



1988 Cline Reunion

by Metaleen Cline Morgan Thomas

In 1987, Mike Gentry was living in Miami, Florida. He was an avid Cline family historian (his grandmother, Jennie Cline, was the daughter of Jason Jerome Cline). Preparing for a trip to North Carolina to do more research, he called my mother, Metaleen Elizabeth Cline Morgan who lived in Hickory, NC, and asked if he could go through her attic, looking for family photos and historical documents. She replied, “no” but he could call her oldest daughter, me, who was interested in family history.

Mike called me and I was thrilled. Finally someone could tell me something about my family’s background – at least my mother’s side of the family. At that time, my mother had no interest in genealogy. She had never taken her children, me being the oldest, to meet any extended family members. We knew our cousins, children of her sisters, Margaret Cline Ritchie, and Sara Kate Cline Mashaw, but no others. It didn’t matter that her father grew up in Conover, NC – an adjacent town to Hickory, or that other Clines lived nearby. We, the children, knew no one, had never met anyone, and had never been shown family ancestral homes or churches. So, here was my chance to learn about the Clines, my mother’s side of the family. I was in 7th Heaven! Finally, I could be taught about family history, who was whom, and where they lived both today and in the past.

Mike drove to Hickory with his family (wife Miriam, and small children Michael and Christina Gentry) and checked into a motel. I, Metaleen Thomas (sometimes called Tookie, my family nickname), went to the motel and picked up the Gentry family. That’s when I got my first taste of family history. Mike took me on a family tour, seeing churches, old family homes (or where they once stood), and introduced me to a few family members – people whom I had never known. He filled my head with stories about the family – and the people I never new existed. I’ll never forget that day – one that opened doors to a whole new world for me, a day that ignited my interest in genealogy, one that led to welcoming hundreds of new people into my life through family reunions – and I’m related to all of them! What a grand turning point in my life.

I’ll never forget driving into Ira Cline’s drive way that day. There, Mike introduced me to Ira and Ann Cline. We were talking in their driveway when I asked if they had every held family reunions, and if so, could I come and meet some of the family. Ira told me that no reunions were ever held, nor any planned, but I could organize one. However, in that simple conversation that day, in Ira’s driveway, the modern Cline reunions were born. Little did I know at that point what was to evolve from that simple conversation. Knowing no one except my mother’s sisters and their families, I knew I would be no help in organizing such an event. So, Ira and Ann took it on themselves to begin to collect a “Cline list of relatives” – our 1st Cline mail list – and plan the first modern Cline reunion with help from Mike Gentry.

The reunion was held on June 25-26, 1988, a Saturday and Sunday, at St. John’s Lutheran Church in Conover, NC. This was Ira and Ann Cline’s home church, one of the many “Cline churches” in the area. My sister, Pat Morgan, created a registration flyer (left). Mike Gentry served as president that year, and Ira & Ann Cline were the contacts.

To my disappointment, I was not able to go. That year, I had been accepted for a Fulbright Scholarship to Israel and Egypt, so I was not even in the country for the first Cline Reunion, the one I had asked for. However, my husband, and son, Ben Thomas, and sister, Pat Morgan, went in my place.



There was an agenda for the two days (right) – again created by sister Pat Morgan. According to others, it was a great gathering (though very hot at St. John’s which had no air-conditioning at the time). There are about 95 people in this group photo.

