

Kirtley Family Genealogy Notes

***** *Miscellaneous* *****

Mark B. Arslan
407 Highlands Lake Drive
Cary, NC 27518-9167
marslan@nc.rr.com

Kirtley Genealogy Web Site: <http://arslanmb.org/kirtley/kirtley.html>

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Letter from Henrietta Leola "Katie" (Kirtley) Leon [#2194] to Postmaster of Mount Vernon, Rockcastle Co., KY, dated 15 Mar 1901 {7324}

May 29, 1996 - Copy of letter described below made by Thomas L.Kirtley [#1232221]

(This is a true copy of a letter given me by Mrs. Frances Kirtley Simmonds [#123228] of Salmon, Idaho, November 11, 1961, who is the daughter of James Logan Kirtley [#12322], who was an early day placer miner before and after the Civil War. E. C. Kirtley, 2711 S. Curtis Rd., Boise, Idaho.)

"Alberta, Canada
Blairmore, Alta.
March 15, 1901

Postmaster,
Mt. Vernon, KY

Dear Sir:

Can you give me any information of the Kirtleys of Va.

William)
Pleasant) Sons of Elija Kirtley of Va.
Francis)
Lema)

They moved to Kentucky in 1820 or 30 odd, leaving Lema Kirtley in Va. Before the war we had a letter from Uncle William at Mt. Vernon, Ky.

Lema married in 1835 and had two sons, and one daughter. I am the only one left. My eldest brother left the States in 1856 for Colorado, my other brother William went in the Southern army and I joined the army at Richmond, Va. in 1861 as hospital and field nurse, age 18 yrs. My mother, widowed, was also a nurse and died from exposure in camp in 1862. Brother Wm. was wounded in several battles, a prisoner 18 months in a New York prison, and never recovered his health. I paid his expenses up to 1880 when I went East from Mexico and buried him in Poughkeepsie, N. Y.

After leaving property, home and every one, my husband killed also, I came West to look for my brother and found him in Montana 1866. Afterwards he was killed by Indians.

Five years as volunteer nurse in the War made me a nurse since. I found work in the mining camps and railroad camps caring for the sick and wounded men, sewing and washing since 1865. All kinds of weather hardships and coldness of people who refuse to pay me for work. I feel it more since 1877. I saved a woman and a babe and had both feet hurt that laid me up 14 months.

I have a heavy shoe and brace on one foot so I keep up at work. I have never had one day of illness and I am now 58 years and 3 months of age. I live in a tent winter & summer doing charity work all the time, often short of food when no work and people refused to pay me, but I a Southern Woman, never asked charity.

I have been with all the large Western railroads (in Old Mexico) and in Canada and B.C. Since 1894, only 18 months in Idaho. I returned to Canada January 21st and worked 43 days in

cook house for a new Coal Co. from 5 A.M. to 10 P.M. then slept in a cold tent with 30 degrees below zero many nights. Now I am resting and waiting for lumber to build a laundry. We are camped on the main line of the Crow's Nest Ry., one of the finest coal plants in Canada. The Co. owns 4580 acres. Three new towns will build here and one new R.R. from the east to Vancouver, West Coast. The country is filling up with Americans. The climate is fine, we now have spring weather. One and one-half miles from here are the sulphur springs. A fine long river through our camp, and opposite is one of the highest Mts. of the east side of the Rocky Mts. are the coal tunnels.

At Femie Camp near here are 4000, also 300 coke ovens.

I was a nurse in Richmond, Va. hospitals; Manassas, Fairfax, Court House, a Culpepper court house, Gordons Va., Swanee, Forest Hill, Stanton, Fredericksburg, Aque Crest, Petersburg, Lynchburg. I was Chief Matron of camp Wynder at Richmond with Mrs. Ellen Meer of Louisville Ky. (Assistant) Then transferred to Montgomery, Alabama, then to Miss. with General Forrester, I was wounded and made prisoner, carried to Warrensburg Mo. Brown and Moonlight----It was there when turned free at end of war. I and two other widow women walked to Denver, Col. and cooked for the outfit. We lost to wagons a 4 men by Indians, and was three months on our way over, 1865.

I have been in the Apache Indian war in Arizona and the Yaqua Indian and Mexican War in Old Mexico as nurse.

We are 80 miles from any town, never see a minister or hear a sermon or prayer. Was on this main line R.R. two and one-half yrs. and never heard a minister. The people here are from all parts of the world, but it is the Americans who open up all the big mines and Railroads.

If any of your old Southern Soldiers who may remember me, the little nurse, I will be glad to hear from them. I was most known as Katie Kirtley, or Leola, then I married Dr. L. Leon, who was killed in Louisiana Regt. My grandfather, Elija Kirtley, had only one brother named Elias, sons of Francis Kirtley, natives of Virginia.

You will excuse my long letter, being alone in the world, and often feel the want of kind words from Ky. or Va. people, even a newspaper is welcome.

My address is

Mrs. Leola Leon,
Blairmore,
Alberta,
Canada”

[Note: The identification of Elija(h) Kirtley as the father of Lem(m)a Kirtley is doubtful. Elijah Kirtley [#123] was married 10 December 1800 in Lincoln County, Kentucky to Mary Buford. Elijah lived the remainder of his life in Kentucky, last being listed on the 1860 census of Rockcastle County. The 1850 and 1860 censuses put his year of birth at between 1779 and 1781. He did have a son named William living in Mount Vernon, Rockcastle County, Kentucky prior to the Civil War, but is not known to have had sons named Pleasant, Francis, or Lemma. The 1820-1840 censuses of Georgia in which Lemma Kirtley appears place the probable year of Lemma's birth at between 1790 and 1794. This makes Elijah [#123] too young to have been Lemma's father. A much more likely candidate is Francis Kirtley [#21], who married Sarah Frances Buford. Francis's will, dated 4 February 1819, does mention sons Francis, Pleasant, and Lemma. It's not clear why Leola names Elijah as her grandfather. She wasn't born until after her father's death and didn't appear to have lived near the rest of the Kirtley family, so she may have confused the names and dates. She was also related to Elijah Kirtley's wife through Lemma's

mother, a Buford. Maybe that's how she knew of Elijah's branch of the Kirtley family. More research needs to be done to resolve this. – MBA 28 Apr 2006]