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Summer 2012

### Ruffner Roots and Ramblings, Vol. 15, Issue 2

Ruffner Family Association

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# *Ruffner Roots & Ramblings*

Published quarterly by the  
Ruffner Family Association

Volume 15, Issue 2, Summer 2012

## *We had a wonderful time in Luray!*

*From the Friday Reception at the Ruffner House and the Bicentennial Parade,  
Saturday's driving tours, visiting Luray Caverns, the Reunion Banquet  
and the "Festival of Spring" on Main Street  
through the Picnic Lunch at Lake Arrowhead on Sunday -  
it was an unforgettable experience.*

*Many thanks to the 2012 Ruffner Reunion Committee:  
Betty Ann Axline, Donna & Bob Brown, Pamela Flasch, Marilyn & Phil Johnson,  
Judi & Jim McNeely, Sam McNeely and Nancy Lee Shifflett  
and the 2012 Bicentennial Committee of Luray*



from the 2012 Reunion Attendees



## **Ruffner Family Association**

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### **Mission of the Ruffner Family Association**

Chartered and incorporated in 1999, to support an association of members who will research and preserve their common heritage through the collection of artifacts and documents which form the basis for knowledge and appreciation of the historic role played by the Ruffner Descendants and their collateral lines in the settlement and development of the American Frontier.

## ***A Message from our President***

Recently we were lucky to be able to come together as one big family to celebrate the bicentennial of the revitalized town of Luray and renew our relationships with each other. It was a time to thank all who have kept our local Ruffner family growing and nurturing Luray through the years. Native Bob and Donna Brown hosted us here many times. We must give special thanks to Jim and Judi McNeely whose purchase of the Ruffner House has secured our family homestead which they shared with us again. With Jim, came his brother Sam (and Betty) who helped update the house and the community with great energy, dedication and southern hospitality. The next generation arrived with Pam Flasch who was instrumental in preparing this community's celebration we enjoyed so much. Heartfelt thanks go out to the Luray reunion team.

One of the most special times of the reunion came Friday night when we climbed aboard three decorated wagons at the Ruffner House and headed downtown to lead the bicentennial parade. As we rode along waving our Ruffner flags, we were bonded with laughter and appreciation of sharing the unique experience.

Peter Ruffner, Sr. was one lucky man! His father-in-law presented he and his bride, Mary Steinman, beautiful land in the Shenandoah Valley to settle and raise their family. I was lucky to find the Ruffner House Bed & Breakfast (for sale at the time) when our daughter chose Shenandoah University for her college experience. It got even better when I found out about the family association and a reunion planned for Lancaster, Ohio in 1999.

During our recent visit, Jim McNeely mentioned that he thought he had three Ruffner cousins until coming to Luray to visit - what a surprise to find dozens and dozens. Many of you have interesting stories about how you found our group, and we would love to hear them. Please take time to write a few lines and send them along to Joan for the RR&R.

We all enjoyed our time together in May and will look forward to seeing some of you at the Ruffner Annual Meeting in Lancaster, Ohio next year. We are still looking for a site for our next reunion and would appreciate any suggestions you might have.

**Wishing you all, happy days ahead, I am  
Phyllis Hershock. RFA President**



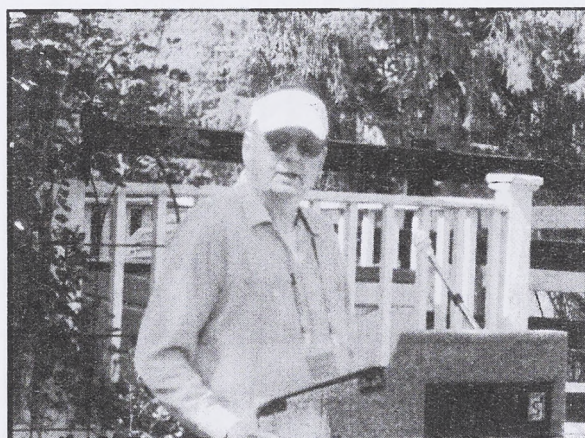
# *Scenes from the 2012 Ruffner Family Reunion*

*(All photos courtesy of Nancy Lee Shifflett)*



**Jim McNeely with Bonnie Lancaster on the porch of The Ruffner House.**

**Jim & wife Judi, always the perfect hosts, shared their home for a Celebratory Gathering in honor of Luray's Bicentennial.**



**Sam McNeely, RFA's tireless COO, welcoming Ruffner attendees to the 12<sup>th</sup> RFA Reunion and Luray's Bicentennial Celebration.**



**Luray Mayor Barry Presgraves presenting a Resolution to RFA President Phyllis Hershock in recognition of the Ruffner Family.**



**Jane Lucas, Winchester, VA, Nancy Brubaker and Frank Shenk, Luray, VA**



**Bill & Shirley Myers from California**



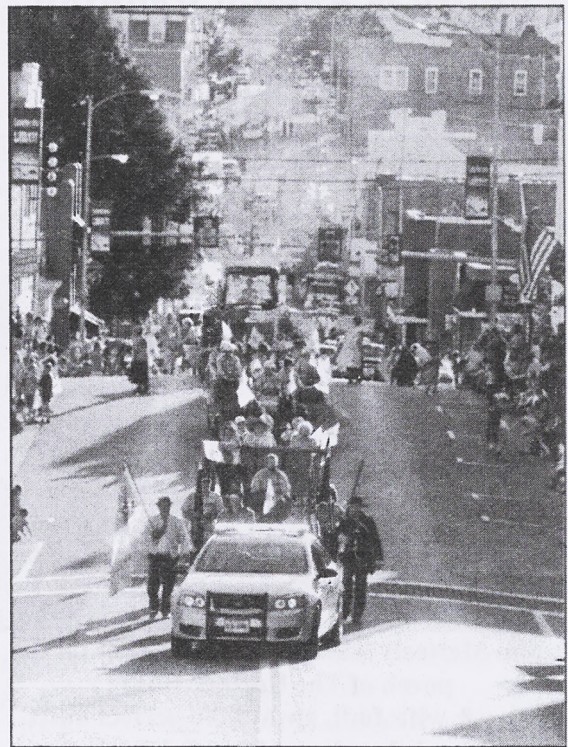
## *The Bicentennial Parade*



**Nancy Shifflett, Phil Johnson and Virginia Ruffner aboard the Chuck Wagon that led Luray's Bicentennial Parade.**



**A wagon full of Ruffner cousins from all around the country – ready to roll!**



**With the color guard and three Ruffner wagons in the lead – the parade winds its way up the Main Street hill.**



**Betty Ann Axline**  
She not only decorated the Ruffner wagons, but handled a multitude of other tasks for the 2012 reunion.



***The Mayor and Town Council  
of the  
Town of Luray, Virginia***

***A Resolution to Recognize the Ruffner Family  
During Luray's Bicentennial Celebration***

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend the Peter and Mary (Steinman) Ruffner Family on the occasion of the 273rd Anniversary of their settling in the Valley of Shenandoah, later known as the Town of Luray, on this 11<sup>th</sup> day of May, the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Luray, Virginia.

*Whereas*, the Ruffner Family and its Association, on the occasion of their 273rd anniversary in the Shenandoah Valley, Page County, Luray, Virginia; and

*Whereas*, Isaac Ruffner, grandson of Peter and Mary, in 1812, provided the first 18 lots, and, in 1818, an additional 26 lots to create the Town of Luray; and

*Whereas*, Isaac's brother Jonas and brothers-in-law William S. Mayre and John W. Abbott were the Town's first Trustees; and

*Whereas*, members of the Ruffner family continue to serve the citizens of Luray in 2012; and

*Whereas*, the Ruffner family and its Association has gathered in Luray on May 11, 2012 for the celebration of the Town's 200<sup>th</sup> birthday.

***NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF LURAY*** that we honor and commend the Ruffner Family and its Association, its officers and members for 273 years of dedication to their family, to the Town of Luray and to the preservation of their Virginia heritage.

April 24, 2012  
Date

Barry A. Presgraves  
Barry A. Presgraves, Mayor

Attest: Mary Broyles, Town Clerk

Mary Broyles



## STOCKDALES OF THE STAGE & SCREEN

*Compiled by Joan Ruffner Reid*

*I was delighted while reading the second edition of *The Descendants of Emanuel Ruffner and Magdalene Grove* by Barbara Rowles to discover there was an early film actor among our Ruffner ancestors. I am a huge movie fan. My mother started taking me to the theater every time the movie changed when I was three years old. The first movie I remember seeing was "Gone With The Wind" in 1939. Several years ago, I learned there was a film actor among my mother's family – a third cousin, Charlie Murray, a former Vaudeville comedian with a rubber face. Charlie left the stage in 1906, was hired by D. W. Griffith as Biograph's comedian and made 500 "split reels" in two years. He continued making an astonishing number of films until 1938 and passed away in 1941 at the age of 69. Last year, I completed Charlie's Story as part of my ongoing family history book. Now I am really excited to not only have a film actor in my mother's family, but my father's family as well. When I viewed Carl Stockdale's photo on the Internet, I immediately recognized his face from my childhood days at the Columbia Theater in Columbus where the admission of ten cents would bring you two hours of entertainment watching second run movies and serials. And, by the way, I still go to the movies at least once a week.*

### **Carl Stockdale** **1874 – 1953**



MR. CARL STOCKDALE,

Old western movie fans might recognize **Carl Stockdale** by sight, but not his name, although he was a supporting actor in more than 300 films, beginning with the Broncho Billy shorts between 1913-14. The Broncho Billy films, unlike many other films of that era, were actually made on location in the West. The audiences loved seeing actual western landscapes with real cowboy actors. They were popular features of the silent screen.

Broncho Billy (born Max Aronson) was the first western movie star. Born in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1880, when movies had not yet been invented. He set his sights on becoming a stage actor at a young age going to school in St. Louis and later moving to New York. He didn't find much acting work. In fact, he was fired from his first stage role! To pay the bills, he became a model and posed for illustrators. One of his first assignments was posing for a cover of *The Saturday Evening Post* dressed as a cowboy. He didn't know at the time he would become famous playing a cowboy in silent films.

**William Carlton "Carl" Stockdale** was born on February 17, 1874 in Worthington, Minnesota to Melissa Caroline (Sheumaker) and William Stockdale. He was the great-great-grandson of Emanuel (our Ohio pioneer) through his daughter Barbara Ruffner Pence and granddaughter Eleanor (Pence) Miller Sheumaker.



*(Stockdales of the Stage & Screen – continued from page 6)*

Though his career ranged over a thirty-plus-year period, Carl, unfortunately, is more often identified as a principal in the 1922 infamous unresolved murder of noted Hollywood director William Desmond Taylor. Actress Mary Miles Minter's mother, Charlotte Shelby, was under suspicion but not charged with the crime. Mrs. Shelby, an ambitious stage mother, strongly objected to a blossoming romance between the older Taylor and her young beautiful daughter. Stockdale, a close friend of Mrs. Shelby, claimed he was with her the night of Taylor's murder—his testimony was unshakable. There was never enough evidence to charge Mrs. Shelby and the case has become a legend in Hollywood history.

Despite that particular notoriety, Carl was an accomplished actor. He never achieved top stardom, but he was extremely active and proficient in his craft. Like many Ruffner men, he was tall and slender, with piercing blue eyes and brown hair. He acquired his skills after spending fifteen years on the vaudeville circuit, entering films around 1912. He got his first solid role in the 1917 Douglas Fairbanks' *The Americano*, in which he played the prime minister of a fictitious Latin country. During this period, he also appeared in several Northwest and western features (*Land of the Long Shadows*, *Men of the Desert* and *The Range Boss*). He also had prominent roles in several of silent star William Russell's westerns for the American Film Company, including *When a Man Rides Alone* and *Where the West Begins* (both made in 1919).



As the age of silent movies came to an end, Stockdale was kept busy supporting popular cowboy stars such as Ken Maynard and Buck Jones. As sound emerged, one of his first efforts was a role in Johnny Mack Brown's *Billy the Kid* (1930). Unlike many silent movie actors, Carl with his fine, stage-trained voice, moved smoothly into the new media. Directors liked him, especially in roles of judges or lawmen. So when sound came to the movies, he was kept busy for the next dozen years.

In 1937, he made two Bob Baker westerns, *Courage of the West* and *The Singing Outlaw*. In the latter, he had a good role as "Sheriff Haight," spending most of the film chasing would-be-outlaw Baker. Stockdale also had roles (some just bit parts) in a few epic films such as *Lost Horizon* (1937), starring Ronald Colman and Jane Wyatt in which he played a missionary; *Marie Antoinette* (1938), a Norma Shearer classic, and as an uncredited senator in James Stewart's award-winning *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939).

His movie acting was tested by a variety of roles in the 1930s in mysteries, horror films, westerns and even a musical: *Cipher Bureau* (1938 Thriller) starring Leon Ames; *Condemned to Live* (1935 Horror film) starring Ralph Morgan (Frank's brother); *Dangerous Lady* (1941 Mystery) starring



*(Stockdales of the Stage & Screen – continued from page 7)*

Neil Hamilton; *The Law Commands* (1938 Western) starring Tom Keene; *The Love Parade* (1929 Musical Comedy) starring Maurice Chevalier and Jeanette McDonald, in which he played the Admiral; he played a reporter in *Rawhide* (a 1938 Western) starring baseball great Lou Gehrig in his one-and-only screen appearance; he appeared as Ignacio MacDonald in *Revolt of the Zombies* (1936 Horror film) starring Dean Jagger and as the Morgue Keeper Schmidt in *The Vampire Bat* (a 1933 Horror film).

Carl's career came to an end in 1942 with bit parts in *The Falcon's Brother*, *The Daring Young Man* and *Tennessee Johnson*. Many of his films are available on the Internet.

Information about Carl's personal life is sparse. On the 1910 U.S. Federal Census, he appears as married in 1908 to a lady named Clara S. Stockdale and living in Spokane, Washington. Clara, an actress, was born in Illinois to German parents. They were no doubt divorced by 1918 as his World War I Registration Card lists his mother, Melissa C. Stockdale, as his closest living relative and both of them residing at the same address in Los Angeles. On the 1930 U.S. Census, he is listed as divorced and living with his brother Frank.



*The injured Carl with Polly Ann Young (Loretta's sister) and Buck Jones in THE CRIMSON TRAIL (Universal 1935)*



**Franklin Elwood "Frank" Stockdale**, Carl's older brother, also an actor, was born in Ohio on November 30, 1870. He appeared in a few films during the silent era including several of the Broncho Billy films with his brother and in Charlie Chaplin's classic *The Gold Rush* in 1925. I could find no record of any marriage. According to the 1920 U.S. Census, he was residing with his parents and his brother Carl in Los Angeles.

**James R. Stockdale**, Carl's oldest brother, was also an actor. He was born March 7, 1868, in Fairfield County, Ohio. According to the 1900 U.S. Federal Census, he was married to an actress named Rachel in 1892. Rachel was born in England in 1868 and immigrated to America in 1870. In 1910, they were residing in Manhattan, New York. I found no record of children from their union. James died November 14, 1906 and is buried in the New Salem Methodist Episcopal Cemetery, New Salem, Ohio.



*(Stockdales of the Stage & Screen – continued from page 7)*

**Frank Stockdale** died in Los Angeles County, California on December 31, 1950. **Carl Stockdale** died of a heart attack on March 15, 1953, at the age of 79, at the Motion Picture Home and Hospital, Woodland Hills, California. They are both entombed in Hollywood Forever Cemetery with their mother. Hollywood Forever Cemetery, originally called Hollywood Memorial Park, was founded in 1899. It is located on Santa Monica Boulevard adjacent to the back of Paramount Studios. It is the final resting place of many famous people and important personalities of the 20<sup>th</sup> century including Rudolph Valentino.

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Sources:

*The Descendants of Emanuel Ruffner and Magdalene Grove*, Barbara Rowles, RFA, June 2009.

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Carl Stockdale – Find A Grave Memorial, <http://www.findagrave.com>

*Broncho Billy, The First Western Movie Star*, [http://www.westernclassicmovies.com/special\\_profiles/](http://www.westernclassicmovies.com/special_profiles/)

Hollywood Forever Cemetery, [http://en.wikipedia/wiki/Hollywood\\_Forever](http://en.wikipedia/wiki/Hollywood_Forever)

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## **NEWS FROM THE RFA BOARD**

At the recent board meeting in Luray, graciously hosted by Donna & Bob Brown, the current officers agreed to retain their positions. There was one board resignation – Jane Munro Webber of Colorado. Her long past service is commended and appreciated. Two new members were welcomed to the board: **Betty Ann Axline of Luray, VA** and **Judy Henderson of Arlington, VA**.

Study continues on the development of a new website for the association.

Plans are underway to hold the 2013 Annual Board Meeting in Lancaster, Ohio. We hope those who missed the 1999 reunion will attend to see the “Fair Fields” where Emanuel made his home.

→ Photo shows Dorothy Ruffner Rinker and her three daughters (l-r) Susan Nolan, Pat Kaempf, RFA Secretary, and Phyllis Hershock, RFA President.







## ***Preservation of the Ruffner Family Archive and Historical Collection***

The Ruffner Family Association has taken a big step forward by cementing our relationship with **Longwood University in Farmville, VA.** On June 4, a small group of Ruffners met with **Suzy Palmer, the Dean of the Library at Longwood**, and she gave us many positive answers to our inquiries about the family archive and historical collection being housed in their facility. She understood our goals to have a secure home for the Ruffner collection, a location to do research, and digitization of some documents and photos being made available online in the future.

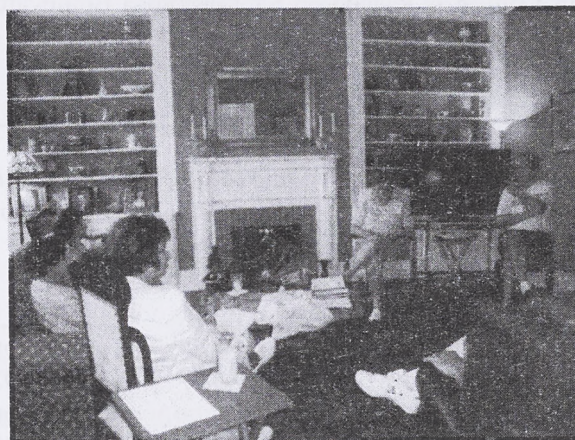
Dean Palmer outlined the steps to be taken for the preservation: Review incoming materials for duplicates and condition; next index file titles to be made available; move on to cataloging, and finally digitize items that could be accessed online. This will be a lengthy endeavor but will provide long term preservation for family documents & photos, and offer opportunities for others to broaden their knowledge of Ruffner history.

The first step will be the association signing an agreement with Longwood University. After this is in place, family members who wish to contribute their documents or pictures will work through the RFA, signing an agreement with the association before any materials start their journey into the collection. We hope to meet the needs of current family members eager to have some of their precious holdings in a safe

place and open the door for gathering primary sources for research at Longwood.

We will be providing updates as this process moves forward.

*~ Phyllis Hershock, RFA President*



*Pictured at the Ruffner House (left to right) Donna Brown, Suzy Palmer, Phyllis Hershock, Nancy Lee Shifflett and Sam McNeely. Also present at the meeting were Bob Brown, Jim and Judi McNeely.*

## ***Ruffner Hall – Longwood University***



was built in 1839 as the "College Building" and later named for William Henry Ruffner, first president of the State Female Normal School in Farmville, VA (1884-1887). This beautiful building is now "the heart" of Longwood University, a co-educational, state-supported institution with 4800 students.



## *Benamins, Benamins, Where For Art Thou?*

The year 2012 is a big year in the history and anniversaries for the **Ruffner Family in America**. We have just finished a fine reunion, joining with the citizens of Luray, in celebrating their Bicentennial. And that was **BIG STUFF** for the history books. Everything about Luray shouts "Ruffner" from being created out of the Homestead lands of our ancestors, Peter & Mary – to the lands they gave to their sons and daughter all along the beautiful Hawksbill Creek – to the discovery of Ruffner Cave, now the historic Luray Caverns. But let's not forget this is also the **Bicentennial of the War of 1812** in which the second and third generations of Ruffners established their reputations as patriots and participants in the effort to drive the British Armies once again from our American shores. Relive that history when you visit the ancient barn on the Emanuel Ruffner farm near Lancaster, Ohio. There you will see the original Ruffner Conestoga wagon used to take goods and produce to Pittsburgh & Philadelphia, as the records show. It was there in Fairfield County, Ohio in 1805 that many of the second and third generations had emigrated from the Shenandoah Valley as the gates were opened up to populate the Northwest Territory. While the town of Luray was being born a great tragedy was taking place in Ohio with the **massacre of Martin Ruffner on September 15, 1812**. A monument now stands in his memory, yet that memory grows cold. What happened to his siblings: **Peter, Benjamin II, Mary, Regina, Ann, Emanuel, Reuben, Abraham, Elizabeth, Barbara, Michael and Catharine**? Where did the grandchildren go? Where are the many descendants of Peter & Mary's second born, **Benjamin**? Are you one of them?



So, this is **A Rally Cry** for those descendants to answer the questions and help to

publish **The BENJAMIN RUFFNER STORY**. This will be the fifth of the genealogy/histories of the six children of Peter & Mary. Many of you have seen the volumes edited and published by the RFA, thanks to the stalwart efforts of Mark & Pam Flasch assisted by so many descendants of Joseph, Peter, Jr., Reuben and Emanuel. Yet, until we complete the Benjamin Story, the history of the Ruffners in America will be incomplete.

### *We have a Benjamin Editor*



Now is the time for all of us "**Bennies**" to get on the genealogy stick and send our records, forms, charts, photos, histories and updates to our cousin, **Sharon Hastings**, who most

graciously has accepted the task to complete the **Benjamin Ruffner Story**. But, remember, the success of her efforts and editing will only be as good as the materials we send to her. **Even if you responded in 2000 when the first call went out, send any additions, corrections, death dates, marriage dates, family births, etc.**

Send your forms, charts, research, photos and information to: **Sharon Hastings, 9852 State Route 55, Saint Paris, OH 43072; (937) 964-8596 or cell (937) 344-8596. Her Email is <shastings@ctcn.net>**. If you have materials, be sure and let her know through Email or by phone, just what you have and will be sending to her.

OK cousins of the ***Big and Fabulous Benjamin Branch*** – let's make it happen this time.

~ *Robert Newman Sheets*

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*Sometimes the poorest man  
leaves his children  
the richest inheritance.*

~ *Ruth E. Renkel*





## ***Ruffner News from the Past*** By Betty Lou Gaeng

While scanning newspaper articles from a publication which once served south Snohomish County, WA, where I have lived most of my life, I was surprised to find two articles pertaining to Ruffner descendants of Reuben, the fourth son of our pioneers Peter and Mary (Steinman) Ruffner.

The newspaper was *The Tribune Review* of Edmonds, Snohomish County, Washington dated Friday, September 27, 1912. The articles as shown below refer to Albert Everett and Rebecca Ruffner, the parents of Edmund Burch "Tiny" Ruffner.

**LOST** – Sunday evening, between Richmond Highlands and Ronald, a gray Australian opossum cape collar, gray silk lined; reward, A.E. Ruffner, Ballard 509.

Mr. and Mrs. Ruffner of Ballard spent Sunday visiting Mr. and Mrs. Henry Perry, and while returning to the car line by way of the sanitarium, Mrs. Ruffner lost an expensive gray Australian possum fur and has not succeeded to find it yet. This was a sad ending to an otherwise pleasant visit.

This family was featured in two articles in Ruffner Roots & Ramblings: *The Voice of Radio*, Vol. 7, Issue #3, September 2004 and *The Voice of Ballard*, Vol. 7, Issue #4, December 2004.

Ballard is located in north Seattle, King County, Washington; about 15 miles south of Edmonds. Richmond Highlands and Ronald were approximately five miles south of Edmonds.



## ***THE CRADLE CORNER***

### **AVERY SAMARA HOLT (*Gen. 11*)**

Born January 28, 2012 – 6 lbs. 2 oz. - 19-1/2"

**Parents:** Kelli Nieman & Aljeron Holt

Lineage: Sheilah Nieman, Lois Archambeau, Everett Stuart, Hiram Clay, William Stuart, Isaac, Jacob and Emanuel Ruffner.

### **SAM OLIVER RUFFNER (*Gen. 10*)**

Born April 16, 2012 – 6 lbs. 15 oz. - 19.75"

**Parents:** Beth & Steve Ruffner

Lineage: Norman Stuart, Everett Stuart, Hiram Clay, William Stuart, Isaac, Jacob and Emanuel Ruffner.

*This plot of orchard-  
ground is ours;  
My trees they are,  
my sister's flowers;  
Here rest your wings  
when they are weary;  
Here lodge as in a  
sanctuary!*

*Come often to us,  
fear no wrong;  
Sit near us on the bough!  
We'll talk of sunshine and of song,  
And summer days, when we were young;  
Sweet childish days, that were as long  
As twenty days are now.*

*From "To a Butterfly"  
by William Wordsworth*

