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Simmons

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S I M M O N S
(Simmonds)

By BOBBY ANDERSON

Midway between Penrod and Gus on Kentucky Highway 949, there is a winding grade, known as the "Jim Alec Simmons Hill". Years ago, before the highway was built in the mid-1930s, the old dirt road ran several hundred yards north of the present road. The old road was so rutted and rough, that only the best of teams of mules could pull a wagon over the hill in the winter. Sometime teams of four mules or horses were used. In the summer, when cars could travel the dirt road, Model T and Model A Fords, which used gravity as a mean of sending gasoline from the tank to the engine, had to back up the hill in order that the gas would flow down to that engine. The old and new roads had their junction in front of the Jim Alec Simmons home at the top of the hill.

A simple, but clean and well-kept frame house was home for James Alexander G. Simmons, his wife, Jennie and their daughter, Ruth. In the front yard was a well with the bucket always available. Passers-by were always welcome to partake of a drink of cool water from the well. Visitors included drummers, mail carriers, farmers going to and from market and fishermen, who once fished the waters of Mud River.

The entire family was known for their gentleness and their soft-spoken ways. Jim Alec Simmons was a simple but principled man, who farmed with a team of oxen, and was often seen on the road with his oxen and cart. He was also an educated man for his day, serving the area for many years as a school teacher.

Today, he is buried high atop a knoll behind a more modern home which stands where his frame house once stood. He, his wife, his daughter and his son-in-law are buried in unmarked graves, save a simple funeral home marker which denotes the grave of the son-in-law, Lewis Jones. There are no descendants of this family known today.

James A. G. Simmons was the son, and one of five known children of Tennessee-born William H. Simmons and Melissa C. Guffy Simmons, the latter of Logan County, where they were married.

* * *

CLARIFICATION

Though the most of the census records in both Logan and Muhlenberg counties, some marriage records and other public records show the spelling of the name as "Simmons", some of the family members used the spelling "Simmonds". These include Mark Simmonds, son William and Melissa, and the engraving of the names on the tombstones of William, Melissa and Mark. In this article, "Simmons" will be used, except for the quoting of certain records.

* * *

The family of
WILLIAM and MELISSA

William H. Simmons was born in Tennessee on March 5, 1820, though the area of Tennessee has not been learned. Neither has the names of his parents. He moved to Logan County, Kentucky sometime prior to 1842, when he married Melissa C. Guffy.

Melissa was born Aug. 24, 1824 apparently in Logan County, as no other records indicate birth elsewhere. Her father is believed to be James Guffy, who came to Logan County from Pennsylvania. Her mother was named Melinda.

William H. Simmons and Melissa C. Guffy were married in Logan County on Jan. 31, 1842.

They lived for several years in northeast Logan County, but moved to Muhlenberg County between 1850 and 1860. Before the 1850 census was taken, there were three children in the family.

Bailiss T., their first, was born in 1843, Martha M. in 1846 and Mark in 1850. The fourth child, James A. G., was born in 1855, and another, Edward Weir Simmons, in 1862. This was after the family had moved to Muhlenberg County.

The children, two of whom will be followed in later paragraphs, briefly are:

(1) Bailiss T., born Nov. 30, 1843 in Logan County, died May 24, 1862, at the age of 18 in Muhlenberg County. He was buried in a family cemetery. (See later note.)

(2) Martha M., born circa 1846, was found in the 1850 census in Logan County and in 1860 in Muhlenberg County, but there is no record of her after that. There has been no marriage license found for her. It is possible that she married in another location and moved away, or like two of the other children, died at an early age, though no grave marker was found with others of the family.

(3) Mark H., was born April 21, 1854 in either Logan or Muhlenberg County. He was twice married to (1) Jemima A. Posey Wood and (2) to Etoile Clark. See his biography in later paragraphs.

(4) James Alexander G., was known the most of his life as Jim Alec. He was born in February of 1855 in either Logan or Muhlenberg. He married Virginia L. (Jennie) Craig and had one daughter, Ruth. More will follow on the life of this man.

(5) Edward Weir, apparently the youngest child of the family. He was born Dec. 23, 1861, and less than three years later, died on Feb. 12, 1864.

There may have been other children in this family, but no records have been found.

William H. and Melissa Simmons lived the most of their life in Muhlenberg County in the southeast portion of the county, near Mud River. In 1860, they were in the area near Hope school, Mud River Mine and Gus, with neighbors being well-known residents of the area, including John S. Hunt, Permelia Davis, John Matherly and A. J. Hall. In 1870, they were in the same vicinity, as well as in 1880.

William H. Simmons died on March 9, 1893, and his wife, Melissa three and one half years later, on Oct. 31, 1896. They are buried in Hughes cemetery, between Dunmor and Hope school. The name enscribed on their tombstones is spelled "Simmonds".

(Note of explanation: Though it is believed that Bailiss and Edward W. Simmons were buried on the family farm of William

Simmons, not far from where his son, Jim Alec lived, the stones from their graves are now located in the same family graveyard where Jim Alec, his wife, daughter and son-in-law lie. The stones are not erected, but rather are lying flat on the ground. Several residents of the area stated that Lewis Jones, the son-in-law, after the death of his wife, and while he lived there alone, brought the stones from an old family farm cemetery and placed them in the cemetery beside Jim Alec, the brother of Bailiss and Edward W. This cannot be substantiated, but the fact remains the stones are there, and oldtimers in the area say the men are not buried there.)

* * *

MARK H. SIMMONDS
(as he spelled it)

Mark was born April 21, 1854 in Logan or Muhlenberg county. On Jan. 4, 1877, he married Jemima A. Posey Wood, daughter of Alexander and Nancy Posey of near Twin Tunnel.

Jemima was previously married to Elisha B. Wood, one of the twin sons (Elisha and Elias) of Abner and Rebecca Studebaker Wood. Elisha and Jemima had two daughter, Auroila, who died at the age of one year, and Fredessie (Dessie), who married John S. Mallory. Elisha died in 1872.

Mark and Jemima had no children of their own. They lived on a farm east of Penrod and Dunmor. Jemima died in 1899 and is buried in Wood cemetery. In 1900, the census listed Mark alone and a widower. On April 23, 1902, he married Etoile Clark, daughter of Matthew Beverly and Quintila Adkerson Clark of near Clark's Bridge on Rocky Creek. He was 52 at that time, she 37. They had no children. Mark died Nov. 19, 1917 and is buried in Hughes cemetery beside his mother and father. He leaves no known descendants.

* * *

JAMES A. G. SIMMONS
(and family)

Born in either Logan County before his parents moved to the Penrod area, or in Muhlenberg County after the move, Jim Alec Simmons was a school teacher and a farmer. He was born in February, 1855, according to census records. He, as stated, was regarded as a common, yet gentle and kind man, who farmed with a team of oxen, the last known such team in the area.

When he was 29-years-old, and she the same, he married Virginia L. (Jennie) Craig, daughter of Jesse and Claremon Craig, though her mother was a widow at the time of Jennie's marriage to Jim Alec on Jan. 2, 1884.

At what period of time they moved there is not known, but Jim Alec purchased a farm midway from Penrod to Gus, and there the Simmons family made their home for many years. The farm was part of the original land grant for Jacob Studebaker, and later was a part of the vast holdings of Abner Wood, who married Rebecca Studebaker. The house occupied by Jim Alec and Jennie Simmons was one of the oldest homes in the area.

The farm was later purchased by the late Bewley Porter and his

wife Winona Shelton Porter. It is now owned by their son, Glennis Porter and his wife, Brenda Gibson Porter. Although a new house has been built on the property, the well remains in the front yard and the silent cemetery where the Simmonses are buried keeps vigil from its knoll behind the house.

Jim Alec and Jennie had but one child, Ruth C., born in November of 1886. She married Lewis Jones, son of Charlie Paten and Alice Elizabeth DeArmond Jones of the New Hebron area. Lewis and Ruth made their home with her parents. They had no children.

Lewis Jones was born in 1884 and was the last of the Simmons family when he died in 1975. He is buried beside his wife. The death dates of Jim Alec, Jennie and Ruth have not been learned, although they are on file as public record at the Muhlenberg County Health Department. Jim Alec died sometime in the early 1940s. His wife died prior to that. Ruth survived her parents.

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