

Extracts from letters written by Kermit Burleson, to Jack Cole, great grandson of George W. Cole. Kermit was a former neighbor of the George Cole family in Barnardsville

"George cole was married two times, and I am sure he married a Greenwood the first time. He had three girls, and one boy by the Greenwood woman. One married Jeff Anders, one married Emmett Williams. The other one married Joe Rhea, I think. The boy was named Rom Cole. Rom Cole was the man that George Cole's second wife split his head open with that pole ax that George used when he chased Chief Greenwood. But that's another story. The great whitecapping story will come later. That was a honey. It was known as the 'great whitecapping trial of Bit Ivy.'

"I asked Chief that night if anyone ever tried to kill him or hurt him for the tricks he had pulled on them. Oh, yes, he said. He said GEORGE COLE cut my overcoat off me with a pole ax. Chief said one night before Christmas I broke the ice in the creek and got a 3 gal. bucket of water (ice water) and knocked on George Cole's door at midnight. George came to the door barefooted and nothing on but his long-handles. Chief put the 3 gal. of water in George's face and run. (There was 2 foot of snow on the ground) and there was a pole ax leaning against the door casing. Chief jumped off the porch, and George 8 feet behind him with the pole ax, and down through bottom they went. Chief had short legs - George was 6 foot six, and skinny as a bean pole. There was a cross fence 1/3 of a mile down the bottom. Chief jumped the fence - George hit the wire fence hard, and Chief was long gone by the time George got on his feet again. Zero weather, and George no shoes or clothes on. Chief said about every 15 feet George would strike at him with that pole ax, and hit the tail of his overcoat every time he would strike. You may not believe this, but that some pole ax was used to split a man's head open, years later. The Court records prove that to be the truth. But that's another story.

"If you wonder why George Cole tried so hard to kill Chief that night with the pole ax, about two months before Chief threw ice water on George, Chief shot him with polkberries.

"Here is how it happened. George's wife had died. His children were all growd up, married and out on their own. So old George decided he just might marry again, so he found a nice middleaged widow woman on Big Creek. The best way to get there was through Hemp Gap. That's a low place in the hill between North Fork and Big Creek. Oh, George was happy and Chief just could not stand to see George happy. So one night Chief loaded up his old double barrel shot gun - muzzle loading shot gun - with polk berries, and goes down to Hemp Gap to wait on George, and George came through the gap at about 10 PM. Chief walked out from a pine tree and said, George, I've come to kill you. So Chief shot him in the chest with both barrels. George fainted. Chief walked up behind another pine tree. In about 10 minutes George came to life again. He looked down and saw all those polkberries he thought was blood. George let out a blood curdling scream and started running down the hill. Rich Cole lived down at the bottom of the hill. Rich heard George screaming and met him at the door. George said, I've been killed. He said, Chief killed me. Where, Rich asked? Where? George said, up in Hemp Gap. Rich said that's polkberries. You are not even hurt. George said, I'll kill Chief Greenwood for this. So, two months later George tried his best to kill Chief with that pole ax."

In reference to Chief's popularity in the community, Mr. Burleson said that Chief had thousands of friends. He was welcome in every home except George Cole's.

"In my book Chief Greenwood was at the top of the list. He hurt no one and he sure made a lot of people happy. Oh, he scared the Devil out of George Cole a few times. Maybe it helped George for Chief to put that fear in his soul. George was a Cole and the Coles was hard to get along with.

"Oh, yes, about the Whitecapping Trial of Big Ivy. That was a honey. It happened at George Cole's home. George's boy Rom got his head cut open with George's pole ax. George's second wife was the one that fixed him up. She was young, and a Big, Big, Big woman from one of the western N.C. counties.

"No, Chief was not in any way mixed up in this whitecapping case. When someone ask Chief why he was not mixed up in it, Chief said, my Daddy did not raise any crazy children."

Note - the next extract is from a letter dated only April 18th - It may have been written in 1986 and would be the first rather than the last.

"You are right. George Cole had one boy and three girls. One married Joe Rhea (E. Loretta Cole, married Joseph L. Ray). I don't remember her name. She was older. Then there was Lou Williams, she married Emmett Williams. I guess her name was Louise but I never heard her called anything but Lou. The other girl was named Arzella but no one would know her by that name. Everyone called her Dow Williams. "Dow lived to be in her 90's. She married Jeff Anders the first time. Jeff died. She and Jeff had 4 children - 3 girls and 1 boy. Then she married Gus Williams. He was a brother to Lou's husband Emmett. Lou died in the 40's, but Dow was still on her feet when I came back from World War II, 1945. She died in the early 50's. Rom Cole went west, and he never came back. His sister Lou Williams beat Rom out of some land left by George Cole. Rom never got over it. The Coles were like that. Dow Williams and Gus Williams separated after being married 3 or 4 years. They never spoke after they separated. They both died mad at each other. They did not get that from the Greenwoods. That was all Cole .

".....Chief did not think much of anyone that had anything to do with the Coles. I thought a lot about why Chief was so hard on the Coles. The Coles were hard to get along with, and George was married to a Greenwood. (She just might have been mistreated by George Cole. That could be.)

"Dow Williams told me that her sister - the one that married Joe Rhea (E. Loretta Cole, married Joseph L. Ray) - told her that if she knew the blood vessel that the Cole blood run in that she would cut it and let the Cole blood run out. Dow was half Cole, but she sure was not proud of it.

"My family thought a lot of Dow Williams. We were neighbors from 1918 to the early 1950's. She had plenty of good common sense. She sure gave me some good advice when I was growing up.

" I've got to put in just a little about the Chief. He told me this one night we set up all night. He said one night he went up by George Cole's house and he had pulled in a lot of logs for wood - big logs. So Chief pulls in one to George's door and leans it up against the door. Then knocks on the door until a light come on, then runs out behind the smoke house and watches. George came to the door and opened it. The log caught George just below the chin. Down went George with the log on

top of him. Chief was gone by the time George got the log off him.
That's just one reason George Cole did not like the Chief."