

# **The Hills of Lawrence County**

a 100 plus year saga of bigamy, murder, impersonation, fraud and survival

Story By: Hope Kohls and John Baldwin

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# The Hills of Lawrence County

Story By: Hope Kohls and John Baldwin

Why do some people get so much enjoyment out of genealogy research? Certainly, the satisfaction of establishing one's place in a family tree is a motivation. Part of the enjoyment though is the unique thrill of discovering something extraordinary that has been lost to memory for many years. Hope Kohls and John Baldwin have done just that. Using modern research tools and extensive data resources they discovered several intertwining Lawrence County family stories that are quite extraordinary. Beginning with the family of Levi Jackson Hill (1833-1863) and Alsa "Elsie" Hill, née Brewer (1835-1894) and extending to their son Charles H. Hill Sr. (1856-1930) and his son Charles H. Hill Jr. (1888-1916) and the people they touched, their story is colorful, eccentric, and sweepingly cinematic. It's a 100 plus year saga of bigamy, murder, impersonation, fraud and survival.

- Hope Kohls is a third granddaughter of Susan Sowards/White (1872-1944). Susan was the 6th wife of Charles H Hill Sr. Hope resides in Germany.
- John Baldwin is a third grandson of Rachel A Justice (1849-1903). Rachel was the 4th wife of Charles H Hill Sr. John resides in Westfield, IN.

*"All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way."*  
— Leo Tolstoy , Anna Karenina

## Chapter One: *He was only 30.*

Our story begins with Levi Jackson Hill. His birth year varies among the records between 1828 to 1833. Because his birth date became important in later officially referenced records, we used a documented date - May 4, 1833. He was born in Ohio, likely the Scioto County area. We hypothesize that his parents were Nathaniel Hill (1806-1869) and Jane Robinson (1805-?).

Levi J. Hill married Alsa “Elsie” Brewer in 1848 in Pike County, Ohio. Together, they had five known children, the first being born in 1852 and the last in 1863. Among his children was a son, **Charles Henry Hill Sr.**

With the Civil War looming, Levi enlisted in the Union Army; mustering in on October 29, 1861. He joined **Company G of the 56th Ohio Infantry** as a Private. The 56th Infantry was formed at Camp Morrow, Portsmouth, Ohio in 1861 and mostly saw action in Arkansas, Mississippi and Louisiana. Levi, unfortunately, and like many other civil war era soldiers, contracted chronic diarrhea/dysentery (sanitary conditions were abysmal) in the fall of 1863. He succumbed to this disease on October 5, 1863 and was laid to rest at the Chalmette National Cemetery in New Orleans. He was only 30.

Name	Levi J Hill
Enlistment Age	33
Birth Date	1828
Enlistment Date	29 Oct 1861
Enlistment Rank	Private
Muster Date	29 Oct 1861
Muster Place	Ohio
Muster Company	G
Muster Regiment	56th Infantry
Muster Regiment Type	Infantry
Muster Information	Enlisted
Muster Out Date	5 Oct 1863

At about the same time as Levi’s birth another baby boy, Smith Price, was born in Scioto County, Ohio. He also grew up and fought in the Civil War. Unlike Levi, he survived and returned home to Ohio, where he married and fathered eleven children. Living on a shanty boat and led by their notorious patriarch, the Price family was known up and down the Ohio River from Huntington, West Virginia to Cincinnati, Ohio. Years down the road the lives of these two families would intersect with tragic results when one of Smith Price’s daughters married the grandson of Levi J. Hill. But first, we need to add some important background on the two families.

Following the war, Levi J. Hill's widow, Elsie, filed for a Widow's Pension in October, 1864. Much later, July 1888, someone filed for a Minor's Pension using the name A. J. Hill et. al. as the minor(s).

A.J. Hill likely was a son of Levi and Elsie, Abraham Jacob Hill (1858-1936). However, Abraham was 30 in 1888, not a minor. We checked how long a child could get a pension back then. It was only up to age 16. The last of Levi's children was born in 1863, so Levi's children would have become ineligible after 1879. We therefore question the legality of this pension application amendment in 1888 and have a theory as to who filed it. More on this in a moment.

NAME OF SOLDIER: <i>Hill, Levi J.</i>				
NAME OF DEPENDENT: <i>Widow, Hill, Elsie</i>				
NAME OF DEPENDENT: <i>Minor, Hill, A. J. et al</i>				
SERVICE: <i>8, 56 Ohio Inf.</i>				
DATE OF FILING.	CLASS.	APPLICATION NO.	CERTIFICATE NO.	STATE FROM WHICH FILED.
<i>1864 Oct-27</i>	<i>Invalid,</i>			
<i>1888 July 19</i>	<i>Widow,</i>	<i>70,081</i>	<i>42,500</i>	<i>Ohio.</i>
	<i>Minor,</i>	<i>376,718</i>	<i>445,106</i>	
ATTORNEY: <i>[Signature]</i>				

Meanwhile, Elsie Hill remarried in October 1864 to Nathaniel Whaley (1837-1913) in Pike County, Ohio. Elsie and Nathaniel had five known children, the first born in 1868 and the last in 1876. None of these children had the initials A.J.

We turn our attention now to Rachel A. Justice. Born December 1849 in Aid Township of Lawrence County, Ohio, she was the first child of Andrew Jackson Justice (1818-1891) and Margaret Elizabeth Crawford (1828-1886). Rachel had five known children with four men: Anderson Hunt III (1821-abt. 1805), Joseph Gilmore (1849-1932), Alexander Gates Sr. (1855-1933), and **Charles Henry Hill Sr.** How do we know this information? Rachel was a regular "inmate" (along with her young children) at the Lawrence County Infirmary between 1880 and 1903, the year of her death. Though we have no primary evidence, Infirmary reports, notes and known general behaviors seem to indicate that she was a prostitute. She died at the Infirmary March 10, 1903 at the age of 53 and was buried on "the Hill", now known as Newton Cemetery.

The only man Rachel Justice married, albeit briefly, was **Charles Henry Hill Sr.** Rachel gave birth to Charles Henry Justice-Hill Jr. October 22, 1888. By March 1889, Rachel Justice (unmarried) and son Charles were “inmates” at the Lawrence County Infirmary.

March 17	Justice Rachel	38	
17	Justice Charles	Male	4 Months

Source: Lawrence County Infirmary Register

On April 10, 1890, a year and a half after Charles H. Hill Jr. was born, Charles Hill Sr. and Rachel Justice married in Lawrence County.

PARTIES		MARRIAGE RECORD	
<p>Charles H. Hill</p> <p>and</p> <p>Rachel A. Justice</p> <p>License</p> <p>Issued the 10 day</p> <p>of April</p> <p>A. D. 1890, to the above named parties.</p> <p>Returned and Filed 17th</p>		<p>THE STATE OF OHIO, LAWRENCE COUNTY:</p> <p>Before me, Lot Davis, Judge of the Court of Probate, for said County came personally Chas. H. Hill, who being first duly sworn, saith that he is more than 21 years of age, that he has no wife living, that he is not nearer of kin to Rachel A. Justice than second Cousins, that she is more than 18 years of age, that she has no husband living, that she resides at the present time in this county, and that there is no legal impediment to their being joined in marriage, and further saith not.</p> <p>Sworn to and subscribed before me the 10th day of April A. D. 1890</p> <p>C. H. Hill</p> <p>Lot Davis Probate Judge</p> <p>Fred A. Ross Deputy</p> <p>No.</p>	

Rachel, Charles Hill Sr. and Charles Hill Jr. lived on the Ohio River Family Boats, aka ShantyBoats, in the Ironton area of Lawrence County.



[Note: ShantyBoats/houseboats were a popular form of housing along the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. During their heyday, from the 1850s to the 1950s, upwards to 50,000 men, women, and children called shantyboats home. They were a common sight along the Lawrence County, Ohio River waterfront.]

## Chapter Two: ... he “looks much younger”

At this point we need a more formal introduction to Charles Henry Hill Sr. Charles Hill Sr. was born in 1856 in Pike County, Ohio. In the 1860 census he was a four year old, living with his parents Levi and Elsie Hill in Beaver Township, Pike County, Ohio. Following the death of his father in 1863, Charles' mother, Elsie, remarried to Nathaniel Whaley in 1864. In the 1870 census for Elsie and Nathaniel, only one child from her marriage with Levi (Emily Jane Hill/Whaley) resided in their household. We think Charles, age 7 at the time of his father's death, was adopted or sold.

### Stated Ages Timeline: Charles Henry Hill Sr.

- 1870 census: Age reported to be 13, born in 1857 in Ohio
  - Living (perhaps adopted) with husband and wife named Ulrich; husband born in Germany
- 1880 census: Age reported to be 38, born in 1842 in Ohio
  - Living with Zuriah Unger whom he would marry in 1883
- 1890 penitentiary record: Claimed to be 56, born 1834
- 1900 census: Claimed to be 66, born May 1834 in Virginia, parents born in Germany
- 1910 census: Claimed to be 70, born 1840 in Virginia, parents born in Virginia
- 1927 marriage to Susan Sowards: Claimed to be born November 4, 1832 in Germany
- 1930 census: Claimed to be 98, born in 1832 in West Virginia, parents born in West Virginia
- 1930 OBIT: Claimed to be Levi J. Hill, age 97, born May 4 1833 in Germany
- 1930 Death Certificate: Claimed to be Levi J. Hill, born May 4, 1833 in Germany

### Six Documented Marriages: Charles Henry Hill Sr.

1. Elizabeth Woods: December 1872 in Ross County, Ohio
2. Zuriah Unger: December 1883 in Scioto County, Ohio



3. Sarah Cotterell: February 1887 in Ross County, Ohio
4. Rachel Justice: April 1890 in Lawrence County, Ohio
5. Luan "Lula" Sweningen: May 1903 in Huntington, West Virginia
6. Susan Sowards/White: May 1927 in Lawrence County, Ohio

In this *Portsmouth Times* Newspaper, Dec 4, 1909, article, it's clear that Charles H. Hill Sr. was an admitted bigamist. Except for Rachel Justice who died in 1903, we have found no evidence that any other wife, prior to 1909, died of "natural causes".

It's also interesting that he stated that his age was 76, yet the author observed that he "*looks much younger*". In fact, at this time he was using his given name, Charles Hill, but using his father's birthdate. He was actually 54 years of age.

Let's return to the year 1890. Recall that Charles H. Hill Sr. married Rachel Justice in April 1890. On June 1, 1890 Charles was arrested for "Shooting".

**Seventh Wife Leaves Hubby, Finds Her Here**

Seven times married is the remarkable record of Charles Hill, an aged Virginian, who came down here from Ashland, Ky., on Wednesday night in search of a runaway wife.

"Why that's nothing extraordinary," remarked Hill when a Times man expressed surprise over his frequent matrimonial ventures, "my uncle John Hill up in old Virginia has his ninth wife."

Hill is close to 76 years of age but looks much younger. He first married at the age of 16 years. All of his six former wives died of natural causes save one. She met a violent death, he felling a big tree which toppled over on a stone house causing her to be crushed to death. He got but one divorce and the wife divorced died of grief eighteen days later.

Hill has been married to his present wife for nine years. She was Miss Lula Sweningen, a native of Blackwater, Ky. Their married life was happy but two months ago a gas pipe couplet, named Bob Frisby engaged board with them. Hill worked for various farmers in the vicinity of Ashland. He never suspected his wife of infidelity but of late had accused her of different things. He now says, without just cause. Last Friday upon his return from a hunt he found his family boat deserted and a skiff missing. He made inquiries and found his wife had shipped her belongings to Portsmouth and left in the skiff accompanied by Frisby.

Hill was at first disposed to prosecute both his wife and Frisby believing they had eloped until he came across her at the home of his cousin, John Hill, a second hand dealer of West Front street. She told him she had left because of his abuse and false accusations and that she had simply hired Frisby to bring her here. The old man at once relented and begged forgiveness. Officer Daplain meanwhile though had picked up Frisby and lodged him in prison. Hill had accused him of stealing the boat and intimidated he was wanted at Parkersburg for breaking jail but later admitted this was only hear-say and was now overanxious to secure his release.

Hill's interview with his wife was very satisfactory for she agreed to return to Ashland with him. She is only 46 years of age and a comely looking woman. No children were born of Hill's many unions though his present wife is mother of three little children by a previous marriage.



June 1, 1890

# JAIL REGISTER.

No. of Commitment.	NAME OF PRISONER.	NATIVITY. (if U. S. name State.)	Color.	COMMITMENT.			DISCHARGE.	
				Date.	Cause.	Term.	Authority for	Manner of
	Jesse Tate	Ohio	W.	June 1	Cutting		Mittimus June 6	To Reform Prison
	David Tate	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
	Chas. H. Hill	"	"	"	Shooting	"	June 7	1/2 O.P.
	James Becker	"	"	"	Forgery	"	"	O.P.

While in the Lawrence County jail he was interviewed for an 1890 Special Census Schedule. On this census he stated his name as Charles H. Hill and that he was in the Union Army, **Company G of the 56th Ohio Infantry** as a Private (same as his father, Levi). He did NOT know his enlistment date nor discharge date, but stated that he served for 3 years, 9 months, and 18 days. He was filing as an invalid, complaining of chronic piles and a wounded leg.

Page No. 1  
 Supervisor's District No. 4  
 Enumeration District No. 141

Eleventh Census of the United States.  
 SPECIAL SCHEDULE.  
 SURVIVING SOLDIERS, SAILORS, AND MARINES, AND WIDOWS, ETC.

Persons who served in the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps of the United States during the war of the rebellion (who are survivors), and widows of such persons, in 38 West Hamilton, County of Lawrence, State of Ohio, enumerated in June, 1890. Belden T. Hicks Enumerator.

House No.	Family No.	NAMES OF SURVIVING SOLDIERS, SAILORS, AND MARINES, AND WIDOWS.	Rank.	Company.	Name of Regiment or Vessel.	Date of Enlistment.	Date of Discharge.	Length of Service.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	2	Hill, Charles H.	Private	G	56th Ohio Inf	1861	1863	3 9 18
2	3	Hamilton, John	Private			1861	1863	
3	4	Brattin, Allen T.	Captain	G	9th Wis Cav	1861	1863	2 5 6
4	5	Henry, Levi M.	Private	A	5th Me Inf	1861	1863	3 2 16

Levi J. Hill, served in **Company G of the 56th Ohio Infantry** as a Private between Oct 29, 1861 until his death Oct 5, 1863; 1 year, 11 months, 6 days. The Roster of **Company G of the 56th Ohio Infantry** lists only two men named Hill: Levi J. Hill and Charles W. Hill (Levi's brother?). Both died during their service.

Hayes, Robert.....	G	Private	May 30, 1862	Cincinnati, O.....	Died in hospital of disease; interred in Spring Grove Cemetery.
Hill, Charles W.....	G	Private	May —, 1863	Vicksburg, Miss.....	Died of wounds received May 16, 1863, in battle of Champion Hills, Miss.
Hill, Levi J.....	G	Private	Oct. 5, 1863	New Orleans, La.....	Died in hospital of disease.
Hindman, David.....	F	Private	Mch. 5, 1862	Fort Donelson, Tenn.	Died of disease.
Hix, Eli.....	E	Private	Sept. 29, 1863	Memphis, Tenn.....	Died at Helena, Ark., of disease; interred in Mississippi

Thus, Charles H. Hill Sr. lied about having served and about length of service. This, on a government census document.

On June 7, 1890, Charles H. Hill Sr. was transferred from the Lawrence County Jail to the Ohio Penitentiary to serve a one year sentence for "Assault with a Deadly Weapon" - Prisoner 21452. At that time he stated that he was 56 years old. In fact, he was 34. In addition to Charles being heavily scarred, another comment was observed on his appearance, namely that he was "well built."

*Forehead med high & broad - Brows arched & apart. Ears large & stand out. Nose med & straight. Chin large & sq. Well built. Numerous scars all over head. Large cut scar on neck right side of chin. Cheeks sunken. Scar on front of chin. Large scar just below point of R. elbow. Two cut scars one on front of elbow & the other just above outside. Large cut scar on wrist left. Half of index finger left hand gone large scar just below knee.*

Physical description from the Ohio Penitentiary Prisoner Register

By 1915 Charles H. Hill Sr. was out of prison and living with Susan Sowards/White on his shantyboat near Ashland, Kentucky. This, according to newspaper reports of their arrest for an alleged rape of Susan's 7-year-old daughter, Martha Swanson. Charles's defense for this crime was that he was impotent. His witness to this fact was Eureka May Hill (née Price), his daughter-in-law (wife of Charles H. Hill Jr.). More on these two in a few moments.

In February, 1930 Charles H. Hill Sr., posing as his father Levi J. Hill, again filed an invalid pension claim. He again stated he had served in **Company G of the 56th Ohio Infantry**.

In the May 1930 federal census he reported that his name was Charley Hill (true), age 98 (actually, he was 74), born in West Virginia (actually, Ohio) in 1832 (actually 1856), living in Athalia, Rome Township, Lawrence County, Ohio (true).

Addkins Nancy	Head	H	O	350	No	F	W	82	h
Hill Charley	Head	R	M		No	M	W	98	h
— Surge	Wife	H			Y	F	W	65	h

Finally, in a Veterans Administration Master Index Card for Levy J. Hill, they listed his date of birth as 4 May 1835 and place of residence, Athalia, Ohio.

This index card indicated that Levi J. Hill made a pension claim while living in Athalia, Ohio. There is no record of Levi having lived in Athalia. However, his son Charles Hill Sr. did.



Charles Henry Hill Sr. died August 23, 1930 in Athalia, Rome Township, Lawrence County, Ohio. His death certificate indicated that he was 97 and that his parents were born in Germany, though their names were NOT known. In fact, he was 74 and was born in Pike County, Ohio in 1856.

18896

DIVISION OF VITAL STATISTICS  
CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

1. PLACE OF DEATH  
County: Lawrence Registration District No. 143 File No. 17  
Township: Rome Primary Registration District No. 2057 St. Ohio Ward  
or Village: Athalia City or Town: Lawrence Did Deceased Serve in U. S. Navy or Army?

2. FULL NAME: Charles H. Hill

(a) Residence: No. (b) Residence: No. (c) Residence: No.

3. SEX: M. 4. COLOR OF SKIN: White 5. SINGLE, MARRIED, WIDOWED, OR DIVORCED: Married

6. DATE OF BIRTH: May 4, 1856 7. AGE: 74 8. OCCUPATION OF DECEASED: Farmer

9. BIRTHPLACE: Germany 10. NAME OF FATHER: Levi J. Hill 11. BIRTHPLACE OF FATHER: Germany 12. MAIDEN NAME OF MOTHER: Levi J. Hill 13. BIRTHPLACE OF MOTHER: Germany

14. DATE OF DEATH: August 23, 1930 15. CAUSE OF DEATH: Heart failure 16. PLACE OF DEATH: Athalia 17. TIME OF DEATH: 10:30 a.m. 18. SEX OF DECEASED: Male 19. RACE OF DECEASED: White 20. COLOR OF SKIN OF DECEASED: White 21. BUILD OF DECEASED: Medium 22. COMPLEXION OF DECEASED: Fair 23. EYES OF DECEASED: Blue 24. HAIR OF DECEASED: Gray 25. MANNER OF DEATH: Natural 26. PLACE OF BURIAL: Athalia 27. NAME OF CEMETERY: First 28. DATE OF BURIAL: August 24, 1930 29. NAME OF MINISTER: Rev. J. H. Hill 30. NAME OF CHURCH: First 31. NAME OF FUNERAL HOME: First 32. NAME OF UNDERTAKER: First 33. NAME OF CARRIER: First 34. NAME OF DRIVER: First 35. NAME OF ASSISTANT: First 36. NAME OF ATTENDANT: First 37. NAME OF BELLMAN: First 38. NAME OF PORTER: First 39. NAME OF COOK: First 40. NAME OF BUTLER: First 41. NAME OF VALET: First 42. NAME OF GROOM: First 43. NAME OF Usher: First 44. NAME OF AID: First 45. NAME OF ATTENDANT: First 46. NAME OF BELLMAN: First 47. NAME OF PORTER: First 48. NAME OF COOK: First 49. NAME OF BUTLER: First 50. NAME OF VALET: First 51. NAME OF GROOM: First 52. NAME OF Usher: First 53. NAME OF AID: First 54. NAME OF ATTENDANT: First 55. NAME OF BELLMAN: First 56. NAME OF PORTER: First 57. NAME OF COOK: First 58. NAME OF BUTLER: First 59. NAME OF VALET: First 60. NAME OF GROOM: First 61. NAME OF Usher: First 62. NAME OF AID: First 63. NAME OF ATTENDANT: First 64. NAME OF BELLMAN: First 65. NAME OF PORTER: First 66. NAME OF COOK: First 67. NAME OF BUTLER: First 68. NAME OF VALET: First 69. NAME OF GROOM: First 70. NAME OF Usher: First 71. NAME OF AID: First 72. NAME OF ATTENDANT: First 73. NAME OF BELLMAN: First 74. NAME OF PORTER: First 75. NAME OF COOK: First 76. NAME OF BUTLER: First 77. NAME OF VALET: First 78. NAME OF GROOM: First 79. NAME OF Usher: First 80. NAME OF AID: First 81. NAME OF ATTENDANT: First 82. NAME OF BELLMAN: First 83. NAME OF PORTER: First 84. NAME OF COOK: First 85. NAME OF BUTLER: First 86. NAME OF VALET: First 87. NAME OF GROOM: First 88. NAME OF Usher: First 89. NAME OF AID: First 90. NAME OF ATTENDANT: First 91. NAME OF BELLMAN: First 92. NAME OF PORTER: First 93. NAME OF COOK: First 94. NAME OF BUTLER: First 95. NAME OF VALET: First 96. NAME OF GROOM: First 97. NAME OF Usher: First 98. NAME OF AID: First 99. NAME OF ATTENDANT: First 100. NAME OF BELLMAN: First

Similarly, his obituary, published in the Ironton Sunday Tribune indicated that he was the oldest resident at that time in Rome Township.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 24, 1930

CRIMINAL DOCKET OF GREENUP

THE IRONTON SUNDAY TRIBUNE

OBITUARY

HILL  
Levi J. Hill, oldest resident in the eastern end of Lawrence county, died at his home at Athalia Saturday at the age of 97 years.

He was born in Germany on May 4, 1853 but had resided in America for many years. He was one of the best known, as well as the oldest resident of Rome township. Mr. Hill is survived by his widow. His death came after a brief illness with a complication of diseases. Funeral services will be held at the home this afternoon. Burial will be made in Rome cemetery under direction of Gholson and Sons.

Based on an abundance of circumstantial evidence, we surmise that **Charles H. Hill Sr. impersonated his father, Levi J Hill** so as to fraudulently receive his father's Civil War pension, over at least a forty year period - 1890 to 1930.

As Hope Kohls observed: "I am just flabbergasted that Charles Sr could manage to pull this off. I have read these applications for several of my ancestors. They had to have so many witness affidavits attesting that everything is true, that they were married, that the children were of this marriage, how old the children were. They carefully examined their military service records and required statements from the commanding

*officers. How did the VA not see that Levi died in the war? Did Charles manage to convince them that it was not really Levi that died, it was somehow a case of mistaken identity? Was he pretending to be back from the dead and making more children? As the old commercials used to say, "Enquiring Minds Want to Know."*

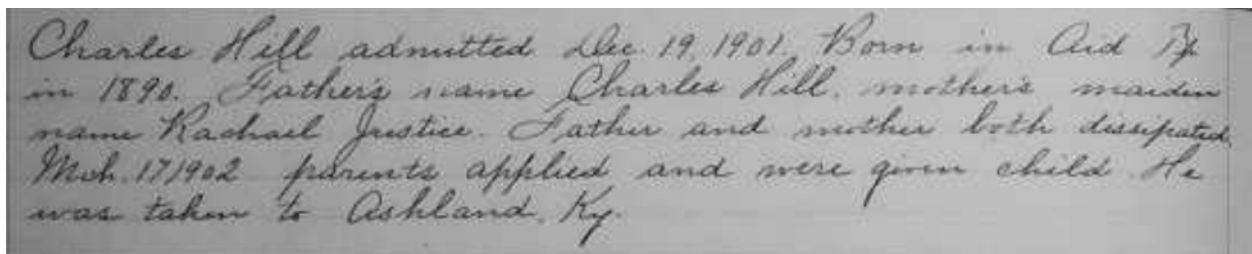
Now, let's return to the son of Rachel Justice and Charles H. Hill Sr.,  
**Charles Henry Hill Jr.**

## Chapter Three: ... it was the family business

As we now know, **Charles Henry Hill Jr.** was born to Rachel Justice and Charles H. Hill Sr. October 22, 1888 in Aid Township, Lawrence County. Charles Hill Sr. married Rachel in April 1890. Charles Hill Sr. apparently provided sporadic support for Rachel and Charles Hill Jr. We know this because there are several entries in the Lawrence County Infirmary Registry for Rachel and Charles Hill Jr., where they spent considerable time:

- March 17, 1889, age 6 months
- January 7, 1891, age 1 year
- December 7, 1901, age 12
  - Sent to Lawrence County Children's Home

Charles Hill Jr. was admitted to the Lawrence County Children's Home Dec. 19, 1901. He remained there until March 17, 1902 when he was returned to his parents who were described in the record as "dissipated." Cambridge Dictionary defines this as "spending too much time enjoying physical pleasures and harmful activities." Despite this, they were allowed to take him with them to Ashland, Kentucky.



Charles Hill admitted Dec. 19, 1901. Born in Aid Twp in 1888. Father's name Charles Hill, mother's maiden name Rachael Justice. Father and mother both dissipated. March 17/1902 parents applied and were given child. He was taken to Ashland, Ky.

The next reference we have for Charles Hill Jr. is the 1910 census in which he was reported as age 19, living with Charles Hill Sr and his wife Lula (*née* Sweningen) on a shantyboat in Clay Township, Scioto County. His occupation was listed as "concrete worker".



Charles H. Hill Jr. married Eureka Malissa “May” Price August 11, 1913 in Lawrence County, Ohio. He claimed to be 33 (he was 24) and she was 34. This was May’s third marriage. It would not be her last.

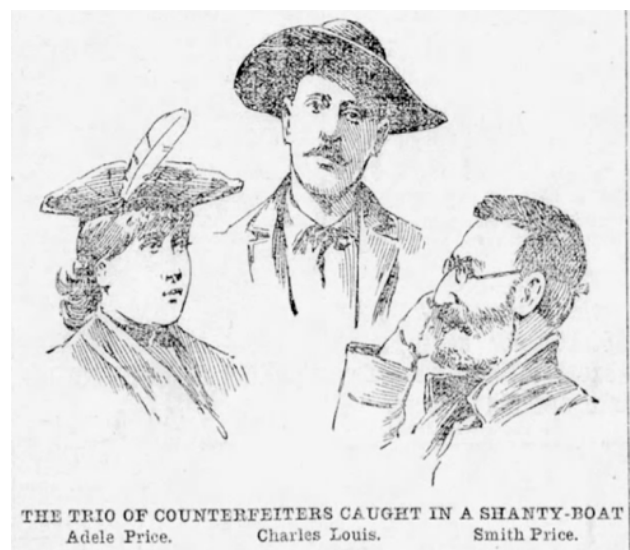
Eureka “May” Price was born May 16, 1879 in Franklin Furnace, Scioto County, Ohio. She was the fourth child of eleven born to Smith “Smithy” Price (1832-1922) and Lavina “Sabina” Beck (1851-1928).

The Price family is worthy of a story all their own. In particular, Smith Price had a great deal of notoriety along the banks of the Ohio River between Portsmouth and Cincinnati. Smith was born near Franklin Furnace, Scioto County. Like his contemporary, Levi Jackson Hill, Smith Price enlisted in the Union Army in the summer of 1861. He served Company F, 27th Ohio Infantry for almost four years. His enlistment rank was Corporal but his discharge rank was Private. Unlike Levi Hill who died in 1863 at the age of 30, Smith Price survived the Civil War and lived to be 89 years old.

Smith married Clarissa E. Rake (1845-?) August 30 1865 in Lawrence County. No known children resulted from that marriage and it shortly ended because Smith married Lavina “Sabina” Beck May 25, 1870 in Scioto County. Smith and Sabina along with their children lived for many years aboard an Ohio River shantyboat.

Their family was shattered on Jan 5, 1897 when Smith Price and his daughter, Adella, were arrested in Cincinnati aboard his shantyboat for counterfeiting and passing counterfeit coins.

On January 6, 1897, Smith’s wife Sabina and six of their children were removed from their shantyboat due to malaria and lack of food and exposure and taken to a local



Cincinnati hospital.

In March 1897, Smith was convicted of counterfeiting and sentenced to 18 months in the Ohio Penitentiary by federal judge, and future U.S. president, William Howard Taft.

All in all, Smith Price was arrested, convicted, and sentenced for counterfeiting four times. Counterfeiting, it seems, was the family business.

- 1878 - Occurred in Scioto County, sentenced to two years in October of that year. He was caught passing the fake money on "Barnum's show day" This was P.T. Barnum's Greatest Show on Earth. It visited Portsmouth on August 24, 1878
- 1897 - Caught in Cincinnati, sentenced March 1897 to four years
- 1908 - Caught in Scioto County, sentenced to two years Jan 28, 1908
- 1913 - Caught in Ashland Kentucky, sentenced to five years on June 2, 1913. Evidently, practice makes perfect, since at this point Secret Service Agent Colonel Michael Bolan said, "*Price is one of the most expert counterfeiters of quarters, halves, and dollars in the United States*".

And then there's this anomaly with his pension records - Price Smith and Price Smith, Alias William Smith:

NAME OF SOLDIER: <i>Price, Smith</i>				
NAME OF DEPENDENT: <i>Widow, Price, Sabina</i>				
SERVICE: <i>Ch. 27 Ohio Inf.</i>				
DATE OF FILING.	CLASS.	APPLICATION NO.	CERTIFICATE NO.	STATE FROM WHICH FILED.
<i>1895 Sep 29</i>	<i>Invalid,</i>	<i>550 866</i>	<i>892.669</i>	
<i>1897 Mar 11</i>	<i>Widow,</i>	<i>1202350</i>	<i>936,499</i>	<i>Ohio.</i>
	<i>Minor,</i>			
<i>Identical with the birth certificate of</i>				
<i>Price Smith, Alias William Smith</i>				
<i>Ch. 27 Ohio Inf. S.O. 1167220</i>				
REMARKS:				

Pension Index: General Index to Pension Files, 1861-1934 for Smith  
Prentice, Geo. W.-Price, Timothy

NAME OF SOLDIER:	Price, Smith alias Smith, William			
NAME OF DEPENDENT:	Widow,			
	Minor,			
SERVICE:	F. 27. Ohio. Inf.			
DATE OF FILING.	CLASS.	APPLICATION NO.	CERTIFICATE NO.	STATE FROM WHICH FILED.
1896 Sep. 29	Invalid.	1167 220		Ill
	Widow,			
	Minor,			
ATTORNEY:	A. R. Burton Not identical with			
REMARKS:	Price Smith Price F. 27 Ohio. Inf. 20, 592669 240, 120, 250			

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Notice the notes at the bottom of the cards ... "not identical". Both indicate service in Company F of the Ohio 27th Infantry. Yet, checking the roster of soldiers there was **no** William Smith, only Price Smith. Was Smith Price attempting pension fraud similar to Charles H. Hill Sr?

Smith Price died in Cincinnati November 17, 1922 and was fondly remembered in his obituary.

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2, 1922**

## Death Claims Smith Price

Smith Price, for many years a resident of this section, and who was one of the best known rivermen along the Ohio, died several days ago, his death taking place at the home of his son-in-law, William Blair, of Cincinnati. He had been ill for some time with infirmities. Price was past 91 years old and was a veteran of the Civil War. He was a very interesting character and most of his life was spent on houseboats, which he kept on the move in the Ohio river. A better fisherman than he never lived and he had made some tremendous catches during his long career. He kept posted on current events and was well educated. He had many friends here and in various cities along the Ohio, where the news of his death will be learned with regret.

## Chapter Four: ... had some sort of charm, magnetism, charisma

Returning now to Eureka “May” Price, we will start with a list of her husbands.

<u>Marriage Date</u>	<u>Spouse</u>	<u>Notes</u>
November 23, 1894	James N. Crawford	Eureka was 15 years old. She gave birth to a daughter, Minnie May Crawford.
July 4, 1908	William S. Lynch	Eureka was 29 years old. In the 1910 census she indicated that she had given birth to two children with one child still living. It is unknown who the father of the second child was.
August 11, 1913	Charles H. Hill Jr	Eureka was 34 years old.
February 22, 1917	John H. Holmes	Eureka was 37 years old. She gave birth to a son, Charles C. Holmes.
June 9, 1920	Ervin Cook	Eureka was 41 years old.
December 14, 1921	William C. Light	Eureka was 42 years old.
March 15, 1923	Milton Lacy Jr.	Eureka was 43 years old.
August 20, 1928	Henry M. Huls	Eureka was 49 years old. At the time, Eureka was still married to Milton Lacy Jr. Milton and Eureka divorced in 1935.
May 29, 1939	William A. Morris	Eureka was 60 years old.

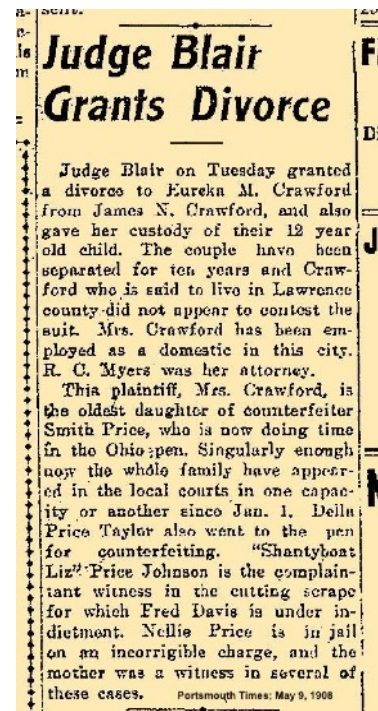
August 27, 1949	Albert Smith	Eureka was 70 years old.
July 21, 1950	Alfred B. Kessinger	Eureka was 71 years old. In February 1962, Alfred and Eureka were in a vehicle accident. Alfred died from his injuries and Eureka was critically hurt.

Eureka "May" Price had at least eleven husbands in her 87 years of life. With the exception of her first husband, who was significantly older than her, the majority were younger than her. She evidently had some sort of charm, magnetism, charisma. Even in her sixties and seventies she was finding new husbands.

From all accounts Eureka Price had a feisty temperament and there was much turbulence in her relationships. She was married to her first husband for twelve years. However, they were separated for ten of those years before divorcing in 1908.

During their years of separation there were disputes over custody of their daughter, Minnie May. Eureka spent time in jail over hiding the girl in West Virginia and refusing to turn her over to Minnie's maternal grandmother, whom the court had given custody to.

Eureka married for the second time in 1908. But it was again a turbulent marriage. Eureka left this husband, Senard Lynch, for the first time the following year. She repeated this cycle, leaving and reconciling several times before finally divorcing. During these years with him, she was also having a relationship with Charles Hill Jr. Young Charles, about ten years younger than Eureka, remained a part of the love triangle involving Eureka, Senard Lynch, and himself for at least two years, before marrying Eureka shortly after her second divorce.



The marriage between Charles H. Hill Jr. and Eureka continued the same pattern. Charles Jr. was arrested in 1915 for shooting at some boys that were swimming in the river near their boat. His stated reason was he had "warned them" against swimming naked in view of his wife. While Charles was in the Cincinnati Workhouse for this episode of what was either jealousy or protection of his wife's honor, Eureka filed for divorce from him. She did not follow through with it and they reunited after his return from prison that winter. This reconciliation did not last long; by early summer 1916, Charles was dead at the hands of Eureka's lover.



## **Chapter Five:** *It was my temper again. This time I am gone.*

On Wednesday, June 28, 1916, the shantyboat owned by Charles H. Hill Jr. was moored just below the construction site of the C&O railroad bridge that would span the Ohio River between Sciotoville and Kentucky. Charles was working on that bridge's construction as a riveter. About 20 days earlier, Charles had reached out to Grover "Red" Kennedy in Proctorsville to inform him that he could secure work on the C&O bridge. Red moved his boat next to the Hill's. But, instead of living on his own boat, Red moved in with the Hills as a boarder. All seemed to be going well with this arrangement.

Soon enough though, Charles became convinced that Red Kennedy and Eureka Hill were having an affair. This led to stress between the threesome, and neighbors reported hearing Charles give an ultimatum. It was him or Red; one of them had to leave. It was reported that Eureka said Charles should go and Red should stay. The following day Charles packed and left their home departing on a second boat. This boat he tied up some distance away then returned unexpectedly on foot. Another heated argument commenced.

According to Eureka's inquest testimony, Charles shouted to Red Kennedy, "*I'll finish you now!*" A struggle ensued between the two. A candle was snuffed out. A Colt revolver (bought as a present for Eureka) was brought into the fray. Charles was shot twice at close range by Red and severely wounded. Red fled the scene, escaping to the Kentucky side of the river. Eureka ran from the boat screaming, looking for a doctor. Charles, mortally wounded and bleeding profusely, struggled up the river embankment and fell on the porch of a nearby house. Later that night, as he lay dying in the hospital, Charles told Eureka, "*It was my temper again. This time I am gone.*" Charles H. Hill Jr. died the next day, June 29, 1916.

As the headlines in the local newspapers attested, the murder of Charles Hill Jr. was a sensational crime in Lawrence County in the summer of 1916:

## Charles H. Hill Lies In City Hospital Badly Wounded; Wife Saw Him Shot; Gun User Flees

## VICTIM OF SHOOTING ON SHANTYBOAT DEAD

CHARLES H. HILL DIES

named Art Goodman, living on had been trouble on Hill's boat the river bank, near the Scioto Tuesday night and told to him that there would be some more tragedy and told him that there Wednesday night.

**VICTIM OF SHOOTING BLAMES WIFE FOR TROUBLE**

Declares He Had Cause For Jealousy; Charles H. Hill Shot By 'Red' Kennedy; Boat Is Scene Of Tragedy

**Save The Pieces**

CRESCENT JEWELRY & OPTICAL CO.



## WIDOW OF MURDERED MAN TELLS ABOUT RECENT TRAGEDY

Grover "Red" Kennedy was an unlikely murderer, being the son of a police officer. In a disturbing twist of fate Red's father was murdered in the line of duty while his son was still on the run from justice. His father, Crown City, Ohio Marshal, Lewis Kennedy was killed while attempting to arrest a group of disorderly men on August 29, 1916.

**Marshal Beaten to Death By Five Men**

Quintet Escapes From Ohio Into West Virginia Hills

IRONTON, O., Aug. 29.—L. C. Kennedy, marshal of Proctorville, was beaten to death by a gang of five men today. Kennedy was endeavoring to arrest them on disorderly conduct charges. Two of the men were arrested but the others escaped into West Virginia.

Red Kennedy was eventually arrested in West Virginia in December 1916. He was originally charged with first degree murder, but the charge was lessened to manslaughter. We don't know for sure the outcome of his trial. We do know he was briefly in the Army in 1917. Perhaps that was his punishment. By 1920 he was back in county jail in Huntington, West Virginia. Red Kennedy died in July 1945.

**Alleged Murderer Caught**

Grover Kennedy, wanted here on a charge of killing Charles Hill, was arrested Friday evening at Point Pleasant, W. Va., by Sheriff E. W. Smith and was brought to the local jail. Last spring Hill wrote to Kennedy asking him to come to Sciotoville. He told him that he could get work on the C. & O. N. bridge. Kennedy came, according to the information received by the officers, and a few days later Hill became suspicious that Kennedy was intimate with his wife.

One afternoon Hill came home and found the two together on a houseboat at Sciotoville. In the quarrel that followed, Hill was fatally shot by Kennedy, who escaped and had been missing ever since.

As for Eureka, well, her grieving and mourning for Charles Hill soon dissipated as she married her fourth of eleven husbands, John H. Holmes in February 1917. She was 37. He was 28. And so it went with her for the next 50 years. Eureka died in August 1966.

- Hope Kohls is a third granddaughter of Susan Sowards/White (1872-1944). Susan was the 6th wife of Charles H Hill Sr. Hope resides in Germany.
- John Baldwin is a third grandson of Rachel A Justice (1849-1903). Rachel was the 4th wife of Charles H Hill Sr. John resides in Westfield, IN.

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