

Sarah Ellen Poe Notes
&
Stories handed down in the Family

Sarah's notes were written in 1894 when she was 12 years old while talking with her mother Mary Elizabeth at Columbia Bottoms, Illinois. (What is now New Columbia)

During the Civil War our family had brothers fighting on both sides, the North & the South. Two brothers in the Confederate Army were captured & imprisoned in a Camp in Chicago, Illinois. (That Camp was reported to be the most inhumane that the North had) When they were released at the end of the war they traveled back to their homes in the south in groups for protection as some northerner's were still hostile towards them. For food they foraged, stole or worked at odd jobs, whatever was necessary.

These two brothers, traveling in a group of twenty-one released prisoners stopped at a local town (not known) to ask for work in exchange for food. They were given the work but the food they were given was poisoned by the local townspeople...all died.

Not long after the end of the Civil War, on a Saturday afternoon Sil Jr was in the field plowing. He looked toward the house when he heard horses ride up. Two men had ridden to the porch of the farmhouse where one of Silvesters brothers was sitting in a rocking chair. Silvester could see his brother talking to them, then they pulled out guns and shot his brother. Before his brother died he told Silvester that "they shot him because of something they did during the war". Silvester grabbed his shotgun, caught up with the men in town (Columbia Bottoms ??) shot and killed both men. The Sheriff arrested Silvester but he was only fined for killing the two men. He had to sell part of the land to pay the fine. (This would coincide with the sale of land to W. F. Teague.)

A horsethief stole Silvesters horse. Silvester caught and killed the thief. The court fined him for killing the thief, so he sold part of his land to pay the fine.

Mary Elizabeth taught Sarah the "Indian Death Song" that she had learned from her mother Polly Ann, who had learned from her mother-in-law Mary Littlefield.

Matties cousin shot and killed a Indian, then the Indian's caught her and skinned her alive.

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Silvester (Sr) was working in the woods as a tree cutter for a Logging Co. The young Indians living in the area would watch the men at work cutting the trees. The loggers always tried to meet the girls, but the girls were afraid and would run off. Silvester saw Mary Littlefield four times before he was able to meet her. The first three times he tried calling to her, running after her and then whistling at her.. but she kept running off. The fourth time that he saw her he enticed her with wild roses, Mary didn't run and Silvester finally met her. They were married Indian fashion, by sitting on opposite ends of a log and watching the sunrise. Mary had always been told that she was found by the Illinois tribe (of Algonquin Indian's) in some bushes where her mother had hidden her as an infant when their village was attacked and destroyed by the Illinois Indians. Mary's mother was killed in the attack.

---- So; I researched the Cherokee and Algonquin Indian's ----

Two of the most aggressive Indian Nations were the Cherokee and the Algonquinian's. Especially with each other. They both were cannabilistic. They captured each other for food, slaves to work and trade, and children to raise as their own (Mary) to make their tribes larger. In 1835 the U.S. Army was ordered by Congress to force the Indians to move west of the Mississippi river so the white people could have the lands east of the river. Many Indians fought this forced move. They were angry and some Indians killed all Indians that they caught living with white people during their move west. Up until the early 1840's southern Il. was settled only along the rivers on the east, south and west. The interior of the state was not safe because it was over run with bandits, cut throats and warring Indians. (Research wording.. not mine)

---- I believe Mary Littlefield could have been killed or died during this period as I can not find any record of her.

I do know that Silvester and Mary Littlefield & Silvester and "Polly" all lived in Johnson Co before 1837. Silvester (Jr) applied for the land 19 Sep 1837 at Shawneetown, the closest U.S. Land Office. It took almost two years after he paid for the land until he received title.(Land Patent)

A Land Patent is the first Deed issued by the government by purchase.

A Land Grant is the first Deed issued by the government at no cost (for services rendered-- Rev. War service, War of 1812, etc.)

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My Thoughts
on these notes

1835-1843

It was during this time that the Army was forcing the Indians west to the land's west of the Mississippi river. Many small bands of Indians fought all whites during this time. It seems to me that in order to live in the middle of this, along with the bandits etc, a man had to be just a little bit careful and a whole lot onery himself. I believe Silvester (Sr & Jr) were probably as experienced and dangerous as anyone else in that area as they did not leave as so many others did that tried to settle in that area.

The story of Silvester kidnapping Mary from a Cherokee village where she was the daughter of an Indian Chief, then being chased to the Potomic river before the Indians gave up the chase, evidently is not true. The story handed down from Polly Ann to Mary Elizabeth to Sarah Ellen appears to be the way it really happened.

Robert L. Hughes