

HISTORY OF THE ISON FAMILY

By Louie Savage Ison

The material found in this record has been gathered over a period of many years, and from different sources, I have traveled thousands of miles, wrote hundreds of letters, contacted different Genealogical Libraries, in Los Angeles, Salt Lake City, Mesa, Arizona, Phoenix, Arizona Capital Building, and the Carnegie Library in Caldwell Idaho, researching for the Ison name, its origin and spelling. I visited the County Recorder's Office in Gate City, Scott Co., Virginia and searched their earliest records, have studied the census Records of Kentucky and Virginia, from Washington D.C.

We visited Elliott, Morgan, Greenup, Harland, Rowan, and Letcher counties in Kentucky and gathered data from all of them of our Ison kin folk, also Brown and Clermont counties near Cincinnati Ohio. From the findings of the above mentioned resources I have written this history of the Ison family, to the best of my ability, that it would be a means of acquainting any one who was of our line, with the character, talents, and physical make up of our early parents, as well as their native country, status, and financial conditions in life, more especially am I interested in their mobility of character and sterling qualities that they have handed down to their posterity, for their honor, truthfulness, and thrift, I owe them a debt of gratitude and will do my best to repay by living, and teaching their worthy standards to our children and children's children--let us resolve that the Ison name, where ever found will be a credit to any community

At the close of this History I am putting a Historical Sketch from Washington D.C.--"The Name and Family of Isham and Ison". Showing that these two names are of the same origin, most Genealogical Societies claim that Ison, Isom, and Isham are all the same family, the spelling being changed at different times.

Quote-From the Dictionary of English and Welsh Surnames: "Ison, Isen, Isom, Isham--A Parish in Northampton England, Bpt. the son of Ison Probably a Welsh Name."

Another proof of these different spelled names being, at one time, the same family, is that several different Ison families use the name Isom, as a given name, for instance the name Archibald Ison and Mary Gillum Ison named their baby boy--Isom Ison, and vis versa I find in the Ison families name--Athol Ison Ison.

Yet in London England as early as 1617--we find the name spelled Ison as our family spell it to day. From the book--London Marriage Licences page 202--we read, "Margaret Ison of St. Andrew Holborn London, spinster daughter of _____ Ison, Yeoman at St Andrew Holborn, Married Thomas Browne of St. Mary Colechurch London, 10, January 1617-8.

Because of above proofs, I am doing Temple work for all three names, Isom, Ison, and Isham, but I am holding our Family record to the distinct line of Ison, and only putting in it those names who I can connect the relation ship, But I am also keeping a record named the "American Ison family" which has many different Ison Family Groups sheets in it.

The earliest history we have, comes from memory it seems that Samuel Ison the second son of Doctor Ison and Elizabeth Fraley Ison, and a grandson of Archibald Ison and Mary Gillum, had the Ison History written in his Bible, as it was told to him by his grandfather, Archibald Ison.

This Bible was destroyed by a flood which came through Isonville, Elliott Co. Kentucky, in the fall of 1938-39 taking the home and all contents of Ollie Fannin, who was a granddaughter of Isom Ison, youngest son of Archibald and Mary Ison.

This information was written to me by her brother B. F. Fannin Feb. 15, 1940, also the same was related to us by Isaac Ison, son of Anderson Ison and Mary Hurst Ison, when we were visiting at his home in Isonville, Elliott Co. Kentucky July 1940.

Isaac Ison is the great grandson of Archibald.

But what family history that Bible contained I have been told from several different members of our family, each one stating what Uncle Samuel said. From Mary Susie Hays a daughter of Sarah Jane Ison, this information was given to them by Columbus Ison, a great grandson of Archibald Ison and Mary Gillum. He Columbus said the following was told to him by Samuel Ison, and is the same information that was written in the Ison Bible, before mentioned. A letter from Mary Susie Hays, stating what Columbus Ison told her, quote: "In getting information on our generation, I was told that we descended from Gideon Ison who was born in Shopshire, England, and was made Lord of Ireland. He was residing in Ireland when his son John fell in love with a woman named Martha Huff. The old man was opposed to his marriage to her, and John made his way to Shopshire, England, where the girl met him. They then sailed for America and made their home in the western part of the state of Virginia. Here two sons, John and Gideon, were born to them. John was the father of Archibald who immigrated to the Newcombe fork of the Little Sandy River in the year 1819. Two other brothers started with him, Gideon and Charles. Gideon settled in south eastern Kentucky, in what is now called Letcher County. Charles came on to Newcombe with his brother Archibald and made one crop. Then he left for Texas. Moses Austin had obtained a grant of land there and had invited settlers. Charles was lured with the reports and immigrated to Texas in the fall and winter of 1820.

I have heard since that some Isons are to be found in Texas. One fact could yet be witnessed that would bear this report out as being at least partially true. Grandfather Ison's youngest brother started to Texas when a young man and stopped in Arkansas. Here he served the Confederacy in the Civil War. He married Mary Tramble about the close of the war. He made a visit back here and took two of the Bishop Boys, his sister's sons, back with him to rear. - - - Aunt Mary died in the spring of 1928 . . ."

I also have a letter from Ira Paulus Ison dated November 19, 1940, Stephen Ky. which gives the same information, quote: " . . . Uncle Samuel Ison, brother of your husbands father, Richmond Ison, gave me a little data prior to Archibald Ison.

Uncle Samuel told me that it had been handed down by previous generations that we were of English decent. We descended from one by the name of Gideon Ison, a Lord of the English Parliament. The story goes that Gideon had one son named John who was paying attention to a lady of the common class. Gideon was opposed to the lady and gave John a harsh rebuking and he eloped with the lady and came to America. . ."

Two sons were born to this union. They were named Gideon and John Jr. John was the one from which we got our lineage. (Later finding Charles in stead of John Jr.)

From Edward Pleasants - Valentine Paper Vol. 1 Page 432. We find that John Ison of Nanesmond Co. Va. bought 179 acres of land in Chukatuck Parish from Thomas Exum - This was recorded June 10, 1678. From this data I have estimated John Ison's birth to be about 1640. This John Ison could have been the son of Gideon Ison of England who eloped with Martha Huff and came to America.

From Census Return of 1790 in North Carolina we find two Ison names, that of John Ison and Christine ----- Ison. It was recorded that Archibald Ison was born in North Carolina and that his fathers name was John Ison, (mothers name was torn away.) Census Record 1850 Lawrence, Ky. Give Archibald Ison b. 1750 in Virginia.

Letter finding of a will from Dr. Archibald's father and Charles in stead of John.

A Mr. Patton Beverly, age 81, of Norton V. who has long been interested in family connections says, "There was a kinship with the Ison and Hunsucker family, probably John Ison's wife was a Hunsucker." Five sons were born into this family of John Ison Jr. Viz., Gideon, George, Joshua, Archibald and John (I have latter information that there were three more sons, Charles, Isaac, and Ira. Four of those sons emigrated from Scott Co. Virginia, to Kentucky in 1819. Gideon stopped in what is Letcher Co. Ky, Archibald and Charles came to the Newcomb Fork of Little Sandy River.

Charles remained one year only. Then started on the long journey for Texas to help in her struggle for independence. Nobody ever heard directly from him again. Evidently he must have reached Texas and left descendants. I had a clipping from a Texas newspaper telling of the death of John W. Ison and giving the names of his survivors (wife, children brother and sisters and where they resided). I think all resided in Texas except one brother who resided in Louisiana. I filed the clipping away and am unable to find it at the present time.

John Ison emigrated to the head waters of the Kentucky River the same year that Archibald came to Newcomb.

Gideon Ison's descendants are very numerous in Pike and Letcher Counties.

From Alexander Ison, who was living in Cumberland Ky. in 1940-41 and is a great grandson of George Ison, brother to Archibald Ison, I get the following, that George Ison and his brother Isaac Ison came from Scott Co. Virginia to Letcher Co. Kentucky in 1804 in company with Sam. Cornett, who came to Linefork in 1803 and George ate dinner at his home when he came.

Tracing this family you will note that the eight sons of John Ison Jr. and _____ all came from Virginia to Kentucky in the two different years, mainly 1804 and 1819 with the exception of Joshua Ison, and at date I have no definite data on him or his family, if he had any, also Charles Ison, who went to Texas and John who settled on head waters of the Kentucky River I have no data on their families. I do not know who Gideon married although many of his descendants are in Letcher Co. Ky., but as for George Ison and Archibald I can give you a lot of information on them and their families.

The first mention that I have of George Ison was from the Virginia Magazine, Vol. 18 Page 86, quote: "George Ison, age 19 yrs., resident of King and Queens Co. Virginia was discharged from the army in 1780", this would make his birth date about 1761. From Parish register of Caterist Church, Middlesex Co. Va. Page 205 - we learn that he enlisted in 1777, in Kentucky Land Grants, Page 601 - it states that George Ison had 50 acres of land, Nov. 13, 1822.

George, being an older brother, came to Kentucky several years before the other boys, in fact he made hunting trips there as early as 1800, his partner being Sammie Cornett. The Line Fork was the creek that they hunted on, receiving its name from the line that they followed for game, and it is still called Line Fork today. On one of these hunting trips, a very fine mare of George Ison's fell over some large rocks and broke her leg while they were crossing Blackie Mt. The rocks were named Ison Rocks and still go by that name. The mare was left to die, but she did not for next spring they found her with a young colt and she was a great service to the pioneer family for many years. As before stated, he moved his family to Kentucky in 1804 and settled in Letcher Co.

George's wife's name was Annie Ingram. They had seven children, namely, Gideon, George, Cynth, Polly, Bettie, Susan, and Kate. Gideon was born in Scott Co. V. in 1802, being only two years old when his parents moved into the Cumberland Mts. of Kentucky, where no white families lived, only the few who were in their company. The story goes that many a day the women folk left their camp home and hid with their children in the woods until their husbands returned from hunting, where they had gone to secure food for the family. This was necessary to protect themselves from the Indians.

Even with these precautions several of the company was killed by the Indians.

At the time of the Civil War he owned 32 slaves. But after they obtained their freedom most of his slaves wished to remain with him. He loved to fight and had thirty-two such contests to prove who was the best man. His six younger children were born and reared and died in Letcher Co. and are still numerous in Letcher, Pike and Harlan Co.

George Ison died in 1828 and was buried at Line Fork at the mouth of Big Branch of the Kentucky River in Letcher Co.

His brother Isaac Ison (born in 1763) came from Virginia to Letcher Ky. shortly after George came. His wife's name was Becca Ingram, she was a sister to Annie and they had the following children, Archibald, Edmond, Isaac Jr., Wilson, Scott, Bettie, Mary Ann, Kate and Landon C.

I have no record of Ira Ison leaving Virginia, and his descendants are still found in Gate City, Scott Co. Va. His wife's name was Davison. All I have found of his children is that he had one son named Silas, and a grandson named George.

In 1819 Gideon, Archibald, Charles and John followed their older brothers from Virginia to Kentucky, and as the copied letters at the first of this history states, Gideon remained in Letcher, while Archibald and Charles stayed there only a short time then drifted into Laurence Co. and from there to Elliott Ky. Charles stayed only long enough to make one crop and then went to Texas.

John migrated to the head waters of the Kentucky River.

Archibald reared his family on the Newcomb Fork of Little Sandy River, the post office is now named Isonville. He and his two boys walked from Virginia to the Kentucky river. They raised a crop of corn there in 1819, built a log cabin and returned in the fall for their families. In the spring of 1820 they came back with their families. All walked, there was not even a wagon road through the mountains. The men folks brought young apple trees tied to the barrel of their guns and planted them at their new home. Some of these trees grew to be 40' high and the last one of those trees blew down in 1935 - making it the age of 115 years.

Archibald's wife's name was Mary Gillum. She was a daughter of Martin Gillum. Their children were Isaac, Williams, Charles, Martin, Burdine, Ira, Doctor, Orgalis, Ison, and Elizabeth.

Archibald was among the first settlers in that part of Kentucky and was given a large tract of land by the government for helping to establish homes there. In Kentucky Land Grants, page 601, it mentions; Archibald, William, Charles, George and Gideon Ison, each having 50 acres of land in Laurence Co. Ky. on Nov. 13, 1822. Later Archibald's land was divided among his boys and their children's children still live there.

He died in Isonville, Elliot Co. Ky, his grave is on a hillside just west of his old home, which has been rebuilt into a large white home, with green trim, only the tall rock chimney was still preserved from the original home, built by Archibald. I visited this and his grave in July 1940. His wife, Mary Gillum, is buried near him. It was Mary's cotton garden and her desire was to be buried there. Two other graves are near them, one is their youngest son Ison, and his infant boy.

Jo Ison, a great grandson of Archibald, said when they buried the small child of Ison's that water ran into the grave, and the father, Ison Ison said, "This is not a fit place to bury anyone in, but if it is good enough for my father, my mother, and child it is good enough for me." So he was buried there.

Doctor Ison, the seventh son of Archibald and Mary, was born at Stoney Creek, Scott County, Virginia in 1819, making him one year old when his parents moved to Kentucky. When he married his father gave him a piece of land about two miles north of the Newcomb Fork of Little Sandy River. He married Elizabeth Fraley (May 1843) she was the 4th. child of Isaac O. Fraley and Catherine Shoemaker. Catherine was a daughter of William Shoemaker

James

and Astor. She was a kin to John Jacob Astor who went down with the great ship Titanic. It sank April 15, 1912 when it struck an iceberg, 1,595 people were drowned and 745 of her crew and passengers were saved.

Doctor and Elizabeth's children were Anderson, Samuel (this Samuel gave us all we have of our Ison History prior to Archibalds time.), Phoebe, Allen, Aaron, Richmond, Bouragard, Madison, Hulda, Josephine, and Marion Francis.

Doctor Ison made many trips to Virginia and Missouri. He owned 36,000 acres of land, and served in many trusted offices of county and state. He and his wife once had to entertain Gen. B McClellan and his Northern Army for one week. They killed and ate their large herd of beef cattle while there. Doctor and Elizabeth are buried side by side on their old home place. We visited their graves, Saturday, July 27, 1940. I was very much impressed by the clasp hands carved on the head-stone of Doctor Ison's grave. His grandson, Isaac Ison told us that his grandfather requested this done to remind his children to always keep on brotherly terms with each-other. He died in 1882 at the age of 63 years.

Elizabeth Fralgy Ison had three strokes before her death. She was helpless for seven years before her death and cared for in a wheel chair by her children. She passed away in 1904 at the age of 82 years.

Richmond was the sixth child of Doctor and Elizabeth Ison. He was born Feb. 28, 1869 in what was then called Newcomb, though the post office has now been changed to Isonville, Elliott Co. Ky. His wife's name was Martha Rice. She was a daughter of George Rice and Ester Hurst, and was born in Morgan Co. Ky. on the 22 of Marcy 1859. They married Feb. 13, 1879.

When Richmond married, his father gave him 75 acres of land on Rocky Branch, a tributary of Newcomb. It was about four miles from the old home. That summer he farmed some of his fathers cleared land and spent all the time he could, while not working at his crop clearing his own land, and building a little log cabin, into which he and Martha moved that fall. Many a night he worked past midnight, by the light of burning limbs, he cut and felled timber. While he was chopping the timber Martha would sew and knit, it was all done by hand those days. One night when Richmond was returning to his little home, from the farm, on his fathers place he was followed by a panther. The night was dark, all he could see was its two round eyes gleaming at him through the darkness, and hear the small limbs crash as it leaped from tree to tree. Several times it dropped to the ground and he could hear the tread of its feet like great cat paws. He secured a large hickory stick with an iron like knot on the end and when the panther came too close he would face around quickly, wave his club towards it, and see those bright eyes go back into the darkness. In this way he covered the four miles between their homes. When he was within hearing distance he called his own large dog, and to his relief, Sheep, came and drove the animal far into the woods. In those days life was one struggle for mere existence.

Richmond and Martha were the parents of ten children. Walter was the first baby. He died when only a few hours old and was buried high on the hillside north of their little home, under a small hickory tree. The next child was Robert Lee he was born June 9, 1881. Then came Hulda Jane, but just before Hulda was born father Richmond decided to build a new home with more room for his growing family. This home was directly west and more on the hillside from their first little cabin. It was also made of logs with three rooms on the lower floor and two upper rooms. The family moved into this house the night before their baby sister, Hulda Jane came. The next children were David Franklin, Edward, Lucy, she also died in infancy and was buried by the side of Walter under the hickory tree. Then came Eys and Janetta.

About the time of Eys birth a great change came into the Ison family. For several generations their kinfolk had all been staunch Methodists. Richmond was a Steward of the church and Martha a very devoted member.

I do not find the end of this history of mothers - but I am sure she is taking of the family joining the L.N.S. Church and moving to Thatcher, Arizona. (Note from Anderson)