

# The Chronicles of Oklahoma

Volume XV

March, 1937

Number 1

## THE FATHER OF SEQUOYAH: NATHANIEL GIST

---

The founder of the Gist family, of Maryland, was Christopher Gist, or Guest, who migrated from England and settled in Maryland on the south side of the Patapsco river in 1682, but removed in 1691 to Baltimore county. He married Edith Cromwell, of the family of the great Oliver Cromwell, lord protector of England. Their son, Richard (1684-1741), was the father of Christopher Gist, who is known in history as explorer of the West in 1750 and as guide of young George Washington in the Ohio river region in 1753 to ascertain the strength of the French. His journal of the expedition is the foundation of much of the early history of the west.

Christopher Gist II married Sarah Howard in Maryland, where three sons were born to them:

First—Richard Gist, Sept. 2, 1729, who was killed in the battle of King's Mountain, 1780.

Second—Nathaniel Gist, our subject, who was born Oct. 15, 1733.

Third—Thomas, who is said to have settled in Kentucky after the Revolutionary war, in which he was a training officer.

Nathaniel Gist bore the name of his father's younger brother, Nathaniel, and in confusion the uncle is by some credited with the adventures of the nephew among the Cherokees. Another brother of Christopher was William Gist.

Young Gist was evidently a visitor, for trade purposes, to the Overhill Cherokees as early as 1753. Manifestly, he was the son

referred to by Christopher Gist in the following excerpt from his *Journal* of 1753, kept while on a tour to the Ohio with Major George Washington: "A messenger came with letters from my son who has just returned from his people at the Cherokees."<sup>1</sup>

In 1754, at the age of 20, Nathaniel Gist was among the Overhill Cherokees. He and another young Virginian, eight years older than he, Richard Pearis, were engaged in the trade to those Indians, Pearis operating from Long Island of the Holston (the present Kingsport) in partnership with Thomas Price.

The goods were supplied by Christopher Gist, who earlier had been in the mercantile business in Baltimore. Having failed in business there, the elder Gist was now in Virginia endeavoring to recoup his fortunes by supplying or backing traders to the Indian tribes. Both Pearis and young Gist looked with longing eyes on the fertile acres of Long Island, and as early as 1754 Pearis preferred a claim to the island with Gov. Dinwiddie, of Virginia. In the spring of that year young Gist bore a message from Gov. Dinwiddie to the Overhill Cherokees asking that they come to the aid of Virginia in the great contest with the French for the possession of the Mississippi Valley. In the summer of the same year Pearis went back to Virginia. "Not having the wherewith to answer his credit, when Pearis came there, one Guest, his merchant, and father to the Guest who was sent into the nation as messenger from Virginia, seized on his leather and denied him any further credit, which obliged him here and there to pick up what goods he could get . . . of inconsiderable value, which he packed in bags, and brought two white men (who fled from Virginia for the press). These he sent into Chote with a letter to Old Hop<sup>2</sup> desiring him to give no credit to Guest or his linguister, Oliver; that they would tell him nothing but lies, and that Guest had stole the governor's

<sup>1</sup> William M. Darlington, *Christopher Gist's Journals*, 80. It is probable that Nathaniel accompanied his father on the tour of 1751-1752. "My son had the misfortune to have his feet frost-bitten (January 7, 1852)." "My son hunted up the creek (Mar. 1, 1752)." *Ib.* 72, 76.

<sup>2</sup> Emperor of the Cherokees.

letter from him, and he, himself, was the man to have brought it. This letter of Pearis to Old Hop was laughed at."<sup>3</sup>

In fact, Gist bore not only the governor's letter, but also a message from the Indians to the Six Nations in western New York, desiring the Cherokees "as mutual friends of the English to aid in expelling the French."

Pearis did not wish to confront young Gist in Chota, and avoided that town, but went to another, where his Indian wife resided. "Old Hop [the emperor] sent to have Pearis intercepted, and when he was brought in there were high words passed between Pearis and Gist. Old Hop told Pearis to be quiet, and asked him why he had lost his way and passed the town, and whether the governor had sent any message to his woman, and said he could compare him to nothing but a young buck in rutting time who ran hither and thither after a doe."

This quarrel between the two young Virginians in the woods of the Tennessee country was thus reported by Trader Ludovick Grant to Gov. Glen, of South Carolina, and in results it was of consequence. It contributed to the loss of the much needed manpower of the Cherokees to Virginians and the British regulars under Gen. Braddock in meeting the menace of the French and their Indians on the upper reaches of the Ohio. It brought a prompt reprimand of Pearis from Gov. Dinwiddie: "If it had not been for the unseasonable and disagreeable difference between you and Gist, I am fully of opinion they [the Cherokees] would according to former promise have sent some of their warriors before now to join our forces."<sup>4</sup>

More blamable for the defeat of Gen. Braddock and the death of that officer than this private dispute was the adverse attitude of Gov. Glen, in the view of Gov. Dinwiddie, who wrote to Gov. Dobbs, of North Carolina, on July 28, 1755: "If Mr. Glen, agreeable to promise, had prevailed over a number of Cherokee and

<sup>3</sup> *Dinwiddie Papers*, I, 266-68.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.*, II, 76, 77.

Catawba warriors to join our forces we should not in all probability have been defeated, as they would have attacked the Indians in their bush way of fighting, which the regulars are strangers to; but • • • that gentleman had a meeting with those two nations of Indians at the very time they should have joined our forces. He had all along, I think, done everything contrary to his duty and the service of the expedition."<sup>5</sup>

Dinwiddie the same day addressed a sharp letter to Glen, much in the same tone.

Nathaniel Gist returned from Chota to Virginia in time to take part in Braddock's campaign, serving as lieutenant in his father's company of Washington's regiment—the Seventeenth Company Rangers, and he was in the disastrous defeat and rout of the colonial and regular forces under Braddock. Indeed, young Gist had been sent out from the army camp as bearer of the messages to the Overhill Cherokees, and it is a fair inference that Washington sent him or recommended him to Dinwiddie for the mission.

In the following year, 1756, Gist served in his father's company in ranging for the protection of the frontiers of Virginia against the marauding French Indians, unleashed and made blood-thirsty by their defeat of Braddock's army. The estimate of so just a man as Col. Adam Stephen of the Gist-Pearis broil before the Cherokees is preserved in a letter to Col. Washington, of date Nov. 7, 1755: Pearis' pretensions to bring in 200 Cherokees appears to me by advice from a rational person to be only a trick to procure forgiveness and recover the governor's countenance, after so many charges have been lodged against him by Mr. Gist. By a particular and intimate acquaintance of Pearis' it has been acknowledged that he was the principal cause of our not having the Cherokees last spring."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *Ib.*, II, 123.

<sup>6</sup> *Letters to Washington*, I, 123.

In the *Dictionary of American Biography* (Vol. VII), in the sketch of Christopher Gist by W. J. Ghent, the statement is made that "in 1756, he [Christopher Gist] went to the Cherokee country in East Tennessee in the vain effort to enlist Indians for service, and for a time he was an Indian agent in that locality."

The journey of the son is here attributed to the father. That the father remained at the north during the period of the son's stay among the Overhill Cherokees is clearly traceable in the *Dinwiddie Papers* and in the *Letters to Washington*. Christopher Gist was kept busy there in collecting supplies for the projected expedition of Braddock. No record has been found by the writer of the presence of the elder Gist in East Tennessee. It is also manifest that Nathaniel Gist was not in the decade of 1754-1764 an Indian agent among the Cherokees. That tribe was under South Carolina's management until Indian affairs passed to direct British control—first to Edmund Atkin as chief agent at the south. In 1757 the younger Gist was, for meritorious services, given by the governor of Virginia the pay and title of captain—the same title being the father's, and that fact doubtless has led to the confusion and erroneous statements.<sup>7</sup>

Nathaniel Gist was delegated assistant under Atkin to take care of 200 Cherokees then in Virginia to aid that colony in the recovery of ground and prestige lost in 1755. No doubt this designation of Gist was due to his acquaintance with these Indians, but the service was not rendered by him in East Tennessee. He is said to have led those Indian auxiliaries in the successful campaign of Gen. Forbes in 1758.

It is interesting to see the estimate placed by Col. Washington on the value of Cherokee auxiliaries from the Tennessee country. In September, 1756, he wrote Gov. Dinwiddie: "Those Indians who are coming should be shown all possible respect and the greatest care taken of them. It is a critical time, they are very

<sup>7</sup> *Dinwiddie Papers*, II, 669, 671.

humorsome, and their assistance very necessary. One false step might lose us all that, and even turn them against us."

And in June, 1758, when preparations were in progress for Gen. Forbes' expedition against Fort Duquesne, Washington wrote Gen. Forbes: "Indians I conceive to be the best if not only troops fit to cope with the Indians [of the French] in such grounds. \* \* \* They are to us of the utmost importance. I suggest the idea of sending a proper person immediately to the Cherokee nation, who may not only heal the differences which now subsist, but get a body of them to join the army in their march, and no person sure has the interest of our important cause at heart would hesitate a moment to engage in such a service, on the event of which our all, in a manner, depends."

Two days before, Forbes had written to the great English statesman, William Pitt, of the Cherokees, then with him and his regulars: "If they leave us we shall lose the best part of our strength as all northern Indians, mostly our enemies, were kept in awe by the presence of so many Cherokees."<sup>8</sup>

Summers, in his *History of Southwest Virginia*, gives a glimpse of Nathaniel Gist and Daniel Boone in 1760: "About the same time Daniel Boone, accompanied by several hunters, visited the Holston and camped the first night in what is now known as Taylor's valley. On the succeeding day they hunted down the South Fork of Holston and traveled thence to what was thereafter known as Wolf Hill (Abingdon). Boone and his companion \* \* \* disagreed and separated, Boone taking the Indian trail to the Long Island, and Nathaniel Gist, his companion, following the Indian trail to Cumberland Gap."

Relying, in part, upon this datum, Albert V. Goodpasture, a thorough investigator and most competent historian, in his "Paternity of Sequoyah,"<sup>9</sup> advances the contention that, after this hunt-

<sup>8</sup> June 17, 1758. Kimball (ed.) *Correspondence of Wm. Pitt*, II, 279.

<sup>9</sup> *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, I, 12 et seq.

ing trip, Gist went to the Cherokee towns on the Little Tennessee river and there formed a temporary alliance with a Cherokee maiden in 1760-61, the result of which was the birth of the great Sequoyah.

Goodpasture reinforces the argument by citing the facts that in Gist's petition to the legislature of Virginia asking confirmation of his title to Long Island of Holston from the Cherokees he represented that he had obtained it in 1761, thus evidencing his presence among the Indians in that year. It is difficult to follow this thesis. There was war flagrant, and hotly so, between the Cherokees and the whites of Virginia and the Carolinas in 1760-61, leading up to and including the massacre of the garrison of Fort Loudoun-on-Tennessee. In all the communications and publicity incident to those fateful happenings the presence of Gist is nowhere indicated. In point of fact, he was in active service with the Byrd-Stephen regiment of Virginians, as one of the captains, and that regiment was marching against those Indians.<sup>10</sup> The regiment under Col. Stephen built Fort Robinson opposite the Long Island, and did not proceed further, peace having been made.

If Gist obtained from the Indians a cession of Long Island it must have been when they came in to treat for peace at Fort Robinson, and not in their country below. Henry Timberlake and Thomas Sumter, of the command, did volunteer to venture there, Col. Stephen not being willing to command such a dangerous service; but nowhere from records does it appear, and it is altogether unlikely, that Gist went to the Overhill towns under the conditions prevailing.

While dissenting from the proposition that Sequoyah was born in 1760-61, this writer is in accord with Goodpasture in the belief that Capt. Gist was the father of that greatest of red Tennesseans. The probabilities point to the period of the early 1770's as being the time of Sequoyah's birth.

---

<sup>10</sup> The fact is shown by much documentary evidence. See Williams, "Fort Robinson-on-Holston," in *East Tennessee Historical Society Publication*, IV, 22-32.

A valuable document is a biographical sketch of Sequoyah dictated to the poet, John Howard Payne, while the latter was for quite a time, in 1835, among the Cherokees.<sup>11</sup> The dictation was by Maj. Lowry, a mixed-blood cousin of Sequoyah, Mike Waters, a brother-in-law, and The Bark, the last named a warrior who was a close associate of Sequoyah in his youth. This manuscript sketch is entitled, "The Life of George Gist"—not Guess or Guest. In Payne's language it states: "I was informed that in 1835, the year I made the inquiry, Gist's age was about 60. He left the nation with the Arkansas emigrants from it about eleven years ago." This would place the date of Sequoyah's birth, approximately, in 1775. Another intelligent observer who saw Sequoyah before his removal to the West is in practical accord.<sup>12</sup>

Sequoyah's syllabary was completed in 1821, and his age then reckoned to have been "about 40." His oldest child, Teeseey, was born in 1789. Sequoyah died in the town of San Fernando, Tamulipas, Mexico, in August, 1843, after a long and trying journey westward in quest of a lost band of his countrymen. It is difficult to conceive of such a task being undertaken by a man 83 years of age, who had from childhood been a cripple from "white swelling" of the knee joint.

That Nathaniel Gist was the father of Sequoyah is consonant with all of many probabilities; that a wandering German peddler from Georgia was such, in 1770, as claimed and stated by Foster in his *Sequoyah*, is unbelievable. It may be that, to shield Gist, that story was advanced, even by his mother and her family. Guess, the peddler, has not been traced in the archives of Georgia or South Carolina. It would be a remarkable coincidence had there been two men by the name of Gist or Guest among the Overhill Cherokees in the same half decade, when very few white men were to be found there.

<sup>11</sup> Payne Papers in Ayres Collection, Newberry Library, Chicago.

<sup>12</sup> Emmet Starr, the Cherokee historian, says that Sequoyah died at the age of seventy-five. *History of the Cherokees*, 45. A boyhood friend of Sequoyah, Charles Hicks, one-time chief of the Nation was born 1767—not 1760.



John Mason Brown, of the Louisville bar, one of the greatest lawyers of Kentucky in his day, was a descendant of Nathaniel Gist; and he in a letter preserved in the Bureau of Ethnology, at Washington, stated that Sequoyah had visited the Gist family in Kentucky and was recognized by the descendants as a natural son of Gist. Mrs. Mary Cary (Cratz) Morton, a granddaughter of the Gist still living, states that the family tradition is that Sequoyah once visited Lexington looking up his Gist relatives.<sup>13</sup> This visit may have been in 1828, as Sequoyah was going to or returning from Washington as one of the Cherokee delegation to treat with the authorities in the capital city.

The mother of Sequoyah, Wut-teh of the Paint clan, was a member of one of the leading Cherokee families, and not, therefore, likely to consort with a strolling peddler. The "Life" in the Payne manuscripts states:

"The family of Gist, on the Indian side (the mother's), was of high rank in the nation. The famous John Watts<sup>14</sup> was one of them. Two of his uncles were men of great distinction: One of the two was named Tahlonteeske (the overthrower)<sup>15</sup> and the other Kahn-yah-tah-hee (the first to kill). Kahn-yah-tah-hee<sup>16</sup> was the principal chief of old Echota (Chota as known to the English), the ancient town of refuge over which he presided. He was called the Beloved Chief of all the people. It was his exclusive duty and delight to be a peace-preserver.

"During some public assembly there was an onset of the whites—notwithstanding it was a time of profound peace—and all the

<sup>13</sup> Letter of Judge S. M. Wilson, of Lexington, Ky., the Kentucky historian, to the writer, respecting an interview with Mrs. Morton.

<sup>14</sup> His father, John Watta, Sr., is said to have been of the garrison of Fort Loudoun when the fort was surrendered, 1761, but this is believed to be erroneous. The father was among the Overhill Cherokees before that fort was constructed in 1756-57, and no doubt was a trader. He was skilled enough in the Cherokee language to act as interpreter in the treaty of Augusta, Ga., 1763. *N. C. Col. Rec.* XI, 179; *Calendar of Tennessee papers* (Draper Collection), '81.

<sup>15</sup> Or Talontuski, Taluntiski or Tollunteeskee. He was a brother of Chief John Jolly.

<sup>16</sup> Commonly called by the Americans The Tassell. For Tatham's account of him in 1777: Williams, *William Tatham, Wataugan*, 23, and *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, 75-77.

Indians fled excepting Kahn-yah-tah-hee and another chief of whom there was some distrust in the nation. They were both in the square where the ceremonial had been gone through. Kahn-yah-tah-hee arose from his seat, and with a white flag waving, met the marauders as they broke into the square. Both chiefs were murdered brutally on the spot."

A number of white men among the Overhill Cherokees as traders were at Sycamore Shoals of Watauga in March, 1775, when Richard Henderson and associates purchased of the Cherokees large portions of Kentucky and Tennessee. Nathaniel Gist was present.

From the Cherokee country Gist in 1775 made a visit to West Florida, returning from the Mobile region when the Revolution in the South was passing into the active stage. He journeyed northward in company with Henry Stuart, deputy agent under the British, the better known Col. John Stuart being his brother and the principal agent to the Southern Indian tribes. On reaching the Tennessee river the party took water carriage towards the site of Chattanooga. Chief Dragging Canoe had been south to confer with the Stuarts and, having returned, was now patiently awaiting the arrival of Henry Stuart at the Tennessee. Stuart wrote his brother John that the party "met at the Tenassy some white people who had come down the river in order to settle on the Mississippi"—evidently in the Natchez district. Also of Capt. Gist that he was "well acquainted with the new settlements" on the Watauga and Nolachucky rivers and had informed young Stuart that "the settlers were very numerous."

On reaching the Cherokee towns the part played by Capt. Gist was, to say the least, equivocal and it led to deep resentment on the part of the Wataugans when they learned of it. He was, indeed, in close quarters. As a trader he must have had money owing to him from the Indians and he must have felt that his claim to the fertile Long Island should be conserved, if at all practicable. Gist knew of the plan of the younger warriors under the influ-

ence of Dragging Canoe to attack the white settlers on the Holston, Watauga, and Nolachucky.

There was a group of Tories in the Brown settlement on the Nolachucky. Capt. Gist, as Henry Stuart narrates, "offered to undertake to give them [these settlers with Tory leaning] notice if he could get four white men that know the woods and some Indians" to accompany him. One of these white traders was Jarret Williams. "The very night before they were to set out the four that were chosen to go ran away; they were all Virginians, which was likely to prove fatal to the white people who remained. All the white people in the nation thought that the only security they could now have for their safety was to go with the Indians."

Jarret Williams, a Wataugan originally from Virginia, when he reached the Watauga settlement gave information "that Alexander Cameron informed that he had concluded to send Capt. Nathaniel Guest, Williams Faulin, Isaac Williams and himself with the Indians till they came to the Nolachucky; that they were to stop and Guest and the other white men, above mentioned, were to go to see if there were any king's men among the inhabitants and, if they found any, they were to take them off to the Indians or have a white signal in their hands or otherwise to distinguish them. When this was done they were to fall on the inhabitants and kill or drive away all they possibly could."

Henry Stuart had endeavored to persuade or compel the settlers in what is now upper East Tennessee to move off of their lands to West Florida, promising that the Cherokees would permit of their safe passage down the rivers. In one of his written messages to the settlers he thus referred to Capt. Gist; "Capt. Gist has been all over West Florida and from what we know of that country we venture to recommend it to you as a very fit country for your poor people."

Dr. P. M. Hamer in a contribution to the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, without citing authority on the particular point,

states that Gist was at the time in the pay of Cameron, assistant British agent to the Cherokees, and that "for the purpose of protecting loyalists and women and children he accompanied the Indians in their attacks on the Wataugans." Gist, at least, did not leave the Indians for his home in Virginia. But his later claim or explanation was, no doubt, that the projected plan to leave the Redmen and go to the Tories on the Nolachucky was in order to get away to Virginia, that the plan failed when the white traders escaped from the Indian towns, and that his only safety was to go forward with the warriors. As we shall see, his explanation was satisfactory to such a patriot as Maj. Evan Shelby, and he was supported by a white trader to the Cherokees, Isaac Thomas. Too, as we shall later see, in the following year Gist wrote to the Cherokees reminding them that he had on this occasion, in 1776, warned them, before they went to war against the whites, against the step.

When, after the three contemporaneous attacks on the upper country settlers at Island Flats, on the Watauga and in Carter's valley, and in the latter part of the same year Col. William Christian began his retaliatory campaign against the Cherokees, his instructions from Gov. Patrick Henry were to insist upon the Indians "giving up to justice all persons amongst them who had been concerned in bringing on the present war, particularly Stewart [Stuart], Cameron and Gist."

When Christian, on the march towards the Cherokee towns, reached the French Broad river, Gist came in from the Indian side under a flag of truce to the camp of the colonel. He reported that 1,000 of the Cherokees from the Carolina side of the mountains had joined the Overhills, who would not give battle until the troops crossed the Little Tennessee. Christian wrote to Gov. Henry: (Oct. 15, 1776) "I judge the flag was only an excuse for him to get with me. I believe he is sorry for what he has done. I did intend to put him in irons, but the manner of his coming I believe will prevent me. The officers tell me that the camp is in great

confusion about him; some think that there are many favorable circumstances attending him; many are for killing him—of the last the greatest part. I spoke but little to him and don't know whether he wants to go back or not."

Two of the soldiers under Col. Christian left accounts of this incident. Benjamin Sharp stated that the bordermen "were so exasperated at him that almost every one that mentioned his name would threaten his life, yet Christian conveyed him through the settlements unmolested, and he went to the headquarters of Washington, where I presume the former friendship was renewed. He became a zealous whig." John Redd stated that "when Gist first came in to Christian he was viewed in a very suspicious light; he was thought to be a spy. But the prejudice against him soon wore off and he became very popular."

Gist went to Virginia and promptly laid a memorial before the governor and the council of state. The order entered by the council, Dec. 17, 1776, as is follows:

"Capt. Nathaniel Gist having presented a memorial to the Governor lamenting the suspicions which he fell under with several of his countrymen, as having acted an inimical part against America by aiding and abetting the Cherokees in their late hostile conduct and desiring his excellency and the council would make inquiry into the same, as a preparatory step either to his acquittal or consign punishment, the board accordingly considered the several depositions transmitted by Col. Christian to the governor and which had been laid before the general assembly, and moreover examined Col. William Russell, Maj. Evan Shelby and Isaac Thomas, upon oath; and, upon the whole matter are of opinion that Capt. Gist is a friend of his country and was acting in that character most effectually when he was suspected of encouraging the Indian hostilities."<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> McIlwaine (ed.) *Official Letters of Governors of Virginia*, I, 78, 184, 186.

It no doubt gratified Gen. Washington to have the record of an old friend thus cleared; and on Jan. 11, 1777, Gist was appointed a colonel of a regiment in the continental line. The newly-made colonel was sent south by Washington to use his influence in bringing the Cherokees into the promised treaty at Fort Patrick Henry, Long Island. Arriving at the island on March 28, Gist sent by an Indian messenger a talk to the chiefs, a copy of which is to be found in the Library of Congress, Manuscript Division.

A number of the friendlier chiefs, in accordance with a promise to Col. Christian, came to the island to treat in April, but Dragging Canoe sullenly held back. Gist then went to Chota with some of the chiefs who did attend; and returned with them to Fort Patrick Henry on the date to which adjournment had been taken, arriving on June 28. At the request of the commissioners of Virginia and North Carolina he sent a second message to Dragging Canoe urging him to come in, but without success. The treaty proceeded, Gist sitting in council "on business from Gen. Washington." He was influential in bringing the results desired by Virginia and North Carolina. Col. Christian as one of Virginia's commissioners in an address to the Indians said:

"At our last meeting in April at this place, a letter from our great warrior, Gen. Washington, was delivered to his brother, Oconostota, by one of his war captains and our friend, Col. Gist. By this letter you were invited to send some of your young men to our general's camp. You know the pains and trouble he [Gist] has been at and how careful he has been to you in bringing about a happy peace; and he has long been a friend to your nation."

The Tassel (Kahn-yah-tah-hee), uncle of the Indian consort of Gist, replied:

"Here is my friend and brother (pointing to Col. Gist) whom I look upon as one of my own people. He is going to leave me and travel into a far country, but I hope he'll return. Here is one of my people, the Pidgeon, that will accompany him, but I do

not know of many more that will. He was once over the great water<sup>18</sup> where he could not see which way he was going; but this journey will be all by land and he will think nothing of the fatigue."

At the end of the treaty negotiated at Fort Patrick Henry in 1777, above the signatures, appears this "memorandum before signing":

"The Tassel yesterday objected against giving up the Great [Long] Island opposite to Fort Henry to any person or country whatever except Col. Gist, for whom and themselves it was reserved by the Cherokees. The Raven did the same this day in behalf of the Indians and desired that Col. Gist sit down upon it when he pleased, as it belongs to him, and them, to hold good talks on."

Col. Gist aided while on the treaty ground in celebrating the first July 4 anniversary ever held in Tennessee. An entry on the Journal shows:

"July 4 the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence was observed. The soldiers belonging to the garrison were paraded and fired two rounds, each in six platoons, and for the 13th one general volley. The great guns were also fired \* \* \* The young warriors then closed the entertainment with a dance."

Col. Gist took with him to Virginia seventeen Cherokee warriors, including The Pidgeon, who were embodied in his command, the regiment being assigned to its first duty on the east shore of that state. Gist, in 1778, was an advocate of a fuller use of Indians in the American army.

The career of Gist in the Revolutionary War was a creditable one. For a time he was in command of Red Stone Fort in Pennsylvania; he campaigned in South Carolina. When Charleston was

---

<sup>18</sup> With Henry Timberlake in 1765. Williams, *Memoirs of Lieut. Henry Timberlake*, *passim*.

captured by the British, he was made a prisoner of war. He was retired Jan. 1, 1781.

In 1793 he removed from Virginia to Kentucky, where for services rendered as a soldier he had received a grant of 7,000 acres of the finest blue grass land.

A valuable sidelight is thrown upon the problem dealt with in this paper by the narration of Gen. James Taylor, of Kentucky, found in the Draper Collection:

"When I was moving out to Kentucky in the spring of '93 I left my company some distance before we reached Redstone (now Brownsville). I understood Col. Gist had arrived with a large number of slaves and was encamped about a half mile above the creek from which the old fort had taken its name. I called on Col. Gist at his encampment. I found him sitting under his markee which, no doubt, had protected him and his brother officers from the storms of many a cold and dreary night. He was a venerable looking man, I should think near 60 years of age; stout-framed and about six feet high and of a dark complexion. It was the first time I had seen him, but, on making myself known to him, he informed me he was well acquainted with my father and had served, I think; in the Virginia legislature or in the state convention together, and perhaps in both.

"While I was with him a good looking youth, who appeared to me about 16 or 17 years of age, come to the markee and was invited in. He was dressed in home-spun clothes, quite neat and was a fine, tall, well-looking youth. He appeared to wish to say something to the Colonel. At length he inquired if he had any business with him or wanted to say anything to him; and the colonel inquired his name. 'My name is Gist, sir,' said the young lad. 'Aye,' said the colonel, 'and who is your father?' 'Why, sir,' says he, 'I am told you are my father.' 'Ah, indeed,' says the colonel, 'and who is your mother? Betsy—Oh, very likely it may be so then; I was well acquainted with a girl of that name some years



ago when I commanded Redstone fort. The young man appeared somewhat embarrassed and the colonel appeared somewhat stumped, and I concluded to take my leave as it might be more agreeable to have their conference alone on that delicate subject.

"I met the Hon. John Breckenridge moving out with his family. He was well acquainted with Col. G., and said he was a great gallant in his younger days. I should not have mentioned Col. G's name in this narration, but a few years ago I named it to one of Col. G's family and inquired of the person if they had any knowledge of the young man. They said they had; that he had moved to the West and had become wealthy; that the whole family had recognized him as a near relative and that he had rendered the family many important services."

On his Kentucky grant Col. Gist established his home, "Cane-wood," which was to become noted for the beauty of its embellishment and for its hospitality. He died there about the close of the War of 1812.

After the close of the Revolution, 1783, he married Judith Cary Bell, a grandniece of Archibald Cary, mover of the bill of rights in the Virginia House of Burgesses. The daughters of the couple married distinguished men. Sarah Howard Gist married Jesse Bledsoe, a United States senator from Kentucky, characterized by Henry Clay as the most formidable man he ever met at the bar in Kentucky; Anne Cary Gist married Dr. Joseph Boswell; Eliza Gist married Francis Preston Blair, and they were parents of Montgomery Blair, a member of Lincoln's cabinet, and Francis Preston Blair, Jr., who was a United States senator from Missouri and a brigadier-general in the Civil War; and Maria C. Gist married Benjamin Gratz, a wealthy citizen of Lexington.

Francis P. Blair, Jr., was the Democratic candidate for the vice-presidency on the ticket with Seymour in 1868; and B. Gratz Brown was the democratic candidate for the same office running with Horace Greeley in 1872.

Missouri has placed in Statuary hall, in the capitol at Washington, the statue of F. P. Blair, Jr.; Oklahoma has placed in the same place the statue of Sequoyah. So that if Sequoyah was the son of Nathaniel Gist, the latter is without serious doubt the only man to have two descendants named by sovereign states as representatives in the Hall of Fame.

That the family of Gist produced virile and able men is further shown by the facts that Mordecai Gist, a cousin of Nathaniel, was a general in the Revolutionary War; and William H. Gist was Civil War governor of South Carolina. Joseph Gist represented South Carolina in Congress.

The Tennessee Gists were from the neighborhood of the Moravian town of Salem, N. C., and evidently descendants of William Gist, brother of Christopher Gist, who for a time lived on the nearby Yadkin river. Benjamin Gist was one of the first justices of Washington county, 1777, and it was, perhaps, through visits to him that Nathaniel Gist became acquainted with the Watauga settlers. Joshua Gist, son of Benjamin, was a member of the constitutional convention of the state of Franklin and one of the two assistant judges of that "lost state." Benjamin, and almost certainly Joshua, was under Sevier in the Battle of King's Mountain. These Gists were early settlers of Sevier county.

Where, it may well be asked, are there descendants of the mythical Gess of Georgia? If there was such a person, where can there be found in his line any, not to say such, evidences of transmitted force and ability?

—Samuel C. Williams

Johnson City, Tennessee.