

Excerpt from Chapter 7, *The Rasco Family Tree, Roots and Branches*, © 1994 by William E. Rasco and used by permission.

## SARAH REESE AND LABAN TAYLOR RASCO I:

### THE FOURTH BRANCH OF THE FAMILY

(pp. 99-103)

[This chapter relates directly to Rasco descendants

whose number starts with a "4", a "2137", or a "31235".]

4. Laban Taylor Rasco I was born in Bertie County, North Carolina, March 30, 1784, the fourth child of Rachel Harrell and Captain William Rasco I. The first ten years of his life were spent in Bertie County in the vicinity of Windsor where his father William was a farmer who had served as a captain in the militia.

When Laban was ten, his father sold his land in North Carolina, and with wife and children, loaded worldly goods into wagons, rounded up the livestock, and moved across the state into the Cumberland River Valley frontier area of the Southwest Territory that was later to become part of the state of Tennessee. Crossing the great Appalachian Mountains and then traveling in a wagon train with an escort of soldiers through the Indian territory must have been exciting times for Laban and the other children on the trip.

As a teenage youth on the frontier, Laban probably had all the work he wanted in helping with the clearing of acreage, the building of a house and barns, tending of livestock, planting, weeding and harvesting of crops. Even though slaves were a part of his father's farm labor force at that time, there was plenty of work for all hands on the frontier as the agricultural practices involved constant clearing of new tracts to farm as the soil in the old sections was exhausted by the farming methods.

#### *MOVING ON TO KENTUCKY*

By 1803, Laban and his father acquired land in the adjoining county (and state) of Christian County, Kentucky. Both had tracts surveyed in the Big Flat Lick area in February 1803 (N-1). Laban entered a tract of 400 acres (Book 18, page 169) surveyed February 17, 1803. His father, Captain William Rasco entered two 400 acre tracts (Book 13, page 555 and 19, 146) both surveyed the previous day (Jillson 389). Revolutionary War warrants, which enabled settlers to acquire the military land reserves, sold for ten cents to \$4 an acre. The low point in the market was about 1804 (*Public Land* 256).

With a farm of his own, Laban decided to take a wife and on January 17, 1804 he married Sarah Reese in Christian County, Kentucky. The minister was Jesse Fort, who was married to Dulcinea Prince, a dau. of William Prince, and a cousin of the bride (Fowler 16). If Fowler is correct this minister also would be a distant cousin to the Jesse Fort who is the brother-in-law of Laban Rasco (Fort 131). (See Chapter 14, Forts.)

Sarah was the daughter of Nancy Earle and Ephraim Reese, both descendants of distinguished colonial families with roots traced back to England and Wales. Ephraim, an officer in the Revolution, and Nancy had moved to Christian County, Kentucky, to the Little River area south of what is now Hopkinsville, Kentucky, before 1799. See Chapters 10, 11 and 12 for information on the ancestors of Sarah Reese.

Laban Taylor's age would place him in the Kentucky militia during the War of 1812 but I have found no reference to his unit or its service in the war.

In 1816 Laban bought 170 acres of land on the Little River from his brother-in-law Edward Hampton Reese (Deed Book F, p. 120 in Fowler 16). The cost was \$150.

Sarah and Laban remained in Kentucky until about 1820 when they moved to Dallas County, Alabama (N-2), with Laban's older brother Jesse and his family. About 1814 while it was still a territory, Jesse had moved to Jackson County, Illinois, where he farmed for several years. Alabama had become a state in 1819 and the immigration of families such as Jesse and Laban helped the new state realize rapid population growth in its early years.

### *KITH AND KIN ON THE MOVE*

Sarah's brother Samuel Reese was apparently among the first of the Rasco kith and kin to move to Alabama. When he sold Kentucky property in 1818, Samuel was listed as "of Dallas, County Alabama" (Fowler 16).

The northwest section of Dallas County where Laban and Jesse settled with their families and friends was in the heart of the Cotton or Black Belt of Alabama. (N-3) The land was a rolling prairie of great fertility. The prairie was broken from place to place by areas of timber. The very black soil contained a great deal of lime valuable to growing crops. By 1860, the Black Belt, one-fourth of the state, was producing two-thirds of the state's cotton and half the corn crop (Riley 133).

The households of both Laban and his older brother Jesse are recognizable in the 1830 Dallas County Census (N-4).

Four Rascos are listed among the privates in Ranier's Company of the 1st Battalion of Alabama Infantry in the Creek War 1836-37. These are Jesse Rasco and Taylor Rasco, possibly sons of Jesse or Laban

Taylor Rasco, Thomas I? L? Rasco, a son of Jesse Rasco I and Archibald Rasco, believed to be #61.

Laban's older brother Jesse Rasco I died early in 1840. His wife had already died and his daughter Rachel and her husband Thomas (Thompson?) Jackson, and his sons, Thomas Linza, Laban II, and Gabriel H. Rasco had all moved to Texas by this time (N-5). Laban II and Gabriel were minors under the law.

Thus, Laban Taylor I and his wife Sarah were the senior Rascos in Dallas County and by the 1850 Census the area where they lived was identified as Rasco's Beat, a reflection of the number of Rascos who had lived in the area now known as Marion Junction as well as of their prominence in public affairs. However, most of the family were Laban and Sarah's children as the only son of Jesse Rasco I to remain in Alabama was his namesake Jesse II. The other children of Jesse Rasco I had moved west by about 1850. Another branch of the Rasco family had established itself in Talladega County, Alabama by 1850. This John Rasco family from South Carolina is believed to be no closer kin to our Rascos than distant cousins (N-6).

In the home with Laban, 65, and Sarah, 63, was their youngest son Edward Hampton, 25, and a young girl attending school, Mary Rasco, 11, otherwise unknown (N-7). Laban was listed as a farmer with property valued at \$7,680. The census taker erroneously listed his birthplace as South Carolina, the birthplace of his wife.

Laban took an interest in public affairs. In the spring of 1853 the election of trustees for the public school district for Township 17, Range 8, was held at his house. Supervisors for the election were John A. Rasco, Gabriel Harrell and W. H. Boswell according to the April issue of the Cahaba newspaper.

### *PROSPEROUS TIMES IN ALABAMA*

Laban and many of his neighbors prospered during the 1850's. The expanding national economy, the good soil, and a labor system based on slavery helped fortunes to grow. Shortly before his death Laban's estate was valued at about \$60,000, half in land and half in slaves. However, this was less than half the declared wealth of the average large planters who held 28 percent of the wealth in Alabama. The per capita wealth of the average white Alabamian in 1860 was \$1,497 compared to the per capita wealth of \$711 for the average free American that year (Sellers 42).

Sarah Reese Rasco died March 17, 1859, and Laban Taylor Rasco I died October 22, 1860. Both are buried in the Rasco Cemetery near the site of the Rasco homestead (N-8).

The children (N-9) of Laban and Sarah were:

41. **Nancy Harriet M. Rasco**, b. April 15, 1805, Christian County, Kentucky, m. Benjamin Bolton; d. in Alabama. (P. 103)

42. **Pherebry Fort Rasco**, b. April 19, 1808, Christian County, m. Whitmel Finis Harrell; d. in Blount County, Alabama. (P. 117)

43. **Taylor Laban Rasco**, b. April 1, 1811, Christian County, m. Mary Ann Candy; d. Dallas County, Alabama. (P. 118)
44. **Mary Susan Rasco**, b. March 1, 1815, Christian, m. Jesse P. Pulley; d. in Fulton County, Arkansas. (P. 118)
45. **Jesse Harrell Rasco**, b. January 28, 1817 Christian, m. Martha Jane Vanderslice; d. in Cullman County, Alabama. (P. 158)
46. **Demaris Boling Rasco**, b. January 5, 1819, Kentucky, m. Thomas B. Jones; d. Dallas County, Alabama. (P. 206)
47. **William Ephraim Rasco**, b. January 5, 1821, Kentucky or Alabama, m. Mary Ann Elizabeth Wilson; d. Dallas County. (P. 212)
48. **John Altum Rasco**, b. February 25, 1823 in Dallas County, Alabama, m. Mary J. Fisher; d. Dallas County. (P. 217)
49. **Edward Hampton Rasco**, b. May 1, 1827, Dallas County, m. Polly Ann Smith; d. in Shelby County, Alabama. (P.218)

Information about the nine children and their descendants follow in this chapter....

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### **Chapter Notes: Sarah and Laban Rasco (pp. 237-239)**

(1.) The procedure for acquiring land in that area (the Virginia Military Tract) required the prospective buyer to locate acreage he believed had not been previously entered and then provide the surveyor with a rough description of the land. The official surveyor ran the line, marked the corners by blazes or notches on trees and entered the description in the survey book which was later forwarded to Washington (*Public Land* 255). Laban's younger brothers William Jr. and John Rasco also had lands entered about ten years later. Both were in the Little River area of Christian County, Kentucky. William Jr. had tracts of 45 acres and 260 acres surveyed July 27, 1813, and John had a 200-acre tract surveyed November 22, 1814 (Jillson 389).

(2.) Oldest daughter Nancy Harriet M. Rasco married Benjamin Bolton in Dallas County, Alabama July 15, 1822 (Dallas Marriage Book D, 54) establishing the move of the Rasco family as prior to this date. Nancy and Benjamin lived in Sumter County in 1830 and in Shelby County at the time of her father's death in 1860.

(3.) Unrelated but of interest to some is the fact that this area of the county (Harrell Station) has gained international significance in recent years among paleontologists. Digs in the area have produced one of Alabama's most complete dinosaurs and its only dinosaur egg (Saxton 5).

(4.) The age categories listed for Jesse's household match sons Beverly, William H., Thomas Linza, Laban Taylor II, Jesse II, and Gabriel H. Two unknowns a male age 10-15 and a female age 15-20 are also in the household. These two unknowns may be relatives or hired hands or both. In Laban and Sarah's household were sons Taylor, Jesse Harrell, John A. and Edward H. and daughters Mary Susan and Demaris. Unknowns in the household include a male 30-40, a male 10-15 and a male under 5, two females 5-10 and one under 5. The older male may be a widower and his children or other members of the family or some unrelated persons. Laban had 10 slaves at this time.

(5.) Dallas Will Book D, 391 and subsequent pages detail the disposition of the estate of Jesse Rasco I. Six of the children remained in Dallas County. (See Chapter 6 for a list of the descendants of Jesse Rasco I and his wife Elizabeth.)

(6.) The 1830 Census for Marlboro County, South Carolina, lists a Rachel Rasco, 70, and a John (iv) Rasco, 56. Rachel is possibly the widow, nee Howell, of Alexander Rasco from Bertie, North Carolina and John is possibly her son. The 1850 Census for Talladega County, Alabama, lists a John (v) Rasco, 43, b. South Carolina; Clarissa, 47, b. South Carolina, Charles J., 12, b. Georgia, and George W., 8, b. Alabama.

(7.) Laban's oldest son, Taylor Laban died in 1845, less than a year after his marriage to Mary Ann Candy. Unless he had a previous marriage, Mary, eleven in 1850, would be too old to be his daughter.

(8.) James Ray Rasco visited the cemetery on several occasions. He reports the cemetery is on an unpaved road leading from Harrell's Crossroad to Marion Junction. Some stones were visible from the road. The earliest marker is for Margaret Johnston d. June 16, 1837. Other markers include: Elizabeth Barlow, d. March 5, 1840; John Combest, a native of S.C., d. in Dallas County August 27, 1843 in about 70th year; Infant Daughter of John H. and Sarah Combest, b and d May 12, 1847; Sarah Combest d. September 19, 1843, age 37 years; Sallie, wife of Laban Rasco, b. in S. C. May 30, 1786, d. March 17, 1859; Laban Rasco, born in N.C. March 30, 1784, d. October 22, 1860; Willie A., infant son of W. H. and S. C. Harrell, August 30, 1859 - October 30, 1860; John A. Rasco, February 25, 1823 - July 4, 1865; Jess. . (illegible, dates fit Jesse Rasco II, son of Jesse) February 12, 1820- January 24, 1870.

Mable Fort Jordan told him the cemetery was larger once and the road made a sharp turn around it. In the early 1930s the county straightened the curve and overran part of the cemetery, destroying many of the graves and markers.

The markers of Laban Taylor Rasco and his wife Sallie are recorded in *Vital Data from Cemeteries in Dallas County, Alabama*.

Another cousin, Ordice Rasco #4967, visited the cemetery October 22, 1953. He wrote Ada Rasco Crumpton the cemetery was about two miles south of Marion Junction, overgrown with trees, and had very badly damaged tombs.

The old Rasco homestead was a two story colonial style building still standing in the 1950's but subsequently burned to the ground. It is said to have been two miles from Marion Junction near the Summer's home on the 500 acre farm which is the site of the Rasco graveyard.

(9.) Family records show some confusion about the number of children of Sarah Reese and Laban Rasco I. Laban's will (Dallas WB L: 297 and later) lists eight children: Nancy Harriet (Bolton); Pherebry Fort (Harrell); Mary Susan (Pulley); Jesse Harrell; Demaris Boling (Jones); William Ephraim; John Altum, and Edward Hampton. We know from other records that a son, Taylor Laban died before Laban I. James Ray Rasco has an early list by Barney Ray Rasco #44491 who mentioned two additional sons, Josiah Narrell (Harrell?) and Robert, and a daughter Catherine Prince Rasco. No other references have been found for these possible siblings and no sources are cited. Until additional proof of the existence or relationship can be found I have omitted them from the list of descendants. However, given the very high infant mortality rates in the South during this period, the chances a family would have eight or more children live to adulthood are extremely remote. For this reason, the three may have been children who died as infants, thus leaving no descendants.