

Mary Louisa Blount (1782 - 1847 Feb 14)

(Third child and second girl of William and Mary Blount)

Compiled for Blount Mansion Association by Dean Novelli, 2020.

GENEALOGICAL DATA:

BORN: 1782 "Piney Grove," (near Greenville), Pitt County, NC
DIED: 1847 Feb 14 "Holly Hills," Jackson, Madison County, TN
AGE AT DEATH: 64/65 years
BURIED: Riverside Cemetery, Jackson, Madison County, TN

PARENTS: William Blount (1749 March 26 - 1800 March 21) age 50
MARRIED 1778 Feb 12
Mary "Molsey" Grainger (1760 -1802 Oct 7) age 42
William and "Molsey" Blount had nine (9) children; five
(5) boys and four (4) girls, seven (7) lived to adulthood

SIBLINGS: Mary Louisa was the third of nine children of William and Mary "Molsey" Blount; see list of siblings under parents' genealogical entries

MARRIAGES: Married once, preceded her husband in death
HUSBAND: Pleasant Moorman Miller (1773? - 1849)
MARRIED: 1801 April
AGES : Mary Louisa 18/19, Pleasant 28/29; a ten (10) year difference

CHILDREN: Mary Louisa and Pleasant are reported to have had as many as thirteen (13) children but this is unverified; a list of possible children include:

Darthula Olivia (1802 Jan 15 - 1836 Jan) age 33/34
Albert S. (1803 - 1852) age 48/49
William Blount (1806 Jan 26 - 1841 March 12) age 35
Mary Ann (1809 - 1830) age 20/21
Susan Lynch (1811 - 1864) age 52/53
Pleasant Moorman (1814 - 1849) age 34/35
Martha Grainger (1817 - 1901) age 93/94
Barbara Martha (1820 - 1890) age 69/70
John Jacob (1824 - 1836 Sept) age 12/13
Richard Blount (1827 March 14 - 1855 Oct 13) age 28

Darthula Olivia, Albert S. and William Blount are confirmed offspring. The rest of the above children are subject to verification.

EDUCATION: Unknown. It is possible that Mary Louisa attended Blount College (found 1794) and was a student Rev. Samuel Carrick

but no records have survived. It is not known if she could read or write.

Mary Louisa Blount (1782 - 1847 Feb 14)

CHRONOLOGICAL HIGHLIGHTS:

- 1782 BORN: Mary Louisa Blount at "Piney Grove," (near Greenville), Pitt County, NC, on her father William Blount's plantation
- 1787 Sept: Mary's father SIGNED the US Constitution as representative from North Carolina
- 1789 Aug 17 DIED: Jacob Blount, age 63; Mary's grandfather
- 1790 Mary's father William Blount APPOINTED territorial governor of Southwest Territory
- 1791 Fall: William Blount's family moved to Rocky Mount, near Johnson City, TN; Mary Louisa and her sister Anne "Nancy" Harvey were sent to stay with their Aunt Anne "Nancy" Harvey in Tarboro. NC
- 1792 William Blount family moved to Knoxville, TN
- 1793? SICK: Mary Louisa, living at Tarboro, NC was gravely ill and nearly died
- 1794? MOVED: At some point after 1794, Mary Louisa went to live with the rest of the Blount family in Knoxville, TN
- 1797 July INJURED: Mary Louisa's mother Moley shattered her arm in a carriage accident near Raleigh, NC en-route to Knoxville
July: Mary Louisa's father William Blount, a US Senator from TN is EXPELLED by the US Senate and IMPEACHED by the US House
- 1800 March <10 DIED: Mary Grainger, Mary Louisa's maternal grandmother
March 21 DIED: William Blount, Mary Louisa's father
- 1801 April MARRIED: Pleasant Moorman Miller; ten years his junior (18 and 28); a rising lawyer and future politician
- 1802 DIED Oct: Mary "Moley" (Grainger) Blount, Mary Louisa's mother
- 1805 DIED March 21: Anne "Nancy" Gray (Blount) Harvey, Mary Louisa's aunt who she lived with in Tarboro, NC for several years
- ???? BORN: Over the next twenty years Mary Louisa and Pleasant had as many at thirteen children (unverified)

- 1809 ELECTED: Pleasant Miller was elected US Representative for TN 3rd district; he served one term
- 1811-12 ELECTED: Pleasant Miller was elected to the TN House of Representatives he served one term
- 1817-23 ELECTED: Pleasant Miller was elected to the TN House of Representatives he served multiple terms
- 1824 MOVED: The Miller family moved to Jackson, Madison County, TN where Pleasant bought a farm, "Holly Hill"
- 1847 Feb 14 DIED: Mary Louisa (Blount) Miller at "Holly Hills," Jackson, Madison County, TN; buried at Riverside Cemetery, Jackson, Madison County, TN; age 64/65

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH of:

Mary Louisa Blount (1782 - 1847 Feb 14)

FAMILY BACKGROUND

See entry under parents William Blount (1749-1800) and Mary "Molsey" Grainger (1760 - 1802) for Family Background

LIFE SUMMARY

Mary Louisa Blount was born in 1782 to William Blount and Mary "Molsey" Grainger at "Piney Grove," Pitt County, NC, her father's plantation near present day Greenville. William and "Molsey" Blount had nine (9) children; five (5) boys and four (4) girls, seven (7) lived to adulthood (four (4) girls, three (3) boys). Mary Louisa is the third child and second girl born to the Blount's. She was likely named Mary for her mother and Louisa for her father's sister Louisa (Blount) Blackledge.

William Blount, like his father Jacob, was a successful businessman involved in plantations, mills and distilleries, import and export, lending money for interest, and as a means to further his business ambitions politics — local, state and national. But above all else, William was a land speculator. Blount's success and his failure, as well as that of his siblings, notable Thomas and John Gray, casts a long shadow that his children will grow up under.

When Mary Louisa was born at "Piney Grove," William, thirty-three years old, was already a recognized if not established figure in North Carolina business and political circles. His Revolutionary War service was earning Blount national recognition, though not always positive. When Mary Louisa turned five in 1787, her father had just signed the US Constitution, making him one of the thirty-nine men known as the "Framing Fathers" of the United States. In 1790, she was eight and her father was appointed both territorial governor and superintendent of Indian affairs for the newly created Territory of the United States South of the River Ohio.

In 1791, William Blount moved his family from the settled secure life of North Carolina Eastern Shore gentry to the frontier "wilderness" of the Southwest Territory, where the town of Knoxville had only just been laid out and consisted of nothing but log cabins, lean-tos and James White's Fort for protection. When her mother Molsey and her three younger brothers left to join William in the Southwest Territory, nine year old Mary Louisa Blount didn't go; neither did her older sister Nancy, age eleven. Their father informed a family friend of the arrangement:

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

Both girls were entrusted to the care of their aunt Mrs. Anne Harvey (Anne "Nancy" Gray Blount), 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 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.

How long Mary Louisa stayed in Tarboro is not known. She is mentioned but once in the large volume of correspondence between Thomas Blount and his brother John Gray that frequently mention Mrs. Harvey and Nancy Blount together; quoted below:

"Mary [Louisa Blount] is yet alive contrary to the expectation of us all & a change that has taken place this morning affords us all some hope that she will recover — Nancy [Blount] & Billy Orr are the only well persons in the family — My Sister [Anne Harvey] is fatigued almost to death & complains heavily but Keeps up — I dread the consequences to her." [TB to JGB, n.d. [1793?], from Tarboro, NC]

At some point after 1794, Mary Louisa apparently left Tarboro and moved to Tennessee. The Blount Mansion in Knoxville was a busy place where Mary Louisa, now at least twelve years old, was both the oldest child and oldest girl in the household. (Her big sister Anne "Nancy" Harvey was two years older but remained in North Carolina and as far as can be ascertained never lived at Blount Mansion.) Her parents had two additional girls (Barbara and Eliza Indiana) while Mary Louisa was living in North Carolina. Counting her three younger brothers there were now six (6) Blount children living at Blount Mansion.

There are no records of Mary Louisa's life at Blount Mansion but it can be assumed that her mother "Molsey" would have seen to her education, at least as far as the social graces expected of a woman of the time period. It is possible that Mary Louisa some education from the Rev. Samuel Carrick, president of Blount College, who taught her brother William "Billy" Grainger Blount (he was two years younger than Mary Louisa), but no records survive. It is not known if Mary Louisa learned to read or write but given her socioeconomic class it is likely she did.

Mary Louisa was living at Blount Mansion when first her grandmother (her mother's mother Mrs. Mary (Walters) Grainger and then her father William died during a local epidemic in 1800. Her mother and sister Barbara were also stricken but survived. With her father dead, Mary Louisa's three brothers became the guardians of either Willie Blount (their uncle, William's half-brother, twenty years his junior) or Hugh Lawson White, while the girls remained in the care of their mother Molsey.

It was during this sad time that Pleasant Moorman Miller entered the Blount's life. Miller was from Lynchburg, VA and had studied law in Staunton before moving to Rogersville, TN in 1796, where he had relatives. In 1800, Miller moved to Knoxville to start a law practice and soon became partners with future Knoxville mayor Thomas Emmerson. The circumstances of Mary Louisa first meeting Pleasant are not known but in April 1801 they married. He was ten years older than Mary Louisa which wasn't unusual for the time.

It isn't known where the newlyweds lived, whether in Blount Mansion or another place in Knoxville. Apparently Mary Louisa inherited forty acres of land that made up part of the Blount farm on what is now the University of Tennessee campus. This was part of the tract known as "Barbara's Hill," where in 1792, the first Blount child was born in Knoxville. It is possible they built a house on Barbara's Hill and lived there.

In October 1802, eighteen months after marring, tragedy struck the Blount household again when Mary Louisa's mother Molyse died. The Millers became guardians to Mary Louisa's two younger sisters Barbara and Eliza Indiana. Miller, being a man and Mary Louisa's husband, was legally responsible for the girls as indicated by court records. He took his responsibility to heart as he states in a 1803 letter to his uncle-in-law John Gray Blount:

"—The death of Mrs. Blount & its consequences as it respect me can be best told by them who have Experen'd the like — however I believe I can weather it as well as most people, tis one of my creeds to do what I am bound to do either from propriety or necessity with dispatch and cheerfulness." [PM Miller to JGB, 1803 April 16, from Knoxville, TN]

It is assumed that when the girls went to live with the couple Mary Louisa took over responsibility for their upbringing. At least Barbara is known to have attended Blount College.

Of what little is known of the Miller's life comes through the success of Pleasant. His law practice thrived and in 1809 Miller was elected to the US House as a representative from the 3rd congressional district. After one term Miller left federal office for state office where he served in the Tennessee house on two separate occasions (1811-1812 and 1817-1823) for a total of nine years. During this time, the Miller's started their large family. Various sources stated they had nine, ten or possible thirteen children; at least several survived to adulthood. About their family life, Miller comments candidly in another letter to John Gray Blount in 1813:

"...Mrs. Miller & myself make Love & children as fast as a reasonable man ought to desire, we have six in fine health, & Mrs. M in fair way — Barbara & Eliza went to Nashville a few days ago

where they will remain for the winter." [PM Miller to JGB, 1813
September 29, from Knoxville, TN]

About 1824, after Miller finished his longest stretch as a public representative, the family relocated from Knoxville to Jackson, Madison County, Tennessee; more than halfway from Nashville to Memphis. It was after the move that the Miller's sold Mary Louisa's inheritance, the forty acre farm (which included at least part of Barbara' Hill), to the East Tennessee College (that later became the University of Tennessee).

Nothing is known of their life in Jackson other than Mary Louisa died there in 1847 and was buried in Riverside Cemetery. She was about sixty-four or five years old. Widower Pleasant Miller left Jackson almost immediately after his wife's death moving to Trenton, Gibson County, Tennessee where he died a few years later in 1849 at the age of seventy-six or seven.

Two of their children, Albert S. Miller and William Blount Miller became US Army officers. Darthula Olivia married Alexander Blackburn Bradford who had a distinguished military career leading troops in the 2nd Seminole War and the Madison (County, TN) Grays in the fight for Texas independence before becoming a member of the Provisional Confederate Congress. Darthula had four children with Bradford before dying young at about thirty-four or five years old. Nothing is know of their other children.