

Carroll Yesteryears  
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The Saga of Centenarian Nancy Saunders, (Part 1 of 3)  
By W. Peter Pearre and Jeff Duvall

Those of great age have always been seen as a way to touch history. In the February 8, 1879, edition of the *Democratic Advocate* is found a notice entitled “Death of a Centenarian.”

“Amy Bell, colored, familiarly known as “Aunt Amy,” died in Taneytown, on the 23d of January, and was supposed to be about 112 years of age. She was owned by the Six family, and the oldest inhabitants of Taneytown and vicinity say she was called “Old Aunt Amy,” when they were children. She was employed as a servant by one of the officers of the American army and was present at the surrender of Cornwallis, at Yorktown, in 1781.”

In that same edition is another reference to a Revolutionary-era person as written by the newspaper’s New Windsor correspondent. He listed the residents of his area who were age seventy and older. Of the twenty-eight persons listed, the oldest was “Mrs. Nancy Sanders (colored) 110.” This was not the first time that Nancy Saunders (often spelled Sanders) had been mentioned in the paper. The Sam’s Creek area correspondent wrote in the July 27, 1878 edition the following:

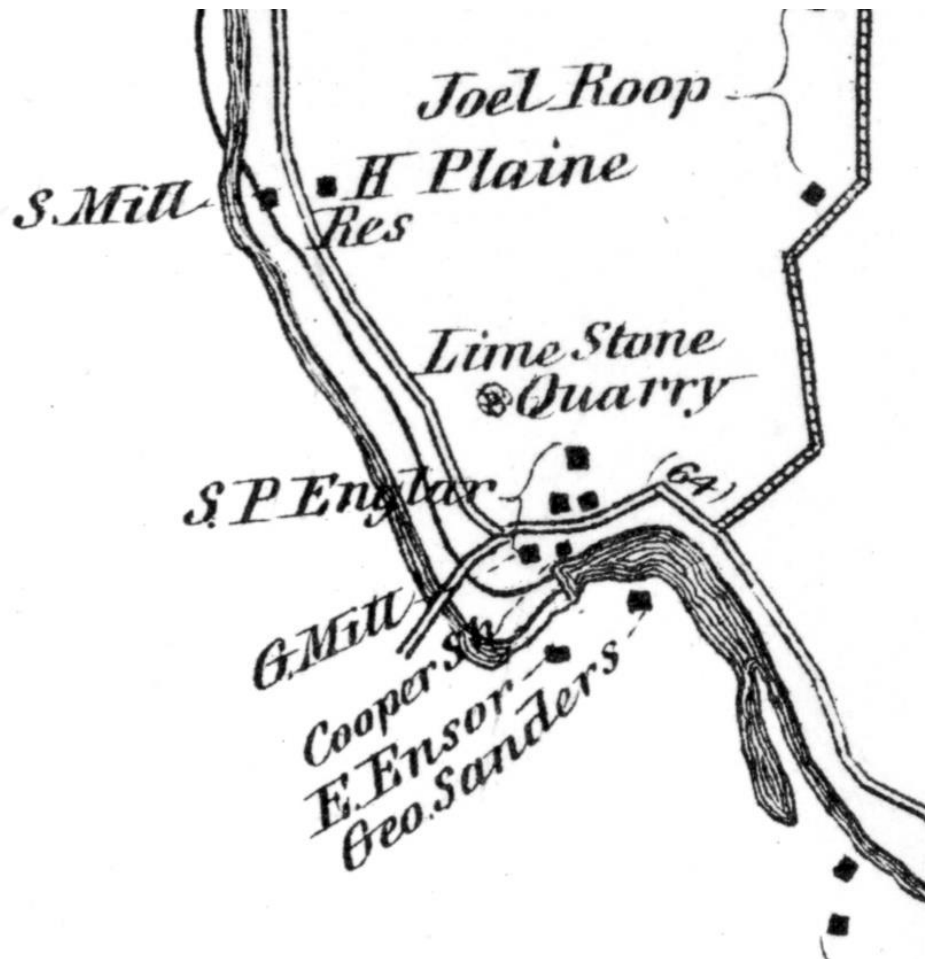
“Nancy Sanders, colored, living about one mile from this point, on the Creek in Frederick county, is 103 years old. Her eldest son, if living would be 83, her youngest son, aged 50, lives with his mother. She enjoys good health, and dislikes to be called old, or to talk of her age.”

Needless to say, her age was all that the paper would print about her in the future. Seventeen months later in the January 29, 1881, edition the same correspondent elaborated:

“We recently paid a visit to Nancy Sanders, an old colored woman, residing at Landis’ Mill. After a few inquiries, the following was related by her: ‘I belonged to Mr. Geo. Robeson, way down in ‘Gomery county, and about the same time the first wa’ with the Englands (Revolutionary War) closed I came to Carroll county on Sam’s Creek: then I was 16 years old. In a few years there was another war with the English (War of 1812), and just as Mr. Peter Naill, Lud. Greenwood and Massa Clemson Skyles were about to start to jine the army the English captain (Major General Robert Ross) was killed down near Baltimore, and then the war stopped.’ Judging from her account, she was born in 1767, was 16 years of age when the Revolutionary war ended – in 1783 – and is consequently 114 years old now. She says if she was not in such a bad state of health she could do more work than any woman in the county. She claims that her age does not hurt her; for she can thread a needle, and laughs at her youngest son George, who is 60, because he wears spectacles. Her mind seems clear on all subjects, except she thinks some one has put a ‘spell’ on her.”

Our second installment will further examine Nancy Saunders and her family.

*Guest columnists W. Peter Pearre and Jeff Duvall enjoy researching the history of Carroll and Frederick counties.*



*Image source: 1877 Lake, Griffing & Stevenson Atlas of Carroll County*

*Image caption: The lives of Nancy Saunders and her family were tied to this portion of Carroll and Frederick counties. Son George lived on the Frederick side of Sam's Creek and worked in the cooper shop. Nancy lived with him in 1881. The area was originally called Landis's Mill. Today it is known as Englar's Mill.*