

**Holder Family Letters in the Draper Manuscripts**  
**Compiled by Harry G. Enoch, 2003**

24 C 27

*To Lyman Draper from W. D. Holder (Confederate Brigadier General in the Civil War, grandson of John Holder, son of Richard C. Holder)*

*April 4, 1849*

*Pontotoc, Mississippi*

. . . Col. Richard Callaway & Col. John Holder were originally farmers in Culpepper County, Virginia (agreeable to my information) and emigrated with Col. Daniel Boone to Kentucky & settled at Boonsboro. . . .

Col. John Holder married Frances Callaway, daughter of Col. Richard & settled after marriage in Clark County near Boonsboro, as a farmer, also had a stock of goods &c, where he resided to the time of his death which was about 51 years since (exact time not known). His wife after his death married to Col. John McGuire. She died about 44 years ago. The father of Col. John Holder also emigrated from Virginia to Kentucky at an early day & lived & died near the Kentucky river.

If my grandfather Col. John had any papers which would be of service to you, they have most probably been lost. None of Col. Holder's children survive but the two youngest, to wit, Mrs. Frances W. McGuire, now of Aberdeen [Mississippi] & Mrs. Catherine Williams of Rockcastle County, Kentucky, Mt. Vernon P.O., the former aged about 53 & the latter 51 years.

Mrs. McGuire recollects to have heard repeatedly the anecdote of her Mother & Aunt—Mrs. John Holder & Mrs. Samuel Henderson—their maiden names were Frances & Elizabeth Callaway, moulding bullets at the Fort at Boonsboro whilst the men were discharging them at the Indians. The young ladies themselves repeatedly fired at the Indians themselves from the fort.

This is all the information I have been able to obtain from Mrs. McGuire except the following named person from whom she supposed you may be able to gather Some facts which may be useful for you. If there are any old papers left by Col. John Holder, they are most probably in possession of Peter S. Deckerd, Esq., Winchester, Tennessee. You may also be able thro him to procure Col. Richard Callaway's testimony. . . .

There was published in the November & December 1845 Numbers of the Southern Ladies Companion (a Methodist periodical published at Nashville by M. H. Hinkla & J. B. McFerrin) a narrative by William M. Braniford, Esq., who married a Henderson, "The Capture & the Rescue". . . .

I have in my possession an old paper which purports to be a commission of colonel to John Holder, bearing date the South Carolina (Charleston) 1st September 1790 & signed by Alexander Moultrie, Director, Isaac Huger, T[homas] Washington, as a majority of the grantees of the South Carolina Yazoo Company & a grant, a certicate of right, was afterwards issued to said Holder of 100,000 acres of Land in view of his raising a batallion of well organized Troops for the defence of the territory belonging to South Carolina.

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24 C 28

*To Lyman Draper from P. S. Deckerd (married Frances S., daughter of John W. Holder)*

*September 21, 1850*

*Winchester, Tennessee*

. . . I am sorry to inform you that Col. Richard Callaway died last Winter in this county. His widow and family are still living here & from whom I may attain something useful to you. . . .

I married a Granddaughter of Col. John Holder & daughter of John W. Holder, Deceased, who died in this county in 1842. And from my mother-in-law, who was a half sister of Col. Richard Callaway, I can obtain some information.

Mrs. & Mr. Henderson have been dead for years & have one son & 4 daughters still living. Mr. & Mrs. John Holder have been dead many years. The two first in Tennessee, and the last in Kentucky, and have now only two daughters living. One a widow, Mrs. Fanny W. McGuire, living in Aberdeen, Monroe County, Mississippi, and the other Mrs. Catherine Williams whose husband Capt. Richard G. Williams lives in or near Mount Vernon, Rockcastle county, Ky. . . .

Col. Richard Callaway was only half brother of Mrs. Henderson & Holder and my mother-in-law. Mother, Mrs. Penn, who was a Miss [Sarah] Callaway, married Mr. Gabriel Penn of Virginia who married, lived and died in Virginia.

I have conversed frequently with Mrs. McGuire about the early times in Kentucky & she knows but little, being very young when her Father died. She often mentioned that her Aunt, a Mrs. Hickman, who was one of the elder Miss Callaway[s], was at the Big siege of Boonsboro & remembered all about it, and I saw in the papers a few years since a report of the celebration of that event on the Spot, that Mrs. Hickman and a negro woman were quite conspicuous on the occasion. Whether she is still living or not I do not know. The Honorable H. Clay can inform you. I think she lived in Clark County, Ky.

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24 C 29

*To Lyman Draper from Richard P. Holder*

*October 6, 1850*

*Winchester, Tennessee*

. . . As Colo. Richard A. Callaway is dead, I now attempt to answer your enquiries from recollection as well as I can. My having some three years ago gotten a statement from Colo. Callaway which I committed to paper and mailed to you at Baltimore, Maryland, but I presume you never got it.

I am a decendent of the Colo. John Holder mentioned by you. I take pleasure in doing any thing I can in the way of furnishing materials for your work.

1st Colo. Richard Callaway was born in Albemarle County, Virginia, about the year 1729. . . .

4th The three Girls, Jemima Boone and the two Miss Callaways, thinking there was no danger from Indians, none having been seen for several weeks, got into a canoe to cross the Kentucky River for the purpose [of] gathering wild onions. Their canoe from some cause was driven into an eddy in the river and the girls became alarmed and ran ashore on the opposite side, but not at the intended landing place.

And as soon as the canoe landed, an Indian seized hold of the Bow and drew it farther ashore, when my grand mother, being nearest the Indian, struck him on the head with the paddle she held in her hand. Instantly a dozen or more Indians rushed up from amongst the cane and grass. The ladies were given to understand that if they made a noise it would cost them their lives & the Indians immediately started for Ohio with them.

There was two parties started in pursuit of them. The one never succeeded in finding the trail [and] the other party consisting of Colo. Boon, my grand father Colo. John Holder, I Martin and ten other men from the fort (their names I have not learned) soon found the trail, and the afternoon of the 3rd day come in sight of the encampment and succeeded by getting some fallen logs between them and the Indians in getting in about 60 yards of them. Each man sited his Indian, there being one more white than was Indians, which left after the firing, one man with a loaded gun.

Instantly after firing, it was ascertained this one Indian remained unhurt. The same that with a hatchet was chopping branches and putting on the fire. Miss B and my Aunt having sat down on the ground beside a log, instantly fell flat on the ground to escape any more firing that might take place. My grand mother Frances Callaway got on the end of the same log. The Indian seeing what was, now turned to her and threw his hatchet at her head, which just did miss. She sensibly felt it touch her head as it passed. Then at that instant the remaining loaded Rifle was fired at the Indian, the ball passing through his body, which caused him to fall forward on his face. The girls ran then to meet their preservers. It was found that the Indian who threw the hatchet was dead, and in fact not one of them close at the camp escaped.

Just before discovering the Indians, the whites had come to where the trail or Indian path forks, two of the party taking the left hand, the others following the right. The two men in their course had passed, unknown to themselves, the camp and on hearing the firing had stopped, when soon an Indian come running past them from toward the camp. He was fired at by both men as he ran, but without effect. From the kettle, spilt water & branch in the vicinity, it was evident that he had been to the branch for water & the firing taking place as he returned, he dropt his kettle of water and ran off and was fired at as he passed the two men.

The Indians did not attempt to make love to the girls, if so, I have never heard of it. Their births must have taken place about 1748 or 9. The party was overtaken about 4 oclock PM.

Colo. Callaway headed the other party, but I never was informed of whom said party consisted or the one who headed it, as they did not find the Indians.

5[th] Colo. Henderson and Elizabeth Callaway were married immediately after [the] Long siege & returned to North Carolina from what state Henderson had come. My grand father & mother were married something like a year or perhaps not so long after . Yet they were engaged at the time of said siege. Both marriages took place in vicinity of Boonsboro. Colo. Callaways party did not join the other Party before the last named Party reached the Fort at Boonsboro.

6th The siege of Boonsboro that is what generally been termed the Big Siege lasted, as I have always understood, fifteen months [days?], the exact date I cannot inform you. Colo. Callaway was only a Private at the siege. Those who exercised most influence then were Colo. Boone and John Holder. Those who went out to meet the Indians for friendly talk or Treaty were Colo. Boone, John Holder, Colo. Callaway and J[ohn?] Martin with eight others whose names I have forgotten. . . .

7th Colo. John Holder did not perform any military services before leaving Virginia, where he was born, which was near or at Winchester, which I think is now in Clark County, Virginia. He done a good deal of fighting against Indians, was afterwards a magistrate and was a private, a Captain and a Colonel in [the] Revolutionary War. He lived to be 62 years old. His height was about ordinary, weighed generally 160 to 170.

Was a man of very fine appearance. Said to be when in his prime very handsome and a man of a good deal more than an ordinary share of agility & strength. . . .

William Bush formerly lived in Clark County, Kentucky, where his decedents now reside, of his nativity I am ignorant, nor do I know if he was in the Big Siege. He lived & died in Clark County as above stated, yet I cannot say when his death occurred. Perhaps Jonathan Bush of Boonsboro can give you information. I know nothing of Buckannan. . . .

Being as I before stated a grandson of Colo. John Holder and wishing you success in your enterprize, I take pleasure in aiding you all I can and if I can be of any further service to you, you will please command me. I enclose to you as you will see a Deed of Conveyance from Daniel Boone to my ancestor with his (Boons own signature) name attached, of which you can get a Fac simile and return original to me. I will write to W. D. Holder of Pontotoc, Mississippi and if anything can be found among some papers there which were formerly my grand fathers that will give any desired information, I will advise you of the same, and Mr. Decherd will also make enquiries and if he learns anything will write you.

[p.s.] Mr. Holder left for Florida and failed to hand me the deed from Mr. Daniel Boone. Respectfully P. S. Decherd

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24 C 43

*To Lyman Draper from R. G. Williams (husband of John Holder's daughter Catherine)*

*September 29, 1851*

*Mt Vernon, Kentucky*

I learn from my wife that her Mother died when she was six years of age, and she has heard that her father died when she was only one year old. My wife is now in her 55th year. She recollects hearing it said and has always believed they were from Virginia. I have much reason to believe from Culpeper County. I have been at their graves, but there is no stone to tell when or where born, or when they died. They were buried on their farm about 2 miles below Boonsboro. The place [was] where she, her sister & Miss Boon were captured. I well recollect having been informed by Mrs. John Hart, an intelligent Lady near Lexington (now living there) of the Capture of the girls. She says they had confidence from the time they would be pursued by their friends from the fort, and while travelling left signs by breaking twigs &c. They were eventually detected in this and severely reprimanded by the Indians. They notwithstanding managed to leave signs behind them.

Mrs. Hart is connected to the family, has a retentive memory, and I have but little doubt could and would with pleasure give information on this subject, particularly as to the time of the death of Mrs. Hickman & French some few years after. I saw Mrs. French for the last time at Boonsboro where there was a vast collection just 50 years from the time of its settlement.

S. R. Combs, somewhat conspicuous in the War of 1812, now dead, who was also Son in law to Col. Holder & Brother to Leslie, has informed me that Col. Holder was a man of rather uncommonly commanding appearance with great energy of character. I do not however now recollect of any skirmishes of note with the Indians before settling in Kentucky. He was one of the party of 3 who rescued the girls and to whom they were afterwards married. He at a subsequent time raised and furnished a Company for the

Yazoo expedition, which from some cause was abandoned. I have never understood its precise effect, altho I recollect seeing his Commission.

Judge Richard French, who I am informed has lately removed from his residence near Mt. Sterling to Maysville, I am of opinion has treasured up more in relation to the pioneers of the country than any other I can now recollect of. I recommend to you to correspond with him on the subject and from my knowledge of him I cannot doubt you will receive much interesting information. . . .

Col. Holder is spoken of in Marshalls History of Kentucky, tho I believe not so very favorably. Also a latter work called the Mountain Muse[?].

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24 C 44

*To Lyman Draper from R. G. Williams*

*January 28, 1852*

*Mt Vernon, Kentucky*

. . . Not having the family record, I am unable to give the precise date of the deaths of Col. John and Mrs. Holder but have no doubt from my wifes recollection the dates given are correct. All his children are dead with the exception of my wife, ye youngest and Mrs. McGuire, Aberdeen, Mississippi. His oldest son moved to Tennessee in 1809. His widow, Formerly a Miss Penn of Virginia, now lives there. I have but Little doubt the family record was in his possession. If so, she will be able to give you the desired information. Her P.O. is Winchester, living however some 8 or 10 miles from the office. A letter should be directed to care of Peter Deckhard.

Happening to speak of J. B. Dysart a few days since to one of his friends and your letter. He informed me that he had several sheets of his which Dysart had written for you. Upon searching however, he has found but one which I herewith enclose. J. B. Dysart moved from here about 16 months since To Missouri. His office is Filmore.

Col. Holder & wife were buried in Clark County 2 miles below Boonsborough. I heard from Dysart about 10 days since. He was then well.

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24 C 46

*To Lyman Draper from R. G. Williams*

*December 12, 1854*

*Mt Vernon, Kentucky*

I have just written to Mr. Peter Deckhard, Winchester, Tennessee, son in law of J. W. Holder, eldest son of Col. Holder, to examine his papers to see if his signature could be found. He also lives near Col. Calloway. If Calloway is yet living, of which I am not certain, I have no doubt if the signatures can be had. He will attend to it promptly.