

Honoring our Heritage on Hallowed Hill

Jack and Bland Coburn Wiggins – a brief overview
By: Don Casada
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Bland Wiggins and Jack Coburn

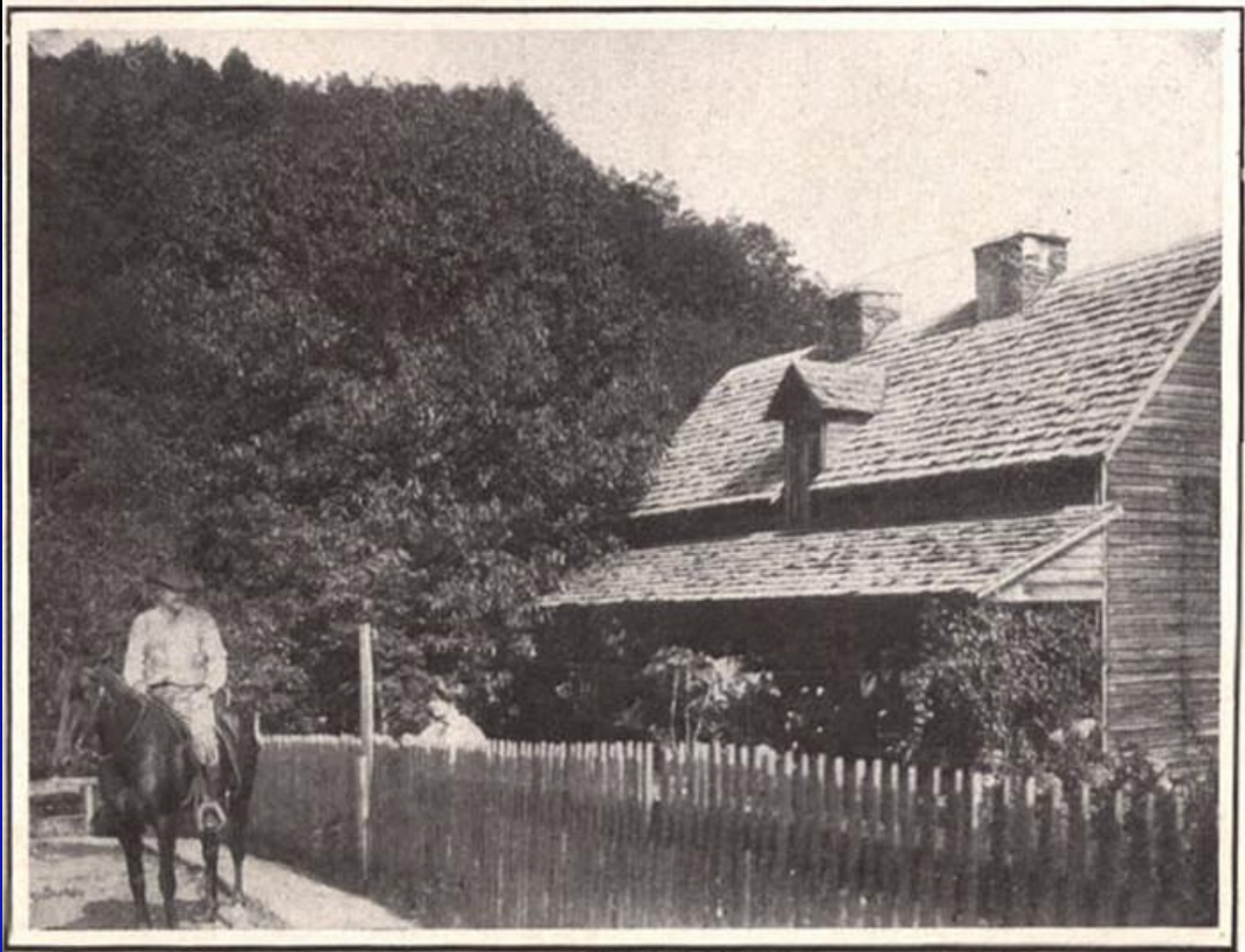


Photo courtesy of Bryan Jackson, great-grandson of Bland's brother, Will, and member of FBCC.

Backgrounds

- ▣ Bland, born in 1871, was the daughter of Rev. J.A. Wiggins (Methodist) and Mary Jane Hayes; Hayesville was named for her grandfather, George Hayes*
- ▣ Jack (John E), born in 1866, was raised on a farm in Michigan, and came to the Smokies before the major timber boom
- ▣ They were married in 1895 by Bland's father

* *A History of Clay County, North Carolina* (Padgett); *Clay County – Then and Now*, Carl Moore



"JACK" COBURN, TIMBERMAN, HIS HOME ON HAZEL CREEK.

Source: Kephart Collection at Western Carolina

Real estate

- ▣ Jack Coburn was, without question, the most prolific real estate person in the county
- ▣ Acquired land from Rymers Ferry to Oconaluftee; had extensive timberland on Alarka Creek (close to 10,000 acres)
- ▣ Acquired over 40,000 acres in Swain County alone; he also had interests in Macon and Graham
- ▣ Purchased timber rights to over 6,000 acres in Swain

Turning a profit on Hazel Creek

THIS DEED, made and entered Into this the 1st day of August, 1912, by and between J.E. Coburn and Bland W, Coburn, his wife of Swain County, North Carolina, parties of the first part and W. M. Ritter Lumber Company, a corporation organized and doing business under and by virtue of the laws of the State of West Virginia, party of the second part,

WITNESSETH

That the said parties or the first part, in consideration of the sum of Sixty Eight Thousand, Nine Hundred and Eighty Five Dollars and Sixty Seven Cents (\$68,985.67) have bargained and sold, and by these presents, bargain, sell, grant and convey unto the said party of the second part, its successors and assigns, all of the trees and timber of all kinds, natures and sizes standing or being on those certain tracts of land located on the waters of Hazel Creek in the County of Swain in the State of North Carolina, and more particularly described as follows:

FIRST TRACT: Beginning on top of the dividing ridge between Hazel and Eagle Creeks, and in the back line of the Silas McDowell Grant No. 1359;

The same practice was used on Alarka Creek

Alarka Lumber Company Incorporators (1914)

Name	Shares
▣ J.E. Coburn	98
▣ S.W. Marr	1
▣ S.W. Black	1

Stockholders of Alarka Lumber Company in 1920

Name	Shares
▣ Arthur Brooks*	458
▣ J.E. Coburn	205
▣ Lois B. Close	37
▣ M.C. Close	81
▣ Flora L. Brooks	10
▣ Marion Brooks	10
▣ Mason Brooks	10

* President of the company

All except Marion and Mason Brooks (children of Arthur and Flora Brooks)
are buried in BC Cemetery

Incorporators of Alarka Valley Railway

Name	Shares
▣ Arthur Brooks	390
▣ Leslie Brooks	390
▣ J.E. Coburn	390
▣ Irene Jackson Brooks	10
▣ D.K. Collins	10
▣ L. Lee Marr	10

All except Leslie and Irene Jackson Brooks are buried in BC Cemetery. Leslie Brooks died in a lumber-related accident in West Virginia in 1930. His wife, Irene, returned to Bryson City to live. She ran the Freeman Hotel (now Calhoun Hotel) for the better part of a decade, then the Brookside Grill. Leslie Brooks' will was witnessed by Jack Coburn and Stanley Black.

Coburn also ran some timbering and sawmill operations

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS, that I, J.E. Coburn, doing business under the firm name of COBURN WOOD COMPANY of Swain County North Carolina, party of the first part, in consideration of the sum of Six Thousand (\$6,000,00) Dollars to me paid by Frank Littleford, of Buncombe County North Carolina, party of the second part, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, have bargained, sold, conveyed, and delivered unto the said Frank Littleford, his heirs and assigns 225,000 feet of sawed lumber, situated at Hubbard's railway siding on the Carolina & Tennessee Southern railway, in Swain County, N.C. and the two mill yards of the party of the first part, situated on Hubbard's Mill Creek in said Swain County,.....

(Hubbard's Mill Creek is now known as Pilkey Creek)

Coburn land now in the GSMNP

- ▣ Taken/donated in the original park formation: 1339 acres, with land on Couches and Mingus Creeks of Oconaluftee, Noland Creek, Indian Creek, Deep Creek, Hazel Creek
- ▣ Jack and Bland owned 9132 acres in the section taken by TVA

Coburn Knob, from cemetery



At the Coburn home, circa 1915



From R-L: Jack, niece Eleanor, Bland, and Eleanor's mother, Estelle, Martha Abernathy, friend of Estelle, and Nina Sharpe, Jack's sister. Photo courtesy of Bryan Jackson, Estelle's great-grandson.

Coburn home, seen from BC Cemetery



Community affairs

- ▣ “Mrs. Coburn was especially active in the welfare work of the Methodist Church and the Women’s Club of Bryson City.” (she was a charter member of the latter)
- ▣ “Mr. Coburn was known throughout Western North Carolina for his philanthropic work and as a realtor and lumberman. He was vice-chairman of the board of trustees of Western Carolina Teachers’ College, Cullowhee, and held many other positions of trust and responsibility.”

Other Jack Coburn involvements

- ▣ Director, VP of Bryson City Bank
- ▣ Mason
- ▣ Shriner
- ▣ Rotarian
- ▣ Welfare Advisory Board
- ▣ State Equalization Board
- ▣ School Board

Dedication of 2nd unit, Ela Dam, 1930



Citizens of Bryson City and Sylva at the dedication of the electric dam, Ela. The group includes Clarence Angel, Dr. Kelly Bennett, Dr. A.M. Bennett, Stanley Black, Sr., Robert Lee Sandidge, Jr. Ed Bryson, Mr. and Mrs. McGee, Dr. Bryson, Dr. Ann Bryson, Harry Ditmore and Jack Coburn.

JACK COBURN & the original "SNAKE STICK"



Coburn in the courtroom

- ▣ Quill Rose pre-trial support
- ▣ Adams-Westfeldt trial commentary

Last days

Jack Coburn organized a petition supporting Fontana being built by Nantahala Power and Light – not TVA. Signed by over two thousand Swain County citizens, it was submitted on Nov. 10, 1934.

Less than three weeks later (Nov 30), Jack and Bland Coburn and Bland's sister Betty Wiggins were killed when a hit-and-run truck driver forced their car into the Nantahala River. The truck driver was never apprehended. They were en route to the wedding of the niece of Bland and Betty, Louise Swan.