

German Family Among First White Settlers Residing In Nissouri

The story of the pioneer settlement and development of the Nissouri district is one of great interest yet one of the least known in general, even among the people who now inhabit this prosperous and progressive region. While I have quite a complete record of my family from the time of James German until the present it is my hope that I may receive additional information from some family descendents or others having any early records of the Nissouri district. Much information of the early days in the district must be stored away in attic trunks; old letters and diaries. I will gladly give any interested descendents such information as I have gathered during the past few years. Address, William M. German, Peterboro, Ontario.

By W. M. German

After the American Revolution followed a period during which migration was fostered by Government effort and Land Companies and, as well, in both the British Isles and the United States by individual promoters. Finally individuals, single families and small groups, of their own initiative, came to Canada to out new homes out of the wilderness. They did not come however in sufficient numbers to transform the new land into a compact settlement but they certainly did extend the frontiers.

It was not until 1791 that the Constitutional Act gave Canada the status of a Crown Colony, a mere frontier of the Empire and it was in the early 1800's that the pioneer settlers pushed the frontier northward into Nissouri to obtain land grants so promising for those of initiative.

It is of James German and his family that I write, they being among the earliest white settlers in East Nissouri. James and Betsy Brown German were my great-great grandparents.

James German was born January 2, 1782 and his wife Betsy Brown May 9, 1784. This we know from the faded writing which appears in their son Jacob's Bible. The old brown ink while faded is quite legible.

Of James German we have as yet little information regarding who his parents were or where he came from, before settling near Lakeside in East Nissouri. According to most family stories he settled there about 1803 though it may have been before or later. We do know however that James and Betsy German had 10 children and they all resided in East Nissouri, at a very early period, when the entire population of Upper Canada was only a few thousand.

James' wife was Betsy Brown, daughter of Thomas Brown and Hannah Spencer. Thomas Brown came from a New England family and fought with Washington during the American Revolution. Thomas lived in the Nissouri district for some time but later moved to New York State near Buffalo, where he received a pension for his service to the American cause during the revolution. He died near Buffalo.

Thomas Brown and Hannah Spencer were the parents of six children, Varnum Brown, James Brown, Betsy Brown, Abigail Brown, Martha Brown, and Russell Brown who died in early life. Abigail did not marry and there is a stone in Lakeside Cemetery marking her grave. Varnum Brown served in the War of 1812.

Thomas had a brother Joseph Brown. Joseph and his wife remained loyal to the British King and during the revolution or immediately after left the country and settled in Canada, first in Argenteuil County, Quebec, at Brownsburg and later in the East Nissouri district.

James and Betsy German would know nothing from a personal viewpoint of those trying days when families like her parents, were split over their loyalty to a principle. They were but children when the Loyalists began to leave their original homes for Canada — and the hatreds engendered during the Revolution would be somewhat lessened by the time they reached a marriageable age. Where they were born, where they met, when they were married is, at present, a matter of pure conjecture. From the evidence at hand it is known though that they were married about 1805.

In these days there were two other families by the name German living in British North America. According to official records one Christopher German, a shoemaker, resided in New York City and was an aged man in 1811. Christopher had two sons Lewis, born in either 1776 or 1783 and George. Of George there is only evidence that he was heir to his father in the

matter of Marysburg lot. Regarding Lewis there is some information but nothing pertinent to James of East Nissouri. Descendants of Christopher now live at St. George near Paris, Ontario.

There was also the family of John German who pioneered in the British province of New York near Fort Edward prior to the American Revolution. None of the five children in this family bore the name James. John and his elder sons fought for the British cause during the revolution and after settled in Adolphustown near Belleville.

There was a James German who was apparently successful as an importer of rum in York (Toronto) in 1802. His connections have not yet been traced. Such a man could have been born in 1782 and be in business at the age of 20, but it hardly seems probable. A more or less successful spirit merchant would hardly forsake his business in a growing community to undertake a homestead in the wilds of East Nissouri. It would seem more probable that James of Nissouri may have been a son of the York merchant.

Some day however, as the search continues, the identity of James of East Nissouri may be uncovered and he most likely will be related to either John German of Adolphustown or Christopher, the shoemaker of New York City. The families have similar characteristics, many names being common to both such as John, William (the writer being the third generation William), Hannah, Ellen, Elizabeth (Betsy), Jacob and Jane and Christian names were usually chosen for a very definite purpose in the days of those hardy pioneers. The physical features of the different family descendents also show a close resemblance.

James German settled in East Nissouri on (W $\frac{1}{2}$) Lot 29, Concession 11. According to records of the Historical Society a stream, known as "German Creek", flowed through the farm of James German. The creek is a branch of Gregory's Creek.

An old map in the Department of Crown Lands, Ontario, shows Adam Hillman in 1823, and Cornelius Betrand 1826, as holders of Lot 29, East Nissouri. It would appear therefore that James German left Lot 29 sometime before 1823. It is stated that James acquired Lot 26, concession 13, East Nissouri sometime in 1818. This lot has been in the German-Seaton families since pioneer days and remains so today. Lot 26 then passed on from James to his son Francis, who in turn was followed by John Seaton. John Seaton married Francis German's daughter, Jane R. German.