooling would not help him in the coal mines so there was little point in him returning. It could be that his father was feeling the pressures from the government.

It was at this time that J. Plecker of the Virginia Bureau of Vital Statistics was attempting to have all Melungeon children removed from the public school system.

Plecker was methodical: he began collecting old county and federal records on the Indians, many of which listed them as 'persons of color.' But Plecker was a doctor, not a historian: he took no interest in the conditions under which the records had been made about illiterate people or in the changes that had occurred in the meanings of words. To him 'color' in 1830 meant the same thing that 'color' did in 1930, and if the term appeared in an old document, the negritude of the person so designated was 'proved.'...He and his colleagues therefore set about compiling a 'Racial Integrity File,' consisting of surviving county and U.S. census documents and also 'testimony' from 'respected' local people about other people's ancestry. The contents of the file became 'proof' of

Negro ancestry for a wide variety of Virginians.

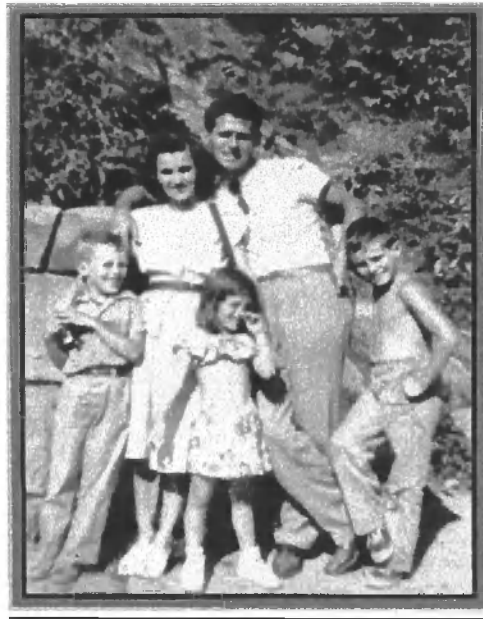
(Rountree 222)



**Figure 15 Letter sent to local Appalachia area schools attempting to eliminate Melungeon children from the white schools.**

My grandfather would ensure that this ridicule of the different child did not happen to his children. He was the first of the Gibson line to marry outside of the Melungeons of the Appalachian Mountains. He met and

married a very fair skinned German-Irish girl from North Georgia in 1936. Economics required him to initially move back to Appalachia for employment; all he knew was coal mining and he had a job with United States Steel. But he was always looking for a better opportunity. He was always concerned for the well being of his children. His concern became its greatest when his daughter entered the first grade; she was the only child to acquire his Melungeon like features. It was then that another child of the Gibson line would have to endure the discrimination that for generations had been suffered. In 1947 he moved his family to Wheelwright, Kentucky.



**Figure 16: Jay, Pauline, Don, Carol, and Larry. Great Smoky Mountain National Park. 1948**

Wheelwright was still a mining town, but in Wheelwright he was not regarded as Melungeon, he was simply regarded as tan. All three of his children were successful in school. His two oldest children Larry and Don both graduated from the University of Kentucky, Don with a B.A. in Business, Larry with a Master's Degree in Mechanical Engineering. My mother, Carol, attended Morehead State University, married my father and they settled down in Kentucky to raise their family.

My mother was popular in school, lived the life of a typical teenager in the 1950's, and unknowingly married a boy who himself was half-Melungeon. His mother's family came from a Hall line that is commonly known in the mountains as "the blackstraps" because of their dark features. But that is another story.



**Figure 17: Frank and John as children. Brothers who are opposites. 1965**



So the family comes down to me. My older brother had blonde hair and blue eyes. He was the poster child for the 1960's. I was born two years later with black eyes, olive skin, and dark hair. We were as opposite as two children could be. People would walk up to my mother on the street and boldly state, "there is no way that those two children are brothers"(Hall). It is incredible that no matter what measures are taken to erase your genetic traits, the features continue to resurface. But the situation had changed in America by the mid 1960s, and it was no longer a problem to be dark featured. My parents moved to Michigan in 1969 because of my younger brother Joe's asthmatic



**My daughters Sami and Savannah, four generations removed from Chestnut Ridge.**

reaction to the pollens in the mountains. Our family had moved again. This time we would not be recognized for who

we were. We had entered the mainstream of America, this time without detection. My wife never suspected what she was marrying into.

## Chapter 5: Acceptance of Ourselves and Celebration

Why did my grandfather move from the town and the people that he loved to a place that he despised? Because we will do anything to help our children to succeed in life. For generations the Gibson parents had migrated westward in an attempt to escape the stigma that was associated with maintaining Melungeon features. They had initially lived on the fringes of colonial America, in the mountainous regions of North Carolina, then had moved to Tennessee to the rich bottomland that would provide an adequate farming life. As Americans migrated westward into Tennessee in the early 1800's the Gibsons had moved into the mountains that were less desirable to the "white" settlers. Always moving, always on the fringe of society, always different, always not quite accepted.

What were they moving from? Difference. In America it has not been accepted to be different from the norm, to be darker than the norm. This is the difference that my grandfather saw in his daughter when she was young. This is what prompted him to seek the refuge of a new place that his ancestors had sought for generations. This was part of what he sought in the spouse that he chose. The need to rid his future generations from the ridicule of darkness,

of rejection, of exclusion, was a voice that whispered to him from his past.

Today it is accepted to be known as Melungeon, it is even desirable. In America today to be different is celebrated, is desired. This summer in Wise, Virginia there was a celebration of difference. The third annual Melungeon reunion was held on the campus of University of Virginia at Wise. In the parking lot of the reunion were cars with registrations from all across the nation. Nearly every state was represented. Everyone looked around for someone they knew, but they did not know each other. But they did have a common bond, they had all come from people who were different, and in this difference they were the same. The question that was on each of these people's mind was a question that was asked of the speakers repeatedly, "Who am I and where did I come from?" This was a question that could not be answered, yet.

But progress is being made in the discovery of the Melungeons. Because of the desire to have these questions answered the Melungeon Research Committee has been formed in a multi-disciplinary approach to the study of Melungeons. This committee hopes that through the study of the genetics, anthropology, archeology, history, sociology, and literature answers can be reached.

The chart on the following page is a DNA analysis of blood samples taken in the late 1960s. It evaluates the gene frequencies of genetic traits, as they are associated with different racial groups. This study, completed in 1990, was conducted by James L. Guthrie who drew his blood samples from thirty-six world populations.

**TABLE I<sup>6</sup>**  
**MEAN MEASURE OF DIVERGENCE (MMD) OF**  
**MELUNGEONS FROM OTHER POPULATIONS**

<b>POPULATION</b>	<b>MMD</b>
Libya (Tripoli)*	0.017
Cyprus (Troodos-Greek)	0.017
Malta*	0.018
Canary Islands (Spanish)	0.019
Italy (Veneto)	0.022 Close Matches
Portugal	0.024
Italy (Trentino)	0.026
Spain (Galicia)	0.027
U.S. Whites (Minnesota)+	0.028
Ireland#	0.029
Italy	0.030
Sweden	0.030
Libya (minus Fezzan)	0.030
Germany	0.031
Britain	0.031
Greece	0.032
Netherlands	0.032
Wales	0.033
Corsica	0.034
France	0.035
Spain	0.036
U.S. Whites	0.036
England	0.040
Sicily	0.040
Iceland	0.041
Northern Ireland	0.042
Finland	0.046
Sardinia	0.051
Turkey	0.053
Cyprus	0.058
Catawba (mixed)	0.108
U S. Blacks	0.189 Distant Matches
Gullas (Blacks South Carolina)	0.222
Seminole, Oklahoma	0.241
Cherokee	0.256
Seminole, Florida	0.308

Figure 18 (Gallegos 80-81)

1. A perfect match to Melungeon would be 0.00
2. \* The Arab/Berber (Moorish) component of the Spanish/Portuguese of today
3. + Probably Swedes. Could reflect the Moorish in Swedes
4. # Married into Melungeon families in S.E. U.S. Does not include Northern Ireland.

The results of this experiment

...point to a European, and probably to a Southern European or Mediterranean origin. A black or American Indian influence is counter-indicated (Gallegos 78-81).

These tests are not conclusive and were completed using blood samples that were nearly thirty years old at the time of testing. However, at this year's Melungeon reunion new blood samples were taken of those who believed themselves to be of Melungeon lineage, with the test results being published in the next couple of years.

As for the legends of the origin of the Melungeons, in many cases the results are fairly accurate. These DNA results show the Melungeons to be of south European descent. This again shows that there is viability to some of the stories that are handed down through the generations. In reality the DNA results show there to be a level of truth to all of the origin tales.

What are a Melungeons and where did they come from? In my belief, based on the results of my research and the story of my family, they are like most everyone else in America today: they are truly a *mélange*, a mixture of many

people. It is probable that the original stock of the early Melungeons was more a concentration of Mediterranean bloodlines, which brought out a darker skin color, prominent features, and dark curly hair, just as the original bloodlines of the west Europeans tended to accent their particular non-Mediterranean features. And over the years the bloodlines of the Melungeon people were thinned by intermarriage with north and west Europeans, just as their bloodlines were thinned by intermarriage with the Melungeons and other immigrants from the Mediterranean.

It is pleasing to see that this diversity is celebrated today as opposed to being ridiculed. This is a move in the right direction for America. My surviving ancestors from the early 1900's still do not wish to discuss the issues. They still see it as harmful to admit what they so long tried to hide; they are fearful that the stigma will become reattached if they embrace who they are. My children on the other hand are proud of their difference. It is enlightening to realize that we have come so far as a people, that we can not only function as equals in society, but we can also boast our uniqueness.

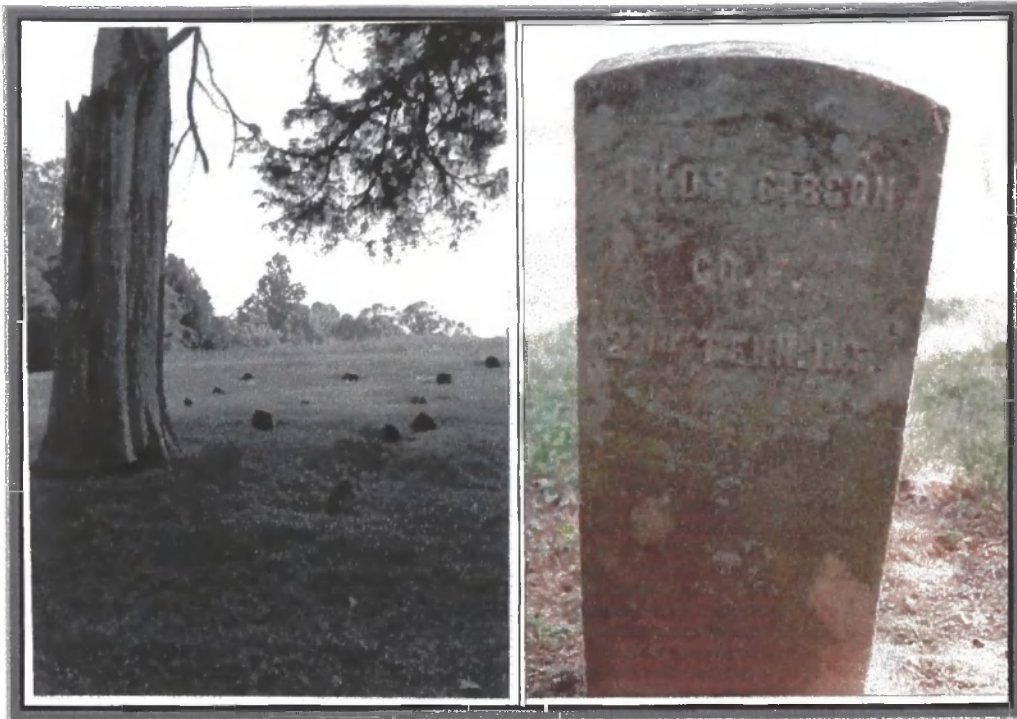


**Figure 19 Don, Carol, Jay, and Larry. 1945**



**Figure 20 All that remains of the Gibson farm on Chestnut Ridge is this old outbuilding. The cottage on the hilltop belongs to a friend of Jimmy Carter.**





**Figure 21 Right: The Gibson Cemetery on Chestnut Ridge. Left: The gravestone of THOS. GIBSON CO. F. 2<sup>nd</sup> TENN. INF**

- 1830 Hawkins County Tennessee Census

BINYON	✓ Simeon COLLINS (fc)	Joseph GIVINE	[Page 82]
Math ABSHIRE	Jordan GIBSON (fc) *	James BURKE	James VAUGHAN
JONES	Polly GIBSON (fc)	[Page 80]	William WRITTER
ROBINSON	Jordan GIBSON (fc) *	Stephen FARMER	John WARDEN
el ROBINSON	Jonathan GIBSON (fc)	Simeon FROST	Nimrod BRADLEY
ANDERSON	Jesse GIBSON (fc)	James WILBURN	Andrew PRESSLEY
is ANDERSON	✓ James LOVING	Joseph BAKER	Joseph PRESSLEY
BAKER	✓ Vardy COLLINS (fc)	<u>John CRUMLEY</u>	John PRESSLEY
el JOHNSON	[Page 78]	John GARRISON	John KYLE
ge LIVESAY	✓ Timothy WILLIAMS (fc)	George LIVESAY	Harden GOEN (fc)
h LIVESAY	✓ Betsy MULLENS	Joseph ROBERTS	Ambrose LAWSON
ge LIVESAY	✓ George GOEN (fc)	Joseph REASON	John FERRELL
ge 76]	Celia MAHAN	Joseph WALLING -	Nancy PRESSLEY
eph LIVESAY	✓ Charles WILLIAMS	John WALLING	Robert KYLE
ANDERSON	Jeremiah SINGLETON	James WALLING -	Sarah KYLE
phen BOURN	William NICHOLS	James BRYANT	Jordan GOODMAN (fc)
er LIVESAY	George MISER	William BRYANT	Patsy GOODMAN
lliam BAKER	William NICHOLS (fc)	David BRYANT	John SULLIVAN
mund LIVESAY	David HUGHES	John BRYANT	Berry MARKHAM
cey BOWLING (fc)	John BERCHET	Betsy JONES (fc)	Betsy THOMPSON
raham BLEDSOE	✓ Mary COLLINS (fc)	Anthony BLEDSOE	Elias BOWYERS
omas BLEDSOE	✓ Levi COLLINS (fc)	Dempsey COUCH	Archbald EVANS
oses JOHNSON	✓ Benjamin COLLINS (fc)	Jacob DELP	Calloway H. MANAS
ilam DAVIS	✓ Benjamin COLLINS (fc)	Crispin GOEN	Edmund GOODMAN (fc)
John MACKSEY	Edmund COLLINS (fc)	James COLLINS (fc)	GreenBerry MITCHELL
oses JOHNSON	Millenton COLLINS (fc)	Harvey COLLINS (fc)	William GOODMAN
Wiram PRIDEMORE (see	✓ James COLLINS (fc)	Katharine BROWN	James GARRISON
John FLETCHER (insert	William JOHNSON	✓ Isaac BLOOMER	[Page 83]
Betsy LAWSON	Levi JOHNSON	William MOORE	Henry MOSELEY (fc)
John BOWLING (fc)	Andrew NEILL	[Page 81]	William GARRISON
Michael BOWLING (fc)	Henry BIRD	Joel COBB	Samuel PRIDMORE
William BABB	✓ Raganer NEWBURY	John MANAS	William MOSELEY
James WESTERN	Levi BIRD	✓ Edmund LAWSON	Lewis McLANE
Benjamin BUNCH	[Page 79]	James PRATT	Thomas HAMMONDS
Jesse BUNCH	James BIRD	✓ James BLOOMER	William REED
Lambert BUNCH	Moses JOHNSON	✓ John BLOOMER	Enoch OSBORNE
Polly NICHOLS	Abram SARGENT	✓ Joseph GARRISON	Sterling REESE
Wiatt COLLINS (fc)	John SARGENT	Henry FRAZURE	Joseph REESE
(only 25 names on	Henry BIRD	Willie MANAS	<u>Absalom TEMPLETON</u>
[Page 77] page)	Eliash STEEL	William MANAS	✓ Thomas MARTIN
Charles GIBSON (fc)	Robert CAMPBELL	Riley MANAS	Alexander TRENT
Andrew GIBSON (fc)	John BIRD	James FRAZURE	Willis HILL
Rachel BUNCH	Joseph CAMPBELL	✓ Meredith LAWSON	Nancy BRISCO
Charles GIBSON (fc)	Alexander CAMPBELL	✓ Imanuel LAWSON	Henry TRENT
Andrew COLLINS (fc)	John DAVIS	Thomas LAWSON	William ROBINSON
Esau GIBSON (fc)	Jonas LAUGHMILLER	Anderson LAWSON	Thomas BERRY
Martin COLLINS	Elizabeth BALDWIN	Jesse MANAS	Anna HASH
John COLLINS (fc)	Andrew L. BAKER	✓ Mary ANDERSON	Alexander TRENT
Sherod GIBSON (fc)	<u>John CRUMLEY</u>	✓ Ezekiel SULLIVAN	Zachariah TRENT
James MOORE (fc)	Paul BUNCH	Thomas SULLIVAN	William TRENT
James MOORE (fc)	Green BUNCH	John SULLIVAN	John ROBINSON
Joseph F. GIBSON (fc)	John BALDWIN	Henry GRAY	Jesse COPE
Samuel MULLENS (fc)	Nicholas BALDWIN	George ANDERSON	Timothy HOLDAWAY
Solomon COLLINS (fc)	Rebecca BALDWIN	Lewis ANDERSON	James TRENT
Andrew GIBSON (fc)	John FROST	Polly ANDERSON	[Page 84]
Sheppard GIBSON	John DAVIS	Richard GREEN	William REESE
Lucinda BURK	Richard MITCHELL	(only 25 names on page)	
(fc)	Jacob CARR		

Figure 22 A copy of the 1830 Hawkins County Census which lists heads of family as (fc) free colored

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