

Mary "Molsey" Grainger (1860 - 1802 Oct 7)
(Wife of William Blount & Mistress of Blount Mansion)

Compiled for Blount Mansion Association by Dean Novelli, 2020.

GENEALOGICAL DATA:

BORN: 1760 Wilmington, New Hanover County, NC
DIED: 1802 Oct 7 "Blount Mansion" Knoxville, TN
AGE AT DEATH: 42 yrs.
BURIED: 1st Presbyterian Church Cemetery, Knoxville, TN

PARENTS: Caleb Grainger (1725? - 1765 October?)
MARRIED: Date Unk.
Mary Walters (unk - 1800 March 11);
at least 4 children; 3 boys / 1 girl, with a possible
fifth child born after Mary

SIBLINGS: Known children of Caleb and Mary by possible birth order; Mary
(probably) was the fourth of 4 children; 3 boys / 1 girl
Caleb (dates unknown)
Cornelius Harnett (dates unknown)
William (dates unknown)
Mary (1760 - 1802 Oct 7) age 42

MARRIAGES: Married once, widowed once
HUSBAND: William Blount (1749 Mar 26 - 1800 March 21)
MARRIED: 1778 Feb 12
AGES : Mary 17/18, William 29; a twelve (12) year difference

CHILDREN: William and Molsey's offspring by birth order
Cornelius (1778/9) DIED in infancy; dates unknown
Anne "Nancy" Harvey (1780 Oct - 1832) age 51/52
Mary Louisa (1782 - 1847 Feb 14) age 64/65
William Grainger (1784 - 1827 May 20) age: 42/43
Blount (1787 - 1791 Oct <25) age 4
Richard Blackledge (1789 - 1858?)
Jacob (1791 - 1809) age 18
Barbara (1792 Sept 16 - 1836 Nov 30) BORN on
Barbara's Hill; age 44
Eliza Indiana (1795 March 19 - 1835 Nov 23) BORN in Blount
Mansion; age 41

William and "Molsey" Blount had nine (9) children; five (5) boys and
four (4) girls, seven (7) lived to adulthood.

Two boys (Cornelius and Blount) died young, before the family moved to Knoxville.

The three (3) boys came to Knoxville in 1792, while the two (2) girls stayed in North Carolina with relatives.

Two (2) girls (Barbara and Eliza Indiana) were born in Knoxville. A total of six (6) of Blount's seven (7) surviving children lived at Blount Mansion at sometime; there is no record of Anne "Nancy" Harvey Blount living full time in Knoxville

EDUCATION: Unknown. As the daughter of Eastern Coastal Gentry Molsey was likely trained in etiquette, entertainment and running of a household as a mistress of her husband's plantation. It is not known if she could read and write but it is likely she could.

Mary "Molsey" Grainger (1860 - 1802 Oct 7)

CHRONOLOGICAL HIGHLIGHTS:

- 1760 BORN: Mary "Molsey" Grainger
- 1765 October DIED: Caleb Grainger (1725? - 1765?) Molsey's father
- 1775 AMERICAN WAR of INDEPENDENCE with Great Britain BEGINS with armed conflict at Concord and Lexington, MA
- 1778 February 12: MARRIED Mary Grainger to William Blount; twelve years his junior (17/18 and 29); her family was similar in class to the Blounts
William and Molsey set up household at Blount's plantation "Piney Grove" Martinsborough (now called Greenville), NC
- 1778/9 BORN: Cornelius Blount; DIED in infancy; dates unknown
First Child / First Boy / First Child Death
- 1780 BORN: Ann "Nancy" Harvey Blount; Second Child / First Girl
- 1782 BORN: Mary Louisa Blount; Third Child / Second Girl
- 1783 Treaty of Paris formally ENDS the AMERICAN WAR of INDEPENDENCE with Great Britain
- 1784 BORN: William Grainger Blount; Fourth Child / Second Boy

- 1787 BORN: Blount Blount; Fifth Child / Third Boy
SEPT 17, William Blount SIGNED US Constitution; one of only thirty-nine (39) men to sign making Blount a "FRAMING FATHER" vs. a Founding Father (those who signed the Declaration of Independence)
- 1790 William Blount APPOINTED Territorial Governor of the Territory of the United States South of the River Ohio (Southwest Territory) by President George Washington and was simultaneously APPOINTED Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Southwest
- 1791 DIED: Blount Blount age 4; Fifth Child / Third Boy / Second Child
Death
BORN: Jacob Blount; Seventh Child / Fifth Boy; last child born in NC
July 2: SIGNED Treaty of the Holston at mouth of First Creek
Oct 3: Knoxville Founded / James White's Lotto of 64 Lots
- 1792 Mary "Molsey" Blount with three (of her five) children (all under ten) and as many as twenty-seven (27) slaves moved to Knoxville from Greenville, NC by way of Rocky Mount, TN
Construction of Blount Mansion begins; family lives on farm where "The Hill" (aka Barbara's Hill or Ayres Hill), UTK is located today
- 1792 Sept 16 BORN: on Barbara's Hill: Barbara Blount; Eight Child / Third Girl, first child born in Knoxville
- UNKNOWN MOVED: into Blount Mansion (probably late 1792 or early 1793)
- 1793-94 TRAVELED: Molsey spent the winter in North Carolina
- 1794 TRAVELED: Molsey returned to Knoxville
- 1795 March 19 BORN: Eliza Indiana Blount; Ninth (and last) Child / Fourth Girl; only Blount child born in Blount Mansion
- 1796 Nov TRAVELED: Went with husband to Philadelphia, PA
- 1797 July INJURED: Molsey's arm was shattered in a carriage accident near Raleigh, NC
- 1798 June RETURNED: After a year convalescing in North Carolina Molsey was able to return to Knoxville with her young daughters
- 1800 March <10 DIED: Mary (Walters) Grainger, at Blount Mansion, Knoxville; buried in First Presbyterian Church Cemetery, State Street, Knoxville, TN; mother of Mary "Molsey" (Grainger) Blount

March 21 DIED: William Blount at Blount Mansion; buried in 1st Presbyterian Church Cemetery, State Street, Knoxville, TN; husband of Mary "Molsey" (Grainger) Blount and father of her nine children

June 29 MARRIED: Anne "Nancy" Harvey Blount to Henry Irwin Toole, Knoxville, TN; Molsey's oldest daughter

1801 April MARRIED: Mary Louisa Blount to Pleasant Moorman Miller; Molsey's second daughter

1802 Oct 7 DIED: Mary "Molsey" (Grainger) Blount at Blount Mansion, buried next to her husband in 1st Presbyterian Church Cemetery, State Street, Knoxville, TN

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH of:

Mary "Molsey" Grainger (1860 - 1802 Oct 7)

Mary Grainger was the daughter of Caleb Grainger and Mary Walters. She was born in 1760 (or possible several years earlier) in Wilmington, New Hanover County, North Carolina. Her father Caleb, referred to as Colonel, was a successful plantation owner, and a business partner and political ally of Cornelius Harnett, a Revolutionary War leader in North Carolina. Nothing is know of her mother Mary's background beyond the family name Walters and the likelihood she was from the Cape Fear area of southern coastal North Carolina.

Caleb Grainger's Last Will and Testament reveals that the Grainger's had at least four and possible five children, of which Mary is likely the fourth and only known girl. The will written in 1760 and amended at least twice, the last time in 1765, also shows the wealth of the family. Mary who would have been an infant when it was written (if she was born in 1760 and not earlier) was well provided for by her father. It also indicates that Caleb likely died in October 1765 and his wife was pregnant at the time. Mary would have been at least five years old when her father died. Her mother never remarried and would spend the rest of her life living with her daughter.

According to Caleb's will, at the age of seventeen or when married, Mary Grainger inherited furniture, "plate," a town lot in Wilmington and at least two enslaved persons. The furniture, plate and particularly the slaves are of note to Blount Mansion historical interpreters.

"I Give, Devise and Bequeath Unto my Daughter, Mary Grainger, Two Negro Wenches and what Children they now have, or May hereafter have, the Names of which Wenches is, Little Hager and Venice [Venus], which Said Negroes as aforesaid, I give,' Devise and bequeath to my said daughter Mary, to her, her heirs and Assigns for Ever.

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I also give, devise and Bequeath to my said Daughter, Mary, one Good Bed & Furniture, two Mahogany Tables, Six Mahogany Chairs, one Large Mahogany framed Looking Glass, and Such of my Plate as I shall leave a List of Inclosed my Will; all which things as aforesaid shall be delivered to her at the Age of Seventeen Years, or day of Marriage."

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Account of Plate Left my Daughter, Mary Grainger.

1 Doz. Table Knives & forks, Silver Handles.

1 Doz, Desart Ditto Silver Handles.

1 Silver Butter Boat.

1 Do. Tea pott.
1 Ditto Milk Pot.
1 Dz Silver Salts & Shovels.
1 Silver Salver.
1 Set of Casters "with Silver Tops.
1 Soop Spoon, Silver
Half a Dozen Silver Table Spoons, Tea Spoons
August 23d., 1760.
Caleb Grainger."

Source: North Carolina Wills and Inventories, copied from Original and Recorded Wills and Inventories In the Office of the Secretary of State by J. Bryan Grimes, Secretary of State, Published 1912

In death, Mary's father Caleb Grainger had provided his daughter with a suitable dowry — the possessions necessary for a woman of her socioeconomic class to establish a comfortable home for herself and her husband, as well as two enslaved women to run it — to bring with her in marriage, and which by law and common practice would become her future husband's property. It made Mary an attractive catch as a bride.

That future husband was William Blount. Like his father Jacob, William was a successful businessman involved in plantations, mills and distilleries, import and export, land speculation, and as a means to further his business ambitions: politics — local, state and national. Blount's success and failure in these endeavors will cast a long shadow over his wife Mary's and their children's lives.

Where and when Mary and William met is not known. They married in 1778 in Wilmington when Mary was at least seventeen. William was twelve years her senior. At the time they married, William was active in the Revolutionary War as a purchasing agent. He was already a well established businessman from a large and successful family, making him an acceptable if not highly desirable spouse. The couple set up house at "Piney Grove," William's plantation outside of what is today Greenville, North Carolina.

Their first child, a son Cornelius, likely named for Mary's brother or her father's associate Cornelius Harnett, was born the next year. Tragically but not uncommon, Cornelius died in infancy. It was the first child the Blount's would loose but not the last. Eight more children followed at a typical spacing of a child every two or sometimes three years; seven would out live both parents.

As William Blount prospered so did Mary — who William affectionately called "Molsey" — and their growing family. William's business and particularly his political activities required long absences from home, as he traveled both in-state and to New York City, the current capital of the United States. It was as a North Carolina representative to the Continental Congress in New York, that led William to

being selected to attend the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in 1787. Hence Molesey's husband became one of only thirty-nine men to sign the US Constitution, making William one of the "Framing Fathers" of the United States (vs. a Founding Father who signed the Declaration of Independence).

Then as now, when you marry an individual you also marry into a family. For Molesey this meant being seen as a "sister" by some (but not all) of her in-laws. Willie Blount, William's half-brother would live with them for a time in Knoxville and became guardian to the boys after William died, and Mrs. Harvey (Anne "Nancy" Gray Blount) who would help raise at least one of their daughters, her namesake Anne "Nancy" Harvey Blount, both thought fondly of Molesey. This was less true of William's brothers, Thomas and John Gray, who referred to her only as our brother's wife.

In William's case it meant his mother-in-law, Mrs. Mary (Walters) Grainger became as much his responsibility as anyone's. Mrs. Grainger would come to live with the newlyweds at Piney Grove and later at Blount Mansion (where she would die just days before William in 1800).

In 1790, as William's political career was advancing to a national stage, Molesey's mother as executrix to her husband Caleb's estate became embroiled in a lawsuit. William was concerned she would say or do something that would result in an unfavorable judgment and was having difficulty managing the situation from afar. Writing to John Gray, William sought to enlist his brother's aid in controlling the situation:

"...I should wish her to be so instructed as that She should not foolishly say any thing that might operate against such a Plea, of all Things She must not go to Wilmington as I am sure She will propose..." adding a warning, "— She must not get to Cape Fear for if She does make herself liable to the debt by Word or Act She will. —"
[Wm Blount to JGB, 1790 Sep 20, from Alexandria [VA]]

Lawsuits were on-going concerns and could take years to settle or be dismissed. In a later letter, William made his concern regarding this suit against his mother-in-law plan to John Gray:

"...the Case in the Suit in Wilmington Court commenced agt. Mrs. Grainger the Particulars of which you know.... — I beg your Attention both to the Suit and to Mrs. Grainger that she does not write or verbally acknowledge or say what may be improper on the Occasion —....It is an important Suit for whatever is saved to Mrs. Grainger is saved to me." [Wm Blount to JGB, 1793 Sep 19, from Richmond [VA]]

It is not know how this lawsuit was resolved.

1790 was an important year for the Blount family. William received two crucial appointments that advance both his political career and business interests. While serving as a state senator in North Carolina, Blount was picked by President George Washington to serve as governor of the newly formed Territory of the United States South of the River Ohio (commonly referred to today as the Southwest Territory). He was simultaneously appointed Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Southwest. The job required him to move to and live in the newly formed Southwest Territory. Blount was thrilled by the first appointment. As a land speculator with large holding estimated at one million acres in the territory, being appointed governor put him in an advantageous position to protect if not promote his personal real estate interests. But Superintendent of Indian Affairs gave him pause, as Blount correctly foresaw the difficulty of making and keeping peace between the white settlers pouring into the new territory in search of land and opportunity, and the Cherokee and Creek nations who already occupied the area. However, it was the impact on his family and in particularly Molsey that concerned William most.

Neither appointments were welcomed at "Piney Grove" where Molsey, Blount's wife of twelve years had reservations about leaving their comfortable Eastern Carolina gentry life of privilege for a log cabin on the frontier. William shared his concern with John Gray:

"...yet I foresee it will give me much Trouble[,] for Molsey is much distressed about the Prospect of my Absence or danger or both[,] but at all Events the duties of so advantageous an Appointment must be attended to as soon as directed by the President...." [Wm Blount to JGB, 1790 June 26, from Greene Ville [Piney Grove], NC]

Besides the on going threat of Native American attacks, there were the Blount children to consider; five at the moment, all under ten. What would the boys (William Grainger, Richard Blackledge and Jacob) turn into growing up on the frontier? And how could Molsey raise her daughters (Anne "Nancy" Harvey and Mary Louisa) to be fine gentlewomen and find suitable husbands when they live in the wilderness?

Blount enlisted the assistance of his brother John Gray Blount to convince Molsey to move to the territory:

"I should be glad of your being at Green Ville as often as convenient and saying such Things in an indirect manner as might induce a disposition in Molsey to visit the ceded Territory at least in the course of the next Spring for sooner I shall not be ready —"
[Wm Blount to JGB, 1790 Sep 22, from Alexandria [VA]]

Living in a log cabin was the apparently a deal breaker for Molyse, or so the family legend would have us believe. The story goes, the decision to move to the Southwest Territory was won when William promised Molyse he would build her a "mansion" when they arrived in Knoxville. Blount Mansion, a National Historic Landmark since 1965, is the result of that promise. (Compare the modest original Blount Mansion with Jacob Blount's Blount Hall at New Bern, NC where William grew up.)

In October 1790, Blount moved to upper East TN and established a temporary territorial capital at William Cobb's "Rocky Mount" (near present day Johnson City) while Molyse and the children remained in North Carolina. At this time tragedy struck the Blount family for a second time when their son, the unusually named, Blount Blount died on October 26th; he was just three years old. William was already on his way to the territory. It was left to Molyse to bury their son. How Molyse reacted to losing a child while her husband was away, in what may well be a dangerous frontier, a place she was expected to move with her four remaining children, isn't known. But with two girls and two boys, to look after, as well as being pregnant for a seventh time, she had little time to grieve.

Sometime in 1791, Jacob Blount was born (named for his paternal grandfather who had died two years earlier). By fall that year, Molyse moved the three little boys — William Grainger age 7, Richard Blackledge age 2 or 3, and the infant Jacob — and an unknown number of enslaved people, Hagar and Venus likely among them, to Rocky Mount in the Southwest Territory.

However, the two oldest children, the girls Anne "Nancy" Harvey now age 11 and Mary Louisa age 9, stayed behind in North Carolina. Their father informed a family friend of the arrangement:

"— My sister [Mrs. Anne Harvey] lives a widow and she and Tom [Blount] keep house together in Tarborough and with them live my two oldest daughters —" [William Blount to Thomas Hart, 1794, from Knoxville, TN]

Both girls were entrusted to the care of their aunt Mrs. Anne Harvey, William's sister who was also called Nancy. Mrs. Harvey, a widow with no children, lived with her younger brother Thomas Blount (nine years her junior), he was also a widower with no children. They shared a house in Tarboro, NC and it was here William Blount's oldest daughters Nancy and Mary Louisa would now live.

It was Aunt Nancy and Uncle Thomas who would serve as surrogate parents for the girls, seeing that they were appropriately raised, educated and married as to the customs of the time. However, at some point, probably before 1796, Mary Louisa left Tarboro and moved to Knoxville. In Nancy Blount's case she continued to live with her aunt and uncle until 1800 when just shy of twenty years old, she married.

Sometime in the spring of 1792, Moley, again pregnant, moved her three boys and accompanying slaves from Rocky Mount to Knoxville. The family moved into a log cabin on a hill just west of second creek. The spacious structure — by local standards — was built especially for the Blount family as temporary quarters while the mansion William promised Moley was completed.

It was here — in a log cabin she didn't want to live in — that Moley gave birth to her eighth child and third girl, Barbara Blount. (named for William's mother Barbara Gray). That place went on to be called Barbara's Hill. Today it is known as "The Hill" (also identified as College Hill then Ayres Hill for a later benefactor) on the University of Tennessee campus at Knoxville. Blount owned about 200 acres on Barbara's Hill. It was from this farm that the Blount Mansion was likely supplied with produce, eggs, milk and meat as required in the years to come. The farm on Barbara's Hill was passed down to William's daughter Mary Louisa who later sold it to the future university then called East Tennessee College in 1828.

How long it took to complete the simple two room, hall and parlor house that made up Blount Mansion at its beginning isn't know. Since Barbara was born September 16, 1792 in the log cabin, it was likely 1793 before the family moved. Many building materials necessary for construction of a "mansion" could not be produced in the newly created town of Knoxville and had to be imported. Window glass came from Richmond, Virginia by horse. Fine woodwork, chair rails and baseboard — likely from Blount's own mills in North Carolina — were shipped by way of raft down the French Broad and Holston Rivers to the mouth of First Creek.

The family settled in to their new life in a frontier capital, where Moley took up the duties as hostess for her husband, the territorial governor. In 1853, Tennessee historian J. G. M. Ramsey, writing in his "Annals of Tennessee," described Moley as"

"...an accomplished lady, and she did much to soften and refine the manners of the first inhabitants of Knoxville. Under her administration, a grace and a charm was given to the society of the place — the more remarkable and attractive from the external circumstances under which they were, from necessity of the case, exhibited in the new town upon a distant frontier."

William entertained many of the leading men of the territory, as well as Native America leaders on a regular basis. Moley would be expect to entertain the wives, at least of the white men (native women likely did come with their men) when their husbands were at Blount Mansion. There are no specific records of teas or dinners that Moley held while hostess at the mansion.

As territorial governor, William traveled frequently on official business and would by necessity be gone for weeks and months at a time. Indications are that

Molsey took these opportunities to return to North Carolina, often for extended stays. Barely a year after the birth of Barbara and even less time living in Blount Mansion, Molsey left Knoxville perhaps with good cause. William explains to his brother John Gray:

"Molsey will spend the Winter in Carolina. I depend on you to provide for her Household and to give her your advice in all Cases"

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"I rejoice much that She is off the Frontiers and a respectable Distance from the *Jacobin* [Blount's emphasis] Part of the Cherokee & Creek Nation[s] —"

[Wm Blount to JGB, 1793 Sep 19, from Richmond [VA]]

Molsey returned sometime in 1794 and apparently stayed in Knoxville through the birth of Blount's last child, a girl in March 1795. Naming Eliza Indiana Blount caused some division between her parents, as William explained to John Gary when announcing her birth:

"On the 19th Instant Molsey was delivered of a Daughter both as well as can be expected — The Child is praised for size & Beauty — The Name is doubtful Molsey says Eliza, I say Indiana to Settle the Dispute perhaps we shall take both."

[Wm Blount to JGB, 1795 March 28, from Knoxville]

In 1796, Tennessee became the sixteenth state of United States and William Blount one of its first two US Senators. This meant William would be absent from Knoxville for months attending congress in Philadelphia. Molsey took the opportunity to go with him. What happened with the children is not known. Mary Louisa was presumably living with her parents in Knoxville by this time, along with "Billy," Richard, Jacob, Barbara and infant Eliza Indiana. The "little girls," Barbara and Eliza apparently went with their mother at least as far as North Carolina where they likely stayed with their aunt Mrs. Harvey and big sister Nancy Blount in Tarboro. But whether Mary Louisa and the boys stayed in Knoxville or went with the family isn't known. It is possible that the older children remain in Knoxville under the care of their Grandmother Mrs. Mary Grainger who lived with the family. Or that Uncle Willie Blount saw after them if Mrs. Grainger went with her daughter and the baby girls. Regardless of which Blounts the children remained in Knoxville with there would be enslaved people (like Hagar or Venus) to look after them.

In November of 1796, William and his brother Thomas (who was a US Representative from North Carolina) with "their Ladies" passed through Richmond, VA on their way to attend congress at the capital in Philadelphia. How long Molsey stayed in Philadelphia and whether any of the Blount's children were with her isn't known but she apparently returned to North Carolina before attempting to return to Knoxville in July 1797.

Early July 1797 was a momentous time in both Molsey's and William's lives. Blount's national political career came to an abrupt end, as he was first expelled from the US Senate and then impeached in the US House for alleged acts of treason. The timing of the actions and her distance meant that Molsey still visiting in North Carolina could not have known of these events as they happened. It was likely she already planned to return to Knoxville the first week of July as she was en-route when William fled the capital. It was at Raleigh that "Misfortune" befell Molsey:

"Mrs. Wm Blount &c at Raleigh on her way to Knoxville the Horse run away with the Carriage broke that to pieces & broke her arm, the last news she was doing well."

[JGB to John Summerville, 1797 July 11, Washington, NC]

William planned to meet Molsey on the road to Tennessee (as he fled possible incarceration in Philadelphia) but when he learned she was injured he diverted to North Carolina. It is not known which if any of the children were with her or if any of them were also injured but "&c" indicated she was not travelling alone. The absence of any mention in the family correspondence would suggest the children or whomever else was with her were safe. Despite the initial report that she was "doing well" Molsey was seriously injured; her arm not just broken but shattered. It would be long time before she could travel.

William spent at least two months with her in Raleigh before he returned to Knoxville in September without her. Despite leaving Molsey while she was still recovering, William was deeply distressed by what happened. In November, five months after the accident he writes:

"I am extremely oppressed with the Misfortune of my dear Molsey and the more so to find it (the wound) is still so bad as will not permit her to come to me this Winter —"

[Wm Blount to JGB, 1797 Nov 7, Knoxville]

In February 1798, William's sister Mrs. Harvey reports their brother Jacob with two carriages and others to assist him went to Raleigh in an attempt to move Molsey to Tarboro, NC. They were unsuccessful. In March, William sent his personal physician Dr. Nicholas Fournier from Knoxville to Raleigh to escort Molsey back but she was still unable to travel. In May, William related the story to an associate:

"— You no doubt have heard that Mrs. Blount in July last had had the Misfortune to have her arm dreadfully Shattered by a fall from a Carriage which as yet has delayed her arrival at this place [Knoxville] but I now daily expect her with my little girls —"

[Wm Blount to Col. Thomas Hart, 1798 May 18, Knoxville]

It would be at least another month before Molsey with Barbara and Eliza Indiana, travelled back to Blount Mansion almost a year after the carriage accident

that injured her arm and possible over eighteen months since she was last there. It is not known which arm was shattered or if it ever satisfactorily healed.

What transpired in the Blount household over the next two years is not known in any detail. William's financial condition, which was the primary cause behind his alleged treason, remained a shambles but his political career still had life, if only just barely. In 1799, after considerable delay and maneuvering, the treason charges against Blount were dropped in the US Senate; effectively ending this sordid chapter of his life. There was every indication, that in 1802, when John Sevier was term-limited out of the governor's office, the still popular (at least in Tennessee) William Blount would be easily elected to the position of governor. A position he had coveted from the out set of Tennessee's existence. But that was not to be.

In the early months of 1800, Knoxville was struck with an epidemic of fever. Few households were spared but none were as hard hit as the Blount's. In March, Mary Grainger, Blount's mother-in-law, fell ill with a "bilious fever." Next to fall ill were Jacob and Billy who was in serious peril, when Mrs. Grainger died. Then Molsy and Mary Louisa were stricken but recovered. William Blount attended to his sick family, while burying his mother-in-law. As Billy improved and was no longer in danger, William relaxed only to fall ill himself. He seemed to recover, only to relapse a few days later. William Blount died at his home, Blount Mansion, in the early hours of March 21st. He was six days shy of his fifty-first birthday.

Molsy still in her sickbed and undoubtedly suffering grief from the double loss of her mother and husband just days apart was unable to attend William's funeral. It was left to Blount's frequent ally, sometime rival Tennessee Governor John Sevier to lead the mourners as William Blount was laid to rest in the 1st Presbyterian Church cemetery.

William did not live long enough after the Panic of 1796-97 and subsequent bursting of the western land bubble that led to his bankruptcy to recoup his financial losses. Now that he was dead his family's circumstances, while not dire were limited. Molsy's brother-in-law John Gray made this plain in a letter to Willie:

"...I expect the School of adversity has taught to Molsy [sic] that econ[omy] now so necessary & that little will be necessary to maintain them [more than] can be made by the negroes."

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"Molsy [sic] must give up to you [Willie] the Boys & they must go [to] the best Schools & have an education...."

[JGB to Willie Blount, draft 1800 May 11, Tarboro, NC]

John Gray's land speculation business was badly damaged by the same downturn that all but destroyed his brother. If he were in any position to financially help his brother's widow, which he wasn't, it isn't likely he would have helped his

brother's family anyway. Molsey and her children, with the possible exception of the boys were for all intents and purposes now financially on their own.

Half-brother Willie Blount, who was in Nashville, rushed back to Knoxville and took charge of the family. All the children recovered as Molsey reportedly did, but likely broken in body and spirit, it is questionable whether she ever fully recovered her health.

Amidst all this sorrow there was a ray of joy, as Molsey and William's eldest daughter Anne "Nancy" Harvey Blount was married just three months after his death. Nancy had been living in North Carolina since the family moved to Tennessee in 1792. When news reached Tarboro, she and her aunt, the Widow Harvey rushed to be with the family in Knoxville. Along with them came Henry Irwin Toole. It was in Tarboro that she met her future husband, an Edgecombe County native. In June 1800 while still in Knoxville, Nancy Blount married Henry Tool in a service officiated by the Rev. Samuel Carrick.

Another Blount marriage followed the next year, when Mary Louisa married Pleasant Miller, a raising lawyer and politician, in April 1801. Unlike the Tools who went back to North Carolina, the Millers stayed in Knoxville and lived for awhile at least on Barbara's Hill. Indications are the other Blount children were thriving despite the loss of their father. The boys were attending Blount College (named for their father) where the Rev. Samuel Carrick was president and teacher. Even Barbara and Eliza, who were still quite young, attended a school though mostly to keep them out of mischief according to their Uncle Willie.

Molsey's life was a different matter. Given her frequent and long absences, it isn't clear whether she liked or ever accepted living in Knoxville but after her husband William died Molsey apparently had little choice. Whether from poverty, ill health or for some other reason, Molsey remained in Knoxville, living in Blount Mansion with her three boys and two girls, and her life-long personal slave Hagar. How the death of her mother and husband effected her isn't known. Nor is it known what if any lingering impact her shattered arm had on her health. But just two years after William died, her body ailing and jaundiced (possibly from Yellow Fever, although there are other causes of jaundice), Mary "Molsey" (Grainger) Blount died on October 2, 1802. At least forty-two years old, Molsey was buried next to her husband in 1st Presbyterian Church Cemetery, Knoxville.