On Family and Fences: Tracing Melungeon Roots in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia and Tennessee

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Abstract
The Melungeons are a group of indeterminable origin living in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Southeastern Tennessee and Southwestern Virginia. This thesis describes characteristics of these tri-racial isolates and gives theories as to their mysterious origins. Being darker skinned, the Melungeons were pushed into more mountainous regions by European colonists in the early 1700's. While multiple hypotheses exist as to the origin of the Melungeon people, there is no single theory that is accepted by all scholars. Dr. Brent Kennedy's The Melungeons: The Resurrection of a Proud People served as a catalyst for my Melungeon research. Kennedy is my cousin, and his book provided facts behind the family stories I recalled from childhood. It also linked me to other famous Melungeons such as Brandy Jack Mullins and Mahala Mullins. Although there are an abundance of stories and facts about my Melungeon heritage, there is also much history that has been lost.

This thesis traces my Melungeon roots, following the family stories of N.B. Kennedy, Brandy Jack Mullins, Mahala Mullins, and Kenneth Kennedy. In order to fully understand these people and their stories, I not only researched their history, but I also visited the areas where they lived and died. In this manner, I was able to gain a better understanding my own family as well as the history of the Melungeons. A person's past is pieced together through oral history, written records, fading pictures, and personal artifacts. Along with these methods, we as writers and researchers add a bit of our own thought and imagination to fill in the gaps of a person's life. In this manner, personal mythology is created. This thesis ends with an example of one fictionalized story from my family surrounding the death of my uncle, Kenneth Kennedy.
Our Cabin Rentals in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Awaken to a Shenandoah Valley morning streaming in through the windows that surround you. With nature as your wallpaper, you'll feel as though you’re camping in luxury. Practice your culinary expertise in your cabin’s full-sized kitchen. Need to recover after a day of sightseeing? Toss your laundry in your personal washer and dryer, and then walk over heated floors to relax in the two-person, rain-head shower. Immerse yourself in the sunset and the night sky through the cabin windows that encircle you or from the bubbling waters of your hot tub. C 3. Virginia – Virginia is a state located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States, as well as in the historic Southeast. The geography and climate of the Commonwealth are shaped by the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Chesapeake Bay, the capital of the Commonwealth is Richmond, Virginia Beach is the most populous city, and Fairfax County is the most populous political subdivision. The Commonwealth's estimated population as of 2014 is over 8.3 million, the areas history begins with several indigenous groups, including the Powhatan. In 1607 the London Company established the Colony of Virginia. Explore the incredible Blue Ridge Mountains on day hikes to Civil War battlefields, gorgeous peaks and historic sites on the Appalachian Trail. Push yourself with fun yet challenging hikes through Virginia’s verdant hills, towering mountains and shimmering lakes. Learn about the area’s storied history and unique ecology from expert hiking instructors before putting your knowledge to use on the trail. Activity Level.