



CHARLES LITTON (SON OF
- THOMAS + NANCY LITTON) -
AND HIS FIDDLE

THE FIDDLE

Thomas Litton and his wife Nancy (daughter of Revolutionary Soldier Patrick Whalen) lived in Montgomery County, Virginia, in the early 1800's. Thomas died when he was just past thirty-five years old, leaving Nancy, several young children, a little piece of land, and a fiddle. When her son Charles became ill, Nancy gave him the fiddle, perhaps remembering in her heart the tunes her husband had poured into the old instrument before he died. She listened to Charles as he taught himself how to play, possibly hoping he would be able some day to bring out of that fiddle the music so lovingly put into it by his father.

Charles Litton married Harriett Roop, daughter of Jacob Roop, a German Millwright. Harriett, secure in her own family's wealth and stability, was good for Charles. His pale blond handsomeness and sensitive tunes on the fiddle were enough for her, overcoming his chronic illness and inability to perform the hard work required of the pioneers. They had five children, Thomas, Malissa, Franklin, Adaline, and Samuel, and lived near Harriett's family in the part of Montgomery County that later became Lee County, Virginia.

The Roop family helped their own by teaching them their trade and skills. Charles' oldest son Thomas was taught in his Uncle Joseph Roop's mill, learning the trade he would follow all his life. And, Charles, unable to work, would sit under a nearby tree, his precious fiddle in his arms, watching his son.

Harriett wanted to go to Kentucky along with some of her Roop family who planned to build mills there. Finally, in 186 Charles agreed to move, and plans were made to go the following spring.

That fall, with the approach of extremely cold weather, Charles Litton realized he could not live long. It was difficult for him now to breathe the clean air of the Virginia mountains, and he dreaded the thoughts of huddling in the smoke of a fireplace, gasping for breath. The tunes would pour into the fiddle, some sad, some lively, floating upward through the yellowing leaves that fell gently into the stream by the mill.

Charles lay dying the next spring, the fiddle beside him. The tunes he had played would linger in the beautiful wood of the neck of the instrument, rubbed smooth by his restless pale hands. No one knew the music that had flowed from the soul of the man, waiting to be heard when it might once again be played by another generation

Family tradition says that they buried the tall blond man on the farm. Harriett married a second time. The Civil War began, and young Thomas volunteered for service in the Confederate Army. When her second husband died, Harriett and the other children came into Elliott County, Kentucky with some of the Roop families. Thomas joined them there after the great conflict ended.

They were all together again, the Littons, and they began their new lives in a new state, secure as a family once more.

Only the fiddle was different. The tunes remained bound, with no one to bring the music out of the lovely wood. They were now only a memory. Through the years, the fiddle, too, became only a memory. All that is left of it today is the neck piece, rubbed smooth by the pale hands of long ago, wrapped carefully in a faded silk scarf at the bottom of a dresser drawer.

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.....Note from the writer, Alice P. Reynolds:
This story was related to me in 1980 by the now late Sam Litton, Jr., Morehead Kentucky, a direct descendant of Charles and Harriett Litton.

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