MELUNGEONS REGARDED
AS PORTUGUESE REFUGEES

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Were the Melungeons Portuguese, as they have always main-
tained? And were they also Portuguese Moors as claimed by
Dr. N. Brent Kennedy, a Melungeon descendant of Atlanta?

This update is intended to express thoughts regarding the
Mediterranean theory, and not to claim a proven solution. The
Melungeons of the southern Appalachia were frequently
described as having a "Mediterranean look," with a long tradi-
tion of claims of Portuguese ancestry.

Tradition or mythical clues cannot be used to find a solution to
the mystery of the Melungeons. However, these haunting,
recurring themes demand a closer study of the history of the
early Arab-Moors. A search was begun for descriptions of their
physical appearance, culture and traditions. And most
important, what happened to the thousands of these conquered
people after their last major defeat by the Christian Spaniards in
1492? It just may be that they were the progenitors of the
Melungeons.

The 15th century Moors were considered to be descendants of
the ancient Phoenicians or Carthaginians. Their land area
was known as Western Islam or the North African Maghrib. Before
they were finally defeated, they reigned supreme for nine
centuries in the coastal Mediterranean area. After their defeat,
they became known as Mudejars [tamed] or Moriscos. Out of
fear, they denied their Moorish heritage, and their culture
vanished. Thousands fled, but some who were Christianized
were allowed to remain.

Many sought refuge in Tunisia where they remained free to
practice their Islamic religion. Others were herded onto
crowded ships and sent to non-Christian countries. Those who
were turned away struggled back to Spain. There they
renounced their faith, reluctantly turned Christian and were
reduced to lower class citizens by the Spanish.

Records of these once proud people are scarce, lost or non-
existent. The earthquake and fire in 1755 probably destroyed
nearly all of Portugal's shipping records. Yet, during the 1500s
there were numerous reports of groups fleeing or being deported
from the Mediterranean area. Refugees who landed on foreign
shores claimed to be Portuguese or Spanish. It would not be
wise to claim to be a Moor in this time period.
American Indians, explorers Needlum, Wood and Sevier claimed to know of people similar to these Moors, [Newsletter, March 1992.]

No proof of the arrival of these people in America between 1492 and 1614 has surfaced to date. Many historians do not recognize this possibility, however Dr. Kennedy has enlisted the aid of the Moroccan ambassador in his quest for knowledge to unlock the Melungeon mystery. Would the Moroccan Archives hold such a key?

Dr. Kennedy, in his "Blue Ridge Country" article, claims the Moors came to the Carolinas early, perhaps in the 1580s. His writing reveals extensive research into the history of the Moors and the culture of their descendents from Portugal.

Dr. Kennedy has experienced a unique physiological occurrence that suggests a Moorish ancestry for him. Earlier in his life, he was confined to a wheelchair with a mysterious malady that defied diagnosis. When a determination was finally made, it was found that Dr. Kennedy was stricken with a rare disorder found only among the Arab race. His physician concluded that it was genetically transmitted.

Between 1609-1614, King Philip III of Spain decreed that all remaining Moors, Christianized or not, were to be expelled. Historian Thomas Bourke wrote that nearly 100,000 went into France where Henry the Fourth treated them humanely, but the majority went into what is today Morocco. Historian Henry Coppee writes that those who went to France during 1609-1614 accepted the French Huguenot religion, and many later emigrated to the American colonies. According to Arab historian Beverlee Mehdi, "On December 20, 1777, in a document written in French, Morocco recognized the newly-declared independent United States of America and granted free passage to all American ships."

It is logical that some Moriscos would find passage to the American colonies on some of these ships. This could account for reports of Moors in the Carolinas prior to the American Revolution [Newsletter, January 1992]. Mehdi also states that in 1790 the House of Representatives in South Carolina provided that "Sundry Moors, subjects of the Emperor of Morocco," be tried in court according to the laws for South Carolina citizens and not under Negro codes. [Newsletter, January 1992].

During 1965-66 a free health study was done on 177 Melungeons in Hancock, County, Tennessee. With assistance of a Tazewell physician, Anthropologists William Pollitzer and William H Brown conducted the tests. This was a pioneer study in identifying nationalities from various genetic samples and was not conclusive. The results showed compatibility with Portuguese genes, but did not produce proof.

In 1990 an abstract was done by James L. Guthrie who used
more modern testing of the data used in the earlier study. In his report entitled "Melungeons: Comparison of Gene Frequency Distributions to those of Worldwide Populations," Guthrie found dominant Mediterranean genes.

Guthrie concluded that the populations of Italy, Portugal, Spain, and France have comparable percentages of CDe genes to the Melungeons. The Melungeon's A2 percentage also supports an early Mediterranean theory, listing comparable ranges among the peoples of coastal Mediterranean and southern Europe [Cyprus, Sardinia, Crete, France, Italy, Romania and Yugoslavia]. The Melungeon O gene is similar to values found in certain populations of Cyprus, Crete, and Turkey.

This report also stated that "the Rhesus system level of cDe [Ro] Haplotype, a marker for Black African ancestry, is higher than for most European populations and might argue for a slight Black American contribution to the Melungeons, except that it is typical of many Mediterranean peoples with long contact with Africa." He surmised that "populations not significantly different from the Melungeons characteristics still exist, but they live in a relatively well defined part of the world." And, he states that "the people closest to having the same gene factors as the Melungeons are now living in Italy, Tunisia, Morocco, France, Germany and Libya." All are areas once heavily populated by the early Moors.

If the Arabic or Spanish-speaking Moors did come to America, they probably anglicized their surnames, and slowly picked up the dialects and language of the English colonists. Jean Bible and Brent Kennedy referred to a few remaining Portuguese first names among the Melungeons of Tennessee. Also, many immigrants would have been Christianized before arriving and would have used or quickly picked up the common biblical first names so often used by all the early Christian Europeans. The surname Gowen/Goins should not be ruled out as having been corrupted from the Portuguese Goyen.

Just as hazy is the origin of the term Melungeon. It is generally thought to derive from the French word Melange, a mixture. But, could the name have originated from the Melungeons themselves before it became corrupted into a derogatory term? The very early tribes of Portugal referred to themselves as "Melongos," according to Jean Bible. Brent Kennedy was informed in the Portuguese Embassy that "Melongo" meant "a white person," and that 16th century North Africans used this term when referring to their Spanish or Portuguese neighbors.

The fine-featured Moors generally had very dark skin, dark eyes and hair. The fine petite features, exceptional beauty and long straight black hair of their women was common. Some blue eyes and brown hair developed from their Eastern Arab blue-eyed Berbers mix, as well as some mixing with their slaves and concubines of conquered coastal and southern Europeans. They were extremely superstitious. Being good farmers and herders, they were able to grow crops in unfertile high areas. They
excelled in story telling which was handed down from each generation leaving no written cultural heritage. All of these traits were characteristic of the early Melungeons.

The claims of Portuguese ancestry by the early Melungeons fell on deaf ears. The social and political ideas of the times encouraged that all those who didn't appear European should be classified as Negro, Mulatto or Free Colored in records. [Newsletter, March 1992].

Many Indians of the Southeast also fell under this same classification. A good reference regarding the confusion with Indian records is in the February 1992 issue of "The North Carolina Genealogical Society Journal." Also, confusing this issue was early mixing among the races in the colonies before it became socially unacceptable, and still continued after laws against it were passed. [Newsletter, March 1992].


Consider this Melungeon update article as information only and not as a claim to the solution of the mystery.


William H. Gowen Was Sire
Of Large Tennessee Family

William H. Gowen, an early resident of Williamson County, had a large family, and one of his sons was the father of 12. One of his grandsons had 13 sons in addition to a number of daughters. When a son, William Franklin Gowen, was enumerated in the 1880 census of Shelby County, he stated that both William H. Gowen and his wife were born in North Carolina. William H. Gowen first appeared in the 1820 census of Williamson County with a family of six. Two slaves were recorded in the household.
In September of 1820 William H. Gowen removed to Lincoln County, Tennessee. It is possible that he was enumerated a second time in the 1820 census. The household of "William Givens" of Lincoln County matched the one of William H. Gowen of Williamson County, including the two slaves.

On August 13, 1821 William H. Gowen purchased from Daniel F. Moore 10 acres on Bradshaw Creek for $50, according to Lincoln County Deed Book J-1, page 464. The household of William H. Gowen had grown to nine members when it was recorded in the 1830 census of Lincoln County, page 240.

"William H. Gowan" appeared in Henderson County, Tennessee in the 1840 census of that county with seven members in the family.

William H. Gowen received Grant No. 12125 for 18.5 acres in Carroll County, Tennessee which adjoins Henderson County on the north on July 1, 1851 from the State of Tennessee. It is believed that William H. Gowen died about 1855, probably at age 70, in Carroll County.

Two children born to William H. Gowen have been identified:

- William Gowen born March 2, 1813
- E. Sarah Jane Gowen born about 1824

William Gowen, son of William H. Gowen, was born in Lincoln County March 2, 1813, according to "Tennessee Baptist Ministers" by James H. Borum. William Gowen was married about 1835, wife's name Susan.

Shortly after marriage they removed to LaGrange, Tennessee in Fayette County where he was baptized into the Baptist Church December 15, 1837 at the age of 24.

His household of four people was recorded in the 1830 census of Fayette County, page 156.

In 1847 he was appointed a deacon in the Baptist Church and shortly afterward began preaching. According to Borum, he was limited in his educational background, "but his preaching was better than mediocrity." Borum also stated that he was "small of stature, but of pleasing countenance." "His work is being hindered in consequence of bleeding at the lungs," according to the book which was published in 1880.

Dr. Charles R. Gowen, a kinsman, commenting on his condition suggested he was a victim of tuberculosis and mentioned that a congenital weakness of the lungs had plagued the Gowen family for generations.

For the remainder of his life William Gowen preached to various congregations in Fayette County and Shelby County, Tennessee and DeSoto County, Mississippi. His locations included Macon, Germantown, Eudora and Egypt, Tennessee.
In the late 1840s and early 1850s he performed many weddings in Fayette County, including the marriage of Sarah Jane Gowen, believed to be his sister, to E. F. Atkins on January 30, 1848.

The household of William Gowen, No. 1257, was recorded November 1, 1850 in Fayette County, Civil District 11, page 648 as:

"Gowen, William 38, born in TN
Susan 38, born in North Carolina
William F. 11, born in TN
Hiram B. H. 8, born in TN
John M. 5, born in TN
Francis D. 3, born in TN, female"

Ten years later the family of William Gowen was recorded in 1860 in the Ninth Civil District of Shelby County as Household 1703-1737:

"Gowen, William 47, born in Tenn, Baptist preacher
Susan 47, born in North Carolina, wife
E. S. 19, born in TN, daughter
H. B. 18, born in TN, farmer
J. M. 16, born in TN, farmer
F. D. 13, born in TN, daughter
M. A. 7, born in TN, daughter
James G. 5, born in TN, son"

"William Gowen" appeared at age 57 in the 1870 census of Shelby County, Tennessee, page 247. In 1880 the household of William Gowen appeared in Williamson County, Texas, Precinct 6 as Household 325-325:

"Gowen, William 67, born in TN, father born in NC, mother born in NC, preacher
Susan 67, born in NC, father born in NC, mother born in NC, wife
"Atkins, Sarah 40, born in AL, father born in TN, mother born in NC, daughter
"Anderson, Richard 23, born in TN, father born in NC, mother born in NC, boarder"

Children born to them include:

William Franklin Gowen born September 21, 1839
E. Sarah Gowen born about 1840
Hayward Benton H. Gowen born in 1842
John M. Gowen born in 1844
Frances D. Gowen born in 1847
M. A. Gowen born in 1853 [daughter]
James G. Gowen born in 1855

Foundation Library Receives
Three Volumes by S. K. Wood
Sandra K. Wood, a descendant of Tennessee Patriarch James Burns Gowen, now living in Yorkshire, has recently completed "Swaledale, the Spirit Speaks Loud" in three volumes. She has donated a set of the volumes for the Foundation Library.

The heritage volumes begin with families who lived in that area of Yorkshire shortly after the Norman Conquest and bring their history down to the present. The books are about people--those who have gone--those who have stayed. Many played parts in developing America, Canada, New Zealand and Australia.

The 470-page set is offered in paperback at 19.30 [pounds sterling] overseas postage included. For additional information, contact the authoress at Corporate Link, Swale View, Low Row, Richmond, N. Yorkshire, England, DL11 6NE.

Don Lee Gowen Named Head Of James B. Gowen Delegates

Don Lee Gowen, Editorial Board Member of Decatur, Alabama has accepted the chairmanship of the James Burns Gowen Delegation to the 1994 Research Conference and Family Reunion in Houston. He is presently compiling a list of Foundation members and family members in the Middle Tennessee area who would like to receive Conference details and to be placed on the Greater Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau mailing list for details on area attractions.

Arrangements are being made to secure convention travel discounts of 40% off coach fare for the Foundation members through American Airlines. Foundation members must present their membership cards to their travel agent to be eligible. Charter buses can be arranged for those who prefer to travel with a family group, also with discount fares.

Members needing travel information assistance, either air or ground, may call Deena Anderson, Travel Agents International [800/888-6298] or the Foundation office at 806/795-8758. Those interested in travel plans for Middle Tennessee may contact Don Lee Gowen, 1310 Cantwell Ave. SW, Decatur, AL, 35601, 205/350-7067.

DEAR COUSINS LETTER COLUMN

It was a pleasure to talk with you on the phone and to hear of all the great plans for the Houston Conference in 1994. After all this time of correspondence and work on the Gowen genealogy, I feel that I know you personally and look forward to meeting you vis-a-vis in Houston.

Thank you for the manuscript print-out on my branch of the family and everything you are doing for the whole Gowen family, particularly those of us who are earnestly seeking. Olen R. Gowens, Ashby Place, Ladoga, IN, 47954.

==Dear Cousins==

I am descended from James Goyne1, John Goyne/Guynes2, James Guynes3, Norvell Madison Guynes4, Missouri F. Guynes
Griffey\textsuperscript{5}, Cassie Griffey Woodall\textsuperscript{6} and Ocea Woodall Allen\textsuperscript{7}. I have made several helpful contacts since joining the Foundation. I would love to hear from anyone who might have documentation on the births, marriage and death of James Guynes\textsuperscript{3} and his wife Martha Whittington. Cynthia H. Reed, 1752 Willowbrook Lane, Simi Valley, CA, 93065.

==Dear Cousins==

The Gowen Family Reunion will be held Sunday, August 2, 10 a.m. til ?? in Lawrenceburg, Tennessee Administration Building, next to the city police station. Especially invited are descendants of James Burns Gowen, [born November 22, 1785, died May 14, 1880] Matthew Gowen and Marcus and Martha Gowen.

We invite anyone connected with this family to come and join us for fellowship and to renew old acquaintances and to make new ones. Contact the folks you know and bring the children. A covered dish luncheon will be held at noon. Bring food and drink and enjoy the fun. For details contact: Charles Gowen, Rt. 2, Box 154 Leoma, TN, 38468, 615/852-4392 or Don Lee Gowen, 1310 Cantwell Ave. SW, Decatur, AL, 35601, 205/350-7067.

==Dear Cousins==

Enclosed are the family ancestor charts for us and our daughter for the Foundation Library, however genealogists are probably becoming an endangered species. Can genealogy survive in the face of the onslaught against the family? With all the “his/hers/ours” children, serial marriages, cohabitation without “the benefit of clergy,” promiscuity, single parenting, sperm banks, “test tube babies,” etc, will the coming generations have any pride [or interest] in knowing who their ancestors were?

Rose Gowen, 4301 Redbird Place, Loveland, CO, 80537.

==Dear Cousins==

I am seeking information about the ancestry and descendants of Daniel Gowen/Goan/Goins [bc1752] who was married about 1770 to Susannah Inman [bc1754], daughter of Ezekiel Inman and Hanna Hardee [?] Inman, probably in NC. By 1800 they were in Jefferson County, TN where he died September 6, 1810. Probable issue were Daniel Goan, Fanny Goan, Shadrack Goan, likely others.

Contact with any descendant of this union would be welcomed. I have collected considerable about the Inman lineage and allied lines and will share. Willis T. Finley, 307 Fairview Dr, Longview, TX, 75604. 903/759-0415.

Back Issues Are Available . . .

A limited number of Foundation Newsletter back issues remain on file, and they are available without charge, upon request by current members who would like to maintain a complete set of Newsletters for reference.

The Foundation Newsletter is mailed only to members who have current memberships, plus historical and genealogical libraries on our mailing list. Additionally sample copies will be mailed to prospective members upon request.
If you wish to participate in the Foundation, you may clip or reproduce the membership form below. Indicate the type of membership you prefer and Linda McNiel, Foundation Secretary, will issue your membership card.

The form below may also be used to request gift memberships for members of your family. The Foundation will send gift cards acknowledging your thoughtfulness, both to you and the recipients.

Gowen Research Foundation Newsletter
Arlee Gowen, Editor
Linda McNiel, Circulation

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Membership Application

Gowen Research Foundation  Phone: 806/795-8758 or 795-9694
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Free To GRF Members
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