



ALEXANDER JOYCE

By Jean Jorgensen

Alexander Joyce, of Scotch-Irish descent, was born January 31, 1812 in Rockingham County, North Carolina. He was the son of John Joyce and Lucy Edwards, and the grandson of James Joyce who died in Rockingham County by November, 1798.

When Alexander was about 13 years of age, the family removed to Grainger County, Tennessee where they remained until about 1845. Part of the family remained in Grainger County; Alexander migrated to Washington County, Arkansas; his parents went to Trigg County, Kentucky.

The first wife of Alexander Joyce was Delila Kirk (b. ca 1812, d. 1840-41), daughter of Ezekiel Kirk and Colis (Coly) Simpson. They married September 9, 1831 and their children were: William, who married Emeline Stone April 24, 1855; Martha (b. July 15, 1835, d. April 9, 1909) who married Jonathan C. Cloer August 15, 1854; James Thomas (b. January 5, 1837, d. July 21, 1917) who married Eliza Cloer August 9, 1855; and Coly Elizabeth (b. ca 1839, d. 1867-70) who married John B. Cloer June 5, 1856.

Alexander's second wife was Serena Sunderland (b. August 6, 1816, d. February 8, 1897), daughter of James Sunderland and Rebecca Daniel. Their children were: Sarah (d. in Oklahoma) who married John Oxford June 1, 1862; Mary Delila (b. ca 1845) who probably married first to Henry G. Cloer and second to A.P. Barnes; Edna Malissa (b. ca 1847) who married first to W.G. Finley and second to Fletcher Clayton; John Alexander (b. April 8, 1849, d. June 19, 1921) who married Lavania Combs September 30, 1869; and Margaret Theodocia (b. December 19, 1851, d. August 28, 1885) who married John D. Savage.

By 1850 there were two Joyce families in Washington County — the family of Alexander and the family of Clinton Joyce. The two families were distantly related as Alexander and Clinton had the same great-grandfather (Alexander Joyce of Virginia and North Carolina). Clinton Joyce lived in Hickman County, Tennessee before moving to Washington County and was later a resident of Bell County, Texas.

Two sons of Alexander served during the Civil War, Bill with the Union army and Tom with the Confederacy, and for the rest of their lives they argued about the war. The war also affected Alexander as he was among the many ambushed by bushwhackers. His son Bill found him tied to a tree and he had been shot at close range. Although he did survive the wounds, he was blinded by the attack. Later a table was made from the tree and later still, the table was thrown into a dry well.

Alexander Joyce died April 24, 1884. He and his wife Serena are buried in the Joyce Cemetery north of Goshen.

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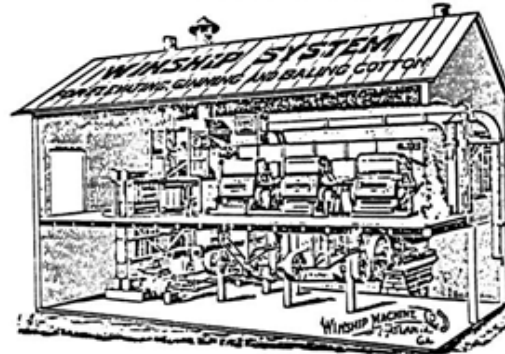
The court records of Rockingham County, North Carolina have numerous entries for Joyces. Some of the early records are listed as John Joyce Coon, John Joyce Possum, Thomas Joyce son of Coon, etc. Family tradition has it that two cousins (each named John, one the son of Alexander and the other the son of Thomas) went coon hunting. They had each taken a son with them. After the coon was caught, the sons started fighting about whose dog caught the coon. Observing the fight, one father remarked, "My son bites like a coon," and the other father said, "My son fights like a possum." Thereafter, members of one family were known as "coons" and the other as "possums."

Even now, 200 years after the big coon hunt, upon learning you are a Joyce relation, the first question asked is whether you are a coon or a possum. Be prepared!! Alexander Joyce of Rockingham County, North Carolina, Grainger County, Tennessee, and Washington County, Arkansas was more closely related to John Joyce Possum.



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