

Hillsman O. H. Perry and Virginia W. (Haggard) Perry
Prepared by Dr. Michael M. Black (mmblack1 [at] outlook.com)

February 14, 2023

<https://blog.valdosta.edu/mmblack/family-history-and-genealogy/>

OPENING

Today is February 14, 2023. In this episode, I will examine the life of Hillsman Oliver Hazard Perry and his wife Virginia Winters Haggard. Researched, written, and narrated by Michael M. Black and dedicated to my son Matthew M. Black. Matthew, we are talking about your 4th great-grandparents who lived most of their lives in Jackson County, Franklin County, and Madison County, Georgia. These are my grandmother, Martha Perry Black's great-grandparents. You can find your line of descent in my Family Tree Maker program.

EARLY LIFE

Hillsman Oliver Hazard Perry was born in the year 1824 on his father's farm in the Harmony Grove community, Jackson County, Georgia south of what is today Commerce, GA. His third given name Hazard is spelled with one z. He was the 10th of 11 children born to Thomas Perry whose nickname was Tom, and his wife Mary Bennett Perry, whose nickname was Polly. I do not have the exact month and day of Hill's birthdate. His father had been a schoolteacher, and I know he would have left a Family Bible with this information; however, as of the year 2023, this bible has not surfaced by anyone in the family who may have inherited it. Throughout his life, Hill's name was written and misspelled to no end: Hilmond, Hilmont, Hillyard, or Hiltzman. He was named for famed War of 1812 commodore Oliver Hazard Perry. Oliver Hazard Perry was born in Rhode Island, and from my research, our Perry line is not related to the famous Oliver Hazard Perry. Matthew, it was very common for families to name their children after presidents, governors, war heroes, and literary figures.

MARRIAGE

Hill Perry and Virginia Haggard knew each other growing up in Jackson County. Hill's father, Thomas Perry, had been an executor to the will of Virginia's grandfather, Samuel Haggard, in 1811. Virginia Winters Haggard, daughter of French Haggard and Elizabeth "Betty" Rogers was also born in the Harmony Grove area of Jackson County on May 8, 1827. She was one of 10 children born to French and Betty Haggard. I do not know where her middle name Winters came from. I have found no Winters in the family history but she always used the middle initial W in records.

Hillsman Perry and Virginia Haggard obtained their marriage license from John Pittman, clerk of the ordinary court, at the courthouse in Jefferson, GA which is in Jackson County. This was on Monday, May 10, 1841 and four days later, they married on Friday, May 14, 1841. Waid Anthony, a justice of the peace, performed their wedding.

I have personally examined the marriage book in the courthouse in Jefferson, and there is a large ink blot right over the last digit in the year on their marriage entry in the book. Their entry is right in line with the other 1842 entries, so I and other researchers have always thought they married in 1842. In 2003, I asked the clerk in the probate court to look for the original minister's

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return in the basement which she did. When she sent it to me, I discovered they were married in the year 1841 not 1842. Hill was 17 and Virginia was 14 years old.

FAMILY

Hill and Virginia lived the first few years of their marriage in Jackson County. They were probably living on one of their fathers' farms but which father I do not know. The couple had 13 children between 1844-1863 of which 10 are known:

1. Arminta Elizabeth
2. William (Zeke) M.
3. Walker Calvin
4. Mary Francis
5. Rachel Pyrena
6. Charles Washington
7. James Attaway
8. Laura Jane
9. Rebecca Ann
10. John B.
11. unknown name (died young or stillborn)
12. unknown name (died young or stillborn)
13. unknown name (died young or stillborn)

All of these children, except William who died in 1864, would go on to marry and have multiple children. Our line is through Hill and Virginia's sixth child, Charles Washington Perry. A future episode will explore his life.

In the 1850 census, the Hill Perry family is living in adjoining Franklin County with four children who had been born by that time. Hill was listed as a farmer, and his real estate was valued at \$125. The next year, Hillsman and his siblings sold their shares of the Thomas Perry estate to James Williams, 50 acres along Turkey Creek.

In 1855, the family moved to neighboring Madison County. There Hillsman purchased 30 acres from Meredith B. Abbott for \$120, land along the waters of Black's Creek bounded by Isaac Strickland and Berry Shields.

By the 1860 census, the Perry family had 9 children. Hill's occupation was listed as carpenter with his real estate valued at \$225 and his personal estate valued at \$465. Most of the men in this area were farmers, so he apparently had a skillset more than others. He could read and write, but his wife Virginia was marked as not able to read and write. The 7 oldest children were attending school.

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In the 1861 property tax digest for Madison County, H. O. H. Perry is listed in the Pocatologo District with 30 acres valued at \$250. His total livestock was valued at \$65. He did not own any slaves.

WAR

Now we move into an extremely difficult time period in the history of the United States, the onset of the Civil War. I don't personally like using that term, but that is the most common term used for the conflict. I hope one day you will research more about this conflict using reputable sources to understand both sides. Through your father's line, me, you have 9 confederate patriots. Through your mother's line, Krystle, you have 14 confederate patriots for a total of 23.

Because of his age, Hill did not enlist immediately at the onset of the war but by the middle and end of the war, old men and very young boys were forced to join. Prior to his enlistment, he witnessed the will of his neighbor and friend James P. Fitzpatrick which was made November 3, 1862.

The following information is taken from the compiled service record for Hillsman O. H. Perry. He enlisted at Athens, Ga. by Capt. Jesse Thornton on Sept. 1, 1863. He appeared on the company muster roll for Sept. 1 to Dec. 31, 1863 for the war period. He was a private in Company I, 66th Georgia Regiment. Also enlisting at the same time was his brother Thomas R. Perry and his brother in law, William Ras Haggard.

For the company muster roll ended December 31, 1863 H. O. H. Perry was recorded as "present sick." According to the statement which Virginia Perry made before Reuben T. McGinnis, a justice of the peace, at Danielsville on January 23, 1864, she says Hill Perry died at Kingston, Ga on or about the 7th or 8th day of January 1864 leaving his said wife and 10 children; that she makes this deposition for the purpose of obtaining from the government of the Confederate States whatever may have been due the said H. O. H. Perry at the time of his death for pay bounty or other allowances for his services as private. Her claim was processed May 7, 1864 noting his date of death as Jan. 7, 1864. The register of effects of deceased soldiers turned over to the quartermaster showed he had \$19.50 with him when he died.

According to statements she makes later in the 1890s, he died in the hospital in Kingston of dropsy. Dropsy is more commonly known as edema which is swelling caused by fluid in the body's tissues, mostly feet, ankles, and legs. Kingston was an important railroad town during the war, and there were eight confederate hospitals at Kingston, which coincidentally was the location where the last confederate troops were surrendered in the state. The hospital served over 10,000 sick and wounded during its three-year operation. It's interesting to me that Virginia had to report his death, and Hill's death date does not appear to be recorded on any of the hospital's rosters that I could locate.

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My grandfather, Lee Black, once told me that his father in law Luke Perry asked Lee if he would help him find the grave of Luke's grandfather Hillsman Perry. Luke told Lee that Hill was placed on the train where his body was taken to Dalton for burial. It is 36 miles from Kingston to Dalton. I have searched in the official records for Hill and Virginia Perry and cannot find any entry stating his body was moved to Dalton but the largest burial of confederate dead was in Dalton. I have visited both Kingston and Dalton to explore. These areas of confederate history are now identified by bronze historical markers. There is no marked grave for Hillsman Perry. Based on the information passed down through the family, he would be buried at the Dalton Confederate Cemetery (which is a section in the West Hill Cemetery in Dalton). According to the public information on the internet, the Dalton Confederate Cemetery has 421 unknown confederate soldiers, 4 known confederate soldiers, and 4 unknown union soldiers buried there.

I have always wondered why was he carried to Dalton for burial instead of buried with the other confederate dead in Kingston. Relocating the dead did occur during that time. In June 1864, more dead from Kingston hospital were interred at Oakland Cemetery in Atlanta.

Research by American Battlefield Trust shows that for every three soldiers killed in battle, five more died of disease. Hill became one of the 258,000 Confederate deaths who lost his life in the service of his country.

In addition to Hill's service. Two of his children also served: William Perry who the family called Zeke was killed August 31, 1864 at the Battle of Jonesboro in Jonesboro, GA. Another son, Walker Calvin Perry, enlisted July 1864 and served throughout the close of the war but his widow noted that he spent more time sick with illness than actually engaged in war.

POST-WAR

The years following the end of the war were difficult in the South. And there was no exception for the life of Virginia Perry and her children. With Hill dead, she became a widow with 10 children, all of whom were unmarried and still at home.

Joe Bray, a cousin and great-grandson of Hill Perry, shared the following story with me on August 16, 2000. And I will read it in its entirety. It concerns their family's trip to Kentucky.

The Trip to Kentucky

The story always began, "Ma (Laura Jane Perry Bray) went to Kentucky in a covered wagon." The story was told by my aunt Alice Eudocia Bray who was born in 1875. I would ask if she went by herself and Aunt would reply, "No she was just a child when they went." And then she would say, "The whole crowd went, took everything they had, even the milk cows." I would ask where in Kentucky they went; she would always say she didn't know. Then she would say, "Ma always said she was glad that she got to see Mammoth Cave on the way

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back." I would ask why they went and she would say, "Times were hard in North Georgia and they thought it would be better in Kentucky." I would ask why they thought it would be better in Kentucky and she would say, "I guess she got a letter from somebody who lived in Kentucky." I never heard grandma Laura talk about it but some of my older brothers did and they recalled a couple of stories that I will try to relate below.

Getting Directions

I'm sure they must have tried many times to get directions, but only one incident was related to me. They stopped at a house in Tennessee that had a well by the road. They asked for permission to get water for themselves and for their animals. The lady who gave permission seemed friendly enough so they asked a question about how to get to some point on their journey, the river crossing, I think. When the lady said she didn't know they asked if her husband was at home. She replied that he was gone to town. They asked if he might be back soon, she said she didn't know. They asked how far it was town and what town. She apparently got tired of the questions and replied, "I don't know, we aint lived here but 13 years, I aint never been, he left going that way."

The River Crossing

When they got to the river (I don't know what river) they stopped and had a discussion about whether to go upstream or downstream to look for a crossing. They made the wrong decision, went the long way instead of the short. When they got wherever they were going, they were told that they were very near a crossing before they went the wrong way and wasted two days. When they got to the river crossing they crossed on a ferry. Whatever it was, all the possessions: wagon, animals and people went at one time. Attaway somehow fell into the river. I was told that Grandma Laura said at the time that she wished they would let him drown but they stopped the ferry and fished him out.

Harder Times

The story goes that times were harder in Kentucky than they were in North Georgia. They wanted to come back, but the trip had exhausted all their resources. They had to stay two years before they could afford to come back. When they started to come back, a teenage boy was allowed to travel to the river crossing to show them the way. He begged his parents and was eventually allowed to come all the way back with them. I don't have any idea who this boy was.

Here ends the story shard with me by cousin Joe Bray. I'm not exactly sure the years the family was in Kentucky (late 1860s), but they were back to Madison County by 1870.

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1870s

From what I can ascertain, other than the few years in Kentucky, Virginia remained in this area of Madison County the remainder of her life (except for 1901). In the 1870 census in Madison County, Virginia is widowed with four children at home: Rachel P., Laura J., John B., and James A.

In 2004, I was provided with a book of transcribed letters that had been written from Isaac Strickland to his uncle Joel Strickland. The letters ranged from 1869 to 1896 and described many details about people living in the western portion of Madison County, particularly in the Pocatigo area. In a letter dated June 17, 1872, Isaac Strickland wrote "Mrs. Perry lost a very good mule a week ago." In an 1874 letter, he wrote: "I met Dr. Martin going to Athens yesterday near Mrs. Perry's." Another 1874 letter, he wrote: "Jane Short who lived at the next house above Mrs. Perry's going toward Athens left home day before yesterday...nothing has been seen or heard of her since she passed Mrs. Perry's coming this way." Yet another 1874 letter described the troubles with Shugy Sailors who the locals thought had dropsy. It turned out to be a baby boy, and Isaac Strickland wrote: "It is laid to Walker Perry, one of Hill's boys." I have found that many of the statements made in the Strickland letters are entirely accurate, and this past statement was proven with a DNA match I made to a cousin who is a descendant of Shugy Sailors and Walker Perry.

In 1877, Virginia purchased in her name, 6½ acres for \$20, from the estate of Isaac Strickland Sr. which had been part of the Haggard survey. She is recorded for many years in the Madison County tax digest.

1880s

By the 1880 census, all the children were out of the house except for John, the youngest who was 18 and working on the farm.

June 18, 1880 Madison County, GA census page 59B

Perry, V. W., W, F, 54. keeping house

-----, John, W, M, 18, works on farm

Another letter written by Isaac Strickland August 26, 1884 shared: "While loading up I will say Mrs. Perry is very anxious to know what has become of the 57 acres of the Lucky land. She is wanting to break up house keeping, sell out and leave. She thinks it is either in the old place or the Haggard tract we sold Berry Shields. I told her if she would get up the papers I would buy it from her but she says she has no papers though she bought it from her son Walker. Rube McGinnis thinks there are about three acres of the land. If you have any idea who stole it let me or Mrs. Perry know as she's hot." I did not find any evidence that she ever did in fact break up housekeeping and move.

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1890s

The federal government did not provide pensions for Confederate veterans or their dependents. That was left up the individual southern states. In 1870, Georgia first granted pensions to disabled veterans with artificial limbs. This expanded in 1879 with a pension for other disabled Confederate veterans and their widows. By 1894, disability was increased to also cover old age and poverty.

Virginia first applied for Widow's Pension for her husband's service in May 1891. She had to reapply each year and records exist for the years 1891, 1893, 1894, 1895, 1896, 1897, 1898, 1899, 1901, 1910. Although there are some gaps in the applications, the Madison County Widows of Deceased Soliders Roll, shows Virginia Perry as receiving \$60 annually for her pension for numerous years until 1900 when she was living in Fayette County in 1901, then back in Madison County in 1902 until her death.

In 1895, her son John B. Perry sold his mother for \$20, 4 and ¼ acres adjoining Isaac Strickland, W. L. Berry Shields, and the lands of H. O. H. Perry's estate. A year later in 1896, Virginia sells this same land back to John for \$20.

Another indenture recorded on the next page, also in 1895, John Perry sells his mother for \$50, 7 4/10 acres in Madison County on the upper Athens and Danielsville road beginning near the old residence of H. O. H. Perry.

In May 1896, foreseeing her old age, Virginia gives 29 acres and \$125 to her son John B. Perry. This property lying in the 262nd Georgia Militia District which is the community known as Pocatigo. The deed states "that the said Virginia Perry for and in consideration of the natural love and affection she has for her son John B Perry and also for the purpose of taking care of her the said Virginia Perry during her natural life and buried in a decent manner". Toward the end of the indenture, it states "provided the said John B. Perry fulfills the consideration set forth in the first part of this deed else this deed is to be null and void and of no effect." In about six years, we will learn that John B. Perry did not fulfil his obligations, and the deed was invalidated.

1900s

By the year 1900, Virginia was living with her grandson W. B. Swindle and his wife, Ada Haggard Swindle in Pocatigo.

June 12, 1900 Madison County, GA census page 283A
Swindle, W. B., head, W, M, May 1871, 29, M, 8
-----, Adda L., wife, W, F, Aug 1876, 23, M, 9, 4, 4
-----, Walker G., son, W, M, Nov 1884, 6, S
-----, Leo L., daughter, W, F, Dec 1896, 4, S
-----, Oder, son, W, M, Jan 1898, 2, S

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-----, Clais B., daughter, W, F, Apr 1900, 1/12, S
Virginia Perry, grandmother, W, F, May 1826, 74, Wd., 10, 0

She was with him a short time before going to Fayette County in 1901 to live with another child, either Laura Bray or Attaway Perry. I am unsure which one.

In 1902 at age 75, Virginia Perry realized that her son would not fulfil the requirements for the land she gave him in 1896, so she identified her ex-daughter in law Mattie A. Graham Perry, former wife of John Perry. The deed stated “for and in consideration of the natural love and affection and to take care of the said Virginia Perry by waiting on her and home during her natural life and further to treat the said Virginia Perry right and proper as a mother should be treated by her children” the remaining 7 4/10 acres. It continues, “Now should the said Mattie Perry carry out said consideration then the said Mattie Perry shall own the right and proper title to the said described property.”

In the 1910 census, Pocatigo district in Madison County, Virginia Perry is living with her daughter in law, Mattie A. Perry and her two sons Claud and Alvin. One of the interesting items on this census is that Virginia is noted as having had 13 children of which 9 were living, so apparently there were 3 children who were stillborn or died young.

Virginia died Wednesday, January 4, 1911 in Madison County, GA at the home of her daughter in law. The next day, January 5, 1911, Virginia was buried at Black’s Creek Baptist Church on the very western border of Madison County. The marker erected over her grave reads “M. V. Haggard wife of Hilmond Perry May 8, 1827 January 4, 1911.” Researchers have incorrectly written her name as Mary Virginia Haggard or Virginia Dare Haggard, but it has always been Virginia Winters Haggard. The M on the tombstone actually stood for Mrs. I will grant that some records for Virginia Perry have her year of birth reported as 1826 so there is a possibility she was born in 1826 instead of 1827. I had the good fortune to locate her funeral invoice as part of her widows pension application. E. G. Brock, Furniture Dealer and Undertaker, of Commerce made arrangements for Virginia Perry. The items purchased were: casket \$25, robe and gloves \$4, pair of shoes \$1, a cap \$1.10 for a total cost of \$31.10. This did not include her grave marker which was erected later. Georgia did not begin collecting statewide registration for death certificates until 1919, so there is no death certificate for Virginia Perry.

A few days after her burial, January 10, 1911, her daughter in law Mattie A. Perry applied in Danielsville to A. H. Long, clerk of the ordinary court, for pension due a deceased pensioner. Her deposition stated: “Mrs M. A. Perry who being duly sworn says that she is the widowed daughter in law of Mrs. Virginia Perry with whom the said Virginia Perry lived and that since the 1st of October 1910 said Virginia Perry has been bed ridden and helpless and that she Mrs. M. A. Perry waited on and nursed her for more than three months and that Mrs. Virginia Perry left no

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property and that she is entitled to the following: To services rendered Mrs. Virginia Perry during her last illness, as nurse \$10 per month for 3 months \$30.”

CLOSING

I hope you have enjoyed this episode about the lives of Hill and Virginia Perry, my 3rd great grandparents and your, Matthew, 4th great-grandparents. I apologize in advance for errors of fact or interpretation in the forgoing discussion. I will continue my research on this couple, and if I find additional and substantive information, I will append it to this recording.

RESOURCES

1820 Jackson Co GA census (hh French Haggard)
1820 Jackson Co GA census (hh Thomas Perry)
1840 Jackson Co GA census (hh French Haggard)
1850 Franklin Co GA census (hh Hillsman O Perry)
1860 Madison Co GA census (hh Hillsman O H Perry)
1861 Madison Co GA Tax Digest
1870 Madison Co GA census
1880 Madison Co GA census (hh V W Perry)
1900 Madison Co GA census (hh W B Swindle)
1910 Madison Co GA census (hh Mattie A Perry)
Compiled Confederate Service Record: H O H Perry
Jackson Co GA Deed Book O, page 132-133 (William R. Howington, John H. Cleghorn, Abner Perry, Hillsman O. Perry, Nathaniel Hix, David Hix, of Madison County, Williams S. Freeman, Thomas R. Perry, Mary Meadows, and Rhoda H. Perry of Jackson County, John Smith of Morgan County, William W. Perry of Benton County, Alabama to James Williams)
Jackson Co GA Marriage Book 2 (Minister's Returns) (Perry to Haggard)
Jackson Co GA Marriage Book 2, page 289 (Perry to Haggard)
Jackson Co GA Will Book A (1803-1860), p. 37-38 (will of Samuel Haggard)
Littleberry Shields of Virginia and Georgia 1764-1827, Ilene Chandler Miller, p. 70
Madison Co GA deed book K, p237 (Meredith B Abbett to H O H Perry)
Madison Co GA Deed Book P, p481 (Isaac Strickland & Daniel M Byrd agents to V W Perry)
Madison Co GA deed book S (1894-1897), p164 (J B Perry to Virginia W Perry)
Madison Co GA deed book S (1894-1897), p165 (J B Perry to Virginia W Perry)
Madison Co GA deed book S (1894-1897), p408 (Virginia Perry to John B Perry)
Madison Co GA deed book S (1894-1897), p409 (Virginia Perry to John B Perry)
Madison Co GA Deed Book Y, p32 (Virginia Perry to Mattie Perry)
Madison Co GA Will Book B, p. 190 (James P Fitzpatrick)
Madison County Widows of Deceased Soldiers Roll
Personal communication (letter from Joe Bray, Brooks, GA to Michael Black, 08/16/2000)
The Isaac Strickland Letters 1869-1896
Tombstone photo: M(rs) V(irginia) Haggard wife of Hilmond Perry

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Widows Pension Application: Virginia W Perry