

# The Grande Nelson Family of Tazewell County

How many families do you know that had 19 children? None, you say? Well, here's one of the largest and most incredible families I've encountered. William Nelson (the paternal great grandfather of the author's paternal 1st cousin) fathered at least 19 children between 1859 and 1901 - 42 years. The first was born when William was 24. The last was born when he was 66. The logistics of managing a household with that many children must have been enormous. The house alone must have been something to behold.

Much has been lost to history about the William Nelson family of Tazewell County, Virginia. And, there are continuing misconceptions and misinformation that have passed along through the years to descendants. I've spent considerable time researching and restoring the lives of each member of this enormous family.

Here's a summary of what I learned with a few mysteries yet to be resolved.

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## Principals

### **William Nelson**

BIRTH about 1835 • Ashe County, North Carolina

DEATH Mar. 1902 • Tazewell County, Virginia

Married: 1859

### **Rutha-Susan Altizer**

BIRTH 21 DEC 1839 • Tazewell County, Virginia

DEATH 8 AUG 1889 • Tazewell County, Virginia

Married: 1896

### **Sarah Jane Cosby Price**

BIRTH MAY 1870 • Elk Garden, Russell, Virginia

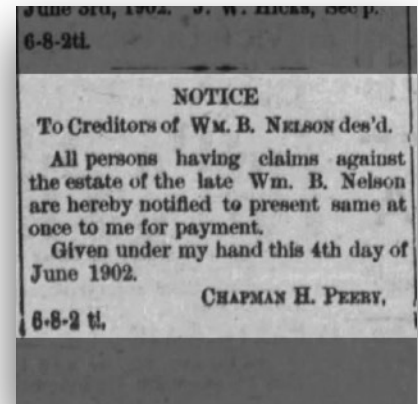
DEATH Aug. 1904 • Tazewell County, Virginia

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## William Nelson

We know that William Nelson was likely born in Ashe County, North Carolina about 1835. Many trees suggest he was specifically born March 22, 1835, with no supporting evidence. Some think his name was William Armistead Nelson. This is not correct. That William A Nelson (1818-1902) was a surgeon in the United States Navy 1839-1858 and the Confederate States Army 1861-1863.

He may have been a William A Nelson. But, in a June, 1902, Clinch Valley News and Richlands Press, "Estate Claims Notice", his name was stated as 'William B Nelson'. In fact, in all other known public records, he was known only as William Nelson - no middle name.



And, here, we have our first mystery - who were the biological parents of William Nelson? There are two conflicting documents that state different parents. When William married Rutha Altizer in 1859, the marriage register stated his parents to be Issac Nelson and Susan (Susannah Young) - which is likely true.

However, when he married Sarah Jane Cosby Price in 1896, the marriage register stated his parents to be Reuben and "B" Nelson. Checking, I found no evidence of a Reuben Nelson being associated with this Nelson family. So, what was going on?

Name	William Nelson
Gender	Male
Marital Status	Single
Age	23
Birth Date	1836
Birth Place	Ash County, NC
Marriage Date	19 Jan 1859
Marriage Place	Tazewell, Virginia
Father	Isaac Nelson
Mother	Susan
Spouse	Ruthy Altizer

William and his 1st wife, Rutha-Susan Altizer, married in 1859 in Tazewell County. He was 24 and she was 19. There's no evidence that Rutha was pregnant when they were married. And, William's father, Issac Nelson, was still alive, his mother had passed.

When William married Sarah Jane Cosby Price in Dec. 1896, he was 61 and she was 26 - a 35 year age gap. And, it's likely that Cosby was pregnant with son, Larry O'Knight Nelson, born June 1897. All in all, an unusual set of circumstances.

Name	William Nelson
Gender	Male
Marital Status	Widowed
Age	60
Birth Date	1836
Marriage Date	14 Dec 1896
Marriage Place	Russell, Virginia
Father	Reuben Nelson
Mother	B. Nelson
Spouse	S. J. C. Price

So, my theory is that, in the 1896 marriage registration, William lied about who his parents were. In fact, the parents names he used were the names of Cosby's parents: Reuben and 'B'arbara Nelson (aka Price). Why William Nelson was motivated to lie about his parents is unknown.

During the Civil War, William Nelson served in the 29th Virginia Infantry Regiment, Company H, on the side of the Confederate States of America for about three years. He enlisted in Tazewell County, VA May 29, 1862 and mustered out (surrendered) Apr. 9, 1865 - at Appomattox Court House, VA.

According to Wikipedia; *"In March, 1863, it totalled 732 men. Attached to General Corse's Brigade the unit participated in Longstreet's Suffolk Expedition and during the Gettysburg Campaign was on detached duty in Tennessee and North Carolina. In the spring of 1864 it returned to Virginia and took its place in the Petersburg trenches north and south of the James River and ended the war at Appomattox. Many were lost at Saylor's Creek, and **only 1 officer and 27 men surrendered on April 9, 1865.**"*



William Nelson was one of those 27 men that surrendered at Appomattox Courthouse. He was never captured but was wounded several times, e.g., shot in the right ankle at Richmond, VA. His service record shows he was awarded a Gold Star.

William Nelson fought in the following engagements:

- [Battle of Middle Creek](#)
- [Siege of Suffolk](#)
- [Battle of Proctor's Creek](#)
- [Battle of North Anna](#)
- [Battle of Totopotomoy Creek](#)
- [Battle of Cold Harbor](#)
- [Siege of Petersburg](#)
- [Battle of Dinwiddie Court House](#)
- [Battle of Five Forks](#)
- [Battle of Sailor's Creek](#)
- [Appomattox Campaign](#)

Name	<b>William Nelson</b>
Birth Place	Ashe County, North Carolina, USA
Enlistment Date	29 May 1862
Enlistment Place	Tazewell, Virginia
Enlistment Rank	Private
Muster Date	29 May 1862
Muster Place	Virginia
Muster Company	H
Muster Regiment	29th Infantry
Muster Regiment Type	Infantry
Muster Information	Enlisted
Casualty Date	15 Jun 1862
Type of Casualty	Sick
Muster Out Date	9 Apr 1865
Muster Out Place	Appomattox Court House, Virginia
Muster Out Information	Surrendered
Side of War	Confederacy
Survived War?	Yes
Notes	1863-01-30 Returned; 1863-04-15 On rolls; 1864-04-15 On rolls; 1864-05-30 Returned; 1864-12-15 On rolls
Additional Notes	Born 1835. Living in Tazewell, VA in 1898
Additional Notes 2	Casualty 2 Date: 11 Aug 1862; Casualty 2 Type of Casualty: Absent, sick; Casualty 3 Date: 16 May 1864; Casualty 3 Place: Drewry's Bluff, Virginia; Casualty 3 Type of Casualty: Wounded; Casualty 3 Information: Shot in right ankle; Casualty 4 Date: 17 May 1864; Casualty 4 Place: Richmond, Virginia; Casualty 4 Type of Casualty: Hospitalized
Title	The Virginia Regimental Histories Series

Supporting the military service absence evidence of William Nelson from Tazewell County, VA during this period, May 1862 to Apr 1865, is the fact that his 2nd child, Mary Y Nelson, was born April, 1862 (before his enlistment) and his 3rd child, John R Nelson, was born March, 1866 (after his surrender/discharge).



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## The Will of William Nelson

In January, 1902, William Nelson filed his Last Will and Testament in Tazewell County, VA. He was 67 and must have been in poor health (likely consumption/tuberculosis), perhaps knowing he was at death's door. His 19th child, Dora L Nelson (adopted and name changed to Helen Nelson Deisher) had been born one year earlier. We will get into the details of the lives of Helen and several other of his children in a moment.

Turning to the Will, it would be helpful to see key transcribed sections. This, because two years after his death, the Will was contested by his children.

*"I William Nelson of the County of Tazewell and State of Virginia being of sound mind and Lawful age do this the 27th day of January nineteen Hundred and two, 1902, do make this my last will and Testament, Amen.*

*First, I bequeath to children and heirs of my first wife all of land lying in the County of Tazewell and State of Virginia on the following conditions, to wit; that they pay my three youngest boys and one girl the children and heirs by my last wife one Hundred Dollars each, the sum of Four Hundred Dollars, also to pay interest at the rate of 6 per cent, or one third of the grain raised on said land to the guardian of said heirs until said four Hundred be paid which sum can be paid to this guardian at any time.*

*Second, I bequeath to my four youngest children and heirs by last wife all of my land lying in the County of Buchanan State of Virginia also all the money and cash paper notes etc after all my indebted are paid if any also one house that I have shall be sold and they to have the proceeds of sale.*

*Third, I bequeath to my wife Cosby all my milk cows, also that out of my personal property where sold that the money be put on interest, and that the interest be paid to her yearly for her and the children's support.*

*I also bequeath to my four youngest Children by my last wife my three beds and steads with the necessary clothing for same with the furniture in the room in which I sleep, including press Trunk & chairs also my cook stove and table dishes."*

To summarise, the children of William Nelson's 1st wife, Rutha-Susan Altizer-Nelson, would inherit his Tazewell County property. But, they must pay each of the children of his 2nd wife, Sarah Jane Cosby Price-Nelson, \$100 each. And, though it's not exactly clear, he sets a payment for his executer (Chapman H Peery) @ \$400 plus a yearly percentage of what the property can produce.

Further, the four children (then under five years old) of the 2nd wife of William Nelson (Cosby Nelson), would inherit the land he held in Buchanan County, VA. - plus cash from the sale of the family home.

And, for his 2nd wife, Cosby Nelson, he bequeathed his milk cows, and interest on any personal property sold, but, unfortunately, no house to live in.

All in all, it was, as written, a somewhat confusing and complex Will that would be difficult to execute. And, it assumed Cosby Nelson would live - which was, as we will see, an incorrect assumption.

Many family trees show William Nelson died Mar. 22, 1902. According to recently obtained documents (see Nelson Children Adoption Reference below), William died in Mar. 1902. And, starting on June 6, 1902, the executor of his estate, Chapman H Peery, posted an Estate Claims Notice in the Tazewell Republican newspaper. By that date, William Nelson had passed from this life, leaving 16 children and his 2nd wife, Sarah Jane Cosby-Nelson, still alive.

6-8-2tl.

**NOTICE**

To Creditors of Wm. B. NELSON des'd.

All persons having claims against the estate of the late Wm. B. Nelson are hereby notified to present same at once to me for payment.

Given under my hand this 4th day of June 1902.

CHAPMAN H. PEERY,

6-8-2 tl.

In Feb. 1904, Moses "Mose" M Nelson, 10th child of William and Rutha Nelson, listed all Nelson children on a challenge to his father's Will. One child was missing, Elizabeth, born 1894-1895. It's assumed she died prior to 1904. More on her in a moment.

**ORDER OF PUBLICATION.**

VIRGINIA:—In the Clerk's Office of the Circuit Court of the County of Tazewell on the 9th day of January, 1904. Moses Nelson, Complainant, against } In Chancery.

John Nelson, Mary Asberry, William Asberry, her husband, Alice Nelson, Margaret Andrews, Auvil Nelson, Susan Lipford, George Nelson, Charles Nelson, Jefferson Nelson, Henry Nelson, Gertrude Nelson, Larry O. Nelson, Irby R. Nelson, Wm. C. Nelson, Dora Lou Nelson, the five last named being infants, Cosby Nelson, Chapman H. Peery, guardian of Lary O. Nelson, Irby R. Nelson, Wm. C. Nelson and Dora Lou Nelson, and Chapman H. Peery, administrator of William Nelson, decd. Defendants.

The object of this suit is to effect a partition by sale of the real estate in Tazewell county, Virginia, lying on the waters of Indian Creek, which belonged to Ruth Nelson and William Nelson in their lifetime and which they died seized and possessed of, and which now belongs to the heirs at law of said Ruth Nelson and to the devisees of said William Nelson, the interest of the said devisees of said William Nelson being charged with the payment of the sum of \$400.00 to the children of William Nelson by his last wife, Cosby Nelson, it being claimed in said suit that said real estate cannot be partitioned in kind and that it is to the best interest of all parties concerned that the same be sold and the proceeds, after paying costs of this suit and said charge of \$400.00 and its interest, be equally divided among the children of William Nelson by his first wife, Ruth Nelson.

And affidavit having been made and filed that the defendants John Nelson, Alice Nelson, Margaret Andrews, Auvil Nelson, Susan Lipford, Jefferson Nelson, Henry Nelson and Gertrude Nelson are not residents of the State of Virginia, it is ordered that they do appear here within fifteen days after due publication hereof, and do what may be necessary to protect their interest in this suit. And it is further ordered that a copy hereof be published once a week for four successive weeks in the Tazewell Republican, a weekly newspaper published at Tazewell, Virginia, and that a copy be posted at the front door of the court house of this county as prescribed by law.

A copy—Teste:

T. E. GEORGE, Clerk.  
A. S. HIGGINBOTHAM, p. q.

The goal of the challenge was to proceed with a sale of the properties of William Nelson in Tazewell and Buchanan Counties. This, to best satisfy the requirements stipulated in the 1902 Will. There are two observations of note in the challenge: 1) Only the children are listed as defendants. There was no mention of Cosby Nelson. 2) Will Executor, Chapman H Peery, was stated as being the Guardian of the four infant children of William and Cosby Nelson. If Mr. Chapman was the children's Guardian, Cosby Nelson must have recently died.

And, there's this clue from the Clinch Valley News and Richlands Press (Bristol, Virginia), Aug. 26, 1904.

**Homes For Children Wanted.**

Three children—2 boys and 1 girl—aged 3 to 9 years old, of the late William and Cosby Nelson, want good homes. Parties desiring to adopt a child please address

Chapman H. Peery, Guardian,  
Paint Lick, Va.

Here we see that Chapman H Peery, as the Guardian of the children of William and Cosby Nelson, was attempting to find adopting homes, via the nascent Children's Home Society of Virginia (more on this organisation in a moment), for three Nelson children. We will get into the details of the adoptions in a few moments. For now, we take note that it was clearly stated - "the **late** William and Cosby Nelson"; implying both husband **and** wife were deceased by Aug. 26, 1904. And, according to recently obtained documents (see [Nelson Children Adoption Reference](#) below), Cosby did indeed die in early Aug. 1904.

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## Sarah Jane Cosby Price-Nelson

The Aug. 1904 'Homes for Children' want-ad clearly stated - "three children of the late William and Cosby Nelson". Thus, this ad suggests that Sarah Jane Cosby Price-Nelson died before this ad was placed.

Newly discovered adoption documents (see [Nelson Children Adoption Reference](#) below) indicate that Cosby Nelson personally signed off (April 1903) on the adoption of her children. So, she may have known then she was mortally ill (perhaps also with TB) and was seeking to resettle her children. This is an active mystery. More on this as we investigate the documents.

NOTE: Hundreds of Ancestry.com family trees have Sarah Jane Nelson dying in Ritchie County, West Virginia, July, 1938. **This is absolutely incorrect.** That was another Sarah J Nelson ([maiden name 'Lane'](#)) - married to a William Franklin Nelson (1873-1940). This is a name coincidence only.

We know little of her early life, except she was born in Russell County, VA May, 1870 to Reuben Price and Barbery Lewis-Nelson. In the 1900 census for William Nelson. Cosby reported she was the mother of four children, four living; Elizabeth, Irby, Lawrence, William Clayton. This was the last reported information we have for Elizabeth Nelson.

Was Elizabeth actually a biological child of Cosby Nelson? After all, Elizabeth was born about 18 months before William and Cosby married. We will return to this mystery in a few moments.

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## Rutha-Susan Altizer-Nelson

Born in 1839 in Tazewell County, VA to William Altizer and Alice Harman-Altizer, Rutha was the first born from a family of eight children. The Altizer's were farmers on about 140 acres of land in Tazewell County. Little else is know about Rutha's early life. She was the mother of 14 children during her 30 year marriage to William Nelson.

Rutha-Susan Altizer-Nelson died of consumption (Tuberculosis) in Aug 1889, about six months after her last child, Gertrude Belle Nelson, was born, Jan. 1889. Gertrude died in 1958 from an asthma condition. Since Rutha likely had TB when Gertrude was born, Gertrude's asthma condition was likely related to her Mother's TB.

*"Tuberculosis (TB) can increase the risk of asthma and respiratory symptoms in offspring, as studies suggest that the immunological effects of TB may influence respiratory health. Children with a history of parental TB have been found to have a higher likelihood of developing asthma and related symptoms."*

**American Journal of Managed Care®**

FYI: Gertrude Belle Nelson married Lewis Peck in Mar 1904 - **she was 15 year old.**

## 14 Children of William Nelson and Rutha-Susan Altizer-Nelson

### Alice L Nelson ☆

BIRTH DEC 1859 • Indian Creek, Tazewell, Virginia, USA  
DEATH BEF. 1870 • Tazewell County, Virginia, USA

### Mary Young Nelson ☆

BIRTH 23 APR 1862 • Tazewell County, Virginia, USA  
DEATH 1 NOV 1928 • Fawn Grove, York, Pennsylvania, USA

### John R Nelson ☆

BIRTH 20 MAR 1866 • Sinking Waters, Tazewell, Virginia, USA  
DEATH 27 DEC 1928 • Richlands, Tazewell, Virginia, USA

### Alice B Nelson ☆

BIRTH 18 AUG 1867 • Bandy, Tazewell, Virginia, USA  
DEATH 6 MAR 1955 • Bluefield, Mercer, West Virginia, USA

### Margarett Nelson ☆

BIRTH 10 NOV 1868 • Bandy, Tazewell, Virginia, USA  
DEATH 3 MAR 1949 • Mercer County, West Virginia, USA

### Susan Anna Nelson ☆

BIRTH 25 APR 1872 • Bandy, Tazewell, Virginia, USA  
DEATH 30 OCT 1953 • Bluefield, Mercer, West Virginia, USA

### George Washington Nelson

BIRTH 1 APR 1873 • Bandy, Tazewell, Virginia, USA  
DEATH 6 NOV 1935 • Grundy, Buchanan, Virginia, USA

### Auvill "Orville" Brown Nelson

BIRTH 6 JUN 1873 • Bandy, Tazewell, Virginia, USA  
DEATH 14 MAY 1932 • Maiden Spring, Tazewell, Virginia, USA

### Infant Nelson ☆

BIRTH 1 DEC 1875 • Bandy, Tazewell, Virginia, USA  
DEATH BEF. 1880 • Bandy, Tazewell, Virginia, USA

### Moses "Mose" Mandy Nelson

BIRTH 21 DEC 1876 • Bandy, Tazewell, Virginia, USA  
DEATH 27 SEP 1950 • Bandy, Tazewell, Virginia, USA

### Charles Albert Nelson ☆

BIRTH 28 NOV 1877 • Bandy, Tazewell, Virginia, USA  
DEATH 18 OCT 1934 • Bluefield, Mercer, West Virginia, USA

### Thomas Jefferson Nelson ☆

BIRTH 4 AUG 1878 • Indian Creek, Tazewell, Virginia, USA  
DEATH 21 APR 1963 • Richmond, Virginia, USA

### Henry "Harry" A Nelson ☆

BIRTH 27 NOV 1886 • Bandy, Tazewell, Virginia, USA  
DEATH 13 DEC 1939 • Richlands, Tazewell, Virginia, USA

### Gertrude Belle Nelson ☆

BIRTH 5 JAN 1889 • Tazewell County, Virginia, USA  
DEATH 9 JAN 1958 • Bluefield, Mercer, West Virginia, USA

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## 5 Children of William Nelson and Sarah Jane Cosby Price-Nelson

### Elizabeth Nelson ☆

BIRTH 14 MAY 1894 • Scott County, Virginia, USA  
DEATH BEF. 1904 • Tazewell County, Virginia, USA

### Lawrence O'Knight Nelson

BIRTH 1 JUN 1897 • Maiden Spring, Tazewell, Virginia, USA  
DEATH 16 SEP 1960 • Bluefield, Tazewell, Virginia, USA

### James Irby Nelson ☆

BIRTH 26 MAY 1898 • Harmon, Tazewell County, Virginia, USA  
DEATH 16 APR 1961 • Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California, USA

### Clayton Nelson (Birth Name: William Clayton Nelson) Deisher

BIRTH 16 MAY 1899 • Maiden Spring, Tazewell, Virginia, USA  
DEATH 3 NOV 1967 • Olmstead Falls, Cuyahoga County, Ohio, USA

### Helen Nelson (Birth Name: Dora Louise Nelson) Deisher

BIRTH 21 AUG 1901 • Maiden Spring, Tazewell, Virginia, USA  
DEATH 8 JAN 1990 • San Diego, San Diego, California, USA

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## Alice Nelson - more than one Alice

### Alice L Nelson ☆

BIRTH DEC 1859 • Indian Creek, Tazewell, Virginia, USA  
DEATH BEF. 1870 • Tazewell County, Virginia, USA

### Alice B Nelson ☆

BIRTH 18 AUG 1867 • Bandy, Tazewell, Virginia, USA  
DEATH 6 MAR 1955 • Bluefield, Mercer, West Virginia, USA

There seems to have been a mixup about Alice Nelson. Most Ancestry Family Trees record just one Alice Nelson. I think there were two Alice Nelson's. The first Alice, the 1st born child to William and Rutha, Dec. 1859 and named Alice L Nelson, likely died before the 1870 census.

In the 1870 census we find another Alice, age 3, born Aug 1867. This was Alice B Nelson and she lived until 1955, and was named in the 1904 challenge to the Will of William Nelson. She had one child, James M Nelson in Mar 1894 - **father, as yet unknown**. This, though some trees suggest the father to be John C Matney (1847-1931) - with no supporting evidence/documentation.

For Alice's son, James Nelson - The 1900 census clearly shows a birthdate of Mar. 1894 - not 1892, as some trees suggest. And, his name is clearly stated to be James M not James T (Toy or Tay). So, I wonder how he came to call himself James Toy Nelson? To date, there's no 1910 census for further reference. This is one of those situations

that DNA matching could quickly solve. However, one thing is certain - James (M or T) Nelson was given the Nelson surname maternally, not paternally.

Alice B Nelson married Ormand Ratliff in 1905 and, with him (no other children known), she lived until 1955. Some trees suggest Alice Nelson died Oct 14, 1914 at Richlands, Tazewell County, Virginia. This was an unrelated Alice Nelson, maiden name McCoy.

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## Elizabeth Nelson - a parentage mystery



Returning to Elizabeth Nelson, here, we have a mystery.

A few trees think Elizabeth Nelson lived and married a Linwood Jones in 1922. However, Linwood Jones and Gertrude Elizabeth Nelson were African American. Clearly, this is not the Tazewell County, VA Elizabeth Nelson.

We know that Rutha-Susan Nelson, 1st wife of William Nelson, died in 1889. We know that William married his 2nd wife, Cosby Price, Dec. 1896. And, in the 1900 census we find stated that Elizabeth Nelson was born May, 1895 - about 18 months before William and Cosby Price married.

And, we know that Larry O Nelson was born June, 1897 - about 6-7 months after the Dec., 1896 marriage of William and Cosby. So, likely Cosby was pregnant at the time of their marriage. But, was Elizabeth Nelson a biological child of Cosby Price-Nelson?

Was Elizabeth Nelson, born out of wedlock, a biological child of Cosby? Or, was there another wife/partner of William Nelson who gave birth to Elizabeth, as yet unknown, and cared for by Cosby? Or, perhaps Cosby married the much older William Nelson because she was pregnant - with another, as yet unknown, man's child.

A few trees suggest the following as the biological mother of Elizabeth Nelson:

Amy Virginia Price  
BIRTH 12 SEP 1871 • Scott County, VA  
DEATH 14 MAY 1894 • Scott County, VA

[Note: Scott County, VA is the next county SW of Tazewell, County, VA. So, it's relatively close to where William Nelson lived.]

The only way a 'Amy Virginia Price mother scenario' would have been possible was if Elizabeth's 1900 census reported birth year was off by one year; 1894 instead of 1895. Amy died May 14, 1894. Might Elizabeth have been born May, 1894 instead of May 1895, and mis-reported, intentionally or not?? Amy Virginia Price was unmarried at the time. Did Amy die in childbirth with Elizabeth with William Nelson and Cosby Price-Nelson adopting her?

An important clue is the 1900 census for William Nelson. Cosby reported she was the mother of four children, four living; Elizabeth, Irby, Lawrence, Clayton. Thus, as reported, it's seems Elizabeth, was her child, at least in terms of household.

Did Elizabeth die about 1903-1904? Or, was she adopted again by another, as yet unidentified, family and her name changed which is now lost to history?? This may be one of those situations in which DNA matching could help solve the mystery.

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## Henry "Harry" A Nelson - a life restored



About 75 Nelson family trees on Ancestry have Henry Nelson dying on his supposed day of birth, Nov 7, 1881. However, Henry Nelson is mentioned in the 1904 challenge to the Will of his father, William Nelson. And, Henry is mentioned, living in Texas, in the 1928 OBIT of his brother, John Nelson. Clearly, he did **NOT die** in Nov 1881.

I did the research and restored the life of Henry "Harry" A Nelson. He was born on Nov. 27, 1886, in Bandy, Tazewell County, Virginia. He married Luella Harris (1899-1921) in Gila County, AZ. They had one son together, Harry Lee Nelson Sr. Luella died tragically at the age of 21 due to a Strep infection. Harry re-married to Lucille Mae Repass (1894-1966) in 1936 in Tazewell County, Virginia.

Harry Nelson died on December 13, 1939, in Richlands, Tazewell County, Virginia, at the age of 53. His death certificate indicates he was Restaurant Manager. Henry was buried at Monte Vista Cemetery in Bluefield, VA.

[Note: There is an 8 year gap between the birth of Thomas Nelson in 1878 and Henry Nelson in 1886. Were there more children born/stillborn in this gap but unknown at this time?]

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## Margarett Nelson - seemingly ageless

Margarett Nelson (daughter of William and Rutha), through her entire life, used a variety of birth dates: e.g., 1869, Oct. 1874, Dec. 1876, 1879. Her official birth register clearly states she was born Nov 10, 1868 - with no middle name. She must have invented her middle initial - "L" - used first in her 1914 marriage registration.

Name	Margarett Nelson
Gender	Female
Race	White
Birth Date	10 Nov 1868
Birth Place	Tazewell, Virginia, USA
Father	William Nelson
Mother	Ruthy Nelson

She married Benjamin Harrison Gilbert in 1914. Though she stated her age to be 35, born 1879, she was actually 45 (born 1868) and he was 26 - an age gap of almost 20 years.

When she married in 1914, her name was Mrs. Margaret L Andrews and that she was widowed. To date, I cannot find any evidence she was married to anyone named Andrews.

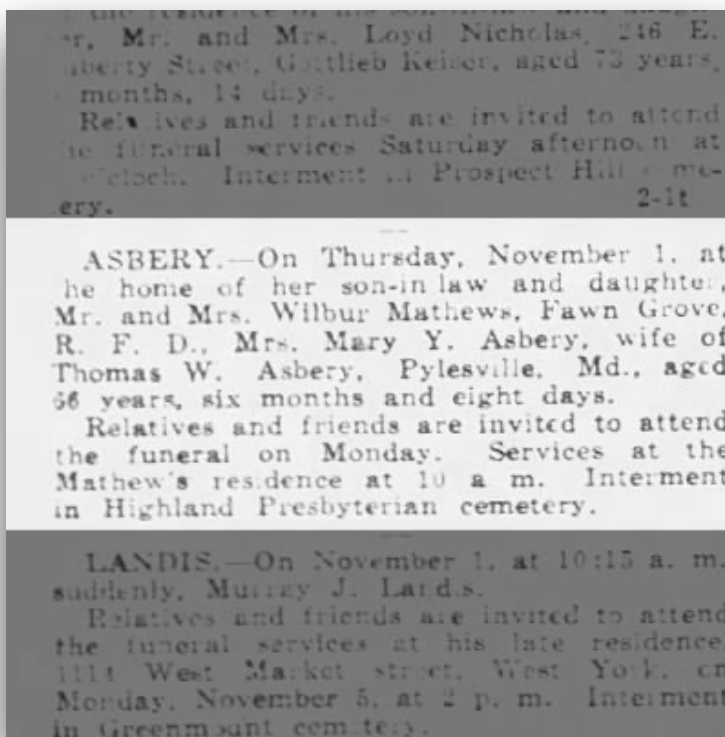
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## Mary Young Nelson - OBIT found

Many Ancestry Family Trees state Mary Young Nelson-Asbury (daughter of William and Rutha) died in Kentucky, Sep. 1 1928, with no support documentation.

In fact, according to her OBIT, she died at the home of her daughter - Mrs Wilbur Matthews - Nancy Hazel Asbury-Matthews - in Fawn Grove, York County, PA, Nov. 1 1928.

*The Gazette and Daily, 2 November 1928, Page 2. via Newspapers.com (<https://www.newspapers.com/article/the-gazette-and-daily-obit-mary-y-nels/192120837/>)*



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## The Adoptions of the Four Nelson Infants

Following the death of William Nelson in Mar. 1902, the living children of William and Sarah Jane Cosby Price-Nelson were put up for adoption.

### Lawrence O'Knight Nelson

BIRTH 1 JUN 1897 • Maiden Spring, Tazewell, Virginia, USA  
DEATH 16 SEP 1960 • Bluefield, Tazewell, Virginia, USA

### James Irby Nelson ☆

BIRTH 26 MAY 1898 • Harmon, Tazewell County, Virginia, USA  
DEATH 16 APR 1961 • Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California, USA

### Clayton Nelson (Birth Name: William Clayton Nelson) Deisher

BIRTH 16 MAY 1899 • Maiden Spring, Tazewell, Virginia, USA  
DEATH 3 NOV 1967 • Olmstead Falls, Cuyahoga County, Ohio, USA

### Helen Nelson (Birth Name: Dora Louise Nelson) Deisher

BIRTH 21 AUG 1901 • Maiden Spring, Tazewell, Virginia, USA  
DEATH 8 JAN 1990 • San Diego, San Diego, California, USA

In April 1903, Cosby Nelson appeared before and petitioned a Tazewell County Court to appoint Chapman H Peery as Guardian of Larry O Nelson, Irby Nelson, Clayton Nelson, and Dora Nelson. Knowing that Cosby did this suggests that she too was mortally ill (likely tuberculosis) and that she was trying to do the right thing by making sure the children had good homes before her passing.

Chapman H Perry, in association with the Children's Home Society of Virginia, placed a series of "Homes for Children Wanted" ads in local newspapers; e.g., Clinch Valley News and Richlands Press (Bristol, Virginia), Aug., 1904.

The two Nelson boys in the ad are assumed to be Irby and Clayton, the girl to be Helen Nelson. I think by this time that Larry O'Knight Nelson was living with half-sister Gertrude Nelson-Peck and brother in law Lewis Peck in Bluefield, VA. The other child of Cosby Nelson, Elizabeth, as mentioned before, was likely deceased.



Clayton and Helen were adopted together by the following family:

#### **Arlen Martin Deisher**

BIRTH 13 NOV 1875 • Botetourt County, Virginia  
DEATH 10 DEC 1949 • Clifton Forge, Alleghany, Virginia  
and

#### **Carula Myers-Deisher**

BIRTH 8 AUG 1876 • Eagle Rock, Botetourt, Virginia  
DEATH 10 SEP 1940 • Eagle Rock, Botetourt, Virginia

Who, if anyone, adopted, or attempted to adopt James Irby Nelson is unclear at this time. He may have been living in NYC in 1930's. There are no census records for him until 1940. So, it's possible his name had been changed by adopting parents until then. And, it's possible Irby Nelson might have been in the household of Chapman Peery, the children's Guardian, when he could not be adopted. The author examined each of the available census records of his half siblings and did not find him. So, this is an active mystery.

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## Nelson Children Adoption Reference

In 2002, Lauren Koch, (the author's paternal 1st cousin and granddaughter of Helen Nelson Deisher, born Dora Louis Nelson), requested from the State of Virginia and Children's Home Society all available documents related to her grandmother's 1904 adoption. Here are selected and pertinent documents.

January 6, 2003

Ms. Lois Gibbs  
Child Placement Supervisor  
Children's Home Society of Virginia  
4200 Fitzhugh Avenue  
Richmond, VA 23230

Ms. Gibbs:

Thank you for your prompt and gracious response to my inquiry regarding records pertaining to my grandmother's adoption. Below is some pertinent information I hope will aid your search. The Court Clerk of Botetourt County was kind enough to give me a copy of their Common Law Book entry recording the adoption, but was unable to provide me with any other information. Oddly enough, the Clerk could find an entry for my Grandmother and her brother Clayton, but not her other brother James. I am also enclosing a copy of what suffices as James Nelson (Deisher's) birth certificate, which may be of assistance to you.

My grandmother was adopted at an early age by Mr. And Mrs. A.M. Deisher, a family she did not care for. Her story was that her adopted parents already had biological children, that she and her two brothers were adopted merely to help work their farm. She left the home early in her teens, and to my knowledge, never had contact with them again. That being said, whatever the unhappy circumstances, my grandmother never told the same story twice. My father, who is in his sixties, has never met a family member. It is my wish for Christmas that I may give him some additional information regarding his mother.

Born: Dora Lou Nelson  
Adopted: Helen Nelson Deisher  
Brothers: James Irby and Clayton (middle name not known)  
\*One story is that my grandmother's mother died in childbirth when my grandmother was three/four. I can see from my great-uncle's death certificate (I believe to be the only possible accurate information), that my grandmother's mother, Sarah Price Nelson was her father's second wife. My grandmother often said she was the 19<sup>th</sup> child. She had a half-brother by the name of Thomas Jefferson Nelson. It appears that none of the children from the prior marriage wanted these last three children when either her mother passed on, or later, her elderly father. Or it could all be balderdash©

Sorry to burden you with so much information. You have been so kind to assist me. I would be interested in whatever family documents you may be able to provide. They may be mailed or faxed, and I will be happy to provide payment for all copies either by check or credit card, whichever is easiest and most expeditious. Also, does the Children's Home Society have a fund that I may make a contribution to for all your kind efforts?

Happy New Year, Ms. Gibbs and thank you again. Your time and effort are greatly appreciated.

Lauren Koch





TOMMY L. MOORE, Clerk

Office of Clerk of Circuit Court  
County of Botetourt  
Commonwealth of Virginia

P.O. Box 219  
Fincastle, Virginia 24090-0219  
(540) 473-8274  
FAX (540) 473-8209

November 26, 2002



Dear Mrs. Koch,

This morning, Shirley Chamblin asked me to assist you with your search for information about your grandmother, Helen Nelson Deisher. As I understand it, this lady was originally named Dora Lou Nelson, and was the daughter of William Nelson and his wife Sarah. You indicated that your grandmother had two brothers, named James and Clayton. You believed that there was some mention of the change of your grandmother's name when she was adopted, sometime around the early 1900's.

After spending almost three hours searching through the records located here in Botetourt, I can tell you that our Common Law Order Book, dated 1904, page 229, makes no mention of anyone named Nelson or Deisher. Enclosed are excerpts from our Index of our Common Law Order Books, 1809-1903, which make reference to the names Nelson and Deisher. If you wish to have any of these copied, you may let me know. I checked a number of these references to William Nelson. None of these mentioned anything concerning his putting his children up for adoption.

I did locate one Chancery Case, filed in January of 1896, that makes a number of references to the unknown heirs of William Nelson. If you wish to obtain a copy of this case file, I will be glad to copy this for you. This file contains 16 pages of information. Please refer to the attached sheet that explains our office's policy for charging for **research** and for **copywork**. Let me know if you wish to have this information.

In the meantime, if you could mail us a "copy" of the document that you told Mrs. Chamblin about, during your conversation with her, that might help lead us to some other information that might possibly be recorded here in Botetourt County about your ancestor. Let us know if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Patricia A. Honts  
Researcher

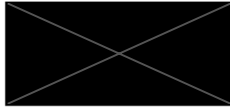


4200 Fitzhugh Avenue • Richmond, Virginia 23230

(804) 353-0191 • Fax: (804) 353-7451

(800) 247-2888 • www.CHSVA.org

December 10, 2003



Dear Lauren:

Let me begin by saying how truly sorry I am that it has taken me so long to get you the little information that we have on your grandmother. Our old microfilm machine is a real challenge as well as trying to find a company to service it. Finally it is working again, but not copying very well.

The information you have regarding her birth parents appears to be correct. Our records are very scant. I did copy what I could for you. There is no mention of any children except Larry O. Nelson, Irby R. Nelson, William C. Nelson and Dora or Dove Lou Nelson. We have a record on William and Dora. There is no mention of what happened to the other children.


It appears that after your grandmother's mother died your grandfather's widow, Cosby Nelson, petitioned the court to appoint Chapman H. Perry as Guardian for all of the above mentioned children. They appeared in court on April 21, 1903 and he was made their Guardian. William and Dora were then placed with the Deishers on November 23, 1904.

Our records indicate your grandmother's father died March 1902 and her mother died August 1904. However, that must be incorrect because the court was petitioned in 1903 and her mother was already deceased. Our records also state that the children were living with their grandmother when they were placed by their guardian with our agency

I do hope this information will be helpful. I wish I had more to share with you.

If I can be of further assistance please feel free to call.

Sincerely,

  
Lois W. Gibbs  
Child Placement Supervisor

LWG:bb

Enclosure

VIRGINIA: At a County Court begun and held at the Court House thereof on Tuesday April 21st, 1903.

Hon. J. H. Stuart presiding.



On motion of Cosby Nelson, widow of William Nelson, the Court doth appoint Chapman H. Peery, Guardian of Larry O. Nelson, Irby R. Nelson, Wm. C. Nelson and Dora Lou Nelson, infant children of the said William Nelson, deceased, under fourteen years of age; and thereupon the together with his surety Wade H. Peery, said Chapman H. Peery, appeared in Court, executed and acknowledged a bond in the penalty of Fifteen Hundred Dollars, conditioned according to law, and qualified as such Guardian by taking and subscribing the oath prescribed by law.

A Copy:

Teste: T. E. George Clerk.

Adoption Release for William Clayton Nelson, Nov. 23, 1904

PARENT'S OR GUARDIAN'S  
RELEASE

... TO ...

Children's Home Society  
OF VIRGINIA.

Register No. of Child *287-289*

Name *Wm Clayton Nelson*

Sex *Male*

Date of Birth *May 16 1899*

Place of Birth *Barman, General Co Va*

Date of Release *Nov 24 1904*

With whom placed *M. Decker's wife*

When placed *Nov. 23 1904*

Adoption Release for Dora Louise Nelson, Nov. 23, 1904

PARENT'S OR GUARDIAN'S

RELEASE

... TO ...

Children's Home Society  
OF VIRGINIA.

Register No. of Child *289*

Name *Dora Louise Nelson*

Sex *Female*

Date of Birth *Aug. 21 - 1901*

Place of Birth *Hampton, Tidewater Va.*

Date of Release *Nov. 21 - 1904*

With whom placed *L. H. Decker's wife*

When placed *Nov. 23 - 1904*

# Children's Home Society of Virginia

## Miss Russell.

Miss Pattie Russell, who is connected with the Children's Home Society, Richmond, of which Rev. Mr. Maybee is General State Superintendent, was in the community several days this week on business connected with that wonderful institution. She came here after two children-left orphans recently, and for whom Mr. Chapman H. Peery is guardian. These children, four of them in all, of the late Mr. Nelson, have all been provided now with good homes—two of them in this county, and two Miss Russell took with her to Richmond. Both of them, we understand—a little girl of four, and boy of 6 years, are in the same home, and will grow up together. The family adopting them have no children of their own.

The managers desire it specially understood that the Home Society is in no sense an Orphan Asylum, where children are clothed, taught and reared. Their sole object is to find immediate homes for children who are homeless, whether they are orphans or not. There are hundreds of children in this state who have no homes—many of them worse than none—and at the same time there are hundreds of homes without children, where children are wanted. The sole object of this society is to bring the two parties together. This they are doing with wonderful success. As many as fifteen or twenty children, perhaps, have been taken from Tazewell within the last year or two, by this society, and placed in good homes—many of these the best homes of the state, and it is generally known that some of these children were sadly in need of homes. And so the good work goes on. Mr. Maybee says that there is not a homeless child in the world that some one hasn't a home waiting for, if only the home and child can be brought together.

The work is supported we understand entirely by voluntary contributions.

Any one wishing detailed information as to the working of the society should write to Rev. W. J. Maybee, Richmond, Va. There is a local Board of the society in this town.

**Children's Home Society of Virginia.**

One of the worthiest and most useful benevolent movements we have ever heard of is the National Children's Home Society. The Children's Home Society of Virginia is an auxiliary to the National Society and its aims are:

1st. To find and obtain legal guardianship of homeless children in Virginia.

2nd. To place these children in good family homes.

3rd. To see that the children thus placed are not neglected or abused.

4th. To save these children from pauperism and crime, and thus save the State from the grievous burden of taxation for their future care, and from the danger of a debased citizenship, arising from neglected childhood.

Rev. Wm. J. Maybee, State Superintendent of the Society in Virginia, preached in the Methodist church last Sunday morning; and after the preaching in the Presbyterian church Sunday night made a brief address setting forth the objects and merits of the society.

An Monday afternoon at 2 o'clock a meeting was held in the Methodist church and a local board appointed and organized here. This local board consists of the following persons: Cap. A. J. Tynes and Miss Ella Bowen, Presbyterian church; H. G. Peery and Mrs. C. R. Brown, Methodist church; B. W. Stras and Mrs. Jno. E. Jackson, Episcopal church; H. W. Pobjst and Mrs. Geo. W. Gillespie, Christian church; J. A. Leslie and Mrs. J. A. Tiller, Baptist church.

The society is a splendid benevolent movement, is inter-denominational and is not a mere theory, as it has been in successful operation in a number of States for more than ten years. It has provided homes for more than twenty thousand homeless and friendless children. We hope it will become a power for good in Tazewell.

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## Tuberculosis in Virginia, 1900

In 1900, Tuberculosis was the leading cause of death in Virginia, as well as in the United States. This disease was a significant public health concern during that time.

### Characteristics of Tuberculosis

- Common Name: Consumption
- Symptoms: Fatigue, night sweats, persistent cough, and coughing up thick white phlegm, sometimes with blood.
- Demographics: Most victims were young adults, particularly those aged 15 to 44.

### Impact of Tuberculosis

- Daily Deaths: Approximately 450 Americans died from tuberculosis each day at the turn of the century.
- Urban Poor: The disease primarily affected individuals living in crowded and unsanitary urban conditions. There was no reliable treatment.
- Very few recovered. Those who survived their first bout with the disease were haunted by severe recurrences that destroyed any hope for an active life.

### Historical Context

The understanding of Tuberculosis improved significantly in the late 19th century, particularly after the bacterium causing the disease was identified. This led to changes in public perception and treatment approaches, including the establishment of sanatoriums for patients.

**[HTTPS://EXHIBITS.HSL.VIRGINIA.EDU/ALAV/TUBERCULOSIS/INDEX.HTML](https://exhibits.hsl.virginia.edu/alav/tuberculosis/index.html)**

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## Nelson Family Cemetery - Bandy/Maiden Spring, VA

Finally, where are William Nelson and wives, Rutha Altizer-Nelson and Sarah Jane Cosby Price-Nelson, and other Nelson's with no grave location, buried?

Based on death records of some of William Nelson's children (e.g., 1950 Death Certificate of Moses M Nelson and 1932 military burial record of Auvil (Orville) Nelson), there is a Nelson Family Cemetery located in the Bandy, Tazewell, VA area - likely on former William Nelson owned land - perhaps in Maiden Springs Township. This cemetery is not listed on Find a Grave - <https://www.findagrave.com>

The Nelson Cemetery needs to be rediscovered, documented, and added to the Find a Grave registry.

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