

Arbuckle Family

House of James Arbuckle II

THE ARBUCKLES—scouts, soldiers and patriots, noted for their vigor and courage—were among the earliest and most important of the Greenbrier pioneers. The progenitor of the family, James Arbuckle I, received from King George II, a grant of four hundred acres of land on the James River and settled there in 1749. One of his sons, John, later became first United States postmaster in Greenbrier, at Frankford. William (Captain) acquired much land in Greenbrier, Mason, and Kanawha counties and in 1777 married Catherine Madison McClanahan (cousin of James Madison and widow of Captain Robert McClanahan). Both were members of the George Rogers Clark Expedition. And, too, they, as well as their brother Matthew, fought together in the Battle of Point Pleasant. In fact, one only had to know where things were happening, and there would be Arbuckles!

Captain Matthew Arbuckle, born about 1749, also a son of James, was one of the greatest woodsmen of his day. He is said to have been the first white man to pass from the Greenbrier Valley down to the Ohio River and safely return (about 1765). The reason for this long and dangerous journey was not only the urge to explore but also the desire to barter his pelts at a French trading post on the Ohio River. At a still earlier date, however, he and his brothers, William and Thomas, had come from the James River on a hunting and exploring trip

and had camped on the Greenbrier River near the present town of Ronceverte.

It is not surprising that he was the man chosen to guide the army of General Lewis through the dense mountain forests to Point Pleasant in 1774—no small accomplishment. He was doubtless the only man in that whole army of eleven hundred who had ever made the journey. Captain Arbuckle was an officer in the battle, and two years later he again marched a company over this route to build and garrison Fort Randolph, and remained in command there through 1777.

It has long been a tradition that Captain Arbuckle bought the first lot and built the first house after the town of Lewisburg was laid off (1782). Colonel John Stuart, the authentic source of much early Greenbrier history, himself, made the statement ("Memorandum" 1798). It is also generally believed and has often been stated that Captain Arbuckle did not, however, live to see the growth of the town, as he was accidentally killed in a storm when struck by a falling tree near Jackson River the following year (1783). On the other hand, this date does not agree with the court records, as appraisalment of Captain Arbuckle's estate, recorded in the clerk's office, gives the date of his death as October 18, 1781.

Further confusing contradictions are a court order dated May 23, 1782, to Matthew Arbuckle and four other men "for viewing and marking out the highest and best way from the Warm Springs to this place (Lewisburg) 2400 lbs. of tobacco, at rate of one penny half penny per lb." And on May 22, 1783, a second order "To Matthew Arbuckle, 18 shillings for 18 diets furnished for the use of militia on duty."

These orders were likely for money due his estate, even though there is no mention of his death, as presumably the date of his death given in the appraisal must be accepted as accurate.

There is no deed for a Lewisburg lot recorded in Arbuckle's name, and, as the lot sale occurred in 1784, three years after his death, the supposition is that he may have already owned property within the area before the actual survey was made.

Certainly there is evidence to lead one to believe that he did own what appears on the first town plat as Lot 25, at the southeast corner of Jefferson and Randolph streets —land which was originally part of the boundary of Fort Savannah, and that his home was on this site. The late Marcellus Zimmerman, Lewisburg's compiler of local historical data, identified the site as that of the Arbuckle house. (Further information is given under "Reynolds-Patton House.")

As was customary, after three years of service as captain of the Continental Line, Captain Arbuckle was awarded posthumously four thousand acres of land which is located in Madison County, Ohio, and upon which some of his descendants are still living. After the death of Captain Arbuckle, his widow, Frances Arbuckle, married Alexander Welch, who was later appointed by Governor Patrick Henry as surveyor of Greenbrier County to succeed Thomas Edgar, who resigned in 1784.

The appraisalment of Captain Arbuckle's goods and chattels, with its quaint spelling, is an interesting one. A few of the items are as follows:

One negro named Adam
1 ditto wench named Esther
Nurse Pernal, a hireling for 13 months

One flee bitten gray horse 8 years old 14½ hands
high
Spectators, full vollum
One large looking glass
One clock face with part of works
1 Dikonary 12 Starks justice 15
One book the souls exposal 2-3
Standing corn including the Smiths share
17 head of sheep at 6-per, head
One old bell without a clapper
6 pewter dishes & 23 ditto plates
1 stamp counterpine
1 flax rackle —5—
1 book Jonathan Edwards
1 book Mortons 4 fold state
4 chainy cups & saucers
1 pockett Bible
2 smothing irons
1 bottle case with 6 bottles

Captain Arbuckle was twice married. His first wife was Jane Lockhart, by whom he had two sons, Charles, who became a leading citizen and merchant of Greenbrier (having a son, Colonel Charles) and John, who moved to Ohio. Captain Arbuckle's second marriage (1774) was to Mrs. James Lawrence, Jr., nee Frances Hunter, of Botetourt County, who was born in 1750 and died in 1834.

It was this union which produced the most illustrious of the Arbuckle men, General Matthew Arbuckle. General Arbuckle, born December 28, 1778, was aide on the staff of General Andrew Jackson at the Battle of New Orleans in 1815; commanded in what is now Oklahoma for twenty years; was transferred to Louisiana and later to Arkansas; built and garrisoned Fort Tow-

son, the first military post below the Canadian River, and died, unmarried, at Fort Smith, Arkansas, in 1851. Captain Arbuckle also had three other sons. Of these, Thomas married Jane Davis, daughter of John and Jane (Clendenin) Davis in 1804, and with a second brother, Samuel, moved to Kentucky; and James II (1776-1869), remained in Greenbrier and lived to the venerable age of ninety-three.

The brick "homestead" of James II is still standing, and is located on a farm approximately three miles southwest of Lewisburg, on the road leading to the Davis Stuart School. The house, later plastered over, is thought to have been built before 1815. It is not recognizable today as one of the earliest brick houses in the county, having been altered and "modernized" about twenty-five years ago. The large paneled front door, with circular glass above, is original, and somehow miraculously escaped the "improvements."

In the yard is a small two-room limestone building, one room above and one below. The upper room, plastered and with a fireplace, opens from the yard, while the lower room is built into the slope of the lawn, with no windows and with an outside door on the lower side. It has a fireplace, but is unplastered and has only a dirt floor. This interesting and quaint little house was called the "loom house," and here the family weaving was done. Undoubtedly very old, though its walls are unbroken, it stands almost hidden in a tangle of vines. The farm is owned today by Mr. Henry Mathews, of Lewisburg.

James II married Catherine Alexander in 1798, and they became the parents of eleven children. Mr. and Mrs. Arbuckle were among the earliest members of Old Stone Church, being members at the time Dr. McElhenney ar-

rived in 1808. One of their sons, Alexander W. Arbuckle I, held the office of sheriff of the county and was also a colonel of militia. He married Julia H. Bell in 1833, and they were the parents of eight children. One of these, Alexander W. Arbuckle II, Confederate soldier and prominent farmer, married Elizabeth Creigh in 1875. Alexander II's children were Charles Creigh, Julia Bell, Emily Creigh, Mary Lynn, James Edward, Lockhart Davis, James Edward (named for the first James Edward who died in childhood, an old custom in Scotland and Ireland), and Alexander Wayt Arbuckle III.