

# Adam Cuppy and Cuppy's Grove

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Cuppy's Grove is a rural area in Shelby County, Iowa, northeast of Avoca and east of Corley. Cuppy family members led by Adam Cuppy settled in Cuppy's Grove in 1851.

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## Part I – Adam Cuppy’s Early Life

Adam Cuppy was born to Benjamin Cuppy and Margaret Downing in Richland County (or possibly Ashland County), Ohio in 1812.

The Cuppy family exemplifies the families who closely followed the frontier as it advanced west during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. During his 53-year lifetime, Adam Cuppy lived on or near the frontier on four occasions.

- **Richland/Ashland County, Ohio**, between Cleveland and Columbus. When Benjamin Cuppy moved his family to this area in 1812, they found only one previous settler in the neighborhood. Here young Adam Cuppy first became acquainted with Native American culture.
- **Wabash Township, Tippecanoe County, Indiana** (now the home of Purdue University). The Benjamin Cuppy family arrived in 1823, one year after the first settler. Initially Benjamin Cuppy engaged in flatboat traffic down the Wabash River.
- **Morgan and Cass County, Illinois**, near Beardstown between Springfield and Quincy. Adam Cuppy moved his young family from Indiana to the Beardstown area between 1834 and 1837. (Beardstown was not on the frontier, having been founded back in 1819.)
- **Wapello County, Iowa** (largest city Ottumwa).

**Background:** Earlier the Sac and Fox Native American tribes had been forced from their ancestral homes further east by the pressures of European settlement. In the Mississippi Valley the Sac and Fox soon dominated the Iowa and Illinois Indians they found when they arrived. As a result of the Black Hawk War of 1832, the Sac and Fox were forced to cede their lands near the Mississippi River. In the late 1830s and early 1840s what later became Wapello County was the site of the Sac and Fox agency.

**More Background:** Increased pressure from the east soon forced the Sac and Fox to give up their Iowa preserve and move to Kansas. At midnight on May 1, 1843 what later became Wapello County opened for white settlement. A land rush immediately ensued and soon Wapello County boasted a population of 5,000.

**Back to the Cuppy family:** Around 1840 Adam Cuppy and other members of his extended family moved to the Sac and Fox preserve. Despite a Cuppy family story, Adam Cuppy was not the Indian agent, that post being held by Joseph Street. However, that does not preclude Adam Cuppy as having been involved in the operations of the Sac and Fox agency.

- **Round Township, Shelby County, Iowa** (about 1/3 of the distance between Council Bluffs and Des Moines). The Adam Cuppy family was one of the first settlers in this area, arriving in 1851. (Round Township, which originally encompassed much of Shelby County, eventually was broken up into smaller townships and ceased to exist. In 1873 the Cuppy’s Grove area became part of Monroe Township).

## Part II –Adam Cuppy and Grenville Dodge.

**Background:** Grenville Dodge represents a completely different slice of mid 19<sup>th</sup> century America than Adam Cuppy, Dodge being raised not on the raw frontier but rather in the relatively genteel Boston area. As a teenager Dodge learned the rudiments of civil engineering and military science at Durham Academy and Norwich University. Dodge came to Illinois as a young man and worked on railroad surveys where he soon attracted the notice of his superiors.

In 1853 the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad awarded Peter Dey the contract for a railroad survey across Iowa, from Iowa City to the Missouri River. Dey hired 22-year-old Grenville Dodge to organize and lead the survey party, which consisted of around fifteen men. The party left Iowa City rather late in the season, on September 4. They were competing against another survey party representing the Iowa Central Air Line that was crossing Iowa further to the north. Dodge's party reached the Missouri River first, arriving at Council Bluffs on November 22<sup>nd</sup>.

As Dodge's survey party approached the Missouri River, the project became more of a reconnaissance than a survey. Thus the route through southwestern Iowa that the Rock Island Railroad followed sixteen years later deviated from the route Dodge laid out.

In particular, I have found inconsistent statements from General Dodge describing two planned 1853 routes through Pottawattamie County:

- One following Mosquito Creek southwest to the Missouri River valley (this was the one used in 1869).
- One leaving Mosquito Creek near latter-day Neola, cutting west through the loess hills in northern Hazel Dell Township, and entering the Missouri River bottoms north of Crescent via Simons Run. (George Simons was the cook with the Dodge party and later became a skilled sketch artist.)

**Adam Cuppy meets Grenville Dodge:** In the fall of 1853, riding west from the Indian Creek area near the later location of Elk Horn, Dodge first met Adam "Add" Cuppy. Quoting General Dodge from the 1915 Shelby County history book:

There were a good many things happened on my first line through the state that might interest you, and I will be pleased to give them to you, part of them relating to Shelby county, and to Add Cuppy. He was the first settler in that country. I found him in what was known as Cuppy's Grove in the fall of 1853, and there was living near him a Mr. Johnson.

I came very near shooting Cuppy by accident. I knew of no settler in that country and started out ahead of my party from Indian creek to examine the country ahead. There were no maps of the country then,

and as my party was out of meat, I carried my rifle for the purpose of obtaining deer if I struck one. When I struck the edge of Cuppy's Grove, I noticed something moving in the bushes. The grove on the outside was full of hazelnut bushes, very thick and very high. I thought I saw the head of a deer in the brush, and as I was sitting on my horse, I took up my rifle to shoot it and Add Cuppy jumped up out of the brush, with a red handkerchief on his head and yelled, "not to shoot him, there was a deer in the brush and he was crawling towards it," I mistook his red bandana as a deer, and was greatly surprised.

I made his acquaintance and used him a good deal in making my reconnaissance and survey in the western part of the state, and I look upon him as a very reliable and good citizen. There were other matters relating to him that were of interest that I could relate if you need them. I entered a good deal of the land in Shelby County for myself and others—people connected with the railroad.

**Background:** The following incident evidently occurred in December 1855 (possibly December 1856). During this storm Lemuel Barritt, age 34, died of exposure while hunting in Monona County. Barritt left behind a body that had been partly consumed by wild animals and a widow with nine children who lived in what later became southwestern Hazel Dell Township.

**Cuppy and Dodge nearly die from exposure:** Again quoting General Dodge from the 1915 Shelby County history book:

"Some years after this, when I was making reconnaissance up the Boyer river valley, with a view of examining that country for a railroad, I had ADAM CUPPY with me. I forget the year, but it was the year that a hunter by the name of Bartlett or Barrett of Council Bluffs froze to death while out hunting. CUPPY and myself had been out, up towards the Boyer river.

It was in the fall and the weather had been quite warm. We were horseback and had nothing with us. There came upon us a heavy rain. It was so cold that it froze the ice on a little creek that we struck. I found that we could not get to Cuppy's Grove that night, and I selected a little copse of trees on a stream, and we tried to build a fire but failed. I saw then that we were in great danger, our clothing being wet was freezing on us, and I said to CUPPY that we must keep walking, and if I am disposed to fall asleep, you must get a willow and whip me to keep awake, and I'll do the same. Some time after

midnight Cuppy got tired and determined to lie down, and I got the willow and whipped him. He turned on me and was going to fight, but soon got awake enough to realize that we must keep moving.

We got to his house that evening, both of us greatly pleased and ready for a warm supper, which Mrs. CUPPY soon prepared."

Adam Cuppy named one of his sons *Grenville Mellen Cuppy*. This is confusing, since Grenville Mellen Cuppy's gravestone in Walnut Hill Cemetery in Council Bluffs says he was born in 1852 and Adam Cuppy and Grenville Dodge didn't meet until the fall of 1853. However, harried 19<sup>th</sup> century parents with lots of children sometimes didn't get around to naming new children for a time. There is also some evidence that the child, called "Tippy" in an early census record, might have been named "Tippecanoe". Grenville would have been a much more palatable replacement.

**Background:** After leading the 1853 survey party across Iowa, Grenville Dodge married and persuaded his parents and brother to join him in the Council Bluffs area. The Dodge family began a farming operation on the Elk Horn River in Nebraska Territory west of Council Bluffs. However, increased Indian hostility caused the settlers in the area to withdraw back across the Missouri River late in 1855.

After moving to Council Bluffs from the Elk Horn River, Dodge organized a militia unit. When the Civil War began in April 1861, this unit became the nucleus of the 4<sup>th</sup> Iowa Volunteer Infantry Regiment, with Dodge as colonel. Soon Dodge caught the eye of Ulysses Grant, and moved on to managing railroad repair and intelligence operations in Grant's sector.

During the Civil War, two of Adam Cuppy's nephews served with Grenville Dodge.

- William Cuppy, the son of Isaac Cuppy of Cuppy's Grove, enlisted in Company B of Colonel Dodge's 4<sup>th</sup> Iowa Infantry during the first months of the Civil War. William died of disease at Rolla, Missouri late in 1861.
- Thomas Cuppy, from Beardstown, Illinois was orderly to General Dodge at one time during the Civil War. Thomas was furloughed home with illness late in 1863; I don't know if he survived. Some of Thomas Cuppy's Civil War letters have been preserved and published as an appendix to letters written by his lady friend's brothers.

### Part III – The Cuppy – Johnston Feud

**Background:** The following is copied from page 572 of the 1915 Shelby County history. Note that William Cuppy mentioned herein and subsequently was the son of Adam Cuppy, while William Cuppy mentioned earlier who died in the Civil War was the son of Adam's brother, Isaac.

*The two earliest pioneer families of Cuppy's Grove, that of Dr. W. J. Johnston and that of Adam Cuppy, who lived only a few hundred yards apart, seemed to have had trouble almost from the start of their settlement there. This disagreement between the members of these respective families seems to have reached a culmination when John Johnston was shot and killed in July 1860.*

*On July 21, 1860, an information was filed with county judge William Wyland, charging William B. Cuppy with the alleged murder of John Johnston and charging Adam Cuppy with being accessory to the said crime. The two defendants were placed under arrest by Milton Stanton, Sheriff, and brought before Judge Wyland, who fixed July 26, 1860, for examination. In the meantime, on July 24, 1860, W. J. Johnston, Mary Ann Johnston, and Brafford Johnston were arrested and brought before Judge Wyland charged with having committed an assault with intent to kill William B. Cuppy. Judge Wyland fixed the 27th day of July, 1860, for their preliminary hearing.*

*On July 26, accordingly, the case of William B. Cuppy and Adam Cuppy came on for hearing with the result that Judge Wyland required them to give bonds in the sum of three thousand dollars for their appearance at the next term of the district court of Shelby County to answer to any charges that the grand jury might prefer against them, which bonds were duly given. On the 27th of July, 1860, Judge Wyland dismissed the defendants W. J. Johnston, Mary Ann Johnston, and Brafford Johnston. W. B. Cuppy and Adam Cuppy were eventually released, or acquitted, as no further record of the case was found.*

## Part IV – The Death of Adam Cuppy

**Background:** The following is copied from pages 572-574 of the 1915 Shelby County history. I believe the reference to William B. Cuppy is included because William was present with his father at the Shelby County Courthouse, but managed to escape.

See Appendix 2 of this report for a version with commentary written by Mona Sarratt Knight.

D. S. Irwin of Irwin, Iowa, in 1870, in the course of a series of articles recounting the history of Shelby county, wrote the following review of the death of Adam Cuppy, of Cuppy's Grove, and the circumstances leading up to it. This event was probably the most exciting episode that had occurred in Shelby County up to that date. Many of the most prominent citizens of Shelby County were interested or in some manner implicated. The editor of this history does not undertake to do more in connection with this matter than to quote the following narrative written by Mr. Irwin but five years after the occurrence which ought to make it fairly reliable.]

"On the 23d day of October, 1865, occurred the murder of Adam Cuppy. But little of the evidence given during the trial of those who were indicted for the murder has been preserved, so that the particulars of the case can only be ascertained from those who lived in the county at the time, and the accounts given by them are so conflicting that we will publish but few of them. But from the best authority that we can find, the causes which led to the murder are as follows:

"A horse was stolen from Mrs. McConnell, of Bowman's Grove, and taken to Council Bluffs. The person who stole the horse is said to have been Charles Cuppy, son of Adam Cuppy. When he took the horse to Council Bluffs, he left him at a livery stable and was there told that he could not take him from the stable until he proved his property. He then left the stable and started toward the hotel, but instead of going into the house he left the city, and on Monday he stole another horse of one McKinzie, of Big Grove, and sold him to a man living in Lewis, Cass county. He then came home to Cuppy's Grove, when he was arrested and bound over for trial in Shelby County, although the horse was stolen in Pottawattamie County. On the day he was to be tried he did not appear for trial and after the

case was dismissed Adam Cuppy mounted a horse to go home, but was ordered to dismount, was tied, and taken into the court house. \* \* \*

"Adam Cuppy was bail for his son's appearance, and we are informed that the citizens told him that if he would give up his son for trial, they would see that he received justice; but he refused to give him up. I do not give these statements as facts, but they have been given to me by several of our most respectable citizens. Adam Cuppy was kept tied in and about the courthouse during the day; and some time after dark, a crowd came and took him out and started northward. A short distance north of the courthouse, he was shot. Five wounds were found on his person, only one of which was thought to be mortal.

"The grand jury of Shelby County found a bill against five citizens of the county for assault with intent to kill Adam Cuppy and William B. Cuppy; but on the 15th day of May the district attorney filed his motion to dismiss the case; and it appeared, to the satisfaction of the court, that said indictment was found and presented by a jury consisting of only fourteen jurors, and that it charged two distinct offenses; the motion was therefore sustained, the defendants discharged and their bail released. The grand jury then found a bill against the same five persons for assault with intent to commit murder, and also another bill for murder. The trial was postponed and the court adjourned till the following September. The cause then came up and was postponed until the first Monday of December, when it again came up and was postponed till in 1868. One of the defendants had a change of venue to Harrison county, where he was tried and acquitted. The other four were tried in Shelby county and were also acquitted. The trial on the indictment for assault with intent to commit murder has been postponed from time to time and has not yet been tried. These suits have made a great deal of cost and confusion and have involved some of the citizens in almost endless difficulty; but as the persons indicted for the murder of Adam Cuppy have established their innocence, it is likely that they will prove themselves innocent of the charge of assault with intent to kill William B. Cuppy. The horse that was stolen was not the property of either of the men who were indicted for the murder of Adam Cuppy, and therefore they were not the injured parties; and as the injured parties were present when he was killed and one of them has not since been

heard of, it is hardly reasonable to suppose that he was killed by the citizens of the county.

**After Adam Cuppy's Death:** Adam Cuppy was murdered on his 53<sup>rd</sup> birthday, October 23, 1865. At the time Grenville Dodge was in the Kansas area commanding the army's Department of Missouri. Although Dodge could not save Adam Cuppy, Dodge perhaps had a role after Cuppy's death.

Adam Cuppy is buried neither in Harlan where he died nor in Cuppy's Grove where he had lived, but rather 40 miles away in Council Bluffs in Walnut Hill Cemetery. Five Council Bluffs families, including the Dodges, had established Walnut Hill just a year earlier in 1864. Adam Cuppy lies in Section 4 of Walnut Hill Cemetery with a number of his family members, including his wayward son Charles, his son William (about whom we will read more later), and his son Grenville. Grenville Dodge lies nearby in Section 5.

**About Charles Cuppy:** Charles Cuppy's Walnut Hill Cemetery stone reads *C. Z. Cuppy Mar 21 1849 – Jan 18 1867*. Thus Charles was sixteen when he failed to appear for his hearing in October 1865, leading to his father's death, and eighteen when he died. I have no further knowledge of his life or cause of his death.

## Part V – William Cuppy's Legacy

**Background:** Around 1870 William B. and Grenville M. Cuppy, the sons of Adam Cuppy, left the Cuppy's Grove area and moved south about ten miles to Knox Township. In 1885 they owned about 1,000 acres of land just east and several miles southeast of Avoca. In the following 1913 passage, you will see why those Iowans who, like me, cherish our natural world owe a debt of gratitude to William Cuppy.

**More background:** By 1913 the passenger pigeon, once arguably the most common bird in America, had a population of one. Of the approximately thirty million bison that once roamed North America, perhaps three thousand remained. Even wild white tailed deer were extinct in some states. The following passage is taken from a 1913 book, *Our Vanishing Wild Life: Its Extermination and Preservation* by William Temple Hornaday.

There is, however, a large group of states in which this species (the white-tailed deer) has been exterminated. The states comprising it are Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, and adjacent portions of seven other states.

As if to shame the people of Iowa, a curious deer episode is recorded. In 1885, W.B. Cuppy, of Avoca, Iowa, purchased five deer, and placed them in a paddock on his 600-acre farm. By 1900 they had increased to 32 head; and then one night some one kindly opened the gate of their enclosure, and gave them the freedom of the city. Mr. Cuppy made no effort to capture them, possibly because they decided to annex his farm as their habitat. When a neighbor led them with a bait of corn to their owner's door, he declined to impound them, on the ground that it was unnecessary.

By 1912, those deer had increased to 400, and the portion of this story that no one will believe is this: they spread all through the suburbs and hinterland farms of Avoca, and the people not only failed to assassinate all of them and eat them, but they actually killed only a few, protected the rest, and made pets of many! Queer people, those men and boys of Avoca. Nearly everywhere else in the world that I know, that history would have been ended differently. Here in the East, 90 per cent of our people are like the Avocans, but the other 10 per cent think only of slaying and eating, sans mercy, sans decency, sans law. Now the State of Iowa has taken hold, to capture some of those deer, and set them free in other portions of the state.

## Part VI – Cuppy's Grove – The Last 150 Years

The Cuppy family has long been gone from Cuppy's Grove. By 1870 Adam Cuppy's surviving sons, William and Grenville, had moved south to Avoca where they became prosperous farmers. In 1875 the Johnston family was still present, but I believe they are now long gone also. Today it's even difficult to find a map showing Cuppy's Grove.

But with the passing of the Cuppy and Johnston families and the other pioneer families of Cuppy's Grove, one landmark remains today in Cuppy's Grove, namely the Altamont Baptist Church.

After the Civil War Danish immigrants began arriving in large numbers in Southwestern Iowa, arriving by train, working on railroad construction, and then taking up farming in the nearby countryside. In particular, many Danish immigrants settled north of the Rock Island Railroad in Shelby and Audubon counties.

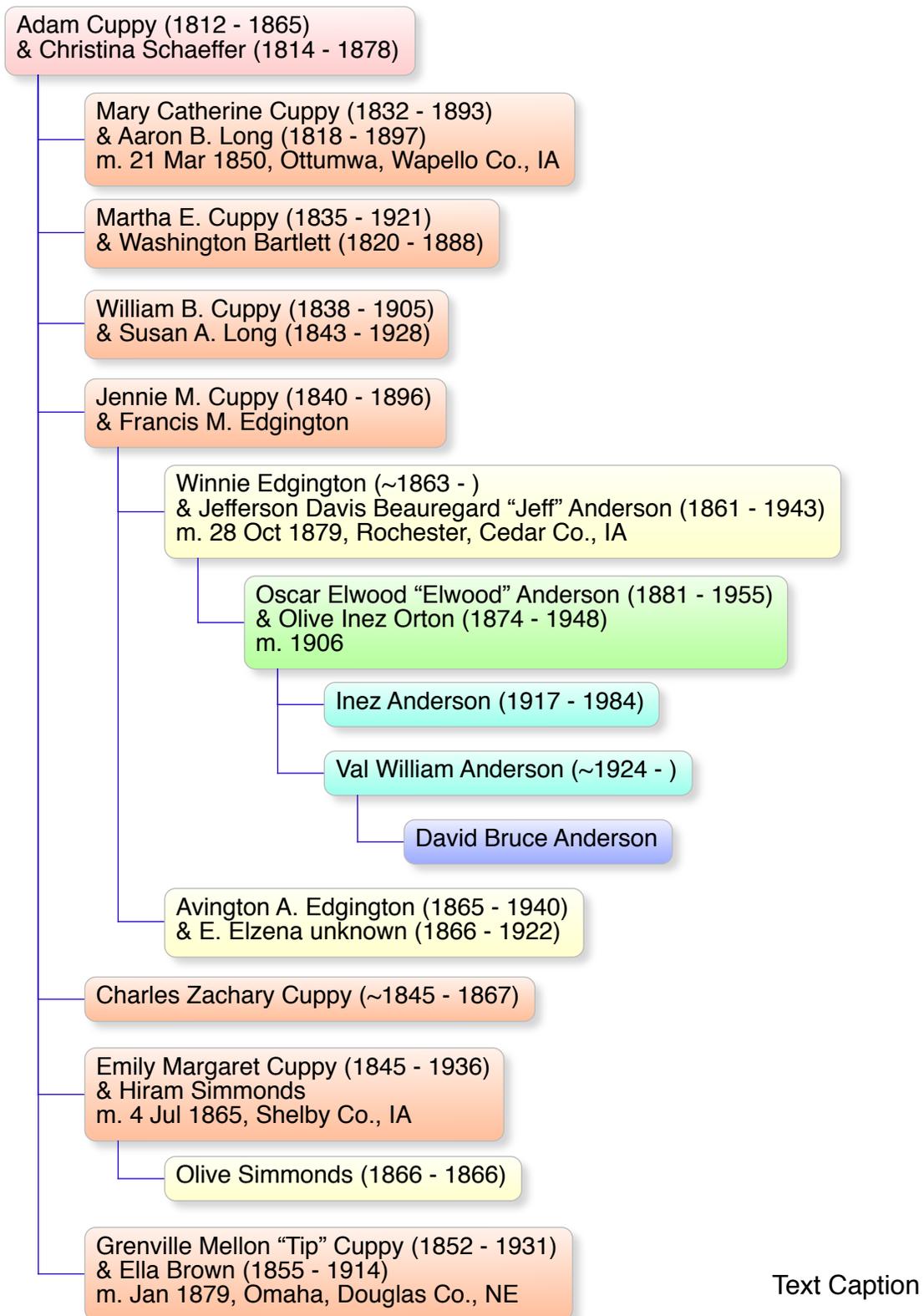
Many Danish immigrants were alienated from the establishment Lutheran Church that they had left behind in Denmark. Even though Danish Lutheranism now offered two reform movements, the Inner Mission and Grundtvigism, Danish immigrants often were receptive to other brands of Christianity such as the Mormon faith (both mainstream and reorganized), Adventism, and the Baptist faith.

In 1870 a Danish Baptist congregation was organized in Cuppy's Grove. Today, several church buildings and 145 years later, the Altamont Baptist Church survives in Cuppy's Grove.

## Sources and Acknowledgments

- *Past and Present of Shelby County, Iowa* by Edward Speer White (B. F. Bowen & Co., Indianapolis, 1915, two volumes). Dodge's two quotations in Part II come from pages 135-139, as transcribed by Denise Werner and appear in <http://www.iagenweb.org/shelby/history/1915history>.
- *Trails, Rails and War: the Life of General G. M. Dodge* by J. R. Perkins (Bobbs-Merrill, Indianapolis, 1929). (No member of the Cuppy family is mentioned therein.)
- *Our Vanishing Wild Life: Its Extermination and Preservation* by William Temple Hornaday, 1913 ([fullbooks.com/Our-Vanishing-Wild-Life5.html](http://fullbooks.com/Our-Vanishing-Wild-Life5.html)). Hornaday was the first director of the Bronx Zoo in New York City.
- *Biographical History of Pottawattamie County, Iowa* (Lewis Publishing Company, 1891) ([iagenweb.org/pottawattamie/Bios1891](http://iagenweb.org/pottawattamie/Bios1891))
- ***FEUD BETWEEN THE JOHNSTON AND CUPPY FAMILIES AND THE KILLING OF ADAM CUPPY*** by Mona Sarratt Knight ([http://iagenweb.org/shelby/history/cuppy\\_johnston.htm](http://iagenweb.org/shelby/history/cuppy_johnston.htm))  
I believe this is both the most complete and the most accurate account of Adam Cuppy's tragic death.
- Early Iowa Boyhood by Harry Blackmar (<http://krafftfamily.org/Krafft-p/harry%20blackmar%20memoirs.pdf>) includes Harry's recollections of the family of Adam Cuppy's daughter, Jane "Jennie" Edgington, in Rochester, Iowa in the 1870s.
- You will find my Cuppy family notes in my *St. Paul's* Macintosh Reunion database.

## Appendix 1 - Selected Descendants of Adam Cuppy



## Appendix 2 – William Cuppy's 1891 Biography

**Source:** Biographical History of Pottawattamie County, Iowa (Lewis Publishing Company, 1891)

(on-line at [iagenweb.org/pottawattamie/Bios1891-C.htm](http://iagenweb.org/pottawattamie/Bios1891-C.htm))

**Commentary by Robert Christiansen:** I have not quoted from this biography in the body of my report, as it has errors as well as some suspect passages.

**WILLIAM B. CUPPY.** This truly Western gentleman was born in the great State of Iowa when it was yet a Territory, and came to Pottawattamie County before there were any settlers, except on the old stage route. The Sioux Indians were then camped in Levins' Grove, near where our subject now lives. William CUPPY, the great-grandfather of our subject, came from Spain, but was of Irish and French descent. He was the founder of the family name in America, which was changed from COPPS to CUPPY. Adam CUPPY, the father of our subject, was born in Shelby County, Kentucky. He served in the war of 1812, and was present at HULL's surrender at Detroit. He went to Illinois when a young man, and there married Christiana SHAFFER, daughter of John SHAFFER, a soldier of the war of 1812. He was a farmer of Cass County, Illinois. Soon after marriage, in 1837, Mr. CUPPY, came to Iowa, and stopped at Burlington during the fall and winter following. Here the subject of this sketch was born, and when but twenty-four hours old was the hero of an Indian outbreak. Some men had brought ten gallons of whisky across the Mississippi River in a canoe and sold it to the Indians. They became very wild and commenced burning the houses of the whites, and drove them to the Indian agent's headquarters for shelter. Mrs. CUPPY was lying in a slab shanty with her young child, and the Indians set fire to it; but the squaws were friendly to her, and rushed in and carried her out on her bed. The Indians, taking up the child to kill it, discovered it was a boy, and exclaimed: "it is a buck; don't kill it;" and so the boy was left to tell the story to another generation.

Soon after this his father moved to Ottumwa, Iowa, and there served the Government as Indian Agent five years. The Sacs, Foxes and Iowas were under his agency, and here young William became familiar with Indian life. In 1850 Mr. Adam CUPPY moved to Mississippi County, remaining one year, and in 1851 went to Shelby County, where he lived until 1865. That county was organized at his house, the settlers coming together for a shooting match, and the poorest shots were obliged to take the offices, as no one desired them--quite a contrast to the present day. The first case was tried at Shelbyville by Judge RIDDLE, under the trees, the jury retiring to a hollow in the grove to deliberate. One of the lawyers who tried the case, "Jim" BRETTOR, procured a two-gallon jug of whisky, and treated the jury until some of them could not answer to the call of the sheriff. Mr. CUPPY was the father of seven children: Mary C., Emeline, William B., Lucy J., Charles, Grenville M. and Emily. Mr. and Mrs. CUPPY were members of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The father was a fine specimen of a frontiersman and a Western pioneer; he was six feet in height, weighed 200

pounds, and was of robust health and character, and became accustomed to all the vicissitudes and trials of a pioneer life in the great West. He was a noted hunter of that period, and became a substantial farmer, owning 600 acres of land at CUPPY'S GROVE. His hospitality was of the true Kentucky type, and he was never known to charge a man a dime who sought shelter or food at his house. In the winter of 1856-'57, which is recorded as the winter of great storms, several families took shelter under his roof and shared his hospitality, as their provisions were exhausted and the weather too severe for them to get to any town for supplies, and they remained with him until spring.

William B., the son of the above and the subject of this sketch, was born in 1838, and as there were no schools in Iowa at that early day, he received but a limited education, except what he acquired by observation and practical experience. But having a quick and ready mind he became a well informed man, and in the rough school of the Iowa pioneer he learned manliness and stability of character, which has enabled him to turn his attention to any matter which he needed to carry through and succeed. He was married at the age of twenty-one years, to Susan A. LONG, daughter of James M. and Sophia (DEER) LONG. The father was an old and prominent resident of Harlan, Iowa, and both families were of old American pioneer stock, from Indiana, and originally from Kentucky. They were the parents of five children: Susannah, Sarah G., Mary F., Mahala J. and Eddie W.

After marriage Mr. and Mrs. CUPPY resided on the old homestead at CUPPY'S GROVE for ten years, and in 1870 came to their present farm of nearly 1,000 acres, 750 being in one body. In politics Mr. CUPPY is a staunch Democrat and free-trader, and several times has made speeches in defense of his opinions, in which, with his vigorous use of the old-fashioned, pioneer English, he freely and pointedly expresses his views. When young, like his father before him, he was a great hunter, and among these peerless hunters, the Indians, learned all their skillful tactics with shot-gun and rifle. The country was then full of game, elk and deer abounding, and in the early settlements the buffalo were not driven to the prairies of Kansas by the inroads of the settlers. The face of the country was undulating and covered with grass, and in the spring was a mass of beautiful and many-colored flowers, and Mr. CUPPY describes it as being one of the loveliest sights the eye of man ever rested upon. The old pioneers of Iowa were noted for their kindness and hospitality, and also for their strict honesty. The neighbors within a radius of thirty and fifty miles visited each other and rendered mutual aid and encouragement. Their latch-string was always out. Mr. CUPPY is now a man of fifty-three years of age, but his eye is still undimmed with age, and he is an erect and well-built man, with an easy and polite manner. His hair is tinged with silver, but many years of an honorable and useful life are before him. He is one of the deservedly popular men of Pottawattamie County, known far and wide for his genial manner, kind heart and large hospitality.

## **Appendix 3 – FEUD BETWEEN THE JOHNSTON AND CUPPY FAMILIES AND THE KILLING OF ADAM CUPPY**

by Mona Sarratt Knight

**Source:** [http://iagenweb.org/shelby/history/cuppy\\_johnston.htm](http://iagenweb.org/shelby/history/cuppy_johnston.htm)

**Commentary by Robert Christiansen:** I believe the following is both the most complete and the most accurate account of Adam Cuppy's tragic death. For this, I am indebted to Mona Sarratt Knight. I have reprinted Ms. Knight's account without change.

### **FEUD BETWEEN THE JOHNSTON AND CUPPY FAMILIES AND THE KILLING OF ADAM CUPPY**

The families of Dr. Witherington Jerome (W. J.) Johnston and Adam Cuppy were two of the earliest to settle in Shelby County, Iowa. Both families had original ancestry in the State of Ohio, and both appeared to have spent time in Illinois and/or Indiana before moving west about 1852-53. In the June 1860 census for Shelby County, these families appear living next to one another at Cuppy's Grove:

Census family 33: Adam Cuppy, age 47, and wife Christena, age 45, along with their children Matilda, 20; Emily, 15; Charley, 11; Gramette, 7; Eliza J. Geoman, 7, and Francis M. Cuppy, age 18.

Census family 34: Washington Johnston (his name was actually Witherington), age 61, doctor, and wife Mary A. Johnston, age 41, along with their children John, age 22, Brafford, age 20, Sarah Jane, age 17, Mary Ann, age 14, Witherington, age 11, James E., age 7, and Lucinda, age 4.

Living down the road was another son of Adam Cuppy, shown as Census family 32: William B. Cuppy, age 22, and wife Susan A. Cuppy, age 16.

Isaac Cuppy, a brother of Adam Cuppy, was recorded in this census as well at Family 30: Isaac Cuppy, age 39, wife Mary Cuppy, age 33, along with their children William, age 17, Harriet, age 10, Celestia, age 7, Mansel, age 7, James B. age 4, Marcus M., age 1, and Elizabeth Cuppy, age 15.

The relationship of these families was to come to a tragic end by July of 1860, apparently precipitated by a long-standing feud between the sons of Adam Cuppy and Dr. Johnston. Their story is related in the history of Shelby County as follows (from page 572):

The two earliest pioneer families of Cuppy's Grove, that of Dr. W. J. Johnston and that of Adam Cuppy, who lived only a few hundred yards apart, seemed to have had trouble almost from the start of their settlement there. This disagreement between the members of these respective families seems to have reached a culmination when John Johnston was shot and killed in July 1860.

On July 21, 1860, an information was filed with county judge William Wyland, charging William B. Cuppy with the alleged murder of John Johnston and

charging Adam Cuppy with being accessory to the said crime. The two defendants were placed under arrest by Milton Stanton, Sheriff, and brought before Judge Wyland, who fixed July 26, 1860, for examination. In the meantime, on July 24, 1860, W. J. Johnston, Mary Ann Johnston, and Brafford Johnston were arrested and brought before Judge Wyland charged with having committed an assault with intent to kill William B. Cuppy. Judge Wyland fixed the 27th day of July, 1860, for their preliminary hearing.

On July 26, accordingly, the case of William B. Cuppy and Adam Cuppy came on for hearing with the result that Judge Wyland required them to give bonds in the sum of three thousand dollars for their appearance at the next term of the district court of Shelby County to answer to any charges that the grand jury might prefer against them, which bonds were duly given. On the 27th of July, 1860, Judge Wyland dismissed the defendants W. J. Johnston, Mary Ann Johnston, and Brafford Johnston. W. B. Cuppy and Adam Cuppy were eventually released, or acquitted, as no further record of the case was found.

These events were tragic for both families, and further incidents would only add to the ultimate outcome. With the outbreak of the Civil War, Isaac Cuppy's son, William, enlisted at Shelby County on July 10, 1861, into Company B, 4th Iowa Infantry Regiment. He died of disease on December 27, 1861, at Rolla, Missouri. He was 19 years old. Brafford Johnson enlisted at Council Bluffs, Iowa (Pottawattamie County), on February 26, 1863, into Company C, 5th Iowa Cavalry Regiment. He was 23 years old. He continued his service to his country until he was mustered out at Nashville, Tennessee, on August 11, 1865, undoubtedly tired and battle worn after two and a half years of fighting. Brafford returned to Shelby County where he lived for several years.

Trouble seemed to haunt the Cuppy family, and in October of 1865, Adam Cuppy was apparently murdered by a mob from Shelby County who were upset about a horse-stealing incident that happened there. This story is recorded in the Shelby County history, pages 572-74:

D. S. Irwin of Irwin, Iowa, in 1870, in the course of a series of articles recounting the history of Shelby county, wrote the following review of the death of Adam Cuppy, of Cuppy's Grove, and the circumstances leading up to it. This event was probably the most exciting episode that had occurred in Shelby county up to that date. Many of the most prominent citizens of Shelby county were interested or in some manner implicated. The editor of this history does not undertake to do more in connection with this matter than to quote the following narrative written by Mr. Irwin but five years after the occurrence which ought to make it fairly reliable.]

"On the 23d day of October, 1865, occurred the murder of Adam Cuppy. But little of the evidence given during the trial of those who were indicted for the murder has been preserved, so that the particulars of the case can only be ascertained from those who lived in the county at the time, and the accounts given by them

are so conflicting that we will publish but few of them. But from the best authority that we can find, the causes which led to the murder are as follows:

"A horse was stolen from Mrs. McConnell, of Bowman's Grove, and taken to Council Bluffs. The person who stole the horse is said to have been Charles Cuppy, son of Adam Cuppy. When he took the horse to Council Bluffs, he left him at a livery stable and was there told that he could not take him from the stable until he proved his property. He then left the stable and started toward the hotel, but instead of going into the house he left the city, and on Monday he stole another horse of one McKinzie, of Big Grove, and sold him to a man living in Lewis, Cass county. He then came home to Cuppy's Grove, when he was arrested and bound over for trial in Shelby county, although the horse was stolen in Pottawattamie county. On the day he was to be tried he did not appear for trial and after the case was dismissed Adam Cuppy mounted a horse to go home, but was ordered to dismount, was tied, and taken into the court house. \* \* \*

"Adam Cuppy was bail for his son's appearance, and we are informed that the citizens told him that if he would give up his son for trial, they would see that he received justice; but he refused to give him up. I do not give these statements as facts, but they have been given to me by several of our most respectable citizens. Adam Cuppy was kept tied in and about the courthouse during the day; and some time after dark, a crowd came and took him out and started northward. A short distance north of the courthouse, he was shot. Five wounds were found on his person, only one of which was thought to be mortal.

"The grand jury of Shelby County found a bill against five citizens of the county for assault with intent to kill Adam Cuppy and William B. Cuppy; but on the 15th day of May the district attorney filed his motion to dismiss the case; and it appeared, to the satisfaction of the court, that said indictment was found and presented by a jury consisting of only fourteen jurors, and that it charged two distinct offenses; the motion was therefore sustained, the defendants discharged and their bail released. The grand jury then found a bill against the same five persons for assault with intent to commit murder, and also another bill for murder. The trial was postponed and the court adjourned till the following September. The cause then came up and was postponed until the first Monday of December, when it again came up and was postponed till in 1868. One of the defendants had a change of venue to Harrison county, where he was tried and acquitted. The other four were tried in Shelby county and were also acquitted. The trial on the indictment for assault with intent to commit murder has been postponed from time to time and has not yet been tried. These suits have made a great deal of cost and confusion and have involved some of the citizens in almost endless difficulty; but as the persons indicted for the murder of Adam Cuppy have established their innocence, it is likely that they will prove themselves innocent of the charge of assault with intent to kill William B. Cuppy. The horse that was stolen was not the property of either of the men who were indicted for the murder of Adam Cuppy, and therefore they were not the injured parties; and as the injured parties were present when he was killed and one of them has not since

been heard of, it is hardly reasonable to suppose that he was killed by the citizens of the county.

"Fortunately the citizens have seldom been horrified by murder committed in the county. There was one other murder, the murder of John Johnston, committed at Cuppy's Grove, for which crime William B. Cuppy was tried and acquitted."

By about 1870, life seemed to settle down somewhat in Shelby county. Brafford Johnston married and was active in the community, being listed as a county fair judge and member of the Board of Supervisors in 1870. In 1875, Brafford Johnston, W. J. Johnson, and B. Johnston are all listed in the names of voters at the county election. The Johnston family is found in the 1870 census for Shelby county, with only Isaac Cuppy and his family remaining in the same area. The Johnston families are recorded in the census as follows:

August 29, 1870:

W. J. Johnston, age 72, physician, born Virginia. (The 1860 census indicates he was born in Pennsylvania.)

Mary Johnston, wife, age 53, born Ohio

Mary, daughter, age 24, teacher, born Ohio (married Henry West on February 28, 1875)

Witherington, son, age 21, born Ohio (married Theresa Tonnesen on March 6, 1871)

Edward, son, age 18, born Iowa (married Mary J. Hankins or Hawkins on March 10, 1876)

Lucinda, daughter, age 14, born Iowa (married Calvin Cleveland on March 6, 1871)

Frank McKeever, age 3, born Iowa (it is not known who this child is; McKeever is his surname in the census)

Recorded near Avoca, Iowa:

Brafford Johnson, age 31, born Ohio (the spelling was changed by the census taker to Johnson instead of Johnston)

Ella Johnson, age 23, born Illinois

Abby, son, age 2, born Iowa

Wetherton, son, age 6 months, born Iowa (this name should probably be Witherington, like his grandfather)

Also recorded in this census and living down the road from the Johnston family is the family of Lewis (Nels?) Rogers and wife Sarah J. Rogers. Sarah is thought to be the daughter of Dr. W. J. Johnston:

Lewis Rogers, age 30, farmer, born Indiana

Sarah J. Rogers, age 25, born Ohio

Brafford, son, age 7, born Iowa (probably named after Sarah's brother, Brafford Johnston)

Amanda J., age 6, born Iowa

Douglas, age 4, born Iowa

Wm. J., age 2, born Iowa

The 1915 Past and Present of Shelby County, Iowa biographies includes a biography for Arthur N. ROGERS, the son of Nels and Sarah (JOHNSON) ROGERS, born July 17, 1882, in Shelby County, Iowa. I will leave it to other researchers to determine if this is the family of Sarah Johnston, daughter of Dr. W. J. Johnston, but I believe that it is and offer it here for further research.

In 1871, Dr. Johnston's children began to marry, as noted in the census above. Some time after 1875, Brafford Johnston moved his family west into Nebraska and South Dakota. He is found in the Veterans Schedule census for Pennington County, South Dakota, Hammerville Precinct, in the 1890 census, and it is believed that he continued to move throughout the west until he settled in California.

"The Cuppy family continued to live in Shelby County, Iowa, with the following marriages recorded there: Martha E. Cuppy to Washington Bartlett on April 14, 1858; William B. Cuppy married Susan A. Long on March 15, 1860; Eliza Cuppy married George Tague on June 11, 1860; Emily Cuppy married Hiram Simon on July 4, 1865; Celestia Cuppy married Thomas Wood on September 24, 1870; and Hattie Cuppy married Frank Marco on September 6, 1877."

\*\*Note to researchers: The story regarding the feud and the later killing of Adam Cuppy has been extracted from pages 572-74 of the Past and Present of Shelby County, Iowa, published 1915. The remaining details have been researched by me using census records, civil war veterans records, and other materials. Every effort was made to spell the names correctly. I am not related to this family and have nothing further to add. I hope that this information aids you in your research of the CUPPY and JOHNSTON families. I encourage you to validate all dates and data given here before you add it to your history. Submitted by: Mona Sarratt Knight, August, 2002.