

Chapter 3

WESTERN TENNESSEE AND BORDERING STATES

Middle Tennessee veterans of the War of 1812 began to move in large numbers to the Western District of Tennessee, a land of promise soon after the Chickasaw Treaty of 1818. The year after the Treaty was signed, men came on keelboats prospecting for land, locating land warrants for the former soldiers. Some were on their way to the district while negotiations with the Chickasaws were still in progress.[\[184\]](#)

The land warrants granted to Bird Smith's estate for his military service show a grant for 500 acres in Madison County given June 1, 1822.[\[185\]](#) It is likely, therefore, that the Smith family members were in the Madison County area by that date. Madison County, formed in 1821, was described by an early traveler as "much more interesting than any we have come through, more thickly settled" with "gentle-folks houses" and "some with very large cotton and corn fields."[\[186\]](#) This traveler expressed disappointment in the little town of Jackson, which was founded in 1822, named for Andrew Jackson, and which served at first as a "seat of justice for Henry, Carroll, Henderson and Madison Counties."[\[187\]](#) On July 4, 1822, one of the first purchasers of a town lot was Wilson McClellan, who was the son of Robert McClellan and first cousin to John D. McClellan.[\[188\]](#) On June 30, 1824, there was a letter in the Jackson post office for John McClellan.[\[189\]](#) It thus seems that the McClellans were also in Madison County by the early 1820s

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In 1825 young Thomas Ingles Smith, 25, and the 10th born of Bird and Rhoda's children, entered into a business agreement with another man in Haywood County, just west of Madison County. Tom Smith and Henry Gray agreed "to establish and Keep up a house of entertainment in the town of Brownsville...." This probably was a tavern that the two men planned to build in the county seat of Haywood.

Another brother was establishing himself in the area also. One of the first orders of business for new counties was the building of public roads. As had his father before him in Montgomery County, Virginia, second son Guy Smith, 30, worked with others in March 1822 "to open a road (from Carroll County)...along a ridge...to McGuire's Ferry on the Big Hatchie (River)." [190] A few months later in September 1822 Guy Smith and others opened a road to the Middle Fork. [191]

In 1826 a state census of free male inhabitants of Madison County showed 1,175 men. [192] As the first decade of settlement in the Madison County area closed, the population of the nine-year-old county was 11,594, which included 4,167 slaves and 7,427 white men, women and children. [193] In the 1833 state census 2,028 white men are shown living in the county, [194] an increase in five years of 853 men. This shows a substantial increase in overall population when considering that many, if not most, of the men had families.

One reason for the significant increase in overall population, and notably the large slave population, was that the soil in the area proved to be singularly fertile for the production of a superior cotton. Madison County is "at the head waters of the Forked Deer (River)" and the "soil is generally of a dark color, having a mixture of clay and sand. In the northern and western section it is more of a yellowish tinge....As would be expected the soil is generally very productive and stands drought and other extremes remarkably well....There is considerable malarial trouble (due to sluggish streams), but these are not generally of a serious character." [195]

Corn, as usual, was the crop grown for local consumption and it grew extremely well in the fertile soil of Madison County. Madison grew the first crop of cotton in the Western District and "the first gin operated was brought from Nashville to Jackson in 1821." [196] By the spring of 1825, cotton from Madison County was selling in New Orleans for more than cotton from Middle Tennessee and Alabama. [197] The race was on to grow more and more cotton since the demand for cotton kept cotton

prices high. With the profits from growing cotton, many families became prosperous, even wealthy. The push to cotton production, though, also meant that crops were not rotated and cared for, depleting the fertile soil, just as had happened in Virginia with tobacco.

Most of the Smiths and McClellans settled in the northern part of Madison County, including that northwestern part that was given later to create Crockett County. [198] Some of the young Smith men were not just looking for new homes, but also for adventure. One opportunity for such an adventure came in March 1825 when "it was announced that an organization had been formed known as the Santa Fe Company, a trading company." [199] The Madison County men were joined by men from other counties and soon numbered 40, each man bringing at least two horses, one to ride, and one as a packhorse. After a farewell dinner at Bell Tavern, the group left on April 1 for Memphis, Little Rock and on to Santa Fe. This

expedition was but one of many like expeditions to Santa Fe. These were instrumental in later attracting immigrants to Arkansas, Texas and other westward areas.

The first men from this expedition did not return to the Madison area until the next November, bringing mules, some gold and much silver. They had faced Indians, weather, and their mistakes and brought back descriptions of the prairies that they deemed poor land. At that time most thought that land that did not have trees would be poor farm land. In the ensuing days, members of the party slowly straggled into Madison. Among these were “Abram and B. Smith of Madison County and Samuel Winchester of Memphis who sold their goods at the Pass and (returning by Texas) turned their faces homeward, but were robbed within six days by a party of Indians, who took 75 mules from them.” [\[200\]](#) This trip, and many others like it, would eventually lure many West Tennessee people to Arkansas and Texas, areas that they had seen on their trading trips.

While Bird and Rhoda’s children were beginning to turn their faces and interests westward, there was one piece of unfinished business back in middle Tennessee. On August 8, 1826, the deed books of White County [\[201\]](#) show that the heirs of Bird Smith sold the town lot Bird had bought in 1812 in the county seat of Sparta. The heirs were listed as William I. Smith, William Jones, Susannah Reed, Polly I. Smith, Jordan G. Stokes, Guy Smith, John I. Smith, Bird B. Smith, A. T. Smith, Thomas I. Smith, Josiah Pullen and William B. McClellan. [\[202\]](#) Since husbands were listed instead of their Smith wives, it seems that Susannah Smith Reed, 44, might have been a widow and that Polly Ingles Smith, 38, had not yet married, although family records show that she did marry.

Besides Guy Smith, Abraham Smith, Bird B. Smith and Juliet L. Smith McClellan, another of Bird and Rhoda’s children in the Madison County area during the 1820s was John Ingles Smith, 32 and the third son, who married Elizabeth G. Pullen [\[203\]](#) in 1826 in Gibson County. Gibson County borders on the northern edge of Madison County. It also appears that Rhoda Ingles Smith was living in Madison County as a descendant stated that Rhoda died, November 2, 1829, at Poplar Corners, in the far northwest corner of present day Madison County. [\[204\]](#)

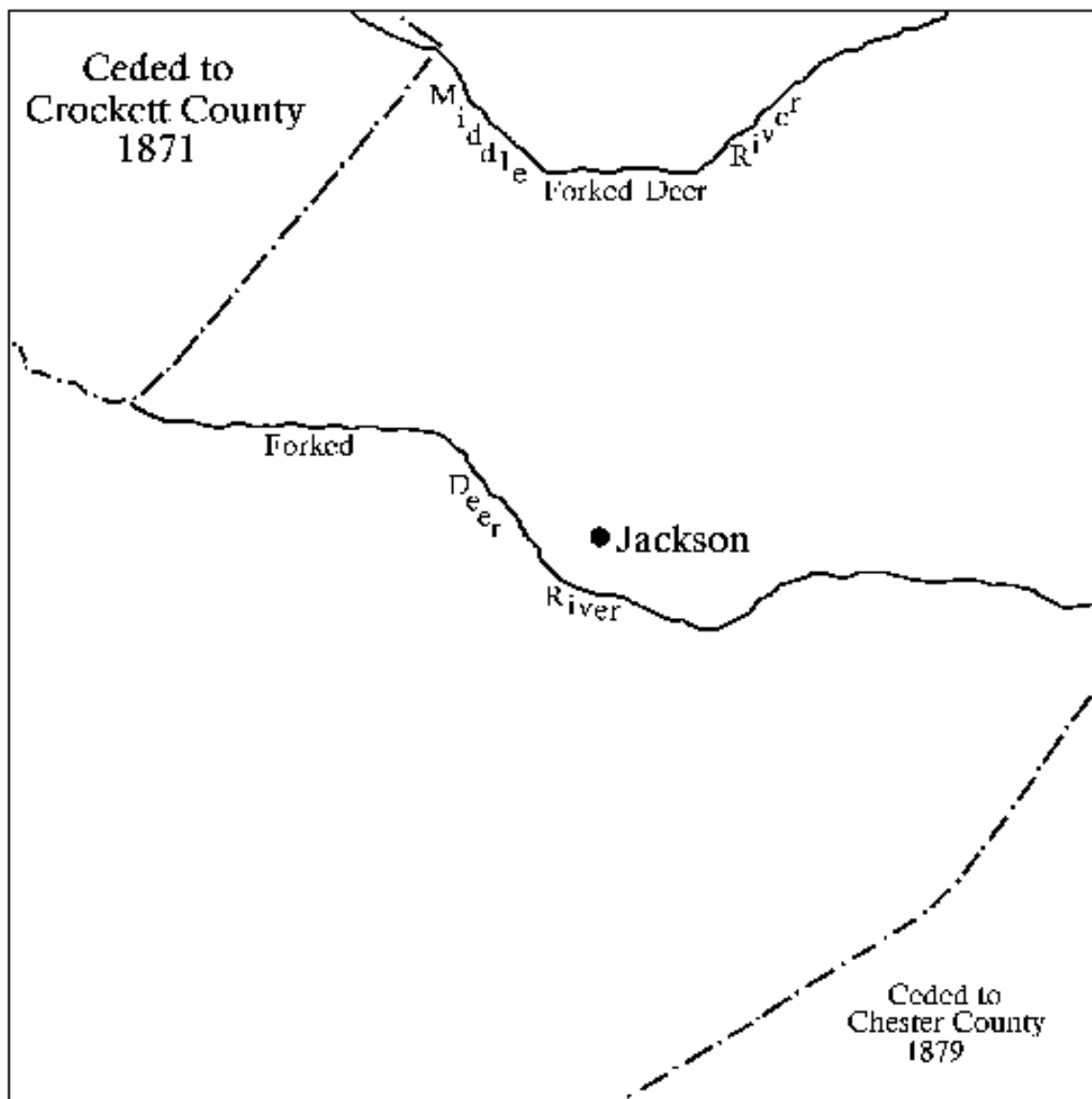
By 1830 Madison County seems to have been home, not only to the McClellans and some of the Smiths, but also to an array of Smith friends and relatives. There were Trigg, King and Christian families and even a Lawrence Smith family.

By the time of the death of Rhoda Ingles Smith, who was their last living parent, the younger of Bird and Rhoda’s children were exploring westward from the Madison County area. Some of the older children of this generation are more difficult to pin down. William I. Smith, the eldest, may have stayed in White County. The others seem to have gone to various places in western Tennessee. For the younger children, however, the 1830s were a time of great movement in western Tennessee and in the states bordering that area.

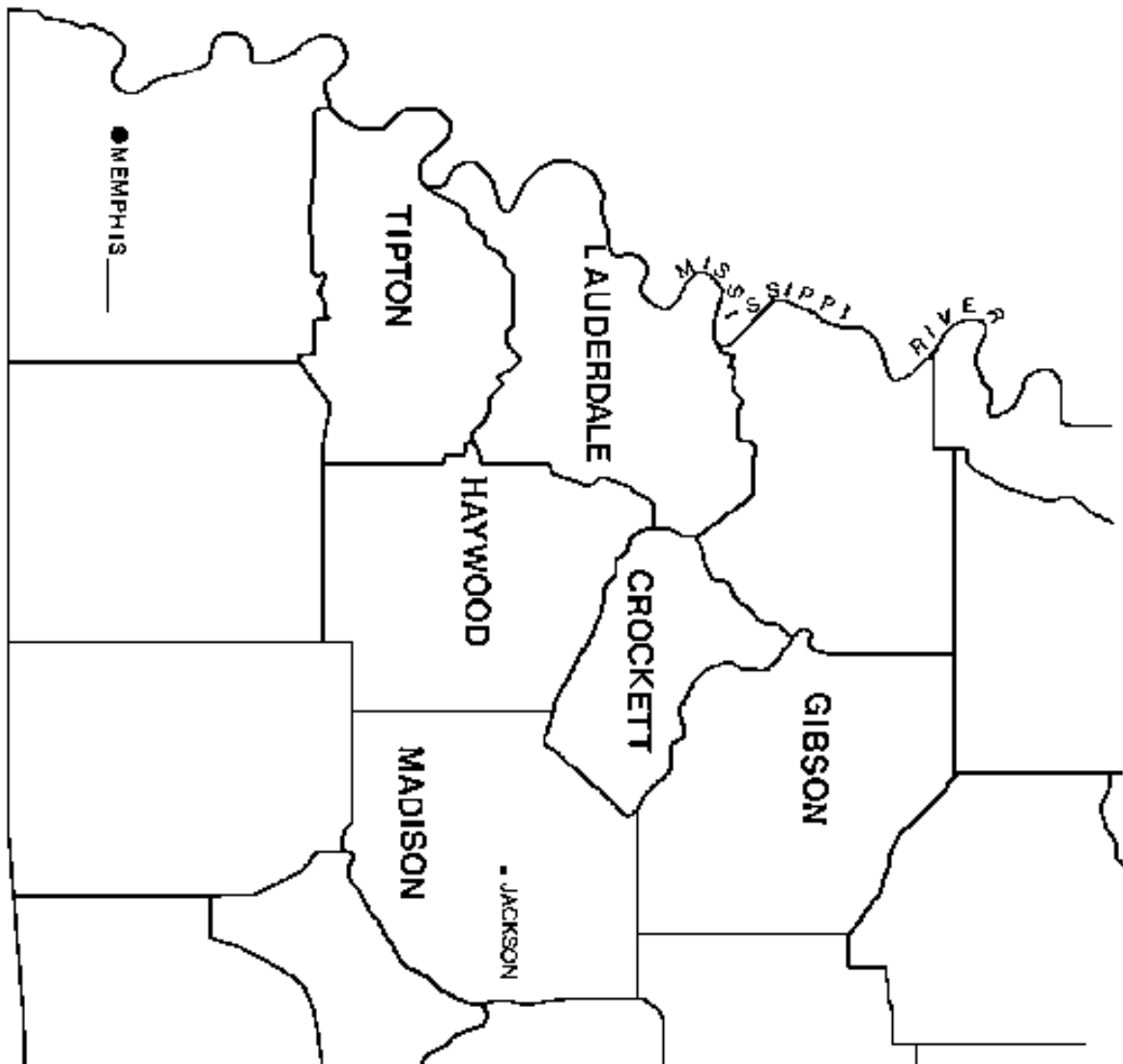
Bird S. (Smith?) Jones, a son of second born Janie Smith Jones, received land in the Alamo-Bells [\[205\]](#) area of then Haywood County, to the west of Madison. That part of Haywood County is now part of Crockett County, which took land from northeast Haywood and northwest Madison with its creation in 1845. The third born, Susannah Smith Reed, was supposed to have been in the Bells area by 1835 also. [\[206\]](#) Susan Garner Smith, the first wife of Bird Booker Smith, is supposed to have died in the Bells area also. [\[207\]](#) Therefore, it looks as though there were several of the children of Bird and Rhoda, or their families, in the Madison County area during the third decade of the nineteenth century. These included second born Janie Smith Jones, third born Susannah Smith Reed, sixth child Guy Smith, eighth child Bird Booker Smith, ninth born Abram Smith and twelfth born Juliet L. Smith McClellan. It is possible, of course, that some of the other Smith

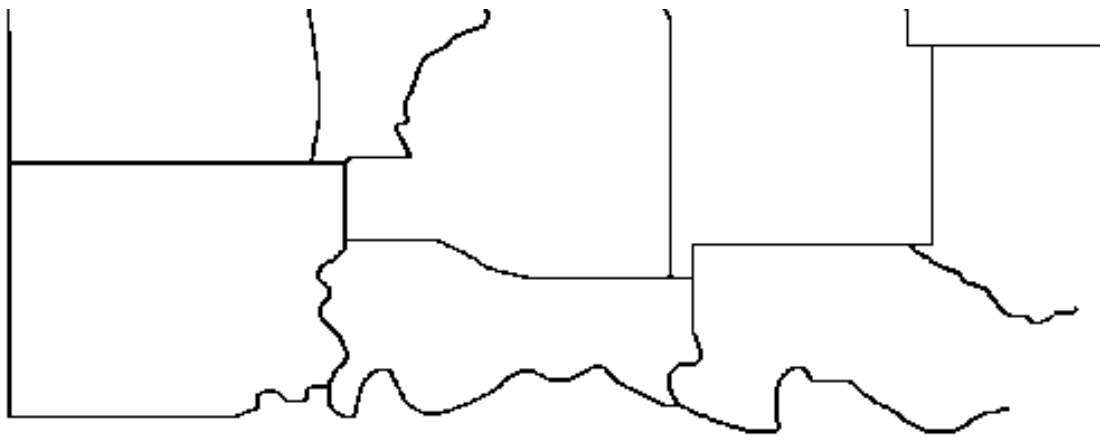
children may have been in the Madison County area also.

In the third decade of the nineteenth century, the Mississippi River was the chief means of transportation to Tennessee and the other states abutting its shores. It was this river that carried the agricultural produce of the farms and plantations to market in New Orleans and on to foreign markets. It was logical, therefore, that the Smiths would want to take advantage of this means of transportation,



Madison County, Tennessee





and some of them would settle in counties like Lauderdale and Tipton, along the banks of the Mississippi.

By the middle of this decade Guy Smith, 38, left Madison County and moved slightly farther west settling in Lauderdale County, where in 1836, he was selected to be the first sheriff. Lauderdale County had been formed out of parts of Haywood and Tipton Counties in 1835. Guy served as sheriff until 1838.^[208] In 1832 a letter from Guy's brother Abram indicated that Guy had moved to "Hogshead old place." Abram also told Guy to give their sister Polly his love, which indicates that she was living nearby. Polly may have been one of those children "selected" by her parent(s) to take care of them when they grew old. These children frequently did not marry until after the last aged parent died, if they married at all. Often they became the "maiden aunts" who used to be so common in families. Since the mother, Rhoda Ingles Smith, had died in 1829, it is possible that Polly then married the Mr. Hogsett (Hogshead) shown in family records. With Guy moving to the "Hogshead old place" there exists the possibility that Polly was already a widow. Another possibility is that Guy, for whom no marriage records have been found, decided to live with the Hogsheads, a common arrangement of the time.

In the neighboring county of Tipton, which was created in 1823, were several Smith families. Four of the Smith children and their families appear to have located, at least in 1830, in this county bordering the Mississippi River, which their father had traveled down some 15 years before on his way to the Battle of New Orleans. Ann H. Smith Stokes,^[209] 40, and her husband, Jordan, lived there with their three boys and three girls, Mary, Hannah, Rhoda Jane, Thomas, Guy M. and William J. and five slaves. Interestingly, later that year Ann was born, their seventh and last child. She, however, was not born in Tennessee, if a 1850 census is corrected, but rather in Alabama. If, indeed, she was born in Alabama, this family took a temporary U-turn on their westward movement.

John Ingles Smith, 36 years old, may also have been in Tipton County with his wife, Elizabeth Pullen Smith and

three children, one son and two daughters, and two slaves.[\[210\]](#) That the census shows that John had a son and daughter between the ages of five and 10 indicates that John had been married before he wed Elizabeth four years before in 1826. The two younger children, under the age of five were probably the children of John and Elizabeth. A John Smith was on the first “venire” of Tipton County, “from which the petit and grand jurors were chosen for the first courts in the county.” [\[211\]](#) If this was the correct John, then he would have been a very early settler in the area.

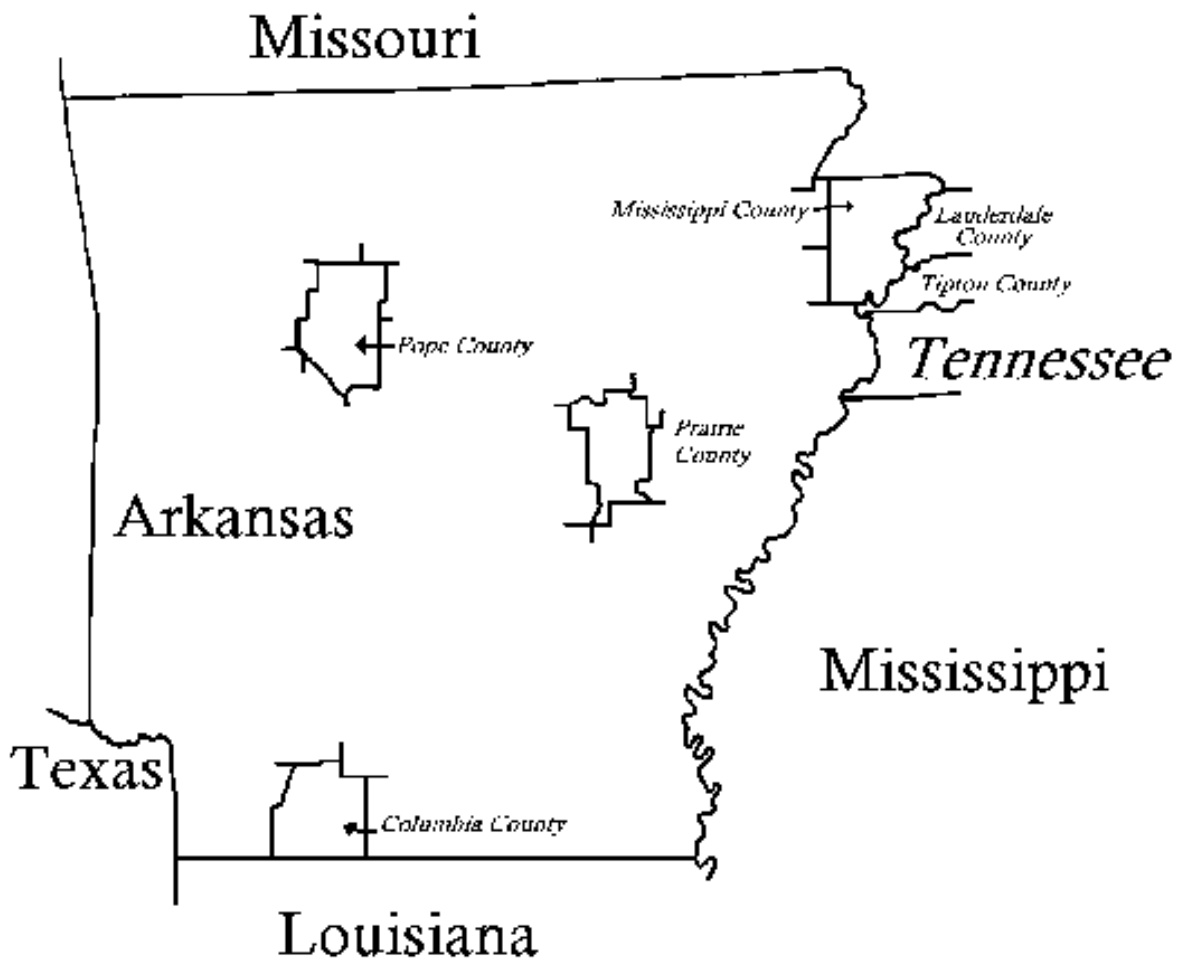
Another Smith daughter in Tipton was Rhoda Smith Pullen, who was 28 years old. She and her husband, Josiah Pullen, [\[212\]](#) who was probably a relative of Elizabeth Pullen Smith, wife of John Smith, had four young sons. Another adult man in his thirties was also living in the household.[\[213\]](#) Two years later in December 1832, Rhoda is supposed to have died. [\[214\]](#)

Nearby lived a Thomas I. (or J.) Smith who appears to be the 30 year old brother of Ann, John and Rhoda. It is reported that he married R. Hogsett.[\[215\]](#) His older sister, Polly, also married into this family. If this Thomas is the correct one, there were a wide variety of people in the family as there are four adult males, one in his forties, one in his thirties, two in their twenties as well as a teenage boy. There were also three younger boys. In this male dominated home there were only two females who were in their twenties. Not that they were without help as there were 10 slaves, including four males ranging from over 55 to under 10 and six females from 36 to under four years. The result was a large household of some 20 people. It seems likely that this was a combination of two families.

Thus the early 1830s saw several of Bird and Rhoda’s children in far western Tennessee counties. These included fourth born Polly Smith Hogsett and fifth born Ann H. Smith Stokes, who were joined by their younger brothers, sixth born Guy Smith and tenth child Thomas Ingles Smith.

Soon, however, the borders of Tennessee could not longer deter the restlessness of the younger children. In 1837 Bird Booker Smith, Jr. of Madison County purchased Barfield’s Landing on the Mississippi River and announced in a newspaper that he would “attend to all consignments, and forward with diligence and care. George A. Taylor will reside there during the boating season, and give his exclusive attention to the boating business.” [\[216\]](#) Bird B. Smith moved from Tennessee to Mississippi County, Arkansas. Later Bird moved to Ripley, Tippah County, in northern Mississippi, not far southeast from Memphis, Tennessee.

The first of this generation to move out of Tennessee appears to have been Abraham “Abram” Trigg Smith. As a young man in his twenties, he moved to Arkansas, probably after 1825, when he went on the Santa Fe expedition, and before 1827 when his first child was born in Arkansas. He eventually located in Pope and Johnson counties in northwestern central Arkansas. Pope County was created in 1829 as “the nineteenth county in the Territory of Arkansas and was the first county to be



be carved from the old Cherokee Reservation.” [\[217\]](#) Johnson County was created out of Pope County in 1833. Abram was noted as one of the earliest pioneers who settled Pope County within the two years following its creation. [\[218\]](#)

Abram was not content to be in Arkansas without as many of his relatives as he could recruit to join him. In his April 17, 1832 letter to his brothers, Guy and Tom, he extolled the virtues of the area, saying, “If you will come you will never rue the trip for I will show you the best country you ever saw and the very country you and Thomas must come to for if you will come and get a start of stalk you will never work a day and the like of health I have never seen since I left White county....” Abram chastised them for staying “in that dammed hole that you and Thomas does.” and closes his letter with “rite quick and come quick.” Abram did have relatives in Arkansas, however. Abram Smith’s older brother John Ingles Smith moved from western Tennessee by 1832 to join Abram in Spodra Bluff, Pope County, Arkansas. In the already noted letter to his brothers, Abram mentions John, saying that John’s family is well. There are Johnson County, Arkansas, land records for 1836 and 1838 showing Abram and his wife Alcy W. Smith selling land to John Smith. [\[219\]](#)

Another Smith relative living near Abram and John was their niece, Hannah Stokes, the second born child of Jordan and Ann (Smith) Stokes, the family that may have taken a U-turn to Alabama. While Abram was in his thirties, his sister Ann was in her forties and her oldest children were beginning to marry. Hannah had married William “Bill” J. Parks. Bill Parks was probably related to Abram’s wife, Elsie/Alcy W. Parks, most likely a brother. Another brother, Robert “Bob” Parks, was also living in Arkansas. The Parks family may have been the impetus for the group’s move to Arkansas, with John Ingles Smith joining them later. In the 1832 letter to his brothers, Abram was most unhappy with Jordan Stokes, who when writing his daughter, did not ask for his respects to be given to Abram until after he named “every person else here of his acquaintance.” Abram obviously felt slighted and wrote, “...if I cant be first with the except of his daughter (Hannah) I wood thank him to forget me.”

This letter and others written by brothers Thomas Ingles Smith and Bird Booker Smith indicate that the level of education, at least for the younger members of this generation, may well not have been as good as that of their father, Bird Bowker Smith. There are several possibilities here. If the mother was an influence on the education of her children, then it is likely that Rhoda Ingles Smith’s education on the Virginia frontier was not equal to the education that would have been available in Pittsylvania County, where Bird Bowker Smith and his siblings grew up. She thus may not have either been able to prepare the children for more education or may not have been as interested. While education was

was certainly available in White County, Tennessee, again it might not have been equal to the education in more settled areas. The War of 1812 might have also had an influence, perhaps interrupting the education of the younger sons, most of who went off to fight in the Battle of New Orleans.

In regard to education of Abram's children, it appears that there were schools available. Unfortunately, Abram, while owning plenty of good land, at one time at least, lacked the necessary cash to pay for his children's education. In the 1832 letter Abram complained that "Bird is the best...child in the Territory and is ruining for the want of schooling and I have no chance to give it to him. [220] We have plenty of schools but I can't git him to (school?) without I had money. I have plenty of property but I have nary money and in consequence of that I can't school him." [221] Even in the rough early days of settlement, however, there is evidence that Abram and his wife Elsie provided as best they could for the education of their children, including housing the current teacher. "General Albert Pike, one of Arkansas' first citizens, distinguished poet and statesman, taught school in a log cabin on Piney Creek, while he resided at the home of Abram Smith in 1833." [222] Many settlers were able to barter for their children's education, trading farm produce or services in return for school tuition. This may not have been, for whatever reason, an option for Abram.

The location of one Smith daughter in the 1830s is unknown. This is the youngest of Bird and Rhoda's children, Mary Smith. By 1830 Mary Smith, who would have been 25, was probably already married to husband James A. Little, but it is not known where she was living.

[184] Williams, Emma Inman. *Historic Madison, the Story of Jackson and Madison County, Tennessee*. n.p.: Jackson-Madison County Homecoming '86, (1946) 1986, p. 30.

[185] One researcher of this family, Mrs. Theron Bratton of Oxford, MS stated that Bird was granted 640 acres in Madison County. (Family Findings, v. XI, April 1974, No. 3, p. 173, Queries #278); There were several land grants given in the name Bird Smith or variations of that name: (1) 140 and 150 acres in Warren Co., southwest of White Co., in 1825; (2) 15 acres in Haywood Co., just west of Madison Co., in 1831 to Bird M. Smith; (3) 50 acres also in Haywood Co. in 1835 to Byrd B. Smith; (this is Bird B. Smith, Jr-) (4) 185 acres in Hawkins Co. in northern east Tennessee.

[186] Williams, Emma Inman, *Historic Madison*, p. 46.

[187] *Goodspeed's History of Tennessee (City of Jackson and County of Madison)*, 1979, p. 807.

[188] *Ibid.*, p. 808; a Wilson McClellan married in Williamson Co., TN 1st to Elizabeth Dean (October 19, 1820), 2nd to Sarah Thompson (October 8, 1828).

[189] *Family Findings*, v. 4, issue 1, p. 8.

[190] *Ibid.*, p. 804.

[191] *Ibid.*, pp. 804–805.

[192] Williams, Samuel Cole, *Beginnings of West Tennessee*, p. 122.

[193] Williams, Emma Inman, *Historic Madison*, p. 534.

[194] Williams, Samuel Cole, *Beginnings of West Tennessee*, p. 123.

[195] *Goodspeed's History of Tennessee (City of Jackson and County of Madison)*, p. 797.

[196] Williams, Samuel Cole, *Beginnings of West Tennessee*, p. 202.

[197] *Ibid.*, p. 203.

[198] Crockett County was formed in 1845.

[199] Williams, Emma Inman, *Historic Madison*, p. 105; Williams, Samuel Cole, *Beginnings of Western Tennessee*, pp. 244–245.

[200] Williams, Emma Inman, *Historic Madison*, p. 106.

[201] White County, Tennessee Land Deeds, Book G, pp. 507–508.

[202] See Appendix B, p. 179 for document.

[203] Elizabeth G. Pullen may be related to Elizabeth Pullen (b. about 1777), wife of Moses Pullen of Giles and Lawrence Co., TN.

[204] *Family Findings*, v. 6, April 1974, No. 2, p. 85; Query from Mrs. Theron Bratton of Oxford, MS.

[205] *Crockett (Haywood) County, TN Deeds 1785–1872*, compiled by Maxine Mayo, 1983.

[206] *Family Findings*, v. 6, April 1974, No. 2, p. 85.

[207] *Ibid.*

[208] *Old Times in West Tennessee*, Evansville, Indiana: Unigraphic., Inc., (1873)1975 p. 206; *The Goodspeed's Histories of Lauderdale, Tipton, Haywood and Crockett Counties*, Easley, SC: Southern Historical Press, (1887) 1978, p. 801.

[209] Federal Census Tipton County, Tennessee, p. 287, line 16.

[210] Federal Census Tipton County, Tennessee, p. 281, line 4.

[211] *Old Times in West Tennessee*, p. 144.

[212] Josiah Pullen is probably related to the Pullens of Giles and Lawrence Co., TN. He may be a son of Jesse or Moses Pullen and related in some way to William Pullen, Sr. or Jr. (Jefferson Co.) since one of his sons was named William (Washington Co., TX 1850 census, pg. 1).

[213] Federal Census Tipton County, Tennessee, p. 285, line 21.

[214] *Family Findings*, v. 6, April 1974, No. 2, p. 85.

[215] Papers of Gertrude Hennigan Parks in possession of author. The surname “Hogsett” is found spelled in a variety of ways, including “Hogsette” and even “Hogshead.” There were two Hogshead/Hogsett families living in Lauderdale County in 1840, a John A. (30–40) and a James H. (20–30).

[216] Walker, Emily B. *Gibson County, Tennessee Newspapers, Historical and Genealogical Extracts*. Fulton, TN, 1987, p. 4.

[217] Pope County Historical Association. *History of Pope County, Arkansas*. Topeka, Kansas: Josten's Publishing Co., 1981, v. 2, p. 14.

[218] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

[219] Johnson County, Arkansas Deed Records, Book C, p. 59–60 and p. 113–115. The August 10, 1836 deed was witnessed by Joab Durham and J. J. Smith. The October 20, 1838 deed was witnessed by William J. Parks, who was the husband of Hannah Stokes Parks, daughter of Jordan and Ann (Smith). He was probably a brother of Elcy Parks Smith, Abram’s wife. Another brother was probably Robert Smith who died in Dallas County, Texas, after moving from Arkansas.

[220] There is no record of the Abram Smiths having a son named Bird, but there could have been such a child as Abram was 34 in 1832 and Alcy was about 28. If so this child may have died as he was not listed in Texas as an heir of Abram.

[221] See Appendix C, Letter 2, pp. 197–1998.

[222] Ibid., p. 23.