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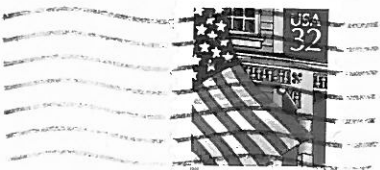
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Mr. Philip Griffith, *Editor*

FROM MARYLAND TO KENTUCKY

Introduction

by William E. Simpson

We read about families who left Chrales and St. Mary's Counties and moved to Kentucky, Illinois and other places south and west in the 1700s and early 1800s. This article will give you a real story of a family moving from Charles County to Kentucky in the year 1809.

The first child of James and Elizabeth, Matilda, was born in 1805. In the following five years, they had two sons, Christopher and Thomas J., and a daughter, Susan.

At this time, for several reasons, James and Elizabeth were thinking seriously about moving to Kentucky. The price of tobacco was high but production was low because of worn-out soils. This did not concern James too much because he was not a tobacco farmer. However, his corn and other crops did suffer from poor soils. Carpentry was only part of his income. The population of Maryland in 1800 was only one third of what it was in 1740. There were abandoned houses, churches and warehouses. Overgrown fields and falling down fences were a common sight. In spite of this, farm prices were high, between 14 and 50 dollars per acre, while in Kentucky, good land could be bought for two to three dollars per acre. Planters with large families did not have land to set up their sons in farming. Not only was land cheap in Kentucky, but taxes also were much cheaper.

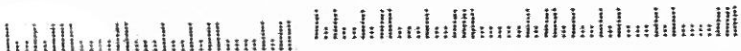
Probably the greatest influence on James and Elizabeth was news from relatives in Kentucky. The father of James had a cousin, Joseph Simpson, who moved to Kentucky in the 1780s. His father also had two brothers who moved to Washington County, Kentucky in the 1790s. These families told of rich soils supporting crops of cane and rye and bluegrass which could be bought for two dollars per acre. They also told of trees over 100 feet tall, a sign of excellent soil. It didn't take James and Elizabeth very long to begin planning a trip to. It seemed everyone else was going and they did not want to be left out.

James had a wife, and four children who were hardly more than babies. He would be careful not to endanger his young family on the long, hard trip any more than necessary. To take livestock would make the long trip longer. His wagon was too light and his oxen too slow. He needed a strong wagon and four good horses. He decided to sell his wagon and livestock, including his oxen and all but two of his horses and buy what he needed to ensure a safe trip.

After several weeks, he found a conestoga wagon and four large horses owned by a freighter in Port Tobacco who was retiring from business. Port Tobacco was still an important shipping port for tobacco to Europe and wheat to Baltimore and Wilmington, Delaware, where there were several flour mills. Hogheads of tobacco and wheat demanded a heavy wagon.

The conestoga was hand-built of special woods. The wheel spokes were of hickory for strength. The felloes (wheel rims) had to be of white oak which would not warp. the hubs were made of blackgum which seldom split. All of these wheel parts were united under pressure with a red hot rim one-half-inch thick and three inches wide. The axle beds were made of tough beech and the running gear of heavy oak. The box or bed was made of poplar which was both light and strong. The bed was higher in front and back than in the center. this prevented loads from shifting when going up and down steep hills. The wagon had a tailgate which would let down to the ground for easy loading. Large ash hoops held a white canvas top which slanted over the front and back ends for protection of load or passengers.

The wagon James bought had a 10 foot bed 42



inches wide with 24 inch sides. The rear wheels were 48 inches high. The wagon weighed 2,000 pounds empty. The horses were a hybrid of Dutch and Flemish draft horses.

By the time James paid for his horses and wagon, he had only a few hundred dollars left. It was enough to buy 200 acres of land, but he decided to carry it in silver.

They were ready to go by the middle of September. James loaded his tools, bedding, and household goods such as pots, pans and utensils.

He purchased a long drag chain, tar keg to lubricate the wheels, wagon jack, and extra horse shoes and nails with the wagon. If the wagon became stuck in a river bottom, James would take the extra team and the drag chain to help the two teams of big horses. After all their clothes, food and personal items were loaded, James added as much corn for the horses as he thought they could easily pull. He knew that the further he traveled away from their old home, the lighter the wagon would become.

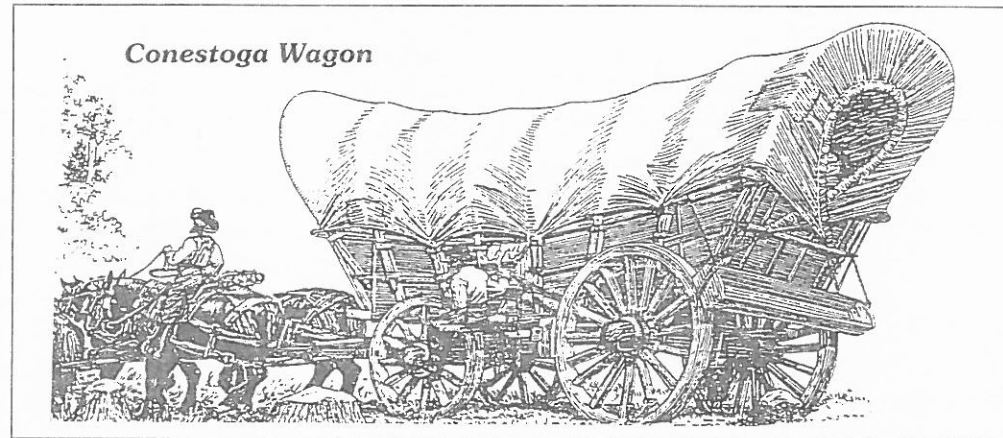
In 1805, James' mother had given him a 19 year -old slave named Robert. Robert's first duty was to tend the livestock and his second to raise a corn crop. Sometimes, during the winters, he helped James with the carpentry work. In June, three months before she left for Kentucky, Elizabeth was given a slave named Ann by her father. On the first day of September, Robert and Ann were baptized and married by the priest when he held Mass at the Newport church. On the trip to Kentucky, Ann would be a big help to Elizabeth with the children and Robert would look after the horses and wagon.

They left Newport early on September 15. James and Robert took turns driving the wagon. When they weren't driving, they rode an extra horse. Elizabeth usually rode the wagon, but at times switched with Ann on the extra horse to break the monotony.

They drove five miles southwest from Newport to Pope's Creek Landing on the Potomac, where they took the ferry to Mathias Point in Virginia.

They had to ferry across one team and the

two extra horses first. The ferry barge was only 24 feet long and there was not room for the wagon and both teams. One team could pull the wagon down the slope to the ferry, but not off the ferry and up the slope on the south side of the river. Crossing the river and hooking and unhooking teams took two hours. The ferryman charged them five cents for each horse and each adult, plus 20 cents for the wagon, or a total of 70 cents. By nightfall, they had gone 15 miles more to the Rappahannok River. Here, they could easi-



ly ford the river but they decided to wait until morning.

Every night they unhitched the horses and hobbled them. They would fill the two feedboxes on the side of the wagon with corn or sometimes oats. Later, they would lead the horses to water and also pasture, if there were any. At night they would also jack up, in turn, the axle bed of each wheel, remove the wheel and grease the hub. The grease was a mixture of tar and oil kept in a bucket which hung from a hook on the rear axle. The next day they forded the Rappahannok and continued south for two more days. They came to Richmond on the north bank of the James River and camped for the night. In the morning they had to go west about 10 miles before they found a ford to cross the James, and then it was west toward the Blue Ridge Mountains. It took them a week to reach Blue Ridge Gap. They were averaging 20 miles per day.

After they were through the Blue Ridge, they entered the Great Wagon Road which ran southwest between the Blue Ridge and Appalachian Mountains. Many settlers from Pennsylvania and western Maryland used this road to settle in Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia and the Carolinas. The

ter fodder. The ears were later stored in cribs and shelled in the barn in early winter.

Corn for their kitchen and still was packed to the grist mill at St. Rose. They paid for the grinding with part of the corn. The mill was built for the original landowner, John Waller, by Nehemiah Webb, a famous millright from Bardstown. Now, the mill was operated by the Dominicans. In times of drought, with not enough water in Cartwright's Creek to turn the 12 foot waterwheel, they operated a horse mill at the same site. This was very seldom. A team of horses would slowly circle the mill and turn the top stone.

Until the farm-to-market roads were built to centers such as Louisville, there wasn't a good market for much corn. James fed many hogs and every winter, herded them to Parker's Station (now Fredericktown) on Beech Fork. There, Parker butchered them, stored the salted meat in hogsheads and shipped them by flatboat to New Orleans, Louisiana.

Most long distant transportation was by packhorse. A packhorse could carry four bushels of corn in solid form. The same horse could carry the equivalent of 24 bushels in liquid form. Most corn farmers in the area at that time, including James, made their surplus corn into whiskey.

James set up a 50 gallon still on Parker's Run, where there was plenty of clean water. The corn for the still was ground at St. Rose in the usual way. He placed the ground corn in oak barrels to make mash. Malt cut the fermentation time from 14 to 7 days. Malt was made by placing shelled corn in burlap bags and pouring hot water over it. The bags were covered with straw so that sprouts two to three inches long would grow. These were dried and ground in the grist mill. Hot water was added to them and this mixture added to the mash barrels. After seven days, the mash was ready to run (distill).

The still was set on a hearth of stones next to the creek. The mash was placed in the pot and a hot fire built under it. The still cap had a long spout which directed the distillate into the copper coil which was placed in a barrel. Water flowed through the barrel from a pipe fed by the creek.

The whiskey was run through the still again and then diluted with water to 100 proof (half alcohol). One bushel of ground corn produced about three gallons of whiskey which James hauled to Parker's Station. He averaged getting

15 cents per gallon for it. Parker loaded up to 250 barrels (8,500 gallons) on a flatboat. He shipped about 10 flatboats each year to Natchez, and New Orleans.

Bourbon County gave its name to corn whiskey aged in charred oak barrels. The charcoal purges impurities and gives the liquor an amber color and smooth oak-flavored body. The whiskey was aged several weeks. James would have to shake the barrels every day. When federal excise taxes were placed on whiskey during the Civil War, whiskey-making became much less attractive to corn farmers. However, by that time, good wagon roads were more common and in some places there were even railroads. Shelled corn was more easily shipped to distant markets.

Most neighbors in the region drank whiskey. When neighbors called, James was expected to have the whiskey bottle replenished. It was considered good manners and was embarrassing to have it empty. In the days before aspirin and antibiotics, whiskey was one of the few pain killers and anti-depressants available, along with quinine for malaria. One often had an ounce "to get started on" in the morning and after a hard 12 hour day, an ounce "to go to sleep on" at night. There were few drunks on the farm.

James never did get around to building a timber frame home on his original farm. He built a second log cabin attached to the first with a covered gallery between them. By 1826, James and Elizabeth had 14 children and they needed a larger home. James designed a two story timber frame house with four rooms down and two bedrooms upstairs. His and Elizabeth's bedroom was on the first floor, along with a sitting room, a kitchen-dining room and a work-storage room.

The last child born to James and Elizabeth was Julia in 1839. Elizabeth died in 1840. She was buried in St. Rose Cemetery on April 1st. of that year. Apparently the mother of 16 children doesn't have a tombstone. She is listed on the register as "Old Mrs. Simpson." James married Sarah McIntire, a widow, in 1852. James died in 1867 at the age of 90 without leaving a will. He is buried at St. Rose. Son Martin bought the interest of the other heirs in the land and personal property. The widow Sarah died in 1869 and is buried buried alongside James.

Editor's Note:

Permission to excerpt material from *Simon's Sons* granted by Charles A. Heavrin, author.

road here was well worn and pasture for the horses was scarce. The second day they came to New River. The river was not swift. The ford was deep, but not so deep that they had to use Ingle's ferry. The next night they camped at old Fort Chiswell, an outpost to which early settlers flocked when the Indians were in the vicinity. It was a long day (25 miles) to the Holston River. Since it had not rained for a week, they easily forded the river the next morning. That night they camped at Moccasin Gap and the next day they made a tough climb over Clinch Mountain into the Clinch River valley. The valley afforded such good pasture, that they stopped for two hours in the middle of the day to let the horses graze, with the permission of the landowner. James paid him with a silver coin. When they reached the river, they waited until morning to ford it. It took them two more days to reach Powell's Mountain.

It was a long, hard climb over the mountain and secondary ridge into Powell's valley. it took them all day. At one point, James helped the two teams with the drag chain and extra horses. The two women walked while Robert drove the wagon. They forded the head of Powell's River and rode southwest for two days down the flat, broad valley. The Appalachian Mountains on the right looked like a huge white wall. Until they saw the gap below Martin's Station, they worried that they could not cross them.

Martin's Station was the last outpost, 28 miles from Cumberland Gap. Fifteen years before, they would have had to leave their wagon and put all their belongings on pack horses and band together for protection against the Indians. Now, the Indians had been driven west and in 1795, Daniel Boone, with 30 men, had cut a wagon road through the gap and over the Wilderness Road.

When they reached Martin's Station two other families with wagons were there on their way to the gap. They became acquainted and one of them suggested that the three wagons travel together in case one of them had trouble with wagon or horses. James readily agreed. The next night they camped at the gap.

Then it was through the gap, a 45 degree climb for three miles over the mountain. there were twelve more miles of poor road between high mountains to the Cumberland River. As usual, they waited until morning to ford the stream. There were two more days over bad road to the

Laurel river, with tall mountains looking down on them all the way. The river crossing was very easy, and they arrived at the bank of the Rockcastle River the same night. After they forded the river the next day, the mountains turned to hills and by the time they reached English Station, even the hills disappeared.

At English Station, the Wilderness Road split. The east fork went to Boonesboro on the bank of the Kentucky River, then north to Blue Lick. The west fork, which James traveled, led to Crab Orchard, Danville and Harrodsburg. it took them two days to reach Danville. Here, they turned west toward Springfield, where Joseph Edelen, the cousin of Elizabeth's father, had settled. It was a long day from Danville to Springfield. They had come 550 miles in four weeks, an average of 20 miles per day. Most early settlers did not accomplish this. James had prepared well for the trip but they were still fortunate that they did not have illness, accident or bad weather to contend with.

When they reached Springfield, they were told that the cousin of Elizabeth's father, Joseph Edelen, lived on Pottinger's Creek, 12 miles west and that his cousin, Samuel Edelen, lived just three miles west on Cartwright's Creek, across from St. Rose Church. They drove two miles up the Bardstown Road and could see the church to the west, down in the valley. After crossing the creek to the church, they crossed the creek again and drove through a cornfield. Up on the ridge they came to Samuel's cabin.

James began thinking about how he would acquire land before he arrived at Samuel's place. many landowners would lease land or sell it for four or five annual payments. The best farmland in the area was on Cartwright's and Hardin's Creeks. But James soon found that the best land was not for sale. James decided to purchase land and pay for it over several years. He wanted to practice his carpentry profession rather than farm, but knew that he would have to do some farming for his family's sake. He had an agreement with St. Rose Church to work four days per week building a boys' school. He decided to let Robert do the farming and to raise only corn and livestock, which did not require as much labor as tobacco.

The first thing James did was to build a house. Most settlers put up a log cabin There was a log cabin in the clearing of two acres. He

was intrigued by the log cabin. It was so weather-tight compared to a timber and clapboard house and yet so simple. His building experience was only with frame houses. However, there wasn't time to locate a sawmill, haul lumber and build a frame house before winter. He had to clear land before spring. He would assign Robert and Ann the Log cabin and build another for his family which would only take three or four weeks. He planned to build a larger timber frame house the next year. Most settlers built a log cabin as a "temporary" home until they could get their fields cleared and have time to build a more permanent home. Many never found time away from their land clearing, planting, fencing, cultivation and harvesting to build another home. As soon as their annual winter clearing and firewood harvesting were over, it was time to begin planting again. As a result they often lived in their log cabins for decades.

James found a grove of tulipoplar trees about the right size (10 to 12 inches in diameter) for the cabin walls. He and Robert cut them into 16 and 18 foot lengths and skidded them to the cabin site with a chain and team of horses. James measured them and saddle-notched their ends.

After they had all of the logs ready, neighbors began showing up to help with the cabin raising. Everyone within a few miles was considered a neighbor. They took a day or two from their harvesting to help, just as James was expected to do when other new settlers moved in later. The first settlers often had to raise a cabin by themselves.

As they stacked the logs to make the walls, Robert sliced off any high spots with a sharp axe, so that the logs would fit together as closely as possible. When the walls were four feet high, they placed two poles with one end on the ground and the other on top of the walls and rolled the other logs up until the wall was seven feet high. When all the walls were up, the door and window openings were cut out. Elizabeth and Ann were continually chinking the cracks between the logs with a mixture of moss and wet clay. Poles for ceiling joists were laid across the cabin from the front to the back wall every three feet. At each end of the cabin, two poles were raised diagonally from the top of each corner and their ends tied to hold the ridge pole. Rafter poles were then laid from the ridge pole to the top of the front and back wall every three feet. This took two full days. The neighbors

then left James and Robert to finish the cabin.

In the spring of 1810, James and Elizabeth had decided to give Robert and Ann their freedom. James rode into Springfield and filed a manumission certificate with the county court. He gave both Ann and Robert a copy of their "freedom papers." They gave them the option of continuing to live in the cabin on their land or moving elsewhere. They agreed to let them farm most of the cleared acreage for a share of the crop and livestock production. In effect, Robert was leasing the land and paying in corn, hogs and dairy products. From time to time, when James would need his help, with a new house for instance, he would pay Robert wages.

As his sons Christopher, Thomas J. and Robert became old enough to farm, James thought about acquiring a larger farm and spending more time farming and less time following his carpentry trade. In 1826, he agreed to purchase 180 acres over five years from James Riney. The farm was about five miles west of St. Rose near Bear Wallow, at the head of Parker's Run. He made the final payment and received the deed in 1831. The selling price was Six-hundred-sixty-six dollars and 66 2/3 cents." Here, James' main crop was corn and hogs.

He had problems with corn in Kentucky he did not have in Maryland. Crows and squirrels waited until the corn plants were just breaking the surface to tell them where the germinating corn seed was located. Until the plants were head high, he lost much corn to deer at night and ate much venison in the spring. As soon as the corn was in ear, there were raccoons every night. He even shot two bears in his corn field in 1826. Elizabeth liked bear much better than venison. She said that it was not as dry.

James grew 60 bushels of corn to the acre. The family and all the livestock ate it; the horses, cows, sheep, hogs and chickens. James even noticed that once his coon dog, "Old Blue," ate cornbread, he would not touch wheat bread later, even though it was like a delicacy to the family. They could hardly wait each summer until the green corn formed "roasting ears." After it was too hard for eating this way, it was rubbed across a tin grater which reduced the kernels to a pulp for cooking. When the corn ears began to harden, the leaves below them and the tops above them were pulled or cut and hauled to the barn for win-