

The History of the John Robb Family

"The days of old to mind I called,
And oft did think upon,
The times and ages that are past,
Full many years ago."

In the year 1723 (should be 1773 J.K.R.) my father and grandfather left their home in Octorara Creek near the City of Lancaster to explore the wilds of Western Pennsylvania. They came to Fort Pitt about the first of October of that year and explored the country up the Chartiers Creek and was offered a tract of land where the station of Idlewood, Crafton and Ingram now stand, from there to Chartiers Creek, containing 400 acres for \$1600 or four dollars per acre. The farm on which Mr. John McMacken (John M. Mackin) now lives was within its boundary. However, they thought the land too poor and they came out to the neighborhood of McDonald but did not buy at that time. But in the year following my father moved the Rev. Mathew Henderson to the forks of the Yough.

In order to improve their financial conditions they looked at a farm four miles west of Pittsburgh now on the Pennsylvania Railroad from Ingram to Idlewood, and down to Chartiers Creek, containing 400 acres. They thought it too poor but were offered it for four dollars per acre of \$1600 for the tract. They then came to the vicinity of McDonald and looked at several farms. The farm on which the writer lives pleased them best. It was owned by Mr. Andrew Walker, subsequently owned by Mr. Samuel Cook of McDonald and they were offered it for five dollars per acre, but didn't buy at that time. My father the following year 1774 hauled out the moving of Rev. Matthew Henderson near the forks of the Yough. The people of this day will think there was not much temperance in them days, when I tell them that the old Rev. put in the wagon a five gallon key of whiskey. He said

that when they got to the forks it was a gallon short.

CENTENNIAL AT ROBINSON RUN

I was not present at it on account of a severe pain in my left ear and was much disappointed for two reasons. I wanted to see old friends and for another my father and mother was there that day one hundred years before, not in a married state, but in all probability met for the first time in there lives, as my mother would in joking way say when we would be talking about long or short marriages that she would not give a fig for a young man and young woman that could not make a bargain in seven months as that was the length of time her and father were making their courtship. The centennial was on the 8th day of October and they were married on the 6th of May following, making 7 months and all to two days.

William Robb the eldest son of John Robb was one of the first elders of Robinson Run congregation and lived on a farm now owned by the McDonald heirs. He moved to the neighborhood of Clinton and was elected elder there. He then went to Servis and bought a farm and lived and died on it. He was also elected and served as an elder under Dr. Anderson in the Associate Church. He married Miss Mary Ralston. From this union there was eleven children, five boys and six girls. Nancy the eldest, married John Caleg. They had two children, Barbara and Mary. Both died in infancy. Isabel unmarried. John married Mary Graham. Ann married Andrew McClure. They had four children. William married Belle Brunt and they had six children. Lettie married James Park and they had five children. James L. Robb married Elizabeth Smith. They had six children William, Henry, Mark, Mary, Albert and Isabell. Joseph died when he was thirteen unmarried.

John the second son married Miss Jane Kelso. From this union there were ten children eight sons and two daughters. John, the eldest, married Miss Mary Kelso. They had two sons and two daughters, one married, the other unmarried. George, the second son, died unmarried. Jane, the eldest daughter, married Samuel Boyd and had three daughters. One died, the other two married.

Barbara died unmarried. Elizabeth died unmarried. William married Miss Margaret Crooks. Eight children, five boys and three girls was the result of this marriage. Isabell died in infancy. Mark married Miss Jane Scott Donaldson. The result of this marriage was four boys, J. S. Robb, Andrew D. Robb, J. K. Robb and James McB. Robb. James, third son of John Robb, Sr. married Miss Elizabeth Kelso, They had four children three boys and one daughter. He was one of the elders of the Robinson Church.

Andrew Robb, the fourth son of John Robb, Sr. _____

James Little married Isabell Robb. The fruits of this marriage was nine children, five boys and four girls. John married Margery Sturgeon; no children. Elizabeth died in youth; no children. Isabell died unmarried. Nancy married; no children. Jane married; one son. James married; nine children, seven girls and two boys. Grandchildren; Jane five children, three girls and two boys. Isabell five, three girls, two boys. Margaret five boys, four girls. Matilda, four children, one boy, three girls. Samuel, five boys. Mary, seven children, three boys and four girls. Sarah, no children. Martha one boy, Nicholas, unmarried. Joseph, two boys. Samuel C. Robb died in youth. James A. Married, two boys, James A. and Edward C. and three girls, Nettie K., Sadie B. and Clara K. David married, had four children. James little and Isabell's children altogether, 9 children, 16 grandchildren, 46 grandchildren, in all 71.

The History of the John Robb Family

The Grandfather of the writer of this sketch, John Robb, sen., emigrated from County Down, Ireland, early in the seventeenth century and settled on Ootarara Creek near where the City of Lancaster now stands where he bought a farm and cleared it of and married a Miss Barbara McKnight. From this union there was born ten children eight sons and two daughters, Their names were William, John, James, Andrew, David, Joseph, Samuel and Moses the girls Isabella & Nancy. They were all connected with the Reformed Presbetyan Church & remarried in that connection until about seventeen hundred & seventy eight. But during this time they had removed to the farm on which the writer owns a part, one mile North of McDonald St. on the Panhandle R. R.

In the year seventeen hundred & seventy three my Father & Grand Father in October left Lancaster County & came West to explore the western wilds of Pennsylvania. They came to Pittsburgh which was then a small village. After staying a few days in Pittsburgh they came west about four miles to where Ingram Station is on the Panhandle R.R. They were offered four hundred acres. It lay from Ingram down to Chartiers Creek up the Creek to Idlewood Station containing about 400 acres & is now owned by Mr. John McMacan & others. My Son James Mob. Robb while working in the Prothonatary's office last winter examining the documents in a suit between Mr. McMacan and others found this same tract containing 360 acres with allowance of six per cent for Roads. They did not buy but came to where the St. of McDonald now stands. They were told that Mr. Andrew Walker which owned a farm about one mile & a half south of McDonald and which was subsequently owned by Mr. S. H. Coack, Esq. of McDonald. Mr. Walker owned the farm on which the writer lives and which they were directed to look at. It pleased them well but did not purchase at that time.

Then in 1795 (believe this should be 1775 JKR.) my Father moved Rev. Mathew Henderson from Lancaster County to the Fork of Yough. Think there was one or two of his sons along and when

they were about to state the Revd. I suppose was afraid there would be some of the ardents in the Backwoods and he slipped a five gallon keg of it into the wagon. But when it got to Fork there was one gallon lost the keg had either leaked or the bad Boys had found a hole where they could get it out but if the old Revd. didn't get the Whiskey he got the money for it as he made the Boys pay for their fun.

When in the fall of 74 they moved from Lancaster to Western Pennsylvania, & bought the farm from Mr. Walker for Five dollars per acre to be paid in the currency of the century. There was nine acres of Rye sowed on the farm and I heard my Father say if they had thrashed the Rye and sold it, it would have paid for the place containing 333 acres. It was the time of the Depreciation the the Contenental Money when it would take from twenty to thirty dollars of it to buy a Bushel of Rye & from 40 to fifty dollars to buy a Bushel of Wheat. But my Grandfather would not take the advantage of Mr. Walker. He paid him in the same coin he got for his own in gold and silver. It seems to me that there was more honesty between men in those days then there is not. There is but few men now but would have taken the advantage of him. The Indians troubled them there for three or four years after they came. There were four men killed on a farm on which Mark Robb now lives in North Fayette township, Allegheny Co., and in the summer season till late in the fall. They always went to the State of Ohio in the winter season. I have heard my Father say about the time when they were cutting their grain they had to keep one man to stand centry while the others cut the grain. On the farm on which the late Joseph Wallace lived there was six of them cut five acres of Rye from supper time and was on there horses before sundown & fifth man stayed as centry. These were times that tried men's soles & here let me tell you a little incident that happened with himself. They forted at James Little's about one mile North of Venice which was four miles from the farm. One evening late in the fall the

Indians had principally left. Grand Father & Father was at work on the farm & in the evening father said to Grand Father that he did not think there was any fear of the Indians that he thought they were all gone & that he had a mind to stay at the cabin that it was so far to go to the Fort and took up so much time in going back and forth that he would stay in the cabin till morning. Grandfather told him he could do as he pleased so he went to the cabin got to bed & slept till about twelve o'clock soundly. But was waked up very quickly from the rattling of the cowbell & the Horse Bell (they had to keep them both belled to find them in the morning) The Horses & Cows knew far better then the people did when the Indians were about. They smelled them when they were within a mile of them. That night he said the Dog began to growl & walk about through the House & Horse & Cow bells began to rattle at a fearful rate. He said he got up. There was a little fire in the chimney. He looked at his gun & found it all right. He said there was a hole in each side the cabin about the size of a bight of glass 8x10 and he sat on the bed side and looked at these holes till morning. By the morning he said he had heard some say the best way was to throw the door wide open and step to one side & if there was any Indians about they would shoot in. He done so but there was nothing happened. Then he walked fast out into the cornfield about fifteen Rods, but there was nothing happened & he said he went to work but he did not stay in the cabin any more by himself. He said the Indians & them were on the place together at the same time that they had seen where they had made a wiperstick not more than 200 yards from where they were at work & often times they had seen them on the place.

It seems to me the people of those times got hardened. They would have there Weddings & fiddle & dance and have a good old time of it the more. They did go to see their girls with their Leatheraprons on. But young ladies don't turn up your noses at your Grand Mothers & mothers, the more they did receive

their Boys in their Leatheraprons. They were a noble race of woman. They were real helpmates for their Husbands. But you will no doubt ask and what is a Leather Apron. Well it is nothing more nor less than a sheep sk. taned. Some of them if they wanted something grand they would have them died with poak berries red. Then they have had them cut in scallops & bound with lace of different colors & was very fancy. But a Leather apron was a very necessary appendage to a farmer's outfit as they had to handle rough timber & Brush that would wear out a pair of Panteloons in a short time. But fair ladies let me give you a specimen of your Grand Mothers & Mothers. Four years ago My Wife and I were at a reunion of the Bigger Family at Murdockville, Washington Co. Pa. The orator of the day gave a History of the Family. They came to the farm on which we were next in 1774. The first year they planted some corn & sowed a patch of Flax. They prepared for the Weavers then. The question was where would they get in woven. The nearest Weaver was at Read Stone near Uniontown, Fayette County, Pa. but who would go. The good Housewife nothing danted or scared though the wood was full of Indians & beasts of Prey mounted her Horse & started on her journey after setting her husband a hearty meal. When the time came the wife didn't put in an appearance. The Husband almost crazy mounted his Horse about 9o'clock at night & sent in search of his Wife. He rode till he supposed about twelve o'clock & lost his path, had to hitch up his Horse & lie down till morning. When he arose in the morning about break of day his Horse Whinnied another Horse and was about thirty rods from hime. The Wife had lost her path, hitch up and lay down till morning. Reader you may think there was a joyful meeting. This no doubt happened on the farm on which I live as the old King Path passes through it.

But Dear young Ladies don't get scarred at this let me tell you another that the Historian give us that that young Wife had stayed at her home for ten days & nights not a white man within ten miles of her that she knew of. Think of this

my fair young readers & perhaps you will think more of your Grand Mothers & Mothers.

They had a great deal of trouble with the Indians for many years after they came to the Western part of the State. When you went out you did not know whether you would come in again. They had to carry their guns where ever they went, to church as well as to the field & in harvest a sentinel was placed in a central part of the field and to watch & if danger was seen to give the alarm. I heard my Father say that on the farm of the late Joseph Wallace that Six of them cut five acres of hay from Supper & were on their Horses by sundown & one stood sentinel. Those were the times that tried men's souls. The Indians & them were on the farm often on the same day and not three Hundred rods apart.

There is a Haw bush on a part of the track on the part belonging to Joseph Robb under the shade of it my Grandfather, Father & Mr. Walker sat to and made the agreement for the place one hundred and sixteen years ago. How old it was when they sat under it I don't know but it must have been large enough to keep off the rays of the burning sun while they sat under it. It is only 10 inches in diameter now. From it they could have a better view of the place.

My Father's Politics

He was a life long Democrat with all his family until 1840 when the writer strayed from the fold with some earnest to me from the family. My father voted for every President from the formation of the Government up to 1844 when James K. Polk was elected. I never knew the reason why my Father did not vote for James K. unless it was this. When he was a younger man he was subject to toothache. He had had it for several days and nights very bad. A neighbor came in and told him to get Foake root and take a small slice of it

& lay between the tooth & the gum and he thought it would help him. He did so & fell asleep & it being rank poison it made him deathly sick & he never could endure Poke since & I think that was the reason he did not vote James K. The writer's first vote was cast for Andrew Jackson in 1828 & in 32.

And here let me give the reader a piece of unwritten History as related to him by The Hon. Nathaniel Ewing of Uniontown, long a President Judge in Washington & Fayette Counties & related to him by the Hon. John J. Crittenden of Kentucky. It was in 38 when John C. Calhoun brought in his Nullification act in to Congress. Mr. Crittenden was walking along the street late on Saturday night. There was a light in Jackson's office & he thought he would step in and see what was up as the President did not be so late in his office on Saturday night. He says President there must be something of importance on hand when you are up so late on Saturday night. Yes I am just writing out the Death Warrant of John C. Calhoun & Mr. Crittenden says you are not going to hang Calhoun. By the Eternal God I am going to hang him. Mr. Crittenden took his hat & excused himself for interrupting and went to Mr. Clay's room & waked him up and told him what was up. They both went to Calhoun's room waked him up and told him what the President was doing. Calhoun turned deathly pale at this time. Calhoun & Clay were deadly enemies. At this time Calhoun spoke. He says Mr. Clay can't you do something for me. On one condition. What is that said Calhoun? That you use your influence & vote for the Tariff Bill now pending in Congress. Calhoun says I won't do it. Then says Clay I can't do anything for you. Calhoun said he would vote for it but would not use his influence. Clay says you must do both or I can't do anything for you. At last he said he would & Clay & Crittenden went back to Jackson's office & got him not to hang Calhoun.

The Centennial at Robinson Run on October 8th 1890.

The writer had a great desire to be there & thought I

would be there but God thought otherwise & I had to submit on Monday before it came off. I took a severe pain in my left ear & for three days & nights and days I neither ate nor drank so I was disappointed for some reasons I wanted to be there. The first I wanted to see old friends with whom I had taken sweet counsel & walked unto the House of God in company. Another was I thought it would bring old remembrances in my mind. Whenever I used to go there & sit in them old puncher seats & listen to that dear old St. Dr. J. Riddle preach the Gospel of the Grace of God.

And last but not least I knew that that day one Hundred years before My Father & My Mother was there helping to organize that Church and had I been there that day I would have been there as their representative one Hundred years after an occurrence that don't often occur. But where are they now. Ask that old Grave Yard and it will tell you that it holds them & fifteen of their decedents in its cold embrace.

, and here I must turn aside for a moment and say a few words in respect of my old friend & Pastor Rev. John Riddle, D.D. He Baptized me & I sat under his ministry for about 16 years. He was a noble man. I have been asked what kind of a preacher he was. I always answered first rate

I have heard more pleasing speakers but if you wanted a man that could dive to the bottom of the stream & bring you up the lowest pebble. Then you wanted Dr. Riddle. He was the greatest reasoner I ever heard he was fond of a contra-verted point. He would take up his opponent side of the question & would discuss it with all the fairness & force his opponent could possibly do. In fact you could say to yourself Dr. ain't you getting over to the other side or in a phrase he cut very close to the wind & when he got through he would take up his own side and he would slash his own argument all to pieces. Then you would be ready to say why couldn't I see that. He was the greatest debater in the Associated Reformed Church or any other Church.

His oldest daughter first wife of Mr. William Savage told me there once Dr. Black came by their house. He had been preaching up in this side. Perhaps at by Grandfathers as him & all his family were covensters & her Father invited him to light of his Horse and rest himself a while. It was in harvest her Father had to watch the barn to keep the beasts out. She said the two lay down on a pile of straw & thought they argued the half of the time they were in the barn. I asked her which beat it she said she did not know that but there was a carpenter fixing up things in the barn & he said that Dr. Black went away with many a scar. It was once by a member that Dr. Riddle was the only minister that he ever saw throw off his coat to fight the Devil. I don't know whether he threw it off to fight but I know he would throw it off to fight a man. Let me tell you a little anecdote that will convince you that he would. In early days the streams would dry up & unless the farmers was provident to have grain ground to bridge them over drouth they had to go to the Horse mills for there was not a stream (apparently meant steam) mill in United States at that time nor for many years after. The first stream mill that was ever erected in Western Pennsylvania was built by Cadwalleder Evans about the year 1817 or there abouts so they had to go to Horse Mills. There was two of them in this section one about two miles south of Venice the other at what is now called North Star. It was on a farm now owned by James Donaldson Esq. It was called Linke's Mill. The farmers in this side went to Linke's Mill. Dr. Riddle being a farmer as well as a Preacher had to go to the Horse mill as well as his Members. At Links the Horses kept the turn. If I was there first in the morning I hitched

in my Horses & ground my grist. If you come next you had to hitch in your Horses or some one would hitch in his & take your turn. At the time of which I speak Dr. Riddle was the second man at the Mill & a few minutes after a friend from