

'CLINCH', AND HIS RIVER

copyright and all rights reserved

Lawrence J. Fleenor, Jr.

Big Stone Gap, Virginia

2-19-15

The identity of the man named 'Clinch', and who was the namesake of the Clinch River, is ephemeral in history. The surname is of English Anglo Saxon origin, and means a low hill. The family migrated throughout England, Scotland, and Ireland. Persons of this surname migrated all the way from Newfoundland to Australia.

Records exist for only one family of that name having immigrated to Virginia. The family came from Kent County England, and came to Surry (Hampton Roads) in the 1600's. They migrated to Granville County, NC, which is in the Yadkin Valley. There is a record of a William W. Clinch living in Guilford, North Carolina in the colonial days. Guilford County is also in the Yadkin Valley, and he is said to have come from Surry County Virginia. March 10, 1752 a William Clinch bought 180 acres of land in Granville County, North Carolina.

There are several 'Clinch' wills recorded in Surry County, Virginia in the 1730's, the oldest of which is that of Christopher Clinch of 1736. There is also a mention of a "William Clinch" in one of these wills.

In 1769 a man named Clinch accompanied the James Knox hunting party from Ashe County, NC (the New River south of Mouth-of-Wilson) into Virginia. The greater part of the party went to Big Flat Lick west of Pineville, Ky. Before they broke up. There is no documentation where or when Clinch broke off. There is a strong, yet undocumented, tradition in Virginia that he had a hunting camp at the head of the river named after him. This would have been in the general vicinity of Tazewell, Virginia.

A modern map of the pioneer era of Montgomery County, Virginia lists a "William" Clinch as being one of the first explores west of the New River, with the date 1742 being cited.

However, the respected Mary Kegley lists a Jeremiah Clinch as being a long hunter and associate of the following long hunters that are firmly associated with the Greater Holston Valley. Among them are: Bakers, Bledsoes, Blevins, Daniel and Squire Boone, Cox, Cowans, Crabtrees, Drakes, Knox, Newman, Skaggs, and Michael Stoner.

Bibliography:

Multiple topic specific Google sources, but most especially:

“The Mountain Laurel, The Journal of Mountain Life” – “The border Series – The Long Hunters”, by Mary Kegley

<http://www.mtnlaurel.com/history/1591-the-border-series-the-long-hunters.html>

<http://www.genealogy.com/forum/surnames/topics/clinch/69/>

<https://www.houseofnames.com/clinch-family-crest>

Regretfully, none of these sources give the source of their information on this specific long hunter Clinch. The William Clinch mentioned above is well documented in the Guilford and Granville County records.