

A RECORD
OF THE
DESCENDANTS
OF
JOHN ALEXANDER,
OF LANARKSHIRE, SCOTLAND,
AND HIS WIFE,
MARGARET GLASSON,
WHO EMIGRATED FROM COUNTY ARMAGH, IRELAND,
TO
CHESTER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA,
A. D. 1736.

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THE FAMILY AND DESCENDANTS OF JAMES ALEXANDER, OF KISHACOQUILLAS.

JAMES, second son of JOHN ALEXANDER and MARGARET GLASSON ALEXANDER, was born about the year 1726. He was a lad of about ten years when his father's family moved from County Armagh, Ireland, to West Nottingham, Chester county, Pennsylvania, in 1736.

Having removed with his father's family to Cumberland county, Pa., he there married ROSEY REED, daughter of Robert Reed, whose home, according to family tradition, was in Letterkenny Township, near Chambersburg, where the interlocking headwaters of the Canogocheage and Canodoguinnet separate and flow in opposite directions to the Potomac and to the Susquehanna. Her mother's maiden name was Garner or Gardiner—a people of dark hair and complexion, tall, straight, and well-proportioned. The men were so swift of foot as to outrun the Indian, and some of them became famous in the early and dangerous navigation of the Susquehanna. Rosey Reed Alexander had a sister, Elizabeth Reed, who married John McDowell, and resided near Bellville, Kishacoquillas, Pa. Rosey R. Alexander died in 1792.

The following sketch, published by the writer some months ago as a newspaper article, contains what is known concerning James Alexander, the founder of a numerous branch of our family.

Nottingham Tract, on the Octorara creek, lies partly in Pennsylvania and partly in Cecil county, Maryland.

Kishacoquillas is the grand old Indian name of a large and beautiful valley in Central Pennsylvania. Both the valley and the creek which drains it derived their name from Kishacoquillas, a Shawanese chief, whose wigwam in 1755 stood where the creek mingles its waters with the "Blue Juniata."

John Alexander, of Glasgow, Scotland, son of Thomas Alexander, removed to Armagh, Ireland, and thence to America in 1736, and settled in Nottingham, on the banks of the Octorara. With him came also his sons Hugh, James and John; his daughters Margaret and Rachel; his nephews Hugh and James; and his niece, Mrs. Polk. After a few years the nephews and the niece migrated to Mecklenburg county, North Carolina; and John, with his sons and daughters, removed to Carlisle, Pa. Here his son Hugh, having married Martha Edmiston of Nottingham, Md., turned aside to settle in Sherman's Valley, now in Perry county, Pa; while his brother James, a man remarkable for energy and enterprise, having married Rosa Reed, near Chambersburg, determined to explore the interior valleys and become the founder of a new settlement in the wilderness.

THE EXPLORATION AND LOCATION.

After a dangerous journey of eighty or one hundred miles northward of the settlements, through forests and through water-gaps in the mountain ranges, along the Susquehanna, along the Juniata, and along the roaring Kishacoquillas, his advance was arrested by the beauty and fertility of a noble valley. "No man should desire a better soil than this." Though hemmed in by mountains, covered with heavy timber, and occupied only by Indians and wild beasts, here he determined to found new things—to plant his settlement.

Across the midst of the valley from Jack's Mountain

to Stone Mountain, he laid his warrant on a thousand acres—forest-clad, well-watered, lying handsomely, and of a rich limestone soil—a goodly heritage for his own rising family. This was in 1755.

THE REMOVAL AND SETTLEMENT.

On his return to the region of Carlisle, though he made a good report of the exceeding good land which he had explored, yet one only, his friend William Brown, dared to accompany him and brave the dangers of settling so far from help in time of Indian warfare.

But how different was *their* mode from the present mode of getting beyond the frontier! James Alexander had his wife and children, goods and chattels, packed on the backs of horses, and his money—nine hundred silver dollars—in a long blue stocking, for he, too, was a Presbyterian. William Brown had his family and effects packed and transported in like manner.

William (afterwards Judge) Brown located near the entrance of the valley and near the meeting of the waters, where afterwards arose the village of Brown's Mills, now Reedsville.

James Alexander proceeded five miles westward to the valuable tract which he had already selected and patented as his future home.

Near the middle of the tract Spring Run rises from several large, gushing fountains of clear, cold, limestone water, and flows south into the Kishacoquillas. Near one of the fine springs, and near this run, he erected a sheltering cabin until, in after time, a large log house could be raised by the aid of hands brought from a distant Juniata settlement. Around the chosen location grew an ancient forest of oaks and other noble trees—some immensely high and others of vast bulk of trunk and wide-spread branches—forming a temple long

sacred to silence, save when disturbed by the savage yell, the twang of the bow-string, or the cry of some wild bird or beast. Wolves, foxes, black bears, and deer traversed the valley from mountain to mountain. Spring Run and the Kishacoquillas were rippled with shoals of speckled trout.

At another of those springs, and only a short distance from James Alexander's house, and just where the dwelling of his grandson, James A., now stands, then stood the house of the nearest neighbor—Logan—the celebrated chief of the Mingo tribe. Here was his habitation and his home. Here he lived long on friendly terms with his neighbor, James A., and his wigwam was preserved many years after he left the valley by John, the son of James. Here only is Logan's Spring properly so called. That in the eastern part of the valley bearing his name is only the spot of one of Logan's hunting camps, and not of his abode. The tourist who would visit the *true* Logan's Spring must find it at the head of Spring Run.

IMPROVEMENT AND PROGRESS.

To clear such ponderous timber, and prepare the virgin soil for tillage, was herculean labor, which only such brave and hardy pioneers could perform—often with loaded rifles close at hand, and sentinel boy and dog on the lookout for the Indian foe. Sometimes they fled, and returned to find their first homes reduced to ashes. Undaunted they renewed their toil. Before the first crops could be secured, raccoons, bears, wild turkeys, and squirrels had taken a liberal share. In reaping the first through of wheat harvest James Alexander destroyed a den of seventeen rattlesnakes, and some in every through till the field was reaped. An Irish servant named John Barrett, whom he had brought

to the valley, was one day sent with Robert, the eldest son of James, to cut grass in the meadow. While mowing abreast with Robert, this son of the Emerald Isle suddenly uncovered a great, blowing viper. His snakeship, enraged at the intrusion, was spreading his neck and hissing loud as a goose. Terrified at the sight and sound, Barrett leaped back, with scythe raised aloft, and exclaimed, "Bab! Bab! here is the devil all coiled up like a screw! Be dad, if he stirs I'll snid the head off him!" To other trials were added the deep snow falls and intense cold of early winters. At the end of the house was a great chimney-stack of stone, with a fireplace to receive sticks of five and eight feet in length. A *back log*, often requiring two men to roll or carry in, was placed against the back wall, and in front of this, upon great andirons, was mounted a goodly pile of logs and sticks of hickory, oak, or ash. All these, kindled with rich knots of pine, raised a blazing, crackling, and roaring fire, which conquered both the gloom of night and the wintry cold, while busy housewife and attendant daughters, with long-handled implements, baked and cooked the family meal. Spinning-wheels whirred in the house by day, and the flails in the barn sounded their timely strokes upon the bounding sheaves of grain. If there was little society abroad, there was some cheer and comfort at home. If the products of early tillage were small, a kind Providence added thereto wild fruits and berries, and the royal dainties of fat venison, wild fowl, and delicious trout. Nor did the boys and girls lack for bushels of six or eight kinds of nuts to crack and pick in winter nights from fall till spring. Nor were intellectual and moral culture lacking in the home at Spring Run, when as yet there was neither school nor church. While subduing the wilderness and caring for food and raiment,

the pious father and mother did not neglect the souls of their children. The house of James Alexander was a Bethel, where, morning and night, were heard the word of God and the voice of sacred song and prayer. The Sabbath was improved in special instructions from the Bible, the Catechism, and Confession of Faith; and every evening was a "cotter's Saturday night" in the wilds of Kishacoquillas.

As the years rolled on, annual additions were made to cultivated fields and biennial additions to the family circle, until a larger house resounded with the merriment of half a score of adult and junior sons and daughters. Other white settlers had located here and there, and the glad time had come when the institutions of the school and church could be added to those of the family.

In this good work James A. took a leading part with characteristic zeal and energy—in collecting the scattered people, organizing the first church eastward in the valley, five miles from his home, attending in all states of roads and weather, and acting faithfully as the first elder with the pioneer pastor, the Rev. James Johnson. Afterwards he participated in founding a second church westward and nearer his own home, of which he was a ruling elder during the closing years of life. Honor is due to James Alexander, not only for exploring the wilderness, introducing its first white inhabitants, subduing forests and founding churches, but also for naming and adding a new township to the great county of Cumberland. For, in memory and in honor of old Armagh of Ireland, from which in boyhood he came with his father, John, he gave the name of *Armagh* township to the whole of Kishacoquillas valley. That great original township was afterwards divided into Armah and Union, and was again at a later date sub-divided into Armagh,

Meno, Union, and Brown. In this sub-division the name Brown was justly given to a part in honor of Judge William Brown, the friend of James Alexander and his companion in the actual settlement, though not in the original exploration and location of land for settlement. Though in consequence of these divisions the name Armagh no longer covers the whole valley, or even the part including the Spring Run settlement, yet that original name which James Alexander gave to the whole still remains upon Kishacoquillas, as an inscription sacred to the memory and due to the honor of the founder of both civil and religious institutions in one of the noblest valleys of Pennsylvania. He died at the age of sixty-six, in the prime of life and in the midst of his labors, leaving to a very numerous posterity the valuable legacy of his bright example and many prayers.

We now return briefly to his early friend and neighbor, Logan, one of the noblest characters of Indian history, celebrated both in peace and war for eloquence and valor; first as the friend, and after the abuse of friendship, as the foe of the whites. Logan was the son of Shickeleshinny, a Mingo chief, whose abode was on the east branch of the Susquehanna, where his name is perpetuated in that of the Shickeleshinny railway station, a few miles west of Wilkesbarre. This was the birth-place of Logan. His father named him in honor of his friend, Governor Logan, of Philadelphia. His father also being a convert and friend of the Moravian missionaries, Logan probably enjoyed some early Christian instruction. It is doubtless owing to these circumstances of his birth and early life that, as chief and warrior during the French and Indian war, he employed his eloquence and influence to shield the white settlements from their savage foes.

In 1755 James Alexander found him settled in Kish-

acoquillas. In 1772 he resided in eastern Ohio. In 1774 his wife and all his relations were barbarously murdered by a company of whites on the banks of the Ohio. For this Logan wielded the tomahawk and satisfied his revenge. To this he pathetically alludes in his speech to Lord Dunmore: "There runs not a drop of my blood in the veins of any living creature. Who is there to mourn for Logan? Not one."

Soon after James Alexander became his neighbor in Kishacoquillas, Logan came one day to his house in his absence, and having gained the confidence of his little son, carried him off through the woods to his cabin. The lonely and terrified mother dared not to resist; but after several hours of dreadful anxiety she determined to follow at any risk and rescue her child. Her relief can scarcely be imagined when she met the friendly chief bringing her little boy in his arms, shod with beautiful beaded moccasins, which during the hours of absence he had made for his little friend.*

On the vast trunk of a royal oak four or five feet in diameter, which stood near his cabin, Logan had carved with his hatchet the full length image of an Indian in a standing posture and brandishing a tomahawk in his right hand. This great tree, with its threatening image, stood there as a monument attracting the attention of curious men and fearful children long after Logan was dead and gone.

James Alexander served in the Commissary Department of Washington's army at Valley Forge in the memorable winter of 1777-8. For these services he received sixteen hundred acres of land, which he located in Clearfield county, Pa.

* It has often appeared in print that this same thing happened to a little daughter of William Brown, and Logan was probably in the habit of showing his friendship in this way.

He died in 1791, and was buried at the Brick Presbyterian church of West Kishacoquillas. His will was taken to Carlisle to be probated, and was left in the house of Mr. Lyon, the Register. His house was burned, and the will was thus lost before it was recorded. The Court therefore directed that the testimony of John Wilson and William Brown, two of the executors, should be taken to procure a copy of the legacies. From this copy it appears that he willed his lands in Kishacoquillas to his sons Robert, John, and James; and his four tracts in Clearfield county, Pa., to his sons William Brown, Hugh, Joseph, and Reed. Of these last William B. alone actually settled on the Clearfield lands. The other three sold their tracts to Sir Henry Phillips. Reed died in his twentieth year; Hugh married and settled in Ohio; and the intention was that Joseph should complete his education for professional life, in which he was engaged at the death of his father.