DURBIN-LOGSDON SETTLEMENT DOWN IN CHRISTIAN COUNTY

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In passing though the country to the southwest of Clarksdale in Christian County, IL, one finds a certain piece of land that excites curiosity, since the timber thereon does not conform with the natural growth in that vicinity. The place is covered with trees of large size, some two feet through their body. While wondering why this fifteen acre patch is different from the neighboring woods, one might find a few fragments of broken pottery. There is nothing on the market today that resembles the place. One is reminded of mound builders or cliff dwellers. This place is two miles from Clarksdale and about the same from Palmer, near Bear Creek. Investigation shows that his timber was once a "clearing", a farm and the timber has grown thereon since it had fallen into disuse for agricultural purposes.

ONCE A HOMESTEAD

This fifteen acres was the original homestead of the Durbins, who settled there at a date that must be several years in advance of the setting-up of Illinois. Records written only in memory, transform into tradition with the next generation and therefore the most interesting part of the story must be omitted for lack of facts concerning the earliest settlers of Illinois.

The curious looking patch of timber was where the Durbins saw fit to locate, but there would seem to be no particular reason why as everything must have been woods alike, and this place would have been in what was then heavy timbered land on all sides. An opening may have been there, but most likely the Durbins cleared the place of timber in building cabins, fences, etc. All trace of buildings has disappeared beyond the memory of the present generation and the forest has reclaimed the tract so many years since that huge trees occupy the once cultivated land.

TRACES OF INDIANS

A crude watermill was operated in the vicinity of Bear Creek where fragments of the dam and millstones were in evidence many years afterward. It is known that Indians traded at this place and nearby is where Black Hawk camped on his march to Starved Rock. In connection with this, a long string of Indian beads were plowed up at that point about three years ago which is believed to have belonged to the Black Hawk warriors. They are now in the possession of Q. S. Simpson of Palmer.

BACK TO 1776

Still in evidence are fragments of a log cabin which was in ruins with the first recollection of the oldest inhabitant and a cemetery are near. There, gravestones bear inscriptions, rudely cut, dating back to 1776. Among the early settlers were the Lees, Boyds, Vandeveres, Simposons, Hewitts, Clarks, Murphys, Taylors, Logsdons and Durbins, but it is claimed that the Durbins and Logsdon families were many years in advance of the other families.

Bringing the story down to a more recent date, we must give the Logsdons a place since our story is of the Durbin-Logsdon settlement. "Aunt Betsey" Logsdon of Taylorville, now ninety years of age, but with faculties fifty years younger, is the living monument of the older generation of Durbin-Logsdon families of which we have any record.

BACK 200O YEARS

The connection of the two families must have started at an early day, since we find on record in Baltimore, MD., that ELijah Logsdon and Nancy Durbin were married nearly 200 years ago. Going on down through the

records, we find that Dan Cupid rarely every ventured outside of the two families to make "two hearts to beat as one."

Josephus Durbin, born on Bear Creek ninety-three years ago, was wedded to a Miss Logsdon, taking, it is said, the first marriage license in those parts. On down the records we find the Logsdons marrying Durbins and the Durbins marrying Logsdons in amazing regularity. A complex relationship that in some cases would be difficult to untangle. It is claimed by some that the two types, Logsdons on one side and Durbins on the other, are so prounounced that a stranger might segregate the two families.

MILL WAS OLD LONG AGO

Daniel Durbin was probably the first white man to locate here, but the date is lacking. "Aunt Betsey" Logsdon played about the Mill when she was eight years old, that is eighty years ago, and the Mill was then very old and about past its usefulness. Daniel was then quite an old man.

The two families were very prolific, both Durgins and Logsdons, rearing large families and strong ties of friendship always existed to the extent that any unusual occurrence, such as a dance or a butchering was a signal for all members of both families to be present. On these occasions a delegation from another community, a sort of branch of the same family, would attend, coming in several wagons from near Owaneco, several miles across the prairie.

While these people had some unusual traits they were a kind-hearted, honest family, and it is said that they have contributed to the up-building of the community in many ways and perhaps more abundantly that any other of the early settlers.

ALL JOHNS OR WILLIAMS

One characteristic trait of the family is that of making a namesake of every male child born into these families. Each of the many families have their "John" and their "William", Durbin or Logsdon as the case may be. So many of these names are used that it becomes absolutely necessary to use a second name or letter or nickname in connection as a means of distinguishing them. Where "John B", "John C.", "John L.", etc., failed to suffice, a suggestive prefix was used, such as "Rugger John", "Bee Hunter John", "Mule Jim", "Pious Joe," etc. through a long list of Jims, Johns and Bills: one Bill got in a little late–one of the younger set–and failed to connect with a prefix, so he must be content to worry along through life with an affix and be known as "Billy Beans" so as to distinguish him from a grandfather, two uncles, some nephews and about sixteen cousins.

These families, locating in the wood as was the custom of early settlers, have always adjusted themselves to the environment and while hunting and trapping occupied their time in earlier days, the march of civilization was gradually brought upon them the necessity of agricultural pursuits. But their ambition has never been such that the accumulation of wealth would interfere with the enjoyments of life and while very content with little of the country's wealth, they have always made the best of their surroundings and kept pace with their neighbors in up to date methods.

There is considerable talent and progressiveness in the present generation of the Durbin and Logsdon families since they are weaned from the backwoods ways of their ancestors and it is said that Dan Cupid is now being given more free rein in matching hearts and there is more often marriages with those outside of their own people than formerly.

M.S. P. (Author)

JOSEPHUS DURBIN, MENTIONED IN 1912 DECATUR DAILY REVIEW ARTICLE-MY GREAT-GRANDFATHER

Josephus Durbin was born 11 Jan. 1818 on Bear Creek in Christian County, IL the son of Stumpy John and Elizabeth Betty Oller Durbin. In 1838, Josephus was married to Miss Elizabeth Simpson by Squire Joseph P. Durbin, magistrate of Bear Creek Township at Palmer, IL. Josephus and Elizabeth had the distinction of being the first couple to obtain a marriage license and marry in Christian County. It was then called Dane County. The couple had five children before Elizabeth died about 1868.

Josephus married a second time to Margaret Peggy Logsdon Burtle, a widow. Peggy and Josephus had 2 children, William Thomas and Sarah Jane, my maternal grandmother. When Sarah was 5 years old, her mother Peggy died and is buried in the Simpson-Reisler Cemetery 2 miles west of Clarksdale.

Josephus married a third time to Sarah Hinkle Painter, a widow with 3 sons. They had 2 children, Isaac and Elizabeth. The photo below was taken at the marriage of Josephus Durbin and Sarah Hinkle Painter in 1891. The couple homesteaded at Lebanon, MO for the next 10 years, returning to Clarksdale, IL about 1900. My grandmother Sarah Jane, age 7 is at her father's knee with her brother Tom behind.

Josephus was the 14th child of Stumpy John and Elizabeth 'Betty' Oller Durbin. They were early pioneers to Christian Co. arriving from Kentucky about 1818, the year Illinois became a state.

Stumpy John Durbin was born in colonial Maryland in 1767, the son of John Drubin, Sr. and Ann Logsdon. He was known throughout his life as "Stumpy" because of his small stature. When KY lands were opened following the Louisiana Purchase, the family moved to Madison Co. KY where Stumpy John and his brother Tom mined salt near the present day Mammouth Cave in Edmonson Co, KY. before moving on to IL.

Stumpy John Durbin, my great-great-grandfather, died at Bear Creek Township near Palmer, IL in 1831. His wife Betty, my great-great-grandmother died there in 1842. They are buried in the Durbin Cemetery, now called St. Joseph Cemetery, Section 15 at Palmer, IL. Their Durbin descendants still reside in the area today.

Corrections to 1912 Article:

1. Josephus Durbin married Miss Elizabeth Simpson in 1838, the first couple to wed in Christian County, IL.. His second wife was Margaret Peggy Lodgson, (my g-grandmother). His third wife was Sarah Hinkle Painter.
2. Thomas Durbin, b. England 1651, m. Mary Downes and d. in Baltimore, MD. Wm. Logsdon, b. England and Honora O'Flynn, b. Ireland m. in St. James Anglican Church 1723, Baltimore, MD. Their daughter Ann Logsdon m. Samuel Durbin. The Durbin and Logsdon families have married long before the Revolutionary War.

Shirley Waterman Harris, 2008
A Durbin Decscendant