

# The Legg, Sisk, and Bolton Families' Train Tragedies

by Jackie Layne Partin

## James Knox Polk Legg (1841-1879)

In Knox County, Tennessee, in the **1850 Census**, young eight-year-old James Knox Polk Legg, born **Oct. 6, 1841**, was living with his parents, John Wesley and Christine "Chrissey" (Price) Legg with six siblings still at home. Mr. John Wesley Legg supported his large family by farming. By **1860** John W. Legg had passed away leaving it hard for his family to get by on the finances he left.

James K. P. "Jimmie" Legg married Jennie Linton, daughter of Charles Jones and Mary Ann (Walker) Linton, in March **1870** and settled in Tracy City, Grundy County, Tennessee with Jennie's parents. The elder Lintons are buried in the Tracy City Cemetery. Her sister, Mary Elizabeth (Linton) Barnett, and her family also lived in Tracy City. The Legg, Linton, and Barnett's had mining and railroad backgrounds. James K. P. supported his new wife working as a locomotive engineer, a dream job of many young men.

James and Jennie lost a baby daughter, Beulah Legg in **Oct. 1875**. She was 4 yrs., 9 mos., and 2 das. old when she passed away. Another daughter Lilliam, born in **1876**, grew up and married Newton Wilson Hamilton.

What was the tragedy that struck the Legg family? These newspaper clippings will explain.

*The Daily American – **12 Aug 1879** –Tracy City, Tenn., Aug. 11 – Engine No. 2 jumped the track, this afternoon, near the tunnel, and turned over, scalding the engineer, Capt. Legg, severely, and bruising Col. Gaines, of Nashville, about the head, but not badly. (Engine No. 2 was the Colyar. jp)*

*The Daily American – **13 Aug 1879** – Tracy City, Aug. 12, 1879 – "Capt. J. K. Legg, the engineer who was so severely scalded yesterday, died last night. State Comptroller James L. Gaines was but slightly hurt and is around this morning. The run-off was an unusual one, as only the engine left the rails and cleared the track, without damaging it, so that the tender and the entire train passed on and was stopped a short distance beyond, the engine."*

*The Daily American – **13 Aug 1879** – Capt. James K. Legg, the engineer who was fatally scalded in the accident on the Tennessee Coal railroad, Monday died a horrible death. His fireman saved himself by leaping from the engine as it fell down the embankment. Capt. Legg leaves a family.*



The Mountain Goat Railroad is on top of the tunnel; however, Jim Legg's locomotive would have been going right to get down the mountain. Engineer Legg's engine left the tracks right before the tunnel. The Cowan Train is on the bottom.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BC5mB8v\\_Brc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BC5mB8v_Brc)

James was buried within the wrought iron fence that surrounded the Linton family plot in Tracy City. His father-in-law was the first family interment, then his daughter, Beulah, then James who was followed three months later by his mother-in-law. Jennie and daughter Lillian lived on in Tracy City and on **September 12, 1889**, in Grundy County Jennie Legg married William H. Foster, son of William P. and Zilpha Foster.





**James K. P. Legg, 38 yrs, 10 mos, 6 das**

**Today (2020) his stone is toppled from base.**

T. B. Roddy was appointed administrator over Jim's estate, and Jennie hired two lawyers. *The Daily American* – **16 Apr 1884** – "Winchester, Tenn., April 14 – Circuit Court is now engaged in the trial of the case of T. B. Roddy, administrator, vs. the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company for the killing of James Legg, who was an engineer on the mountain road, and lost his life, the engine turning over, about three years ago. The plaintiff is represented by Capt. T. D. Gregory and J. H. Holman, the defendant by Col. A. S. Colyar and Capt. J. W. Childress. This cause will likely consume the entire week." In **1881**, three years after Jim's death, Jennie bought two small lots from Thomas Benton "T. B." Roddy for \$800.00 near or in the corner of town Lot 100. She obviously won her court case against the railroad company. Later Jennie bought land from T. B. Roddy and moved over to 16<sup>th</sup> St. across from the Methodist Church. She married William Foster and set up housekeeping.

Jennie (Linton) Legg Foster (1846-1932) is buried in the Hampton/Foster plot in Tracy City with her second husband William and daughter Lillian (Legg) Hamilton.

The Linton/Legg family knew the family of Joseph Sisk and William Bolton. In the beginning of life in Tracy City all three families owned land on Beersheba St. in Tracy City, land that had formerly been known as the Backus Addition to the town. James Legg, Joseph Sisk, and William Bolton were all railroad engineers and worked out of Tracy City. With the loss of Jim Legg noted, let's talk about the tragedy in the Sisk family.

### **Joseph E. "Joe" Sisk (1846-1921)**

One of Jim Legg's friends and fellow engineers, Joseph E. Sisk (**1846-1921**), son of Jeremiah "Jerry" and Martha Patsy (Noah) Sisk, also lived on Beersheba St. in Tracy City. Jerry and Patsy were the children of two Franklin County farmers, William Sisk and Joseph Noah. When the Jerry Sisk family first came to Tracy City it was still in Marion County, TN. The family was not rich; Jerry was a brakeman for the railroad and had also been hurt in line of duty, but a few years after the Civil War made its marks on the railroad in and near Tracy City, Jerry and Patsy began to get into a little bit better financial shape. In **October 1883** they acquired **Lot 110** on Coke and Beersheba Street which was the beginning of the connection for all families in this story to Beersheba Street. Their son Joseph, who had worked for the Tracy City Coal Company during the Civil war, obtained a job on the railroad as a locomotive engineer, and the trains became his delight. His two siblings, Louisa and James, were still home with their parents, but James was employed by the railroad as an engine fireman which helped with the finances.

On **January 2, 1871**, Joseph married Sarah Mary Mulloy (**1841-1926**), a young lady born in Ballinew Cottage on Ragoon Road, Mincloon Townland, Ragoon Parish, Galway,



Ireland. They had married in Nashville, TN. Sarah's parents were Patrick and Bridget (Codyre) Mulloy, and their children were Patrick, Jr, James, Bridget Beatrice, Sarah Mary, Mary Delia, Martin J., Julia Elizabeth and Catherine who was the only child born in the U. S. A. She was born in Nashville and died there before 1870.

The Mulloys and the Linton/Legg families were old friends; thus, the Sisk family became part of the tight community. Later in our story Julia Elizabeth Mulloy will be a name of extreme interest to the reader.

Joseph and Sarah had four children: Martin Joseph, Delia Regina (m. William Harlow, William T. Hawkins), Julia Aloyisis (m. Allan Ross Zink) and Lula "Lou" (m. Jack Hill; Levi Lowe). Joseph and Sarah were of the Catholic faith and attended the small mission church in Tracy City on Rutledge Street. Since the family lived on Beersheba St., they needed only to walk about a half block (in Tracy City we still take shortcuts in 2020), so I reason that the children did a hop, skip and a jump to the church's front door.

**Right: Sarah Mary (Mulloy)  
Sisk**

**with her sister Julia Elizabeth  
(Mulloy) Bolton**

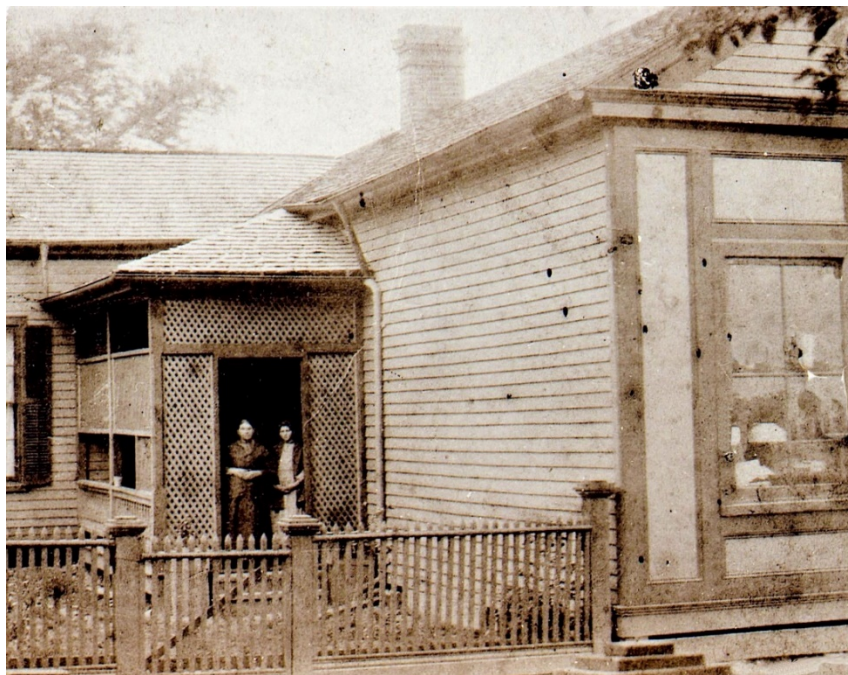
**in bonnet**

**(Photo taken ca. 1896 at  
Jeremiah "Jerry" and Martha  
Patsy Sisk home on Beersheba  
St. in Tracy City, TN)**





**Delia Regina (Sisk) Harlow, son Joseph Martin Harlow, and probably daughter Eva May Harlow in front of Delia's parents' new home on Beersheba St., Tracy City, TN; (Photo taken ca. 1905)**



**Possibly Delia Regina Sisk and her Aunt Bridget Beatrice (Mulloy) Faherty**





**James Sisk**

**(1858-1896)**

**(Brother to Joseph "Joe" Sisk)**

**James was still at home in Tracy City  
with his**

**father, Jeremiah "Jerry" and mother  
Martha Patsy in 1880.**

**I include James Sisk because he was an  
engine fireman at the age of 21. As we  
say here in the woods of Grundy  
County, "It was in their blood!"**



**Joseph "Joe" Sisk**

**at home in Tracy City**

**before his accident in 1903**



What was the tragedy that overwhelmed the Sisk family? The following news article will help us understand the pattern in the tragedies.

"*The Chattanooga News, 12 Feb. 1903 – FATALLY INJURED BY A TRAIN – Tracy City, Tenn., Feb. 12 – Mr. Joseph Sisk of this place was run over by a Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis train yesterday and fatally injured. One of his legs was amputated above the knee; also, it was necessary to remove part of his remaining foot. Sisk was walking along the track, going to work and was run down by a car which was being backed, the engine being so far off that he could not hear it until too late.*" Thankfully, the news reporter got the story wrong when he wrote that Joseph had died. He did not die, but had extensive injuries to his body, injuries that would cause him to lose the better paying job as a locomotive engineer. When he healed enough, he did some work as a coal contractor and was offered menial jobs around the railroad system. How did Joe and Sarah manage financially under the circumstances?

Exactly two weeks after his accident, Joe and Sarah sold their land and home to the Nashville, Chattanooga, & St. Louis Railroad company for \$650.00. It was one of the messiest deeds I have ever tried to decipher. The few words I could read in one sentence said to me that there was a compromise of some sort between Joe Sisk and the railroad company. To me, either the author was nervous, or disgruntled or in a hurry to accomplish something for someone. At this very place in time the railroad company was urgently making plans to forge ahead from Tracy City's railyard in the Heading area, (County Garage area today, 2020), to Nunley's Ridge/Roddy Springs/or just plain Coalmont. But guess whose home place was in the way – Joe and Sarah's Lot #187 which incidentally was the town lot right behind the Tracy City Catholic Church. However, Joe and Sarah sold out to the railroad. Maybe the money was good, but where would the newly wounded man and his wife live?

One must realize that the Legg, Mulloy, and Sisk' families were in *Roddy* country. There was always a good real estate deal right around the corner. Sarah (Mulloy) Sisk took her money two days later on **February 28, 1903**, to T. B. and Lottie (Sims) Roddy and bought Joe and herself a piece of land with two houses, one being the Ten Pin Alley House and the other inhabited by a Mrs. Perry. Sarah's cost was \$450.00. It was said that the Ten Pin Alley House was in terrible shape with cracks in the floor and much deterioration, not fit for a home. One cannot find a good definition for the Ten Pin Alley House, but since Andrew Jackson "A. J." Roddy had a saloon up in that area, my *guess* would be that the old house was the remnants of his business, and one only needs to watch a few, probably just one, *western movie* to figure out what went on in the Ten Pin Alley House. I really don't think they were bowling – maybe singing, maybe dancing and for certain – drinking liquor and fighting.

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59c69c542278e73c826f3226/t/5afe2eb81ae6cff5bd808e00/1526607548677/The+Roddy+Desperadoes.pdf>

Delia Regina Sisk married William Harlow, a locomotive engineer, in 1899; a daughter, Eva May (1900) and a son Joseph Martin (1903) were born to this union. They rented a home in Jefferson County, Alabama. William died in December of 1903 in Colorado from tuberculosis while little Martin was still an infant. Daughter Eva died before 1907. Delia found she had become a widow with a small son to rear. Her brother Martin helped by offering her a place to live with him in Nashville until she could make the right life decisions that lay ahead. She moved in temporarily leaving her son in Tracy City with her parents who she knew would give him the love and attention that he needed while she was recuperating her family losses. She found work as domestic help at the *Maxwell House*.

In 1910 she married William Hawkins who was an industrial and chemical engineer. This was the second marriage for each of them. He provided her with two nice bungalow homes in West Nashville. He adopted Joseph Martin, and later he and Delia adopted a girl, Billie Lou Hawkins. Without doubt, at times the couple helped Joe and Sarah Sisk and their daughter Lula who all still lived in Tracy City. Later Delia moved her sister Lula to Nashville, so she could give utmost attention to her care. Her parents had been loving and caring throughout her personal problems, and now that she had the opportunity to return some of that care, she did so.



**Delia Regina (Sisk) Harlow and son, Joseph Martin Harlow**



**Far Right: Joseph E. "Joe" Sisk holding his crutch needed after his train tragedy. The boy to his left is his grandson, Joseph Martin Harlow, son of daughter, Delia Regina & William Harlow. Unk. girl and elderly man**

*Nashville Banner – Nov. 8, 1921 – SISK – At his home, Tracy City, Tenn., Monday afternoon, Nov. 7 at 4 o'clock. Joseph E. Sisk, survived by his wife Sarah Mulloy Sisk; son, Martin J. Sisk; daughters, Mrs. W. T. Hawkins, Mrs. Ross Zink of Atlanta, Ga., and Miss Lula Sisk of Tracy City. Remains will arrive this (Tuesday) Cornelius, Martin & Rollow from where the funeral will take place tomorrow (Wednesday) morning at 9 o'clock. The following will serve as pallbearers: James Sullivan, John Wilson, Wm. Burch, Jerry Mahoney, Jerry Murphey, Ray Hitchcock. Interment at Calvary cemetery."*

*Mrs. Grundy, Nov. 10, 1921 – Tracy City, Tennessee – "Joe Sisk Dies After Short Illness – Mr. Joe Sisk, an aged citizen of this place died last Monday afternoon after an illness lasting only nine days. Mr. Sisk was well and favorably known throughout Grundy county, he at one time being an engineer on the N. C. & St. L. Ry., and later a coal contractor. The deceased was 76 years of age and has lived practically all his life in Grundy County. He was a devout Catholic. His body was carried to Nashville for interment Tuesday afternoon where some of his*



*children reside. He is survived by the following: Mrs. Will Hawkins and Martin Sisk of Nashville; Mrs. Ross Zink of Atlanta, Ga., and Mrs. Joe Sisk and Mrs. Lou Lowe of this place."*

Sisk Family Plot  
in the  
Catholic Calvary  
Cemetery  
of the Nashville  
Diocese



Sarah Mary Sisk stayed in her home in Tracy City, but when warm enough, she sat outside remembering the years of happiness, moments of hardships, and the great tragedies of three local locomotive engineers. The third tragedy is coming up next in our story. Sarah lived through all three.

*Chattanooga Times – 12 Jun 1926 – "TRACY CITY, Tenn., June 11 – Mrs. Joe Sisk died at her residence here this morning, aged about 80 years. The remains will be carried to Nashville for burial. She is survived by four children, Martin Sisk of Nashville; Mrs. Delia Hawkins of Nashville, Mrs. Julia Zink of Atlanta, and Miss Lou Sisk of this place. Her husband died several years ago."*



## William H. Bolton (1845-1897)

What happened to Sarah Mary (Mulloy) Sisk's sister, Julia Elizabeth Mulloy? Well, it is time to tell her story, but I must warn that there never seemed to be an end. I can, however, explain how I came to be involved in her story. As a member of the Grundy County Tennessee Historical Society, I volunteered several years ago to survey the Tracy City Cemetery, a job I thoroughly enjoyed but did not, at first, fully understand the massive undertaking.

After recording any data that was found on a stone, there were times that something seemed to hold me *in place, kept me still, made me think, refused to allow me to move on*. This happened to me at the burial stone with this data: **William H. Bolton, Jul 4, 1845 – Mar 1, 1897**. The grave was neatly kept, no debris, but the name was new to me. The stone had symbols of three lodges or degrees of one lodge, **F & AM**. It was a nice stone, impressive and all alone (or so it seemed at the time). My thoughts swirled with questions: "Where is your wife? Why are you alone and unattended? Why are you tugging at my heart stings? I'll be back one day, down the road a way. I'll find out! I won't let the world forget you." Those were my thoughts that day toward this stranger.

And years later, **2020**, I went back having never forgotten his grave and my wonderment. Below is what I found. The stone was completely covered with trees, bushes and vines.



**William H. Bolton (Jul 4, 1845 – Mar 1, 1897)-- Photo taken in 2020**





June 12, 2020, my husband and I and another willing volunteer started in on finding "William H. Bolton" again. The work will continue until we feel the stone will be safe from leaning for a topple. There is a top on the stone that had already slid but hopefully that will improve since the tree uprooting the stone has been removed and maybe the roots can be killed.



Now that we can read the data on the stone, let's begin to learn about who Mr. Bolton was. I can say in the beginning that he, his immediate family and extended families were important pioneers of the new coal town of Tracy City.

(Photo courtesy of Wm. L. Bolton, grandson to Wm. H. Bolton, via *The Heritage of Grundy Co., TN*)



With the help of a friend, Kirby Crabtree, we came to the conclusion that the clothing in the photo above was a post-war outfit. William is obviously near the age of his upcoming death and not of a youthful soldier. The sash appears to be one of the Masonic Lodge, part of a dress-up for a happy event, maybe a reunion with old friends or a Masonic event. The emblem on the hat at the bottom center may indicate post-war unity with the U. S. A., the union as a whole. The war was behind William; now he needed or even wanted to dress as a United States citizen.

William H. Bolton was one of the sons of Spencer and Mary (Jones) Bolton. Spencer was listed in the **1850** and **1860** Census as being of the mulatto (mu) race; his wife was not listed so. The other children with the exception of the first, James L. Jones, were listed as mulatto. The children were as follows: James L. Jones, Wm. H. (*subject of our story*), George W., Lucretia A. (*a sister with many names*), Mary A., Benjamin C., and Franklin. Some of the places the family lived were Bledsoe Co., Rhea Co., and Marion Co. By **1870**, and after William's return from his Civil War service, widow Mary J. Bolton, her daughter, Mary, and sons, William H. and Benjamin were living in Marion Co. TN, District 10, which laid at the southern base and side area of the plateau. Most of our story took place in Tracy City on the plateau.

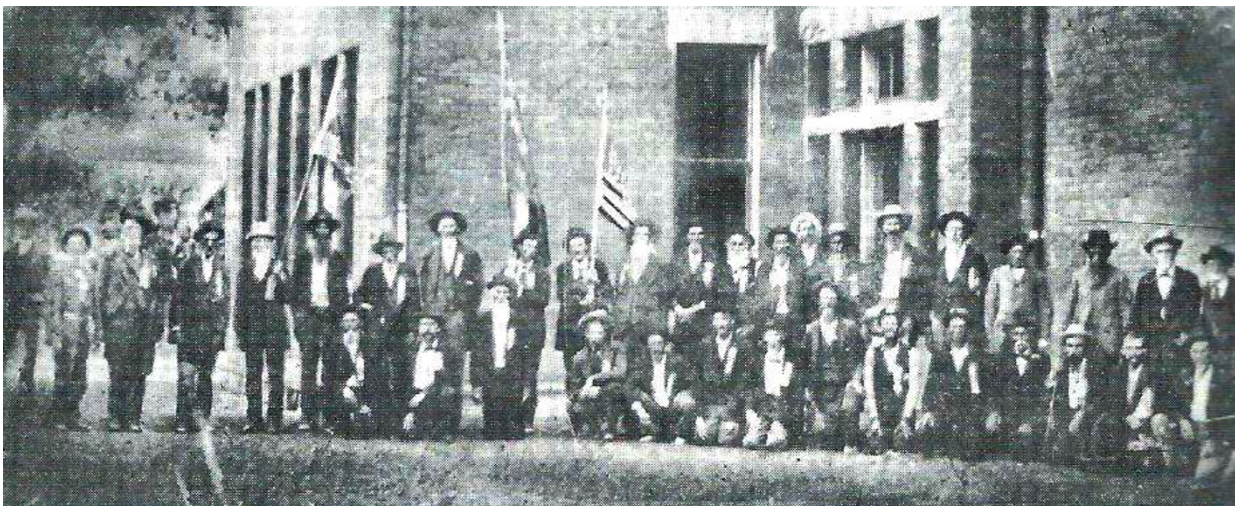


**Wm. H. Bolton's sister, Lucretia Louisa A. Elizabeth "Lizzie" Emorcilla (Bolton) Overton and husband, John Waller Overton of Sumner Co., Tennessee**



The following news clip will help show us that even though William was young, he did serve in the war. This will later be supported by his second wife's own words. Pvt. William H. Bolton, 16<sup>th</sup> TN Infantry Co. B, was in the Confederacy. Thanks to Greg Curtis and his good work on Grundy County Civil War veterans for the attention he gave to securing and recording this history.

*Tracy City News*—**Sept. 26, 1895**—“Mr. W. H. Bolton attended the Park Dedication at Chattanooga last week where he met and mingled with many of his old Ex-Confederate friends. He also visited his family who are spending a few weeks in Nashville with relatives, returning home Saturday night.” In this instance, William H. would have been fifty years of age, which would fit the photo in the Heritage Book. It appears that he dressed for an important occasion and carried his slouch hat with ostrich plume and appropriate insignias for the times.



**This is an 1898 photo of Grundy County Confederate Veterans probably taken at the big reunion held July 20-24, 1898, in Atlanta, GA. The third veteran from the left is Alexander Houston Sanders of Grundy County. If Wm. H. Bolton had not died the year before, without doubt, he would have been right there with the local veterans.**

Eventually, William H., Benjamin, Mary and their seventy-year-old mother, Mary were living in Grundy Co. Benjamin had married Ellen Graves in Grundy Co. on **February 2, 1879**, and had a baby son whom he had named after his older brother Wm. H. Bolton. Benjamin's occupation was listed as a stationary engineer. He was possibly an employee of the railroad who controlled and maintained the boilers on the engines.



The Boltons matriarch, Mary, was seventy-years-old, and she and her unmarried daughter Mary A. Bolton were living next door to Benjamin and his family.

William's brother James L. Bolton (*listed as Jones earlier*) and his wife Annie Jane sold one half acre of land in Grundy Co. to A. J. Roddy for \$201.25. The land had been sold by the Tennessee Coal & Railroad Company in **1873** to James McCullough who sold it to James L. and Annie Bolton in **1874**.

William H. had marrying on his mind when he met Elizabeth F. Coker. They wed on **October 1, 1871** in Grundy Co., TN. On **August 3, 1872**, the couple bought one acre of land from J. L. and Melvinia Levan. After a few improvements to their land, on **April 24, 1875**, they sold the one-acre lot to A. J. Roddy for \$310.00. This deed signing was the last time I read or found anything about Elizabeth (Coker) Bolton. Where was she born? Did Elizabeth die between **1875** and **1880**? Did she meet and leave with another man? She appeared to have fallen off the face of the earth. I can find no death announcement, no divorce, no remarriage, no known burial spot—nothing on this lady. After several months of research looking for her, I have concluded she died and was buried wherever her parents were, or she left William. Granted, I did have a whole other theory and spent many an hour trying to support my idea, but for now, I will leave it as it appears.

In the **1880** Census record, thirty-four-year old William H. Bolton had listed as his wife, Julia *Elizabeth* Sisk, a young lady from the neighborhood who was fourteen years his junior. Wm. and Julia married on **January 22, 1880** in Davidson Co., TN. He provided two teenage girls as servants for his new bride. The couple made their home in Tracy City two households away from Mrs. Jennie Legg and young daughter Lillian. Both families had suffered through a railroad tragedy with the loss of Jim Legg and crippling of Joseph Sisk. Without doubt they were good friends and had lots of stories to exchange.

**Julia Elizabeth (Sisk) Bolton**

**(1850 – 1927)**

**Probably taken on her wedding day**



Julia gave birth to five children in all, but only Martin J. (1884), Joseph Mary “Josie” (1888), and Patrick William (1890) lived for some years. In the 1910 Census record, Julia stated that she had given birth to five children with only two living at the time. Since we have several accounts of Martin J., Josie and Patrick, we know from her own mouth that she had two children to die before 1897. This gave new meaning to a small heavy white cross at the head of the family burial spot. There is no data on the cross. That little cross had gone unnoticed by me for years probably because of the ivy undergrowth.

After two mornings with a chainsaw, general manual labor, hoe, rake, stacking several piles of brush, removing poison ivy and Virginia Creeper from the whole stone, resetting the little cross which leaned against the base of William’s large stone, and drinking plenty of water, the photo below is what my husband and I found. More could be done, but younger bodies are a necessity. The brown color on the stones is simply



water to remove sawdust, etc. Weed killer was applied and later the setting will be checked again to be certain the stumps don't sprout to grow again.



Julia's Mulloy family were devout Catholics. Since I have written in the past about the Tracy City Catholic Church, I was happy to find probable charter members in the Mulloy family members. I was sent copies of a couple of letters some time back from the Nashville Diocese that were written to Julia E. Bolton. At the time, they were meant to give that story volume and a little history since most Grundy countians had not heard that Tracy City had a Catholic Church. The small building, which was started in **1869**, took several years to grow in size, for money was an issue.

*Chattanooga Daily Times – 05 Sep 1882 – "The Tracy City Catholic Church – Father Gavan, of the Catholic Church, left yesterday for Nashville to raise funds to lift the debt hanging over the church recently built at Tracy City. He states that the people of Nashville have subscribed liberally, and that he hopes to receive all that is necessary this week. He has worked faithfully in*



*this matter, and his zeal is worthy of emulation.*" The Mulloys, the Sisks and many other Irish immigrants were Catholics and helped in working toward having a place of worship within the town. This building was within a short walking distance, even in some back doors of these local Irish immigrants of the town. Don't despair over the two dates, **1869** and **1882**. In the beginning of Tracy City in **1858**, a spiritual gathering of believers sometimes sat in the open on hewn logs to edify each other, but the little mission buildings came later, slowly.



**This photo is believed to be the Catholic Church on town Lot #186 on Nathurst St. near Beersheba Street. The house to the left would be Lot # 188.**

An excerpt from another story I wrote on the beginning of the church follows: "From the *Republican Banner*, **Mar. 20, 1869**, I transcribed the following excerpt from an article, "TRACY CITY—*The settlement which the Tracy City mines have called into existence consists of some 700 inhabitants, 120 of whom are miners...There is in the village a Methodist and Roman Catholic Church in the course of erection, and a flourishing school of about sixty scholars.*" ...Now a date, **1869**, of a church building being prepared for the Catholic



believers tantalized me all the more. Actually in 1867, the Official Catholic Directory mentioned Tracy City as a mission station, so believers were present before the carpenters started the building on town Lot #186 on Nathurst Street.”



**L to R: William and Julia (Mulloy) Bolton’s surviving children ca. 1892 – Martin J. Bolton, Patrick William Bolton, and Joseph Mary “Josie” Bolton**



**The children at an older age: L to R: Martin J. Bolton, Patrick William Bolton and Joseph Mary “Josie” Bolton**

The **third tragedy** of our story came upon Julia E. Bolton, Monday, **March 1, 1897**.

*Nashville Banner – “03 Mar 1897 – W. H. Bolton for thirty years an engineer on the Tracy City branch of the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railway, while endeavoring to mount his engine at Tracy City, fell under the wheels and had both legs severed from his body. He died almost instantly.”* Such a simple article; so heartless an article; such loss of a good man! Sadly, and reluctantly, I must later paint a gruesome picture of what happened on that day, the



first day of the rest of Julia Elizabeth Bolton's life. Her husband was dead; William died a horrible death; lawsuits, court cases, and trials, formed mountains around her; bonds/securities furnished by Wm. B. Holt who was married to Anna (Roddy) Holt, and court costs were sucking the life and finances from her. She was sued on **April 9, 1912**, by William B. Holt for money, \$250.00, that had accrued over the years. Fifteen years after her husband's death, she was still fighting for what she felt should be granted to her, what local Grundy County juries had voted to award her for the loss of her helpmate. Mr. Holt accused her of fraud which she denied. What Julia and her lawyer L. V. Woodlee were trying to do was save her home place for her two remaining children, but Mr. Holt was not going to let Julia, Josie and Patrick do that. He wanted his money and the court ordered her to pay.

Her son Martin had become ill and died only four years after his father's death. *"The Tennessean – 05 Mar 1901 – DIED – BOLTON – At Tracy City, Tenn., Saturday March 2, 1901, Martin Bolton, son of Mrs. Julia E. Bolton, aged 18 years. Funeral will take place from St. Columba's Church at 9 a. m. Wednesday, March 6. Services conducted by Father E. Gazzo. Remains will be placed in Mt. Calvary vault. Remains will leave Combs' Chapel at 8:30 a. m."*

The Mt. Calvary vault held young Martin's remains for over a year until Julia felt emotionally and financially able to buy a Bolton family plot after **1902** then have her son interred therein. There are no grave markers in the plot only one stone in the corner with the surname, *Bolton*, on it. I talked with the Calvary Church office and was assured that Martin had died in **1901** and not **1902** as some researchers believe. His body was on the premises in **1901**, but it was not until **1902** that he was interred in the recently acquired family plot.

**This is the only stone that marks the Bolton graves in the family plot at Calvary Catholic Cemetery.**





### **Calvary Catholic Cemetery of the Diocese of Nashville**

The question may come to mind as to why William H. Bolton was buried in Tracy City and not carried by train back to the Catholic Cemetery in Nashville. Mere speculation tells me that the body needed to be buried quickly, and that William was not of the Catholic faith which sometimes does not allow certain lodge members to be buried in their cemeteries. William was a member of the Masonic Sewanee Lodge #405 in Tracy City, Tennessee. There are three symbols on his stone. One is a Free Mason Symbol with the three linked chain symbolizing the eternal cable tow between two brothers. It may also indicate that he had connection with the Odd Fellow lodge or may have something to do with his ethnicity. Another indicates his connection to the Knights of Pythias; it is cornered with three letters, the F, C and B indicating Friendship, Charity and Benevolence. It appears to have a shield in the center. A third symbol has the letters S, H, T, M, S, S, T, K around the peripheral. Finally, there is the idea that Julia already had two children buried in the Tracy City Cemetery, so she placed her husband next to his children. At this point she had not even had time to grieve or grasp the fact that her world had turned upside down. The large burial stone was bought later by the family



and placed in the cemetery. Julia put every symbol and word on his stone for which his life and death had stood; it is, even today, so obvious that she loved her husband kindly.

*Chattanooga Daily Times – 27 Mar 1903 – Julia Bolton Gets Heavy Damages Against Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis – The jury in the case of Julia E. Bolton against the Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis railroad brought in a verdict in favor of the plaintiff for \$12,500 damages. This was the fifth trial of this case and all the other trials resulted in disagreements on the part of the jurors. The trial took place at Altamont, Tenn. The suit was brought for damages resulting in the death of the plaintiff's husband.*

*The Chattanooga News – 08 Mar 1911 – DAMAGE SUIT OF 16 YEARS' STANDING – Altamont, March 8 – The case of Mrs. Julia E. Bolton vs. Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis Railway Co. for damages for the death of her husband, William Bolton, an engineer, who was run over by a train at Tracy City and killed about sixteen years ago, and which case has been tried twice here and each time carried to the supreme court and reversed and since the last reversal has been pending for about twelve years, was again continued by consent.*

*Mrs. Grundy, Dec. 3, 1914 – “Case of Mrs. Julia Bolton – A lawsuit of more than ordinary interest is now being heard in the circuit court at Nashville, it being the case of Mrs. Julia Bolton versus the N. C. & St. L. Ry. Co. The case has been in court longer than any of the same nature which have been tried in this section of the country.*

*It is a suit for damages for the wrongful death of Mrs. Bolton's husband, William Bolton, which occurred on the platform of the depot in Tracy City on March 1, 1897. Suit was immediately instituted, being tried several times in the circuit court of this county and two judgements, awarding large damages to the plaintiff, were reversed by the supreme court. One judgement, awarding \$10,000 to her, being set aside by Judge Higgins of our circuit court. In the meanwhile, Mrs. Bolton moved to Nashville, took a non-suit in her case here and sued in the 1<sup>st</sup> circuit court of Davidson county. The first trial there resulted in the failure of the jury to agree and the case is now being heard upon the 2<sup>nd</sup> trial in that court.*

*A large number of citizens of this city are, or have been in attendance during the progress of the trial as witnesses both for the plaintiff and defendant.”*

*Nashville Banner – 04 Dec 1914 – GETS DAMAGES FOR FOURTH TIME – For the death of her husband, seventeen years ago, on the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railway, at Tracy City, Mrs. Julia E. Bolton now a resident of Nashville, was yesterday awarded a verdict for \$12,000 in the Circuit Court. This is the fourth time the case has been tried, and damages have been awarded at each trial, only to have the decision reversed when the case was appealed.*

*The case first came up in a Grundy County Court, and has, during its course, attracted much attention throughout the state. Some of the best lawyers of the state have been involved on both sides. It is claimed that William Bolton, deceased husband of the plaintiff, met his death on **March 1, 1897**, when as an engineer on the defendant road, he tried to climb into his cab, slipped and was ground to death under the engine. It has been the claim of the railroad that the fireman was driving the engine at the time, though this was positively against the rules. According to Mrs. Bolton's contention a defective step on the engine caused the death of her husband.*

*Nashville Banner – **25 Mar 1916** – N., C. & St. L. Ry. Vs Julia E. Bolton, Davidson law. This was a case nineteen years old, over the killing of the husband of Mrs. Bolton, an engineer, at Tracy City. A verdict of \$12,500 had been secured. The railroad company took the case to the Court of Appeals, which held that the statute of limitation applied. The result reached by the Court of Appeals in dismissing the case was upheld, but along a different line of reasoning. Affirmed.*

William had walked his children, Martin and Josie, to the James K. Shook School for the day. Patrick was yet too young for school. He kissed them, then waving goodbye, he walked back to the depot area to check on his engine and the train that was being built up for his run to Cowan, TN. He never saw his children again. He never sat in his engineer's seat again. He never got to Cowan. At this place in our story, his wife will tell about her husband and that day. This evidence was used in several trials after Julia sued the railroad company. After hearing from her, then we will listen to some words of very credible people who were well-respected in Tracy City and were called as witnesses throughout the trials that extended from **1897** to **1916**.

*Evidence on behalf of the plaintiff, being sworn in her own behalf, deposed as follows: Direct Examination: (read Dec. 22, 1914 in the Davidson County Appeals Court)*

*(I took time to transcribe this for the historical value it has for Bolton researchers.)*

*I am Mrs. Julia E. Bolton, the plaintiff in this case. My husband's name was William H. Bolton, he is dead, he died the **first day of March 1897**. During his lifetime down to the time he died he worked around at different things. When he was sixteen-year-old he went to Confederate Army, and after he came back out of the army he worked at Tracy-City at different things, and finally went to braking and then to firing and finally got to be promoted to be an engineer. At the time he was killed he was working for the Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis Railway. At that time he lived at Tracy-City. At the time he was killed he was an engineer on the road. I last saw him alive at home about eight o'clock in the morning, he left home about eight or perhaps a little before eight. He was going to work at the railroad. I did not see him any more until after he was dead. I saw his body after that. I saw his body in a day after he was killed: I didn't see that day he was killed, I couldn't see him; they brought me in next morning to see him. At the time of his*



death he was fifty-one years old, would have been fifty-two if he had lived until July. His health was splendid so far as I knew. He was heavily built and a very stout healthy man. He had never been afflicted with any ailments or diseases of any kind so far as I knew. He was perfectly healthy. Sometimes he would complain may be that he was feeling bad, he had kind of billious spells. He always worked all the time, in good and bad weather. He scarcely ever left off unless he would be sick or the children. His habits were good in every way. He did not drink. He put in all of his time at work. At the time of his death he only made a hundred dollars a month. They ran them by the month. They used to work them so much a trip, but for I don't know how many years he was only making a hundred dollars a month, and he was making a hundred dollars a month at that time. He left three children and left me as his widow. I had children of course that died before their papa did, the oldest living was Martin, and Joseph and William, was the three living. My oldest boy, Martin is dead. The names of the two living are Joseph and William Patrick. The girl is named Joseph, it is a boy's name, but we call her Josie. The children living at the time of my husband's death the oldest one was going on seven and the other was going on five.

Julia (Mulloy) Bolton was then asked about the expense of the funeral: casket--\$200; total expenses \$225 or \$250. Dr. Sutton's bill was \$25.00. She was asked if she paid for it and she answered, "Yes Sir, I paid it." Mr. Bolton and I had been married about 19 or 20 years before this accident. We were married in 1887 I think. I think we was nearly twenty years married when he died. In 1887 and then the accident occurred in **March 1897**, that wouldn't have made us married about ten years, about twenty years, I disremember the year, I had been living at Tracy-city all this time after we were married. I was familiar with the depot and grounds down there and plat-form. I used to go down there frequently with the children when their papa would go out. I would take them down on the plat-form with me. We would frequently go down in the afternoon when he would go out on his last run. I frequently saw my husband when he went there to that depot preparatory to going upon his trips...

... My husband had on pretty heavy shoes the day he was killed. He had them half-soled and pretty near nails put in them, kind of heavy tacks, you know, to keep him from slipping. Had them put in the bottom, they were good sized tacks. I brought suit the same year he was killed, in the Circuit Court of Grundy, I think it was October or November.

...Witness being asked if her surety on the cost bond Mr. Holt, didn't have to pay \$250.00 of cost and after sue her for it, answered. Well, I will tell you, Mr. Holt never paid five cents for me in his life. He was trying to sue me for something but never did tell me what for. I don't owe him nothing. He never paid any costs, I beg your pardon, I don't want to dispute your word, but he never paid any. There was no suit brought against me in the Chancery Court to set aside this covenant because of cost he paid in this lawsuit.

There was an ample number of witnesses for Julia in the trials. I will transcribe some of Mr. Robert McCreary's testimony:

*... "The depot and platform were located in the yards of the company and were part of the yard. They do switching right along in front of the depot up in the yard. The closest track to the platform where they do switching is right at it; I guess it was eighteen inches from the rail to the edge of the platform, may be two feet. I saw Mr. Bolton a few minutes after it did happen. I saw him under train, killed with both legs cut off in his thigh, it ran across his thigh and ground on up and from there down. I was on the south side of the depot when the accident happened...We laid him up on the platform there, I thought he was dead, but they said he was breathing but I couldn't tell it, and later on we moved him into the waiting room a few minutes, stayed there a few minutes and then I helped carry him up to his dwelling. He was dead. I suppose the injuries I saw on his body were sufficient to produce death, both legs were ground all to pieces. Well, they were just gashed all to pieces; his feet were turned around the wrong way, back the wrong way..."*

Mr. McCreary was question and re-examined so many times throughout the years that he seemed to be in a frustrated mood. Since the roundhouse, Y-sections of track, depot with platform, ticket office, passenger processing, agent's office, and businesses were all *right there* in a close, crowded, busy section of Railroad Ave., the numerous witnesses saw things unfold from different angles, adding something new to each court hearing, trial, etc. McCreary was not alone in his part as a witness for the plaintiff. To me, Mr. Joe Simmons, a citizen of the town, made a good witness for the plaintiff out of the group of respected citizens chosen for both sides of the trial.

*"...Now after he told me he was going to get his orders he went to the door there I often saw them go in. In the railroad office, and got is orders and when he came out he had a yellow paper...he had it in his hand , a yellow paper that gives the orders as he came out of the railroad office, that was just a few minutes before he was killed by the railroad. That was just a few minutes because he just raised his hands to get his engine, there is a handhold on the tender and a handhold on the engine. She was going to Cowan you know, that would make his right hand on the engine, and his left hand on the tender, and he caught hold of that, I have often see'd him do it. Well sir, he caught hold of that and when he went to make his step up the plank broke under his left foot, the plank broke under his left foot, broke and let him down and kind of swung him around, he let his right hand loose from the engine and that throwed his back right agin the tender and she was just creeping on up and -that was the last hand he let loose, was his left hand, but the right hand he had to let loose and that throwed his back again the tender and he fell and when he fell he rolled and when he rolled he rolled right down side the track with his hands up and when the train came along them bumpers knocked his knees down and cut off his two feet right across there and then - I was standing there looking of course, and he turned himself out again and when she come along his knees was up and them bumpers struck his knees and knocked them down again and cut off his*



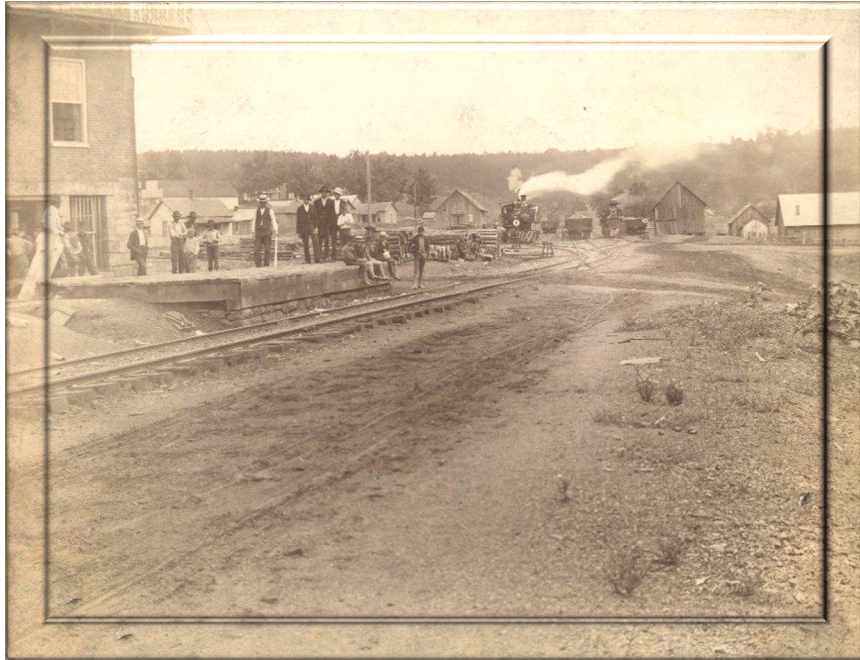
*leg right above the ankles here, both of them, and then he swung himself around again, and that was the third time, and when he got out it ran up his leg here, up here about his thigh, just tore him all to pieces, and when we got him out he lived about four minutes."*

### **William H. Bolton's Work World in Photos**

William and his family lived close enough to the railroad and all its many working parts that he could walk anywhere in the town, leave the mare in the barn. He was actually in the center of the coal mining town familiarizing himself with every aspect of his job. The Masonic Lodge and other membership facilities were right near his work in the small town of Tracy City.



**Round House in Tracy City (photo taken 1889); Wm. H. Bolton's engine and all others were turned around here for the next assignment. The railroad leaving town for Cowan can be seen in upper right-hand corner of photo.**



**An 1898 photo of the rails going to and from The Heading used while attaching loaded cars to an engine – the same rails Wm. used. Below coming back to the Depot.**





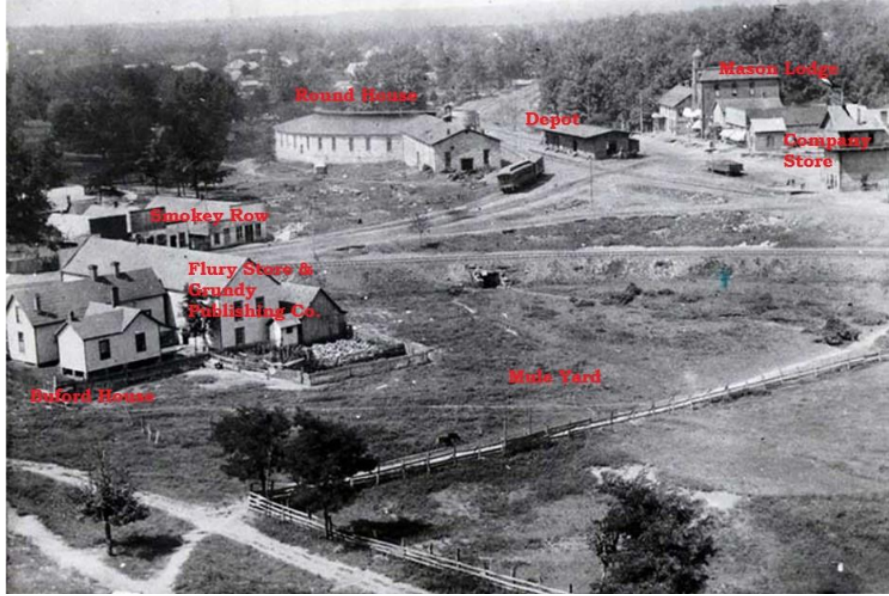
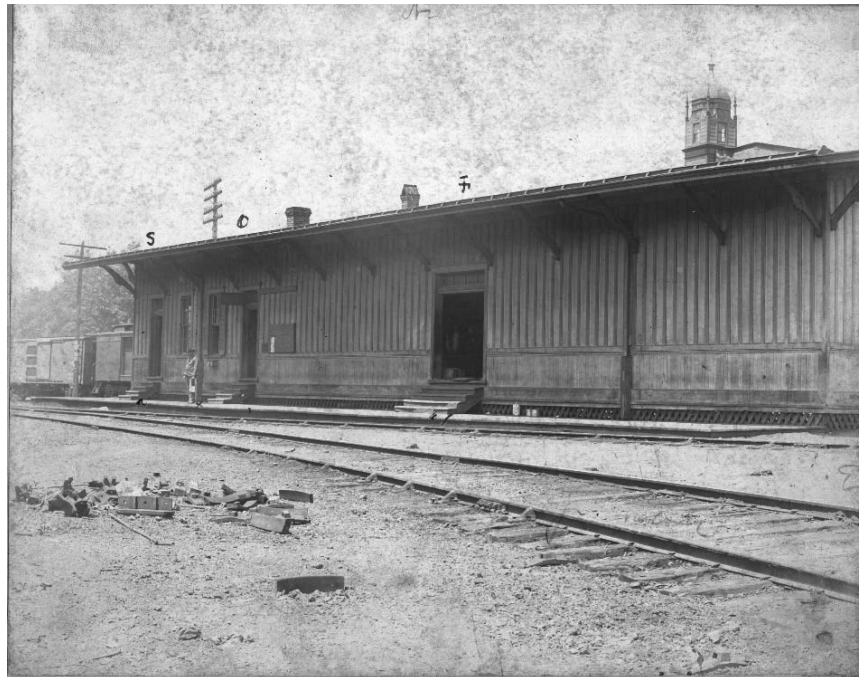
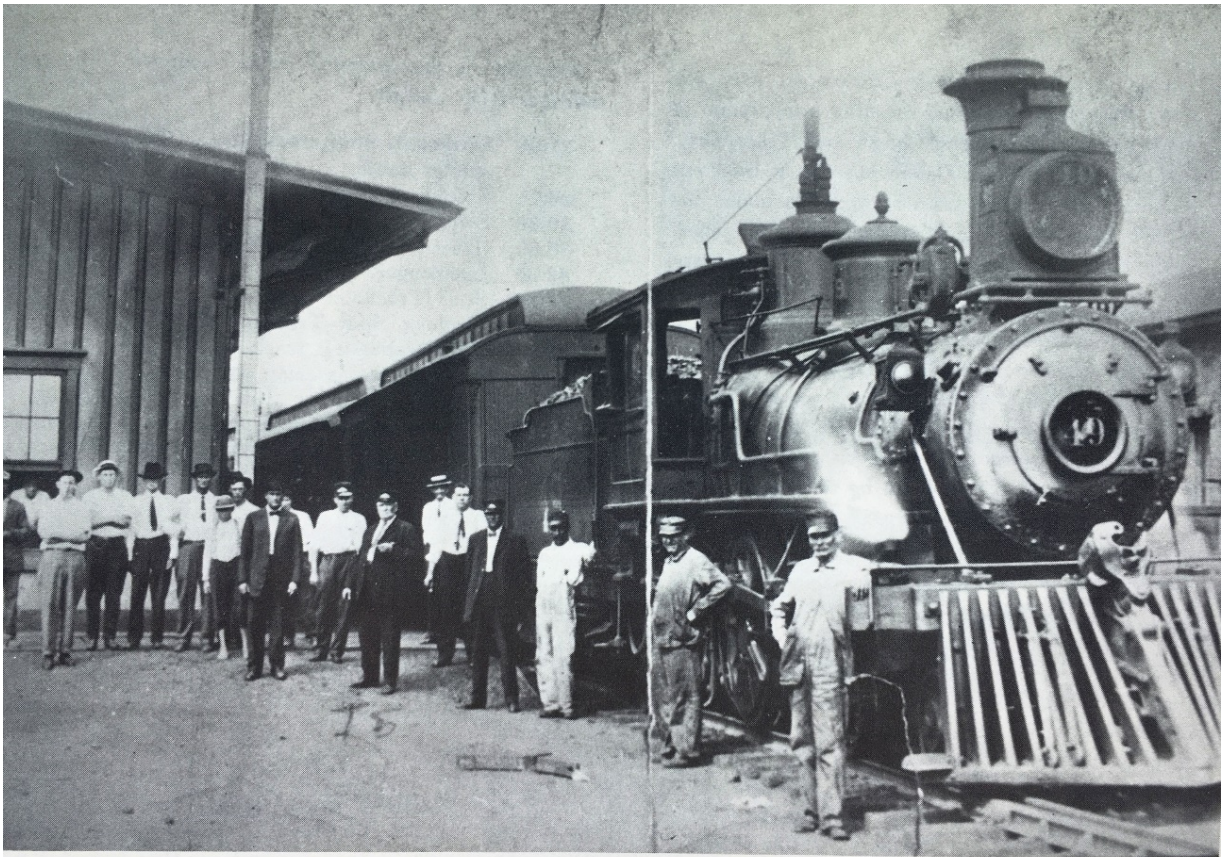


Photo was taken from the James K. Shook School Tower several years after Wm.'s accident, but the buildings were still there. Here the Round House, the Depot, the Company Store, the railroad tracks going passed the Depot and off toward Cowan can be seen. At the time this photo was made the platform may have been rebuilt.



The infamous Depot platform where Wm. H. Bolton faced certain death. The platform ran the full length of the depot several inches or a foot above the railroad tracks. The top of the Masonic Lodge building can be seen behind and across RR. Ave. from the Depot.



No. 49 and the passenger train at the Tracy City station, Sept. 1909. *[William Ray Turner]*

Twelve years after Wm.'s death old No. 49 with its passenger train stands ready to go. Probably all of these men knew Mr. Bolton and may have been among the list of witnesses for Julia E. Bolton.





**A wonderful, but sad, photo of a train leaving for Cowan. The Depot and its platform are on the left. The water tank and Round House are on the right; and as though Wm. H. Bolton were telling his children goodbye for the last time with the James K. Shook School in the back center of the photo. The new school opened its doors for the (1889) fall season.**

There were continuous questions as to how rotten or dangerous the long platform that ran the full length of the depot was. Who was responsible to keep it safe, not just for the railroad laborers, but for the general public? Did William's new nails in his shoes cause him to hang his foot in the patch work over the rotten planks in the platform? The biggest question covered the responsibility of William to never board his engine while it was moving; that was the official orders for engineers from time to time. It appeared that throughout the years that many engineers boarded their engines while they were being slowly moved along the tracks. Of course, Fiddler Holmes, William's fireman, was in control at those moments of the engine's movements while coming alongside of the platform at the depot where William would board his engine. The rule was that only the engineer could sit in the driver's seat; that rule was broken over and over as a general

habit to save time, and to train the fireman hopefully for a future job as a locomotive engineer. And strangely enough, a Mr. Albert Finch was backing down the steps from the gangway just as William was reaching his left hand for the hold he so desperately needed to keep his body from falling.

Julia Elizabeth (Mulloy) Bolton was a fighter. To her the evidence was overwhelmingly in favor of her stance. The town may have been split on the matter, but the Grundy County jurors were not split. Great men on both sides of the issue took the witness stand year after year after year. At time, even they couldn't "recollect" because of the passage of years. It was obvious that the jurors for the most part felt the railroad company was liable, and that the widow and her children needed retribution if there could be such a thing when one loses a mate, a father, a friend.

Julia signed a non-suit and moved to Davidson County to appeal her case before the Supreme Court there. Eventually the fight was over; she lost her case against the railroad. Simply put, William H. Bolton was not following the rules, finding himself at the wrong place at the wrong time. The Supreme Court wrote: "*...it is shown that had he been at his place of duty on his moving engine the accident resulting in his death would not have occurred.*"

Sunday morning Christmas Day, **December 25, 1927**, Julia finally rested. She was born in **1850** in New Village Townland, Rahoon Parish, Galway, Ireland. She was placed in the Bolton family plot at the Calvary Catholic Cemetery, Davidson Co., TN.

For some unknown reason, Julia's son Patrick William Bolton started using part of his dead brother's name, William **Martin** Bolton. He did away with the *Patrick* part of his name and took on *Martin* as his middle name. We read in *The Tennessean* – 11 Jan. 1934 – *the body of William M. Bolton, who died Tuesday morning in New Orleans, La., was returned to Nashville yesterday and was taken to the funeral home of Martin & Connell, 2408 West End avenue. Funeral services will be conducted there tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock. Burial will be in Calvary cemetery. Mr. Bolton was born in Tracy City, Tenn., and had lived in Nashville for about fifteen years before moving to New Orleans eight months ago. He was a member of the Holy Name church. He is survived by his sister, Mrs. Josie Smith of Nashville.*

Like her mother, Joseph Mary "Josie" (Bolton) Smith died in December. The year was **1950**; she had been a widow for several years. Josie left one child behind, William **Bolton Smith** of Nashville. The little girl, Josie, with a boy's name, Joseph, was buried as an adult daughter, widow, and mother at Calvary Cemetery.

James "Jim" Legg, Joseph "Joe" Sisk, and William H. Bolton should never be forgotten. They were all good laborers, good neighbors, and good family men, pioneers



of Tracy City, the coal and railroad train. Beersheba St. today (2020) could tell us some more stories of good and bad history of our town of Tracy City. Remember Mr. Ike Woodward is buried in his front yard which still is a part of Beersheba St. I wonder, if he being a local newspaper reporter and publisher, even got to publish at least the Sisk and Bolton stories. I am sure they sat on the porch together and talked coal, railroads and accidents. Also, Tracy City's town arsonist Clyde Newsom lived on or near Beersheba St. Front porches and short walks from Beersheba St. to town took the blue ribbon for, not gossip, but real down to earth true-life stories.

Some of the trial records of Julia E. Bolton vs. N. C. & St. L. RR. Co. can be seen and read in the **Research Library of the Grundy Co. Historical Society** thanks to a Mulloy descendant's efforts. I want to make the story of these three tragedies a memorial to other local train accidents thrust upon real people of Tracy City's past. This is by no means a complete list of railroad accidents, but through this work, we can remember the ultimate price many paid to live and/or work in our coal town.

#### **In Memory of Arthur Colyar (1860--1879)**

*The Daily American – 02 Jul 1879 – TRACY CITY – Arthur Colyar a nephew of Col. A. S. Colyar, and a brakeman on the switch engine, was instantly killed, this afternoon, falling off a car and being run over by a car heavily loaded with coke.*

*The Pulaski Citizen – 03 July 1879 – "Arthur S. Colyar, a nephew of Col. A. S. Colyar, was run over by a train of cars and killed at Tracy City last Tuesday."*

Arthur was the son of Elbert Franklin and Harriett (Smiley) Colyar. He was nineteen at the time of his death. He was buried in the Tracy City Cemetery.

#### **In Memory of Benjamine Finch (1855-1889)**

*Chattanooga Daily Times – 03 Jan. 1889--"Brakeman Killed at Tracy City – South Pittsburg, Tenn., Jan. 2 – Ben Finch, a brakeman on the Mountain road, was killed at Tracy City today while in the act of coupling cars. His foot hung in a frog, the cars knocked him down and ran over his body, killing him instantly."*

Benjamine was the son of George M. and Martha (Wilson) Finch. He was born in Hawkersville/Alto, Franklin Co., TN. His grave is in the Tracy City Cemetery.

#### **In Memory of William C. "Willie" Lockhart (1871 – 1906)**

Willie was the son of Joseph and Lucy (Hunter) Lockhart of Tracy City, TN and was married to Bettie (Summers) Lockhart. He was buried at the Altamont Cemetery.

*Nashville Banner – 09 Jan. 1906 – "SWITCHMAN FELL BENEATH CARS – W. C. Lockhart struck by backing train and death will result. W. C. Lockhart, a switchman in the employ of the Nashville Terminals, fell from a box car while the train was switching in the yards shortly before 9 o'clock this morning and suffered injuries from which he will not recover. He was removed to the infirmary of Drs. Eve on Broad Street shortly after the accident, and while he was conscious immediately after the accident, he soon lapsed into unconsciousness and his death is a matter of a few hours."*

*"Switchman Lockhart was standing on a Baltimore & Ohio freight car while an engine was making some switching, and in some manner he fell from the car landing between the rails. The brake beams of the backing car caught him, mashing his right hip and mutilating his left leg and arm, injuring his back and head. The accident occurred near the office of the General Yard Master in the south end of the terminal yards."*

*"Mr. Lockhart had been in the employ of the Terminal Company only three months and came to Nashville from **Tracy City**. He resided with his family at 1635 Hamburg Street."*

#### **In Memory of Rebecca Jane Hand (1874--1911)**

*Sequachee Valley News – 19 Oct. 1911 – "Mrs. Jane Hand was run over by a train at **Monteagle** Thursday afternoon of last week and instantly killed.*

Mrs. Hand and her husband William H. Hand owned the large *Hand Boarding* house outside of the Monteagle Sunday School Assembly. Since the newspaper was printed on Thursdays, her death date would have been **October 12, 1911**.

#### **In Memory of Floyd Lawson Gross (1870-1919)**

*The Tennessean – Tracy City, Tenn. March 4, 1919 – KILLED BY A TRAIN – "Floyd Gross was run over by the train at the coke ovens and killed instantly. It appears he was in what is known as the slack pit at the ovens, which is beneath the track under the slack elevator, and it is supposed he heard the train coming and tried to get out, but failed and was struck. His body was badly mangled, his head being almost severed from his body. He leaves a wife, two daughters and four sons." (Funeral and burial will be at the Hobbs Hill church tomorrow. Chattanooga Daily Times) Mr. Gross was buried in the Hobbs Hill Cemetery. He has left us, in **2020**, several descendants in the Grundy County area.*