

YOUNG DUTCH STOWAWAY BRINGS UNUSUAL SURNAME TO THE U.S.A.—AND TO STATE OF TENNESSEE¹

By Charles R. and Sarah Gill McDaniel

In Holland in 1808, sixteen year old **Willem Kolwyck**² stowed away on a ship bound for America. Like thousands of other young men he was seeking sanctuary from the Napoleonic wars. Little did he know before the century was out he would father sons who themselves would experience the horrors and tragedies of the American Civil War. According to stories handed down in the Kolwyck family the stowaway was discovered soon after sailing and given rough treatment. Consequently he hit the dock running when he disembarked at either Mobile or New Orleans.

Where he went and what he did over the next fifteen years remain a mystery. Life could not have been easy for a teenager alone who spoke little or no English. The Dutch are traditionally water men so it is possible he worked on riverboats moving up the Mississippi River to the Ohio at Cairo, Illinois, then down the Cumberland River to Nashville. This could explain how he got to Lebanon in Wilson County where in 1823 he married Margaret Ann Steel³, a native Tennessean, on August 23rd of that year. His bondsman was James B. Taylor from the neighborhood where the Steels resided. The groom signed the license “Willem Koolwyk”. The court clerk entered his name on the bond as “William Colewick”, the first of many attempts to change it into English. The family Bible also has it as “Colwick” and “Colewick”. Later family members in Parsons, Tennessee and Sikeston, Missouri spelled it Colwick. Clarence Kolwyck of Chattanooga says it is Dutch for a place where cabbage is grown, and that is correct.

In the 1830's the family moved westward from Wilson County to Perry County and ultimately Decatur County. In 1840 we find the family in the Perry County census. He was then known as William and the surname is garbled terribly. Next door neighbors included his wife's brothers Minor Steel⁴, Nathan Steel, and William Steel, for whom she named three of her sons. William and Margaret had eight children by this time, five boys and three girls, eventually they had thirteen children. The family Bible lists birth dates of eleven of them. Others were illegible or not listed, but the 1850 census of Decatur County, page 444, reports those living and at home at the time.

CHILDREN OF WILLIAM & MARGARET (STEEL) KOLWYCK

(1) Sarah Allen Kolwyck, b. 22 Jul 1824, Wilson Co., Tenn., d. 31 Oct 1904, mar. 1st Mr. McDaniel, mar. 2nd Robert T. Fullerton, ca. 1848 in Tenn.

¹ Slightly revised version, 2011.

² Family Bible shows he was born 2 Nov 1792 in Holland. Rotterdam was the most likely port he boarded ship for America.

³ She was born 20 May 1804. Since publication in 1996 her parents have been found to be Thomas Steel, Jr. and wife Sarah Allen of Chester Co., S. C.

⁴ Sometimes spelled “Miner. Steel.”

- (2) Miner Thomas Kolwyck, b. 23 Apr 1826, Wilson Co., Tenn., d. 22 Jul 1876, prob. Henderson Co., Tenn., mar. Martha A. Barnes on 14 Aug 1856 in Tenn.
- (3) William S. Kolwyck, b. 12 Jan 1828, Wilson Co., Tenn., d. about 1880 at Dyersburg, Tenn.; mar. 1st Sarah; mar. 2nd Harriet Weeks. Middle initial was probably for "Steel."
- (4) Catherine Fisher Kolwyck, b. 24 Dec 1829, Wilson Co., Tenn.; mar. John William Johnson.
- (5) F. S. Kolwyck, b. ca. 1830, Wilson Co., Tenn., no further record after 1850 census.
- (6) Nathan R. Kolwyck, b. 12 Jun 1832, prob. Wilson Co., Tenn., d. 9 Feb 1862, Tenn.
- (7) Anderson D. Kolwyck, b. 12 Dec 1834, prob. Wilson Co., Tenn., d. 17 Dec 1864, Elmira :Prison Camp, New York, prisoner of war, mar. Margaret J. Hale.
- (8) Gerebeth G. Kolwyck, b. 2 Jan 1837 prob. Wilson Co., Tenn. No further record.
- (9) James Wright Kolwyck, Sr., b. 3 Aug 1838 Perry Co., Tenn., d. 12 Feb 1914, Darden, Henderson Co., Tenn.; mar. Eliza Keziah Newman in 1866.
- (10) Louisa E. Kolwyck, b. 1838/39, Perry Co., Tenn., mar. James F. McFarland
- (11) Margaret C. Kolwyck, b. 14 Feb 1841, Perry Co., Tenn., d. 13 Feb 1858, age 17.
- (12) Mary D. Kolwyck, b. 16 Jul 1843, Perry Co., Tenn., d. 27 Mar 1927, Prospect, Bradley Co., Tenn., mar. James A. Cagle on 28 Oct 1875 in Tenn.
- (13) Sarilda Ann Kolwyck, b. 17 Sep 1846, Decatur Co., Tenn., d. 2 May 1930, Darden, Tenn., never married.

By time of the 1850 census William and Margaret were living in Decatur County which had been split off from Perry. Eight children were at home, the youngest a five year old daughter Sarilda. Next door was their 21 year old son William S. Kolwyck, his wife Sarah and five months old son William C. Kolwyck.

William Kolwyck's wife Margaret Ann (Steel) died 2 May 1855 shortly before her 41st birthday. William lived to experience the horror of seeing four of their seven sons leave to fight in the Civil War and a fifth killed for refusing to go. Confederate records in the National Archives reveal four of the brothers enlisted as privates in the Confederate Army in December 1861. William S. Kolwyck joined Capt. J. R. Williams' Cavalry Company on 6 December. Anderson D. Kolwyck enlisted in Capt. Joseph B. Caruthers' Company of the First Tennessee Heavy Artillery Regiment on 7 December 1861. His brothers James Wright and Miner Thomas signed with the same company on the tenth, three days later. All escaped from Island No. 10 and New Madrid, but were captured at Vicksburg on 4 July 1863.

The Tennessee Heavy Artillery was reorganized after Vicksburg, and Company A was stationed at Fort Morgan, Mobil, Alabama. Anderson rejoined the company and was captured a second time on 23 August 1864. He was transported on a prison ship from New Orleans to Fort Columbus in New York Harbor, arriving there 28 September 1864. Transferred on 5 December to the Union Prison at Elmira, New York, he died twelve days later of smallpox, recorded as "variola". He left a wife and two small sons who never knew his fate. The writers of this account learned from military records of his burial at Woodlawn National Cemetery in Elmira, visited his grave and prison museum. His descendants at that time lived near Dyersburg, Tennessee.

James Wright Kolwyck fought in the battle at New Madrid, Missouri, escaping with those not captured to Island No. 10 in the Mississippi. Both areas had been heavily armed with artillery to hopefully control that river. When that fortification was overrun, they escaped the rest of the way to the swamps of Reelfoot Lake. The company was reorganized as Company L of the First Tennessee Heavy Artillery headed by Col. Andrew Jackson, Jr. The men participated in the siege of Vicksburg, Mississippi, sinking the ironclad "Cincinnati" and other ships. They were captured on 4 July 1863 and paroled three days later. James was sent to Union prison camps in Alabama and Georgia before being exchanged. He then joined Company D of Barteau's 22nd Tennessee Cavalry under General Nathan Bedford Forrest's command, and took part in the battles of Franklin and Nashville.

Minor Kolwyck, who was with his two brothers at New Madrid and Island No. 10, also captured at Vicksburg, has not been found in any other war records. He did survive the war. According to family tradition their brother Nathan was hanged for refusing to go into service. Some of the Kansas cavalry – locally called "Jayhawkers" -- and other groups were said by the family to have terrorized their members and may have killed him.

William Kolwyck, the patriarch, who had taken Sarah Fullerton as his second wife in 1859, died at Flatwoods in Decatur County, soon after the war ended. He was 73. He is said to have been buried at Flatwoods but his grave has not been located. There is an interchange in the immediate neighborhood.

James Wright Kolwyck returned to Decatur after the war and in 1866 married Eliza Keziah, the sixteen year old daughter of Elder Henry and Susannah (Reeves) Newman of Henderson County. James lived and farmed the rest of his life in the Darden community. He was a staunch Republican. He and his wife were charter members of Mount Ararat Missionary Baptist Church. After an illness extending over several years he died 22 February 1914 at age 75 in the family home near Darden. James and Eliza are buried in Corinth Baptist Cemetery in Darden.

CHILDREN OF JAMES AND ELIZA (NEWMAN) KOLWYCK

- (1) Ermany Kolwyck, b. 10 Sep 1867, Henderson Co., Tenn., d. 18 Oct 1868.
- (2) William Henry "Buck" Kolwyck, b. 5 Jan 1869, Henderson Co., d. 16 Jan 1954, Darden, Tenn; mar. Mary Ida "Molly" Posie on 1 Dec 1889.
- (3) James Wright Kolwyck, Jr., b. 20 Nov 1870, Henderson Co., Tenn. d. 8 Nov 1951
- (4) Coon Rod Kolwyck, b. 3 Jan 1873, Henderson Co., Tenn., d. 23 Mar 1943, Darden, Tenn., mar. Ava Angeline Maxwell on 28 Dec 1899.
- (5) Margaret Ann Kolwyck, b. 24 Oct 1875, Henderson Co., Tenn. d. after 1958.
- (6) Samuel Lee Kolwyck, b. 8 Jan 1878, Henderson Co., Tenn., d. 30 Aug 1947 at Deering, Pemiscot Co., Mo., mar. Eula B. Richie, on 26 May 1912, Senath, Dunklin Co., Mo.

- (7) Rev. George Washington Kolwyck, b. 25 Feb 1882, Henderson Co., Tenn. d. 16 Mar 1952, mar. 1st Birdie Ray on 6 Aug 1910, Kennett, Dunklin Co., Mo., no issue, mar. 2nd Annie Virdie Owens on 24 Jul 1917, Henderson Co., Tenn., by whom there was issue.
- (8) Beadie B. Kolwyck, b. 18 May 1884, Henderson Co., Tenn., d. 23 Dec 1944.
- (9) Jack J. Kolwyck, b. 28 Mar Henderson Co., Tenn. D. 1970 in Parsons, Decatur Co., Tenn., mar. Bezzie A. Davison on 15 Sep 1917.

Samuel Lee Kolwyck was the only one of James and Keziah's children to move from Decatur and Henderson Counties permanently. Samuel settled in the small farming town of Senath in Dunklin County, Missouri, about 1910, worked in a grocery store and served as postmaster. On 26 May 1912 he married Eula Richie and they later moved to adjoining Pemiscot Co., Mo., first to Netherlands community, eventually locating in Hayti where he had a grocery store on The Square. He retired to Deering in the same county. The third of their children, Sibyle Lee, married Harvey Ray Gill of Hayti, and they are parents of Sarah (Gill) McDaniel, co-author of this paper.

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