

## Chapter 6 The John Humphrey Family

John Humphrey was born on April 1, 1847 in Craven County, North Carolina. His mother, Drusilla Humphrey, was the daughter of Hiram Humphrey and Nancy Jones of Craven County. John Humphrey does not appear in the 1850 census; however, the court bonds of 1848 and 1849 indicate his mother, Drusilla, also had a daughter born in 1848. Other than the court bonds, there are no records in Craven County concerning Drusilla and her daughter, John's half-sister.

In the 1850 Craven census, there is a listing for a Joseph Murphrey, Brazella, John and Dinah living in the adjacent house to Nancy Humphrey, the widow of Lewis Humphrey<sup>1</sup>. Also Joseph Humphrey, uncle of Drusilla, appears only in the Schedule 2 slave owner's listing but not in the Schedule 1 inhabitants, along with Nancy Humphrey and others.<sup>2</sup> Research into later records found no listings for Joseph and Brazella Murphrey and their children. At this time, the writer can only speculate that Barzella may be the missing Drusilla and her children.

A small Methodist hymnal, owned by John Humphrey, dated about 1858-9, is in the possession of Charles P. Humphrey, great grandson of John.<sup>3</sup>

In the 1860 Craven census, John Humphrey appears for the first time in public records, age 13, apparently an orphan, in the household of Matilda Morris, a widow, in the area of Core Creek in Craven County. The family of Leonard White also lived with Matilda. Migrating from Lenoir County after 1850, this White family settled in the area, Leonard's sons, Frank and Reuben, are buried in the Cove City area.<sup>4</sup>



*Figure 7 Thomas Morris House, c. 1820.*

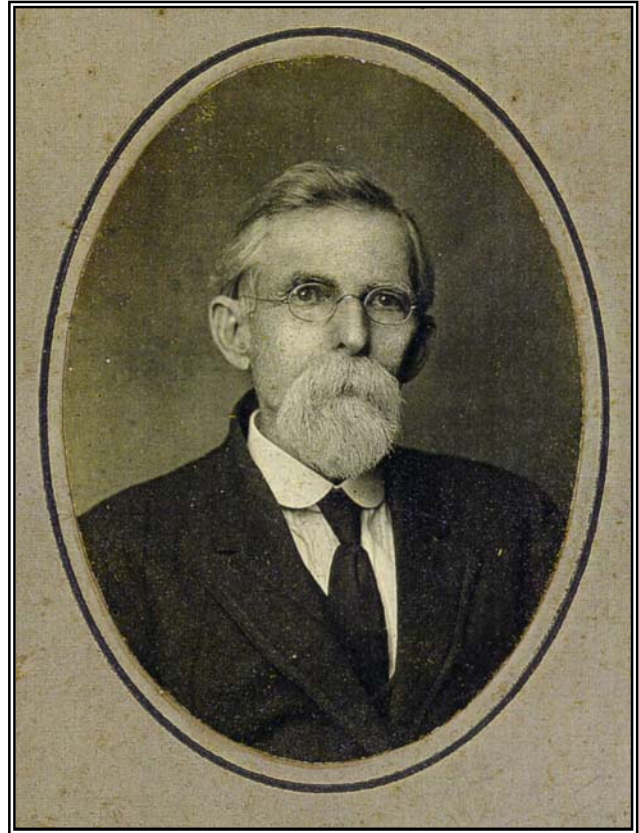
John Humphrey enlisted in the Confederate army on September 27, 1861 at the age of 14 1/2, and was listed as a farmer, 5 feet 6 inches tall. Family history has John being discharged in Kinston, with a single silver dollar to his name, walking the railroad line back to Craven County.<sup>5</sup>

In 1867, John Humphrey is listed in the extant voter registration of 1867, returning the vote to citizens taking the oath of allegiance to the federal government. John Humphrey does not appear in the 1870 Craven census.<sup>6</sup>

John Humphrey and Julia Eleanor Arnold were married on February 21, 1877 in Perfection, Craven County in the home of William Arnold, Julia's father. This

home still stands on NC Highway 55 in the Perfection area. Daniel Culbreth, Methodist minister of Beech Grove (1872-1876), performed the ceremony and the witnesses were William W. Prescott, George Milton Lancaster, and John Washington Stewart.<sup>7</sup>

Of the witnesses, William W. Prescott married Julia's older sister, Eliza Arnold (1853-1934) and George M. Lancaster married Julia's older sister, Harriet Arnold (1850-1915). William Prescott's sister, Mary "Polly" Prescott was married in 1871 to Joseph Humphrey, cousin of John Humphrey. John W. Stewart later became a prominent businessman in New Bern, owning a stable, and later was the sales agent and Treasurer for the Enterprise Brick and Tile Manufacturing Company of Clarks.<sup>8</sup>



**Figure 8 Photo of John Humphrey**

John and Julia made their home in Craven County in Clarks. On December 3, 1878 John purchased a tract of land from E. R. Stanley for \$1200. The tract was bounded by Bachelor Creek on the west, south of the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad, bounded on the east by the land of Henry J. B. Clark, and on the south by the land of the estate of John H. Richardson and others. The agreement purchased the land for an initial payment and annual payments of \$200 for four years. Part of the purchase was an agreement to maintain the buildings on the land. The mortgage was recorded as cancelled in 1891. The brickyard is documented on the Lt. Col. Guion (CSA) map of 1864 and the old home existed before the war. The original home was of pegged beam construction and over many years additional rooms were added and wood siding added to the home. Two more generations of Humphreys lived in the home before it was destroyed by fire in 1966.<sup>9</sup>

The first of John and Julia's children, Laura Gertrude Humphrey, was born on November 30, 1877.

John, Julia and Laura are listed in the 1880 Craven census residing in Clarks in the 8<sup>th</sup> Township of Craven County. John was a farmer and Julia's occupation was housekeeper in 1880.<sup>10</sup>

Besides farming, John was also involved with a brick business. A versatile man, John was a progressive farmer, helping introduce soybeans to the Craven area. John also wrote articles for farming periodicals and was a Justice of the Peace. John sold medicines and would weight out doses for his customers. A family story has John sewing a severed finger back on a man's hand after an accident. John was a proponent of education and taught school for a time.<sup>11</sup>

**Figure 9 Photo of  
Julia Arnold Humphrey**



After operating the brickyard for many years, John opened a dairy in Clarks and his son, Jay Lee Humphrey, operated the brickyard.

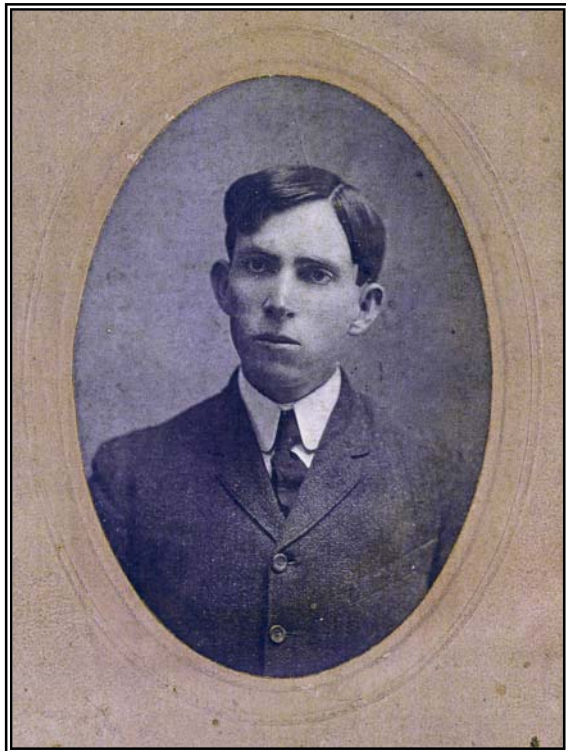
The oldest son, Jay Lee Humphrey, was born on August 16, 1881 in Clarks. Jay Lee's brother, John William Humphrey, was born on July 7, 1884. The last child, a daughter, Clara Julia Humphrey, was born on January 2, 1886.<sup>12</sup>

**Figure 10  
Photo of the  
John Humphrey  
family**

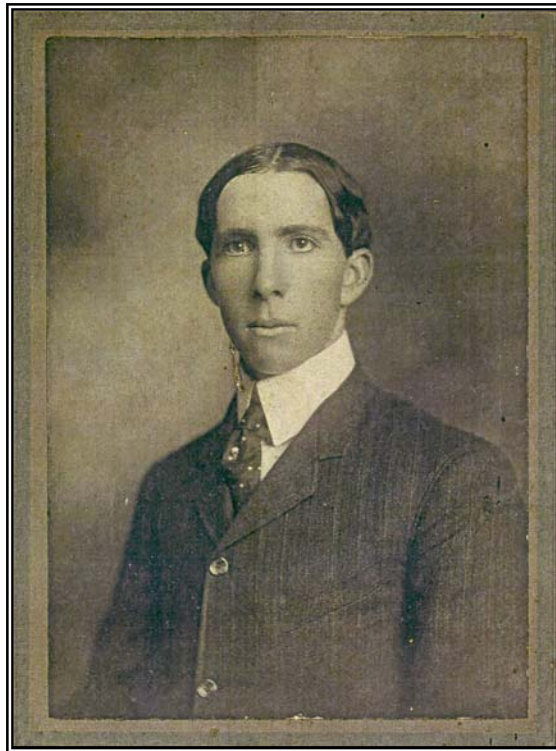
Taken about 1909 in Clarks. Front row; John and Julia Humphrey, Back row; l-r, Jay L. Humphrey, Hal Foscue, Clara Humphrey Foscue, John W. Humphrey and two cats. The overhead streak is the smoke from a passing train.



*Figure 11 Photo of  
Laura G. Humphrey, c. 1882*



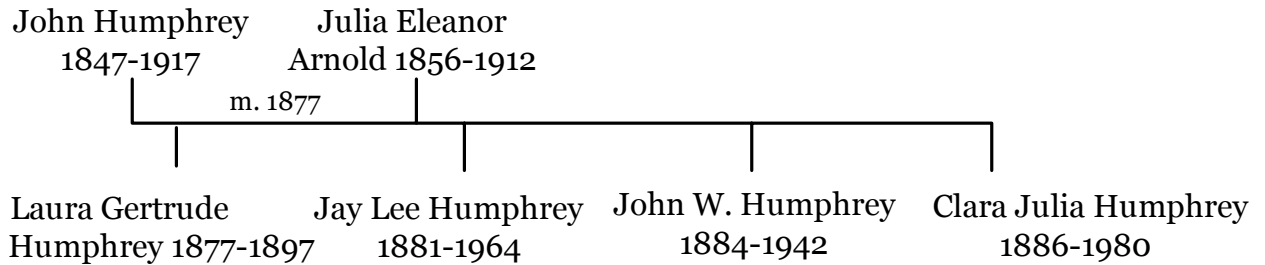
*Figure 12 Photo of Jay Lee Humphrey*



*Figure 13 Photo of John W. Humphrey*

Laura Gertrude died on September 25, 1897 and was buried in the Arnold Cemetery near Perfection, along with other members of the Arnold family.<sup>13</sup>

In 1900, John and Julia Humphrey are listed in the Craven census, along with John, Jay, and Clara.<sup>14</sup>



**Figure 14** *John Humphrey Family Tree*

John and Julia along with other Methodist families in the area attended the Beech Grove Methodist Church at Bellair. This church was built in 1871 and dedicated in 1876. Several Clark's residents are buried in the church graveyard.<sup>15</sup>



**Figure 15** *Beech Grove Methodist Church*

John and Julia were members of the Clarks Methodist Church, founded in 1905. John served as the first Superintendent of the Sunday School. Son Jay Lee, and daughter, Clara Julia were active in collecting money to built the church. In the 1970s, the Clarks Methodist Church, build a new sanctuary, and the church was purchased by William G. Humphrey, and moved to the Jay Lee Humphrey home place. The old church building still stands in 2002.<sup>16</sup>

The Humphreys were involved with fund raisers for the new Methodist Church in Clarks, two invitations survived in the estate papers of Clara Foscue Bennett:

## "MEASURING PARTY."

You are very much requested,  
To be up and specially interested,  
In a measuring party that's to be,  
At the Methodist Church of Clark's, N. C.  
On the evening of February 15th, 1907,  
Hours from seven right on to eleven.  
Only a nickel for each foot you're tall,  
And one cent for every inch over is all.  
Please bring or send your mite  
To us on that glorious night,  
We'll be glad to have you with us,  
So come along and do not fuss,  
About the little price we ask  
For finishing a church is our task.  
We are trying our church to complete,  
So come dear friends and help with your feet.

Bring or send to

MRS. JOHN HUMPHREY,  
CLARK'S, N. C.

**Figure 16 Measuring Party  
Invitation, 1907**

## GLOVE PARTY For M. E. Church, CLARK'S, N. C.

This Glove Party is given to you,  
'Tis nothing novel: 'Tis nothing new,  
We send to each this little mit,  
You may be sure 'twill not fit.

Just multiply your size by three,  
Place within this mit so *wee*,  
In pennies, nicks or dimes  
Your size multiplied three times.

With greetings most hearty,  
We'll receive you at this party,  
Hours from eight to eleven,  
Or, you could enter at seven.

There'll be no other fine,  
So you surely need'nt whine.

**Figure 17 Glove Party Invitation**

Jay Lee and John attended North Carolina State College in Raleigh, North Carolina. Traveling from the Clarks railroad station to Raleigh, they befriended a fellow student, Haliburton Foscue, from nearby Jones County. Haliburton Josephus Foscue married Clara Julia Humphrey on November 16, 1906 in the Clarks Methodist Church. The ceremony was performed by George B. Webster, and witnessed by M. W. Foscue and W. B. Foscue.<sup>17</sup>



**Figure 18** *John W. Humphrey, Hal Foscue, Jay L. Humphrey*



**Figure 19** *The Clarks Methodist Church, circa 1905*

*Established in 1905, the original church building shown above was moved to the Jay Lee Humphrey Sr. homesite about 1980. A new church structure was built on the original site in Clarks, NC. Photo 2002 by the author.*

John Humphrey built a new home on the south side of Deep Branch in Clarks. The wooden two-story home, of typical farmhouse design, stood until the 1980s. A photograph of the home and family, about 1912, shows, Hal Foscue, Clara Humphrey Foscue, Sara Julia Humphrey (b. 1911), and John Humphrey. The original photograph was in the possession of Clara Foscue and in the 1970s was restored and distributed by William Grey Humphrey. Unfortunately, the name of the dog remains a mystery.<sup>18</sup>

The dignified home stood between two large brick chimneys, the parlor walls were plastered, and the home boasted gas lighting, supplied by a self-contained acetylene gas generator in the yard. When the house was electrified much later, the electrical wires were routed through the old gas pipes to the new lighting. William G. Humphrey acquired and restored the exterior of the home in the 1970s and the home stood until it was destroyed by fire in the 1980s.



The John Humphrey home circa 1912. Left to right: Haliburton J. Foscue, Clara J. H. Foscue, John Humphrey, and Sara Julia Foscue.



***Figure 20 The John Humphrey Home***

Back of the John Humphrey home, circa 1980, after restoration work by William G. Humphrey. Photo courtesy of William C. Humphrey.



# Enterprise Brick & Tile Mfg. Co.

Clarks, N. C., April 13 1909

Dear son,

Your card came this am. & found us all well & glad to hear that you were well.

Herbert is able to get to the phone, and is all right I hope.

We are having some misty rain & plenty of wind today. We are having a regular phone ringing time now, they have added the Jasper b'ople into our line, & sometimes it is hard to get central, hope the line won't be so busy, after the new wears off.

Hubs sickness has put us much behind with En. work & some with ours., have all the highland corn in, the goats fenced in poplar cut, & are about ready for cotton & swamp.

I have had more offers of farm help than usual but have not hired any yet. The En. is going to have some wood cut in the Jeffers section & I expect this will cut our help short, in the summer. I don't think the last cold did much harm, killed our d. po. some, & all the Johnson & ass. Ind. went to a candle stein

**Figure 21 John Humphrey Letter, 1909**

Written by John Humphrey to his son, Jay Lee Humphrey in 1909.

at Mrs. G. J. Eubanks'

Clara & H. went home yes. pm.  
The new pigs are looking well, but the sows  
seem to have had too much corn & are off  
their feed, expect it will make the pigs look  
bad, if it continues, am going to feed some  
bran & boiled soy beans for a while, with  
a little corn by se.

The oats are looking well.

Will close with

Much love

Papa

John William Humphrey and Eva Lane Pittman were married on December 22, 1910 in Craven County. Hal Foscue and Clara J. Foscue witnessed the marriage. J. R. Hurley performed the marriage, in the New Bern Township. An additional note, the license records that Eva's parents, Charles and Annie Pittman were living in Kinston in 1910.<sup>19</sup>

Julia A. Humphrey died on January 28, 1912, the cause of death unknown. Julia was buried in the family graveyard on the home place off SR 1225 in Clarks. The following obituary appeared in the New Bern Sun Journal in the February 2, 1912 issue:

**Died**, Sunday morning at heir home in Clarks, Mrs. J. H. Humphrey. The funeral was conducted from the Baptist Church Monday morning by Rev. J. M. Wright, and the interment made in the cemetery at that place. Mrs. Humphrey had a large number of friends in this city who will learn with regret of her death.

The above reference to the Baptist church may be incorrect, as Julia and John were fervent Methodists and supporters of the Clarks Methodist Church.

---

The New Bern Weekly Journal of February 6, 1912 carried the following:

***In Memoriam.***

*Seldom are relatives and friends more shocked and pained then when on Sunday morning last, the sad news passed from lip to lip, "Mrs. John Humphrey is dead!" How could we believe it; when so late'y we had seen her well, seemingly strong and full of life. When a young life is taken away just in the flush of youth, we sometimes say "this is saddest time to die"; but when they have just reached the "high noon" of life and the toilsome weariness of the journey is changing into the quiet joys and ?eanties of the noontide glow: when we feel that the much deserved rest has begun after the toilsome climb to the summit and quite enjoyments of a calmer view of life. There we catch the radiance of the eventide glow before we begin the journey towards the summit. Surely this is a sadder time to let the go. But what a beautiful gem-crowned life she left us! Faithful and true as a wife, fond and loving as a mother; as ever strong and faithful friend; a full type all rounded Christian character. But through our tears we can smile and say with an infinite trust to His love; as we gaze sadly out at the lovely flowers and radiant face of nature that she loved so well, "He maketh sore and he bindeth up, He woundeth and His hands make whole".*

*"A Friend"*

Jay Lee Humphrey and Stella Rosa Pittman, sister of Eva, were married on July 31, 1912, in Lenoir County. Brother John W. Humphrey was a witness.<sup>20</sup>

In 1915, the Beech Groove Methodist Church dedicated a new brick sanctuary. An article in the Heritage of Craven County, by unknown Methodist official mentions the hospitality of a night provided by John Humphrey and his son-in-law, Mr. Foscue. "The conversation of Brother Humphrey so full of interest and information made the hours fly away."<sup>21</sup>

In 1917, after contracting pneumonia, John Humphrey died on January 13, 1917. He was buried at his home in Clarks, along with his wife, Julia, in the family cemetery. The following obituaries appeared in the local papers:

From the New Bern Weekly Journal, dated January 13, 1917:

***Mr. J. Humphrey Dead at Clarks  
Esteemed Citizen Passed Away At Early Hour This Morning***

*Mr. John Humphrey, one of the most highly esteemed citizens of the county, this morning succumbed to an attack of pneumonia at his home near Clarks. The deceased, who had been ill for several days, was seventy-two years of age and was held in high esteem by all who knew him. The funeral service will be conducted from the Methodist church at that place tomorrow afternoon at 2 o'clock.*

From the Sun Journal, dated January 14, 1917:

***Funeral of Late Mr. John Humphrey. Service to be  
Conducted from Methodist Church at Clarks This Afternoon.***

*The funeral services over the remains of the late Mr. John Humphrey, who died at his home in Clarks yesterday morning, will be conducted from the Methodist Church at that place at two o'clock and the interment will be made in the family burying ground.*

*The deceased, who was seventy-two years of age, was stricken a few days ago with an attack of pneumonia and being advanced in years, he gradually grew worse until the end came.*

*The deceased was one of Craven County's most esteemed citizens and his passing will be mourned by friends of the family throughout this section of the State.*

After his death, many papers and journals were destroyed in the "clearing out". One of his few remaining possessions, a copy of Charles Dickens', "A Christmas Carol", published in 1867, bears the signature, "John Humphrey 1879", is in the library of the writer.

---

**North Carolina State Board of  
BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS**

**CERTIFICATE OF DEATH**

County Craven  
 Township 8  
 or Town \_\_\_\_\_ Registration District No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 or City Clarks (No. County Home)  
 (If death occurs in a hospital, or other institution, give name instead of street number.)

2 FULL NAME John Humphrey

PERSONAL AND STATISTICAL PARTICULARS			MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF
3 MALE OR FEMALE <u>Male</u>	4 COLOR OR RACE <u>White</u>	5 SINGLE, MARRIED, WIDOWED, or DIVORCED <u>Widowed</u> <small>(Write the year)</small>	16 DATE OF DEATH <u>Jan</u> <small>(Month)</small>
6 DATE OF BIRTH <u>April 1, 1847</u> <small>(Month) (Day) (Year)</small>			17 I HEREBY CERTIFY, That I attended deceased from <u>Jan 6, 1917</u> to that I last saw h. <u>alive</u> on and that death occurred on the date above stated, as the CAUSE OF DEATH* was as follows: <u>Emphysema</u>
7 AGE <u>69 yrs. 9 mos. 12 ds.</u> <small>If LESS than 1 day.....hrs. or.....min.</small>			
8 OCCUPATION <small>(a) Trade, profession, or particular kind of work.</small> <u>Hammer</u> <small>(b) General nature of industry, business, or establishment in which employed (or employer).</small>			
9 BIRTHPLACE <u>Craven Co.</u>			
PARENTS	10 NAME OF FATHER <u>unknown</u>		
	11 BIRTHPLACE OF FATHER <small>(State or Country)</small>		
	12 NAME OF MOTHER BEFORE MARRIAGE " "		
13 BIRTHPLACE OF MOTHER <small>(State or Country)</small>			
14 THE ABOVE IS TRUE TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE  (Informant) <u>J. L. Humphrey</u> (Address) <u>Clarks NC</u>			
15 Filed <u>Jan 19, 1917</u> <u>W. L. Suraw</u> Registrar.			18 LENGTH OF RESIDENCE (For Hospitals, Institutions) At place of death.....yrs.....mos.....ds. <small>in the</small> Where was disease contracted, if not at place of death? Former or usual residence.....
			19 PLACE OF BURIAL OR REMOVAL <u>Clarks NC</u>
			20 UNDERTAKER <u>J. H. Wiltis Co.</u>

Contributory La Griffe  
 (Signed) J. L. Humphrey  
Jan 18, 1917 (Address) Clarks NC

\*State the DISEASE CAUSING DEATH, or, in case of (1) MEANS OF INJURY; and (2) whether ACCIDENT.

**Figure 22 Death Certificate of John Humphrey**

John's death certificate, signed by his son, Jay Lee Humphrey, stated John was 69 years of age, and born on April 1, 1847.<sup>22</sup> The mystery of John's parentage began at that time, as Jay Lee filed the certificate, writing "born in Craven County, parents unknown". Over eighty years later the writer found the 1848 court records and discovered John's mother, Drusilla Humphrey of Craven County.

---

**Endnotes Chapter 6 The John Humphrey Family**

- <sup>1</sup> 1850 Craven County Census Page 327B. Microfilm. Craven County Library.
  - <sup>2</sup> 1850 Craven County Census. Schedule 2. Page 2-39. Microfilm. Craven County Library.
  - <sup>3</sup> Personal Interview with Charles P. Humphrey. 2002.
  - <sup>4</sup> 1860 Craven County Census. EN 404. Microfilm. Craven County Library.
  - <sup>5</sup> NC Troops 1861-1865. Volume 3. Infantry. Craven County Library.
  - <sup>6</sup> North Carolina Extant Voter Registration of 1867. Craven County Library.
  - <sup>7</sup> Craven County Marriages 1851-1905. Volumes 1-7. Microfilm. Craven County Library.
  - <sup>8</sup> Ibid.
  - <sup>9</sup> Craven County Deed Book 107 Page 130. Microfilm. Craven County Library.
  - <sup>10</sup> 1880 Craven County Census. 8<sup>th</sup> Township. Microfilm. Craven County Library.
  - <sup>11</sup> The Heritage of Craven County. Article 269. Craven County Library.
  - <sup>12</sup> Ibid.
  - <sup>13</sup> Craven County, NC Cemeteries, Volume 2. Craven County Library.
  - <sup>14</sup> 1900 Craven County Census. 8<sup>th</sup> Township. Craven County Library.
  - <sup>15</sup> The Heritage of Craven County. Article L79. Craven County Library.
  - <sup>16</sup> The Heritage of Craven County. Article 269. Craven County Library.
  - <sup>17</sup> Craven County Marriages 1851-1905. Volumes 1-7. Microfilm. Craven County Library.
  - <sup>18</sup> Family letter and restored photograph from William G. Humphrey, circa 1980.
  - <sup>19</sup> Craven County Marriages 1851-1905. Volumes 1-7. Microfilm. Craven County Library.
  - <sup>20</sup> The Heritage of Craven County. Article 269. Craven County Library.
  - <sup>21</sup> The Heritage of Craven County. Article L80. Craven County Library.
  - <sup>22</sup> Craven County Death Certificates. 1917. Register of Deeds. Craven County.
-