

Excerpt from *Schooldays of a Backwoodsman and News and Views from Bold Camp, Virginia* by Daniel Bartley Hollyfield—copyright 1963.

About the author: Daniel Bartley Hollyfield was a well-known and well-liked schoolteacher in the Pound, VA area. His mother (Mary Melvina "Polly" Short Hollyfield) died when he was 8 years old; his father (William Jefferson Hollyfield) remarried Clarinda D Boggs, daughter of William and Charlotte Mullins Boggs.

Sent from Margaret Sturgill to Jason Duncan, 2013.

Pages 197—202 of Hollyfield's book:

A Wandering "Tar Heel"

One beautiful fall day in 1899, a wandering boy of about 17 years of age came up Bold Camp. His eyes and hair were black and his complexion dark. He had all his worldly possessions on his back, which consisted of a plain cotton work shirt and trousers to match; coarse shoes and socks, and a well worn cap. He had walked and hoboed all the way from Traphill, Wilkes County, North Carolina.

He said his father was a drunkard and would come home nights and beat up his mother, and that their home life had never been a success, or pleasure. After he was nearly grown and his mother died, he decided to leave the "old north state" and try to find a home elsewhere. He said he belonged to the church, and proved it by his uncle and mother's brother, Grant Cothrin, whom he wrote letters to after he decided to make his home with my grandfather, Bartley Hollyfield.

This boy was John Baugess. He had a good personality, and was kind and sympathetic. Like most mountaineers he had a high temper, and when aroused was dangerous. He was a hard worker and helped grandfather on the farm. He attended church and did not drink.

He became acquainted with Gaston Mullins' family, particularly his oldest daughter, Rosa Bell. In three years they were married. John built a house not far from Gaston's place and they went to housekeeping. In a few months a baby boy was born and in a few more, a baby girl. They called them Ralph and Flora. In the meantime John had begun using too much whiskey, staying out too late and having trouble with his wife when he went home. He got worse and worse and bought a .38 calibre Colt revolver and began carrying it around and being independent.

One night, on October 9, 1906, he came home drinking, very late in the night and shot his wife through the body, just under the collar-bone over the heart. In fact it was so close to

the heart that she could only have lived a few minutes, as the doctor, who examined he testified.

John was so benumbed and befuddled with the drinking and what he had done that he did not attempt to leave the house. A neighbor notified Gaston of the murder of his daughter, and as soon as he could get there he went, taking some neighbors and friends with him. When they arrived at the house of his daughter, they found John sitting in the house with his oldest child Ralph, on his lap. John's wife, Rosa Bell, was lying in the bed in a welter of blood. The little daughter, Flora, was covered from head to foot with her mother's blood almost stangled with it.

Gaston said to John, "Didn't I tell you if you didn't quit your way of doing that you would destroy some of your family?" John said "Yes". "Now you have killed your wife," said Gaston. John said, "No, I didn't ; someone else did it." Gaston said, "Damn you, don't you lie to me; you killed her," and stepping back he drew a .45 calibre Cold, and said "I think I will fill you full of lead." A friend took hold of Gaston and reminded him that he would only get himself in trouble. Then it was that John confessed the crime.

Gaston had bought this .45 Colt after he killed Marshall Mullins; being the first revolver I ever knew of him owning. Could he have been blamed if he had shot John Baugess? There was his own sweet daughter, who had been killed by her husband without cause. Most backwoodsmen believe with the Bible, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth". But hard as it was, when Gaston had time to think, he saw himself in the wrong and desisted.

They went in the next room and found John's .38 calibre Colt revolver hanging on a nail on the wall with only one chamber empty. There were his clothes all bloody where he had left them in a heap when had changed. Also a good quantity of whiskey.

Sam Meade was deputy sheriff at the time and one of John's nearest neighbors. So they got John then and there. It was nearly daylight. After dressing Rosa Bell and getting ready to put her away that day, they found it would be too late, and decided to wait for the morrow. They moved the corpse in her casket to the home of my father and took John along for keeping, until after the burial. The mother, who had been murdered, would have been a mother again in a few days.

Sam Meade deputized Noah Mullins, Sam Stallard and myself to help guard the prisoner. Several folks were in another room keeping watch over the corpse. The room in which we had the prisoner was adjoining. The room had one door in it which opened onto a porch. On each side of this door as you went in was a bed. They put John in the bed beside me, and Sam Stallard was on the bed close to our near door. He sat on the bed and did not even remove his clothes. They said they would do the guarding. I tried my best to get Sam Meade to handcuff John to me, and then I knew there would be no getting away. I had no thought of going to sleep. We must have all dozed off, for the first thing we knew John was gone. He had crawled over me and passed within a foot of Sam Stallard, opened the door and bolted out bare-footed; left his shoes setting on the floor; and his wife in her coffin in the other room.

The ground was covered with a white frost. We tracked his barefeet until we decided he had made for where his sister lived on Meade Fork of Bold Camp. It was getting daylight and we went as fast as our legs would carry us to the place we expected him to go for shoes and breakfast. When we arrived there we stationed ourselves above the house next to the woods. His cousin, Pearly Bauguess, soon came out carrying something to eat. We captured him and went on up the hill through the woods, where we expected John. Though we surrounded the place and came back down the ridge which Pearly had started up. We all sat down under a big white oak tree. I wasn't long until we heard someone coming, moaning and groaning and praying. We looked down the hill and saw John coming into our view; though he did not suspect us. He came up within 20 feet of where we were. All of the boys were armed with shot guns except myself and Sam Meade. They had given me John's gun, the .38 Colt with which he had killed his wife. John came up with his eyes on the ground. All of the posse, except myself, fired over his head and called to him to surrender. It only appeared to frighten him, hardly looking to see what was taking place, he jumped, and turned as he jumped, and landed at least 20 feet down the hill. In this jump he had put himself squarely between me and the big oak, which must have been four feet in diameter. By the time I could get around the tree, to which I could see him, he had gone a considerable distance. I succeeded in bringing the revolver down on him where I could shoot, when to my surprise, he jumped and went out of sight. I was leading the posse after him, but when I reached the place where he left my sight I found that he had jumped over a cliff and a long ledge of rock, which must have been 20 feet high. I was afraid to make the leap over and went around. By the time I did this and ran down to the hollow he was nearly to the top on the other side, and at least one hundred yards away. I was tired and nervous, but took aim and fired, and missed my prey. He went on over the hill. We went up and searched the woods well, but that was the last time I saw John Baugess. Nothing more was ever heard of him, but I've always thought that he went back to North Carolina.

The woman that John Baugess killed was my first cousin; as you can have an idea what made me pull the trigger to try to keep him from escaping. John was also a good friend of mine, but the tender young cousin had been one of my best playmates. We had been practically "raised" together; her troubles had been mine. I had rejoiced with her in our childish pleasure, our laughter had rung through the hills and valleys, through the fields and woodlands; my home had been her home, her home had been mine; now at the youthful age of twenty, I saw her hands folded in death; her tongue forever stilled. This was another page of experience from the great book of the world! Could I have but seen the future, I would have been like all youngsters and known that I was only beginning to learn.