

Parker Adkins & Blue Sky: Was Their Story Possible?

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Lilburn, Georgia
June, 2017

INTRODUCTION

Parker Adkins's parents, William Atkinson (Adkins) and Elizabeth Parker were married on January 17, 1716, at St. John's Church in Richmond, Virginia.

One branch of Parker's descendants has embraced the story that, in addition to the children he had with his wife, Mary, he had two children by a daughter of Chief Cornstalk named Blue Sky and when Blue Sky died, Parker took his two half-Shawnee children, Littleberry and Charity, home to his wife, Mary, who raised them along with their other children.

No proof existed, one way or another, until 2016 when a direct female descendant of Charity Adkins was located and agreed to have her mitochondrial DNA analyzed. Mitochondrial DNA traces a female's maternal ancestry, mother-to-mother-to-mother, back through time. The DNA came back as Haplogroup H, the most common female haplogroup in Europe. Charity's mother was a white woman with mostly English and Irish ancestry. Many other women match her descendant's DNA kit, all of them with the same basic ancestry.

Some members of the Adkins family who have long embraced Blue Sky as their ancestor did not accept the DNA results so I researched and put together the following paper trail in an attempt to validate the story, beginning with Littleberry and Charity Adkins. This information was posted on the Adkins Facebook page over a period of time. I have consolidated the posts into one document – a future reference for everyone who has heard or is interested in this story.

I grew up in Leon, West Virginia, and graduated from Point Pleasant High School so I have always had an interest in the history of the area. I began seriously researching my family history as well as my husband's Adkins family history in the mid-1970s.

My interest in Chief Cornstalk and Indian atrocities in Western Virginia began while researching my Burns ancestors. My first Burns ancestor, Peter Burns, came to America in 1738 as an indentured servant to Col. James Patton who was killed in 1755 during the Draper's Meadow Shawnee attack that resulted in Mary Draper Ingles being captured near Sinking Creek above the New River and taken to a Shawnee village in Ohio.

I later found that members of the See family, ancestors of a cousin-by-marriage, were murdered or captured by Shawnee Indians led by Chief Cornstalk at the massacre of Muddy Creek in 1763.

I soon began finding accounts of other Indian atrocities, specifically by the Shawnees and Chief Cornstalk. None of it matched what I had been taught about Chief Cornstalk while attending Point Pleasant High School, which was this: “Chief Cornstalk was a brave Indian chief who fought the settlers at Point Pleasant to prevent them from taking away more of his land. Afterwards, he signed a peace treaty and became a faithful friend. He and his son were unjustifiably murdered when he came to Fort Randolph to warn the settlers that other Indians were planning attacks.”

I bought the book, “Adkins – Land of York to Beech Fork” by Ronnie Adkins that was published in 1990 because my husband was part of that same large Adkins family. I had never heard the Blue Sky story until I bought the book.

My basic premise when beginning this research was that in order to do valid research, one must put aside preconceived ideas and go where the facts lead. This is the result, beginning with the two children involved.

LITTLEBERRY ADKINS

According to Ronnie Adkins’s book, the birthdate on Littleberry’s tomb stone is May 10, 1767, but I looked at the various censuses and this is what they say: The 1820 census says Littleberry was over 45 (born sometime before 1775). The 1830 census says Littleberry was age 50-59 (born 1771-1780), 1840 census says he was age 60-69 (born 1771-1780).

Considering that Littleberry was head of household in 1830 and 1840 and the information given about his age is consistent in both censuses, should we believe the date on his tomb stone or should we believe the information that was given while he was still alive?

My opinion is that the census information is more likely to be correct since the people involved were the people who gave the information to the census taker, probably Littleberry himself since it was customary at that time for the head of household to answer the census questions.

Littleberry and Nancy Adkins were married May 29, 1790. This means that he would have been 23 years old if born in 1767, 19 years old if he was born in 1771, 18 years old if born in 1772. It is not very logical that he would have been married much younger than that so my best guess is that he could have been born no later than 1771 or 1772. The 1820 census says he was over 45 so anytime between 1767 and 1771/1772 could be correct. As I said earlier, his age in the later censuses leads more toward 1771/1772, considering the consistency from census to census. This is important only in relationship to his sister, Charity, who also supposedly belonged to Blue Sky.

CHARITY ADKINS

The only facts we have about Charity are that she married Randolph Adkins in 1788 and the various censuses in which she appeared.

In 1810 she was living in Giles County, Virginia, with Randolph and nine children. Charity was age 26-44. This means she was born between 1766 and 1784. The three oldest children, ages 16-25, were born between 1785 and 1794. Since Charity and Randolph weren't married until 1788, these three children would have been born between 1789 and 1794. The two youngest children were born between 1800 and 1810. Also, Charity could not have been born as late as 1784 since she married Randolph in 1788 so we know she was born closer to the early part of this range.

In 1820 Charity was a widow in Cabell County, Virginia, age 26-44, which means she was born between 1776 and 1794. Her brother, Littleberry, was over age 45 in this same census, thus establishing that he was older than she. But Charity could not have been born in 1776 unless she married Randolph Adkins when she was age 12. Although this is possible, it is not likely.

In 1830 Charity was a widow in Cabell County, age 50-59. This means she was born between 1771 and 1780. Littleberry was also age 50-59, supposedly born between 1771 and 1780. Considering the consistency between the 1810 and 1830 censuses, Charity was born closer to 1771/72 in which case she would have been 16 or 17 years old when she married Randolph.

Charity was not in the 1840 census but Littleberry was. He was age 60-69, born between 1771 and 1780.

Why this close attention to their ages? If Littleberry was born in 1767 and Charity was born around 1771/72, there was a 4 to 5 year difference in their ages. This means that Parker's supposed relationship with Blue Sky lasted over a period of several years. If both were born closer to 1767 or 1771/72, the relationship would have been a much shorter one.

PARKER AND MARY ADKINS

In order to prove the Blue Sky story, we need to examine the places where both Parker and Chief Cornstalk were living at the time as well as what they were doing.

Ronnie Adkins has done such meticulous research concerning Parker, including a paper trail of land records, that I have not tried to go further. Here is Ronnie's chronology of where Parker and his family were living when Littleberry and Charity Adkins were born, as well as the family's moves before and after:

1754. Parker married Mary (last name unknown). They lived on the south side of Pigg River in the Snow Creek District in what is today Franklin County, Virginia. Here is a current description of the Pigg River: "The Pigg River rises on Five Mile Mountain in western Franklin County and flows generally eastwardly through Franklin and Pittsylvania Counties, past the town of Rocky Mount."

May 10, 1767. According to Littleberry's tomb stone, this is when he was born. According to census records, he and Charity could also have been born around 1771/72. Whichever is correct, Parker and his family were still living on the south side of Pigg River in Franklin County, VA, when these two were born.

1772. Parker sold 50 acres of his land to his father.

Sept. 11, 1773. Parker and his family were living in Fincastle County, Virginia. Fincastle County was created in 1772 from Botetourt County and became extinct in 1776 when it was divided to form Montgomery, Washington and Kentucky counties in Virginia.

June 20, 1774. Parker joined the militia in Fincastle County.

October 10, 1774. The Battle of Point Pleasant took place. There is now some controversy about whether or not Parker and his son, Millington/Milton, participated in the Battle of Point Pleasant against Chief Cornstalk and his Shawnee warriors; some records say yes and some say no. Whichever the case may be, Parker did join the Militia to protect his family and other settlers from attacks that were being made by Chief Cornstalk and his Shawnees just a few months before the Battle of Point Pleasant.

January 7, 1775. Parker had 144 acres surveyed on Sinking Creek, the south side of Johns Mountain. This is a current description of the area, posted as a description of part of the Appalachian trail: "This is a strenuous trek and is not recommended for first-timers. Gaining over 1500 feet during the 3-mile ascent of Johns Creek Mountain and then 2000 feet over the 2.5-mile hike to Lone Pike Peak, this route will keep you huffing."

1780. Parker was overseer of a road from the steep bank of Sinking Creek to the hollow of Doe Creek.

1782, 1789 & 1790. Parker and his family were still living on Sinking Creek, south side of Johns Mountain and Salt Pond Mountain of the New River.

Here is a description of this area: "Salt Pond Mountain is a mountain located in Giles County, Virginia. The mountain, which is part of the ridge-and-valley province of the Appalachian Mountains, extends about seven miles from southwest to northeast. The highest peak is Bald Knob, at the southeast end, south of Mountain Lake. Salt Pond Mountain joins Johns Creek Mountain at the southwest end. The south end of Salt Pond Mountain drains into Sinking Creek and Doe Creek, thence into New River, the Kanawha River, the Ohio River, the Mississippi River, and into the Gulf of Mexico.

1791. Parker was given a tax exemption due age and infirmities in Montgomery County.

In order for Parker Adkins to have fathered two children with Blue Sky, he had to have developed a friendly relationship with the Shawnee tribe as well as with Chief Cornstalk so that he could come and go among them. This relationship would have lasted over a period of at least 2 to 4 years, depending on the age gap between Littleberry and Charity Adkins. This means that Parker and Blue Sky had to be in the same places at the same time.

While working on the chronology of Cornstalk's activities, I ran across this documented account which I have shortened considerably to show only what applies to Parker:

Shortly after Parker and Mary Adkins were married in 1754 in Halifax County, a series of forts were built to protect against Indian attacks. Captain Thomas Calloway commanded a fort on Pigg River. Parker and Mary lived on Pigg River at the time so they certainly would have been aware of the fort. It is entirely possible they visited or took refuge in it.

Peter Fontaine, County Surveyor, wrote a letter from Halifax in June, 1757: "The County of Halifax is threatened by our enemy Indians, and the people in the upper part are in great consternation and all public business at a stand. The poor farmers and planters have dreadful apprehensions of falling into the hands of the savages, as they have good reason, considering the treatment of those who have had the misfortune to be surprised by them.

"We have amongst us two or three who have made their escape from the Shawnees (a tribe living on the Ohio), the Indians suspected that one of them whose wife and children had been inhumanly murdered, would attempt to escape, to prevent which they cut deep gashes in his heels and as soon as the man was like to get well and be in order to travel again they cut other gashes across the former, and by that means and at other times searing his feet with hot irons, kept him a continual cripple. The man, however, providentially made his escape . . . Such cruelties they practice upon our people that all had rather perish than be taken alive."

The above paragraphs are examples of what Parker Adkins knew about the Shawnees at the time.

Although there is no evidence that Cornstalk participated in these atrocities, there is also no evidence that he did not. In either case, these and other heinous tortures were commonly practiced by the Shawnee tribe.

A HISTORY OF SHAWNEE TOWNS DURING CORNSTALK'S LIFETIME

No one knows when Cornstalk was born but most seem to think it was between 1720 and 1735 in Pennsylvania. This makes sense because the Shawnee tribe was living in Pennsylvania at the time and didn't begin moving into the Ohio Valley until later. This is a list of known Shawnee towns where Cornstalk may have and probably did live at various points in his life.

1725/27-1758. Logstown. The original village was directly on the right bank of the Ohio River, northwest of the Forks of the Ohio (now in downtown Pittsburgh).

Late 1730s. By the 1730s the effects of alcohol abuse were damaging Shawnee communities. Several Shawnee communities in Pennsylvania were led by Peter Chartier, the son of a French trader and a Shawnee mother. He strongly opposed the sale of alcohol in Shawnee communities, resulting in a lasting conflict with the colonial government.

Late 1730s-1748. Chartier's Town was a Shawnee village on the Ohio River, about 60 miles by water above Logstown, probably near Kittanning, Armstrong County, Pennsylvania. This was the town of Peter Chartier who is mentioned above.

1735-1758. Lower Shawneetown on the Ohio River reached a population of around 1,200 by 1750. It was located near South Portsmouth in Greenup County, Kentucky. It was less a village

and more of a district extending along the Scioto River and Ohio River floodplains. French and British traders regarded Lower Shawneetown as one of two capitals of the Shawnee tribe. The town was destroyed by floods in November, 1758, and the Shawnees relocated to another site further up the Scioto River.

Before 1754. Shawnee Springs, Virginia. The Shawnees had a headquarters at Shawnee Springs at modern-day Cross Junction, Virginia, near Winchester. The father of Chief Cornstalk held his council there.

Before 1754. Several other Shawnee villages were located in the northern Shenandoah Valley: one at Moorefield, now West Virginia, on the North River, and another on the Potomac at Cumberland, Maryland. In the spring of 1756, British settlers clashed with Shawnee Indians led by Chief Killbuck at Moorefield in what is known as the Battle of the Trough.

Before 1774. Chillicothe. On Paint Creek near the current city of Chillicothe in Ross County, Ohio. There were three earlier Shawnee villages of that same name in Ohio. This village may have been occupied by the Shawnees after they moved from Lower Shawnee town.

Before 1774. Cornstalk's Town. Located near Circleville, Ohio (Pickaway County), on the north bank of Scippo Creek. The historical marker that is there today mentions that the Shawnees had villages on the Pickaway Plains.

The Shawnee hunting parties and raiding parties ranged far and wide but, for the most part, the women and children lived in established villages, mostly in Ohio, during the time Parker Adkins was living near the Pigg River in Virginia.

More information about the Indian villages called Chillicothe: Chillicothe was the name of a Shawnee clan. The principal leader of the Shawnee could only come from the Chillicothe clan. When a village was called Chillicothe, it meant that it was home to the principal leader. It was the capital city of the Shawnees until the death of that person. Then the capital would move to the home village of the next person selected to lead. That village would then become Chillicothe.

One Chillicothe was located on the site of the modern city of Piqua, Ohio. Another was on the Scioto River south of Circleville at, or near, modern-day Westfall. A third Chillicothe was approximately three miles north of Xenia. A fourth Chillicothe was at Frankfort along Paint Creek in Ross County. A fifth Chillicothe was at Hopetown, three miles north of present-day Chillicothe.

DISTANCE BETWEEN THE PARKER ADKINS HOME AND CORNSTALK'S VILLAGE

We now know that Cornstalk lived near Circleville, Ohio, and Parker Adkins lived on Pigg River in Franklin County, Virginia, when Littleberry and Charity were born.

The Pigg River flows past Rocky Mount, the county seat of Franklin County, so I looked up the distance between these two cities. It is between 339 and 353 miles from Rocky Mount to

Circleville, depending on the route taken and using today's modern highway system. Parker would have traveled much further to get to Cornstalk's village since he was going up and down the mountains rather than having the advantage of a modern highway.

Since I'm not knowledgeable about horses, I looked up how far a horse can go in a day. Most agreed that horses can go about 20 or 30 miles per day under ideal conditions but not nearly that far under the following conditions:

Level/rolling grasslands: 30
Hilly grasslands: 25
Level/rolling forest/thick scrub: 20
Very hilly forest/thick scrub: 15
Un-blazed Mountain passes: 10
Marshland: 10

I used horseback travel as an estimate because, considering the waterways and terrain involved, it is not possible that Parker could have made this trip solely by canoe or by walking part of the way while carrying a canoe. Since Parker would have been traveling through un-blazed mountain passes at about 10 miles per day, it would have taken him well over a month, perhaps two or more, to get to Circleville. Keep in mind that he would have been hunting for game along the way.

FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR INCIDENT – 1755

In order to understand what Cornstalk was doing and why he was doing it, we need to understand a bit of history, beginning with the French and Indian War in which the Indians fought unrelentingly against the settlers.

One of the early battles is known as Braddock's Defeat and the Shawnees participated in it. The battle took place in 1755 about nine miles from Fort Duquesne on the Monongahela River, near what is now Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This is what George Washington said about it in a letter to his mother:

“We marched to that place, without any considerable loss, having only now and then a straggler picked up by the French and scouting Indians. When we came there, we were attacked by a party of French and Indians, whose number, I am persuaded, did not exceed three hundred men; while ours consisted of about one thousand three hundred well-armed troops, chiefly regular soldiers, who were struck with such a panic that they behaved with more cowardice than it is possible to conceive. The officers behaved gallantly, in order to encourage their men, for which they suffered greatly, there being near sixty killed and wounded; a large proportion of the number we had.”

When General Braddock was shot, his troops broke and ran for the river. Of the 1300 British who crossed the river, over 500 didn't come back. The Indians marched the survivors back to Fort Duquesne naked and tortured them to death. The French stood by and watched. Here is one eye-witness account of what took place:

“After the battle the Indians brought their prisoners back to their villages outside Fort Duquesne. An English boy inside the fort—a former Indian captive—saw them come in. The Indians were firing muskets into the air. Some were wearing red coats and officers’ hats. They began stretching hundreds of scalps on hoops. The prisoners were naked. The Indians had already painted the prisoners’ faces black with ashes to mark them for torture.

“Just off the point where the rivers met, there was a low bar called Smoky Island. It was there that the Indians routinely tortured their prisoners. At sunset all the Indian families accompanied the prisoners in canoes to Smoky Island. The men tied the prisoners to stakes and piled coals on their feet. Women heated ramrods over fires until they glowed, then drove them into the prisoners’ nostrils or ears. The children practiced shooting arrows into them.”

There is no record of the names of the Shawnees who participated in this battle. Cornstalk would have been between 20 and 35 years old at the time. Whether or not he was there, this battle describes the practices of the Shawnees against the settlers in 1755 shortly after Parker and Mary Adkins were married.

SHAWNEE ATTACK ON DRAPER’S MEADOW IN 1755

This attack took place about forty miles north of where Parker and Mary Adkins were living.

Sometime around mid-morning on July 30, 1755, a Shawnee war party originating in Lower Shawneetown attacked the small settlement.

Col. James Patton, the man who brought my first known Burns ancestor to America, was killed. Mary Draper Ingles’s mother, Eleanor Draper, was tomahawked and scalped. Betty Draper’s infant child was brained against the side of one of the cabins and a neighbor, an old German man named Casper Barger, was decapitated.

Mary Ingles, along with her young sons, George and Thomas; her sister-in-law, Betty Draper; and two unrelated men, James Cull and Henry Leonard, were captured. They were taken across Flat Top Mountain up the New River/Kanawha River Valley to the Ohio and then to Lower Shawneetown.

As the war party was leaving, they stopped by the home of another neighbor, Philip Lybrook and his wife. They gave Mrs. Lybrook a sack they had brought with them. When she looked in the sack, she recognized the head of Mr. Barger. The Indians then continued on their way without killing the Lybrooks – a mystery that will never be explained.

When the captives arrived at Lower Shawneetown, both Henry Leonard and James Cull failed the ordeal of running the gauntlet and were tortured to death. Mary’s sons were separated from her and adopted into Indian families.

Later that fall, Mary, along with an old Dutch woman, escaped and walked across the entire state of West Virginia back to Draper’s Meadow. Both were near death from starvation when they arrived home. They found their way by following the rivers, including the Kanawha. When she

was captured and during her journey home, Mary Draper Ingles walked the same river bank at Leon where I grew up and at Point Pleasant, where I graduated from high school.

The next chapters will be about Chief Cornstalk, beginning with the year 1763, just four years before the 1767 birthdate on Littleberry Adkins's tomb stone.

1763 TO 1767

The entire Virginia frontier was in chaos after Braddock's defeat in 1755. The Indians attacked the settlements at will, murdering men, women, and children and taking captives until the French and Indian War ended on February 10, 1763 when the Treaty of Paris was signed by England, France and Spain giving control to the British. Unfortunately, no one asked the opinion of the Indians.

Lord Jeffrey Amherst, the British commander-in-chief for America, believed that the best way to control Indians was by strict regulation and punishment. He referred to the granting of provisions that had been practiced by the French as bribery and he stopped giving provisions to the Indians, an action which greatly upset them. In a letter to Sir William Johnson, he wrote: "... it would be happy for the Provinces if there was not an Indian settlement within a thousand Miles of them, and when they are properly punished, I care not how soon they move their Habitations, for the Inhabitants of the Woods are the fittest Companions for them, they being more nearly allied to the Brute than to the Human Creation."

Enter Chief Pontiac who convened a war council and enlisted support from practically every Indian tribe from Lake Superior to the lower Mississippi. His plan was to expel the British from the Indian lands. Each tribe was to seize the nearest fort and then join forces to wipe out the undefended settlements. Pontiac told his people, "It is important for us, my brothers, that we exterminate from our land this nation which only seeks to kill us."

Guess who was in charge of exterminating the settlers in the Greenbrier region of Virginia. None other than Chief Cornstalk.

Pontiac and his allies quickly managed to seize 3/4 of the forts in the Ohio Valley with hundreds of colonists either captured or killed and many more fleeing from the region.

The British then created a smallpox epidemic among the Indians by giving them blankets and articles of clothing that had been deliberately infected with smallpox spores. This weakened their ability to wage war and Pontiac sent the British a wampum belt for peace in 1764. The British chopped up the belt, a huge insult to the Indians, and the conflict continued.

The British finally decided to start peace negotiations in order to prevent further violence. A peace agreement was signed in 1767 but this did not mean that attacks on the settlers stopped.

This takes us to the year Littleberry Adkins was born, according to the date inscribed on his tomb stone. The next chapters describe some of Chief Cornstalk's activities.

FIRST GREENBRIER MASSACRE – AT MILLBORO

The first massacre took place in 1759, when a band of Shawnee warriors followed Chief Cornstalk from the Ohio River and split into two parties. From what is now Millboro in Bath County, Virginia, twenty-seven of the warriors slipped over Mill Mountain about two miles north of where Interstate 64 now cuts toward Clifton Forge.

Charles Daugherty and some of his children were killed. Next was the Jacob Cunningham cabin. With Cunningham away, his wife was killed and his 10-year old daughter was knocked unconscious, scalped, and left for dead. She survived to face the Indians a second time when Chief Cornstalk and his men later massacred the settlers at Kerr's Creek.

Next came the home of Thomas Gilmore; the elderly Gilmore and his wife were leaving to visit a neighbor when they were killed and scalped. Five of the ten members of the Robert Hamilton family were killed next. By that time, the community was alerted to the danger and residents were scrambling for safety.

One account says that John and Jane McKee had earlier sent their six children to Timber Ridge for safekeeping. When the alarm sounded through the neighborhood, the McKees fled. Jane McKee could not keep up and John had left the house without his gun. As the Indians neared their home, Jane begged her husband to run on without her or their children would be orphans; John McKee helped his wife hide in a sink hole before he ran. He hid until dark and returned to find his wife lying dead in the sink hole. She had survived long enough to wrap her kerchief around her head wound. He buried her where she lay, wrote her name in the family Bible, and went on to raise their children without her.

Another account says that John had gone to help a neighbor and found his wife had been slaughtered when he returned home. In either case, the Shawnees slaughtered Jane McKee and John McKee raised his children without her.

Charles Lewis (the same Charles Lewis who was killed in the Battle of Pt. Pleasant) raised three companies of militia (about 150 men) to go after Cornstalk and his men. One company overtook the Indians near the head of Back Creek in what is now Highland County, Virginia, but the other two companies were behind the advance group and the Shawnees escaped.

The militia companies eventually caught up with the Shawnees at Straight Fork, four miles below the present West Virginia line, and about 20 Indians were killed. Thomas Young was the only white man killed, and Captain Dickenson was wounded.

Pay attention to the Gilmore name for you will see it again in connection with the death of Chief Cornstalk at Point Pleasant.

SECOND GREENBRIER MASSACRE – AT MUDDY CREEK

The two white settlements that gained historical fame during the Pontiac rebellion were the Muddy Creek settlement north of the Greenbrier River and west of Muddy Creek Mountain and

the Clendenin settlement on the Big Levels near Lewisburg, Virginia. These settlements were about twenty miles apart.

Authorities agree that Cornstalk's scalping band consisted of about sixty warriors. Crossing the Ohio in canoes, which they sank at the mouth of the Kanawha, they proceeded overland a distance of about 160 miles to Muddy Creek. Simultaneously, they hit the nine member See family and the six member Yocum family.

On July 16, 1763, Cornstalk and his band suddenly appeared at the Frederick See cabin and pretended to be friendly. The Sees offered to share food with the Shawnees and the Shawnees agreed. After the meal was finished, the Indians lounged around for awhile and rested. Suddenly, the Shawnees attacked their hosts, killing Fredrick See, his son-in-law, Littleberry Roach, and his nephew Valentine (Felty) Yocum, scalping them before the eyes of their families. All of the women and children were taken prisoner.

In one short day, the Muddy Creek settlement was annihilated. Only the captives were left to tell the story.

Leaving a few warriors behind at Muddy Creek to guard the terrified wives and children of the murdered men, Chief Cornstalk and his band went some twenty miles to the Clendenin settlement and proceeded with their third massacre.

As I mentioned before, my original interest in Cornstalk and his activities was partly because of the See family, which has a connection to my own family.

THIRD GREENBRIER MASSACRE – AT KERR'S CREEK

The settlement at Kerr's Creek was larger than the Muddy Creek settlement. As many as 30 families, about 150 people, were living there. The settlement was not a town but was made up of individual claims that were spread over a relatively large area.

The settlers would not normally have been gathered in one place. Accounts given by the captives after their release state that some of the settlers were gathered for a service at the Timber Ridge Presbyterian Church (built in 1756) while others were at Archibald Clendenin's farm.

Those who were at the church fled into the woods when they became aware of the approaching Indians. Those who were at Archibald Clendenin's home were not so lucky.

Archibald Clendenin was the leading citizen of this settlement and he felt that he was on good terms with the Indians who occasionally hunted near his home. He had just returned from a hunting trip where he had killed three elk and invited some of his neighbors to share a meal. When the Shawnees appeared, again pretending to be friendly, they were entertained as they had been at Muddy Creek.

One man, Conrad Yocum, was suspicious of the Indians so he took his horse some distance from the house. Soon afterward, he heard screams and the report of guns so he fled to the fort on Jackson's River. He was the only white man there who was not murdered that day.

The remaining men were killed, the women and children were taken captive, the homes plundered and burned and the horses stolen. It was a day of terror.

The captives were taken to join those who had been left at Muddy Creek and then marched toward the Ohio. Those who later returned told of the march during which one fretful baby was killed and thrown on the shoulders of a girl who was herself killed the next day. Another baby was impaled on a spear and left as a warning to pursuers.

The trip was long and grueling. The women and children who could not keep up were killed. When they finally reached the Shawnee village, the women were forced to run the gauntlet where the Indians beat them with clubs and threw dirt and rubbish in their faces.

Chief Cornstalk and the Shawnees were forced to return 206 captives between November, 1764, and the end of 1765. The captives from Muddy Creek and Kerr's Creek were among those released. They lived to relate the horrendous details of what took place.

THE ATROCITIES AT KERR'S CREEK

These are abbreviated versions of some of the stories told by returning captives:

One survivor told about ARCHIBALD CLENDENIN'S death this way: Mrs. Clendenin was in the process of boiling the bones from the game that Archibald had brought home from his hunt and prepared to take meat to the Indians. Just as she turned the corner of the house, she heard Archibald exclaim "Lord have mercy on me" and saw an Indian with the scalp of her husband in his hand. She rushed at the Indian and began to lash out, calling him a coward. Although she was hit in the the face with the bloody scalp of her dead husband, she showed no fear.

Another survivor told a slightly different version: By mid-morning, Clendenin had a large iron kettle containing the elk meat boiling briskly in the yard. His little daughter, Jane, and her 3-year-old brother, John, played near by. Ann was in the cabin tending the baby and talking to an old lady guest who had arrived early. The old lady had heard that Indians were great healers and asked one of them if he could cure her sore leg. His answer was to bury his tomahawk in her head. This was the signal for the massacre to begin. Both versions could be true, depending on where the teller was at the time.

Ann Clendenin's half-brother, JOHN EWING, age 16, was hoeing corn with two Negro slaves nearby and heard shots. They went to investigate and he saw his half-sister, Ann, tied to a horse. John and the slaves were immediately captured. They were among those taken to Ohio.

MRS. DALE grabbed a horse and escaped. Managing to balance her baby and cling to the horse, she outran the Indians. She said the terror-stricken people ran in every direction, trying to hide. The Indians chased first one, then another, killing everyone in their path. Even the cattle were

shot, bristling with arrows. Mrs. Dale recounts that some people threw up their hands and begged for mercy. Some fled for the spring pond, hiding in the water and in the weeds along the banks. The warriors found them, killed and scalped them, and tossed the bodies in the pond.

THOMAS GILMORE died defending his family. His wife, Jenny, stood over his body, grappling with a tomahawk-wielding Indian. When a second Indian ran up to kill her, the first threw up his hand, sparing her life for her bravery. She was led off into captivity, with her son, James, and two daughters.

MARGARET CUNNINGHAM, the young girl who lived through being scalped in the Shawnee raid at Millboro, was captured along with James, Betsy and Henry Cunningham. When she arrived at the Shawnee town, one of the warriors brought out a scalp and sat it on her head, communicating that it was her hair.

MARY HAMILTON had a baby in her arms when captured. She dropped it in the weeds, and later, when she was ransomed and returned home, she found its bones.

Several days into the trip to the Shawnee camp, ANN CLENDENIN slipped into a thicket and escaped. She found her way back to their cabin and arrived about a week after her capture to find the corpse of her husband still lying in the July sun. She covered his body and slept that night in the cornfield. The next day she started walking toward the Jackson River fort.

The graves of some of the victims can still be seen in what is known as the McKee burying ground. Those listed in the cemetery records as killed in the Cornstalk raids are: Isaac Cunningham, Jacob Cunningham, the Charles Dougherty family, four of the John Gilmore family, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Gilmore, ____ Gray (no first name listed), five Robert Hamilton family members, James McKee, Alexander McMurty, Robert Ramsey, James Stephenson, Thomas Thompson, Samuel Wilson and John Winyard.

As I mentioned before, pay attention to the six Gilmores who were killed for you will see the Gilmore name again in connection with the death of Chief Cornstalk at Pt. Pleasant.

Meanwhile, back at Pigg River, Parker & Mary Adkins had just become the parents of two more sons, Champ and Parker, both recorded in the Adkins book as having been born about 1763.

WHAT WERE PARKER ADKINS AND CHIEF CORNSTALK DOING BETWEEN 1763 AND THE BATTLE OF POINT PLEASANT?

November 15, 1764 – 1765. Col. Henry Bouquet marched down the Ohio River to the forks of the Muskingum and met in a conference with the Indians. They had lost a major battle with him shortly before that. He gave them twelve days to agree to give up all of their prisoners “without exception; Englishmen, Frenchmen, and children; whether adopted into your tribe, married, or living among you under any denomination or pretense.”

The Indian tribes, lead by Chief Cornstalk, agreed to release their prisoners. Two hundred and six captives were released between November, 1764, and the end of 1765, including the captives from the Greenbrier region, with one exception. Elizabeth See, age 9 or 10, was kept by Chief Cornstalk for nine more years. Some of her descendants say she was "married" to one of his sons but there is no proof.

May 10, 1767. According to the date on his grave stone, Littleberry Adkins was born. According to census information, he was born closer to 1770. NOTE: The grave stone date is difficult to read; some have interpreted it as 1762 and others as 1766. I am using the date from Ronnie Adkins since he visited the grave site personally. Also, earlier dates would make the gap between Littleberry's and Charity's births even wider.

October 17, 1768. The Treaty of Hard Labour was signed with the Cherokee tribe. The Cherokees gave up all claims to the property west of the Allegheny Mountains and east of the Ohio River, including of all of present-day West Virginia except the extreme southwestern part. The Shawnee tribe had no part in this treaty and did not honor it.

November 5, 1768. The Treaty of Fort Stanwix was signed with the Iroquois, giving the British colonists the land that is now West Virginia, Kentucky and most of Tennessee. Chief Cornstalk was present at the negotiations but refused to sign. He and his men went back to Ohio and continued to attack the settlers. This was more than a year after the birth date on Littleberry Adkins's tomb stone.

1768-1774. More and more settlers began pouring into the Ohio Valley and violent incidents escalated, leading up to the Battle of Point Pleasant. Although not mentioned by name, Chief Cornstalk participated in and planned many of these attacks. Indian chiefs did not lounge around in their teepees while their warriors went on raids.

1769-1771. Sometime between 1769 and 1771, Charity Adkins was born.

1772-1773. Parker and Mary Adkins moved from their home near the Pigg River to Sinking Creek in Fincastle County, Virginia. Their new home was about 65-75 miles north of their former home and about 25 miles south of the current West Virginia line. It was about 200 miles from Pt. Pleasant, nowhere near the Ohio Valley.

June 20, 1774. Parker Adkins joined the militia that was raised to protect his family and his neighbors from Shawnee attacks.

August 13, 1774. This letter may explain why Parker Adkins joined the militia:

Col. William Preston, who was in charge of the Fincastle military district, wrote this letter: "This summer a number of our people have been killed and captured by the northern Indians. Thomas Hogg, and two men near the mouth of the Great Kanawha, Walter Kelly with three or four other persons below the falls of that river, William Kelly on Muddy Creek, a branch of the Greenbrier River, and a young woman at the same time made prisoner. One of the scouts, one Shockley, was shot in this county and on Sunday the 7th of this inst., a party attacked the house of one

Laybrook (Lybrook), about 15 miles from this place. Old Laybrook was wounded in the arm, three of his children, one of them a sucking infant, a young woman, a daughter of one Scott, and a child of one widow Snide (Snidow) were killed. They scalped the children, all but one, and mangled them in a most cruel manner. Three boys were made prisoners, two of whom made their escape the Wednesday following and were found in the woods by the scouts. The Indians were pursued by the militia, but were not overtaken.

The number of Indians in this marauding party numbered six, and all this mischief was done by them in a very few minutes. The Indians escaped with their prisoners though they were pursued by a company of men under a Captain Clendenin. The night of the 7th of August was a sad one at the fort. Mrs. Snidow and Mrs. Lybrook walked the floor throughout the night, weeping and wringing their hands, and saying that “they knew where the dead children were, but their hearts went out for the little boys, captives.”

The party followed the Indians down the New River until they met the escaped captives, and after listening to the story of their escape and calculating that the Indians were too far ahead to be overtaken, returned with the boys to the settlement, reaching there on the Wednesday after their capture on Sunday, “much to the delight and joy of their mothers and friends.” Theophilus Snidow, the other captive boy, was taken by the Shawnees to their town north of the Ohio.

October 10, 1774. The Battle of Point Pleasant. Chief Cornstalk retreated. Some records say that Parker and his son, Millington, participated in the Battle of Point Pleasant and other records say he did not. Records of the participants are not complete so no one living really knows. Whether or not he was at the Battle of Point Pleasant, he joined the Militia just a few months before the battle to protect his family and the other settlers against the attacks that were being perpetrated by Chief Cornstalk and his Shawnees .

October 19, 1774. Chief Cornstalk signed the Treaty of Camp Charlotte which established the Ohio River as the boundary between the tribes in Ohio and the settlers in Virginia and required the Indians to stop attacking travelers on the Ohio River. This, of course, did not happen.

WHAT WERE PARKER ADKINS AND CHIEF CORNSTALK DOING AFTER THE BATTLE OF POINT PLEASANT?

If, indeed, Parker Adkins participated, he went home shortly after the Battle of Point Pleasant; he had land surveyed in January and Mary gave birth to their youngest son the next year.

January 7, 1775. Parker had 144 acres surveyed on Sinking Creek, the south side of John’s Mountain.

1775. Parker and Mary’s son, Sherrod B. Adkins, was born.

1775-1776. Chief Cornstalk represented the Shawnees at on-going treaty councils at Fort Pitt in Pennsylvania. The Shawnees hoped the British would help reclaim the lands they had lost to the settlers. The Treaty of Fort Pitt was not signed until 1778, the year after Chief Cornstalk was killed.

November 10, 1777. Chief Cornstalk was killed at Fort Randolph. Rather than shorten and paraphrase what happened, I am copying the account of Col. John Stuart, who was present:

“The Cornstalk warrior, with the Redhawk, paid a visit to the garrison at Point Pleasant. He made no secret of the disposition of the Indians; declaring that, on his own part, he was opposed to joining in the war on the side of the British, but that all the Nation, except himself and his own tribe, were determined to engage in it; and that, of course, he and his tribe would have to run with the stream (as he expressed it). On this, Captain Arbuckle thought proper to detain him, the Redhawk, and another fellow, as hostages, to prevent the Nation from joining the British.

“During the time of the stay, two young men of the names of Hamilton and GILMORE, went over the Kanawha one day to hunt for deer; on their return to camp, some Indians had concealed themselves on the bank among the weeds, to view our encampment; and as Gilmore came along past them, they fired on him and killed him on the bank.

“Captain Arbuckle and myself were standing on the opposite bank when the gun was fired; and while we were wondering who it could be shooting, contrary to orders, or what they were doing over the river, we saw Hamilton run down the bank, who called out that Gilmore was killed. Gilmore was one of the company of Captain John Hall, of that part of the country now Rockbridge county. The Captain was a relation of Gilmore’s, whose family and friends were chiefly cut off by the Indians in the year 1763, when Greenbrier was cut off. Hall’s men instantly jumped into a canoe and went to the relief of Hamilton, who was standing in the momentary expectation of being put to death.

“They brought the corpse of Gilmore down the bank, covered with blood and scalped, and put him in the canoe. As they were crossing the river, I observed to Captain Arbuckle that the people would be for killing the hostages, as soon as the canoe would land. He supposed that they would not offer to commit so great a violence upon the innocent, who were in nowise accessory to the murder of Gilmore. But the canoe had scarcely touched the shore until the cry was raised, ‘Let us kill the Indians in the fort; and every man, with his gun in his hand, came up the bank pale with rage. Captain Hall was at their head, and leader. Captain Arbuckle and I met them, and endeavored to dissuade them from so unjustifiable an action; but they cocked their guns, threatened us with instant death if we did not desist, rushed by us into the fort, and put the Indians to death.’”

Governor Patrick Henry caused charges to be brought against the four men accused of killing Chief Cornstalk. They were Captain James Hall, Malcolm McCown, Hugh Galbraith and William Rowan. They were tried in the spring of 1778 and acquitted when no one would testify against them.

Captain Hall’s wife was Martha Gilmore from the same Gilmore family whose members had been murdered during the Greenbrier massacres and the other men who participated in the killing of Chief Cornstalk were also from Rockbridge County. When the Shawnees killed and scalped Robert Gilmore that day, it was the straw that broke the camel’s back as far as the men from Rockbridge County were concerned. They had finally had enough of Chief Cornstalk and his Shawnees.

THE REAL CHIEF CORNSTALK

West Virginia history, as taught to me, ignored the fact that Chief Cornstalk murdered and caused to be murdered, countless innocent men, women and children. Instead, it only glorified his bravery at the Battle of Point Pleasant and his bravery while facing death.

In the interest of space, I earlier left out Col. Stuart's account that the interpreter's wife ran to the cabin where Cornstalk was being held and told them the people were coming to kill them "because the Indians that killed Gilmore had come with Elinipsico the day before. He utterly denied it; declared that he knew nothing of them, and trembled exceedingly." The men at Fort Randolph did not believe Elinipsico. Considering the circumstances, would you?

I never learned any of this while studying West Virginia history and I will bet that most people reading this didn't learn it either. It certainly isn't mentioned to tourists at Tu-endie-wei Park. Instead, the truth about Chief Cornstalk's violent history is hidden and he has become a glamorous, romantic hero.

While it takes bravery to fight a war against armed soldiers, it takes no bravery at all to gather up large bands of men and attack unsuspecting families, brutally murdering, torturing, and capturing innocent men, women and children. This is what Chief Cornstalk did for years before the Battle of Pt. Pleasant and this is what he was doing when Littleberry and Charity Adkins were born.

Here is what the West Virginia Division of Culture and History web site (wvculture.org) says about Chief Cornstalk's death: "The Greenbrier Valley was completely desolated and so remained for six or seven years. Henceforth the frontiersmen of Virginia nursed an undying grudge against the Shawnees. Many of the soldiers who assisted in the defeat of Cornstalk at Point Pleasant in 1774 were but paying off an old score. And – from one way of looking at it – when Cornstalk and his son were murdered at Fort Randolph in 1777, the child-stealing, baby-killing old chieftain was but being paid an old standing debt in his own coin."

This sums up the situation perfectly.

HOW DID PARKER ADKINS MEET BLUE SKY?

After going through this exercise, I have concluded that Parker Adkins could not have met either Blue Sky or Chief Cornstalk.

When I began this project, I said that true research requires us to put aside everything we think we know and go where the facts take us.

I have tried very hard to prove that the Parker Adkins/Blue Sky story could be real, using all of the facts I could find. Everything included in my posts has a historical paper trail in documents such as court records, censuses, personal letters and accounts written by people who were there or their immediate descendants, etc.

Considering the distances involved and Cornstalk's hatred toward the settlers at the time, it is beyond belief that Parker Adkins would have left his wife and children alone, traveled hundreds of miles for more than a month, perhaps two months, across the entire state of West Virginia and almost half of Ohio through an unmarked, hostile wilderness, safely found his way to Cornstalk's village where he was welcomed, stayed there long enough to father two children by Blue Sky, and safely traveled another month or two through that same hostile territory to get back home where he was welcomed by his wife. What would have been his purpose for setting out on such a trip?

Another other possible scenario is that he safely made at least two trips through the same dangerous environment, stayed long enough each time to impregnate Blue Sky, and twice made it safely back home. To me, this is even less likely.

The only remaining possibility is that Blue Sky lived near Parker and he regularly went to visit her. There were no recorded Shawnee villages anywhere near Parker and even if there were, they would have been hostile to the settlers. Indian women and children lived in the villages of their relatives and Chief Cornstalk's village was near Circleville, Ohio. There is no reason to believe or evidence that Blue Sky would have lived anywhere else.

Last of all, we cannot ignore the fact that Parker and his son, Millington, had joined the Militia to protect his family and other settlers living near them from Chief Cornstalk and his Shawnees and he and his son may have fought against Chief Cornstalk in the Battle of Point Pleasant. This was at a time when Charity and Littleberry were four to seven years old.

The bottom line is that historical facts do not support the Blue Sky story. Even if you do not believe the DNA results that show Charity Adkins's mother was a white woman with mostly English and Irish ancestry, there is no disputing the historical facts. We can ignore them, we can refuse to believe them and we can wish they were not true but they will not go away; they are still the facts.

If you continue to believe the Blue Sky story after reading all of the research contained here, I have prepared a list of logical questions you should answer for yourself in order to confirm your beliefs. Please answer them honestly. If you cannot answer them with facts, you owe it to yourself to forget the Blue Sky story and accept that Littleberry and Charity Adkins belonged to Parker Adkins and his wife, Mary.

Why do I care? I care because the Adkins history is my husband's history. I care because it is important that history is correct for our children and grandchildren and the generations who will come after us. Above all, we owe them the truth. Why would anyone want anything else?

SOME KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT THE BLUE SKY STORY

What valid historical documents have you found that support the Blue Sky story?

Where did Parker meet Blue Sky and father her children, if not in Cornstalk's village?

Considering the hostilities that were going on at the time, why would Parker Adkins risk his life to make his first trip to Cornstalk's village, since he hadn't yet met Blue Sky?

How did he find Cornstalk's village?

Did other men go with him, also leaving their families behind? If not, how likely is it that one man could survive such a trip through hostile Indian territory alone? Or even with companions?

What was Parker's explanation to Mary for leaving her alone to take care of their children while he went on this lengthy trip, risking his life to do so?

Why would other hostile Indians allow Parker to pass, unmolested, through their territory?

Why would Chief Cornstalk welcome Parker Adkins, a white man he had never met, at a time when he and his Shawnees were brutally killing other settlers?

Why did Parker Adkins voluntarily join the Militia and possibly fight Chief Cornstalk in the Battle of Point Pleasant if they were friends and Parker was the father of two of Cornstalk's grandchildren?

Was Parker with Blue Sky when she died? If not, who made the trip to notify him?

The Indians valued their children above practically everything else, even replacing dead children with captured white children. Why would Cornstalk give his own grandchildren to Parker Adkins when other Shawnee women would have willingly taken care of them?

If Blue Sky died after Cornstalk, why would their new Chief, Blackfish, relinquish these two children to his sworn enemy?

Where and when did Parker spend enough time to bond with and learn to love these two children to the extent that he would ask his wife to raise them?

If you were Mary, how would you react if your husband surprised you with his two Shawnee children who had never lived with white people and expected you to raise them?

Why do you not believe the historical facts presented here?

Why do you want to be descended from Chief Cornstalk and Blue Sky in spite of all the evidence against it?

If you come up with logical answers to these questions and documentation that supports them, I hope you will contact me so I can retract the conclusions I have reached. If not, you owe it to yourself to accept that Parker's wife, Mary, is your ancestor and stop passing along the Blue Sky story.

Your children, your grandchildren and your descendants yet-to-come deserve the truth. And, most of all, you do too.

I believe this narrative to be accurate, based on the historical documents I have reviewed. I will be glad to accept corrections, if documented.

Copied 9 Feb 2017 from:

<https://parkeradkins.wordpress.com/2017/06/02/parker-adkins-blue-sky-was-their-story-possible/>