

Our Column In History

Our County and Section and Its Settlers

JOSIAH SIRMANS, PIONEER

The name Josiah Sirmans has become quite familiar to Clinch county people for fifty or sixty years past, but the first Josiah Sirmans in this section was the progenitor of every Sirmans in this section of South Georgia, and to-day his descendants if counted up, would be found to be in the thousands and to be scattered over several counties particularly in Clinch, Lanier, Cook, Berrien, Atkinson and Lowndes.

The original Josiah Sirmans was a man of some prominence in his day, that is, he was known as a very honorable man and enjoyed the confidence and esteem of every one who knew him. He was if we may judge by the old records of Union (Burnt) Church, a very pious man who conducted himself in the scriptural way as a deacon, an office which he held for a number of years before his death. He was the original charter deacon of old Union Church when it was constituted in 1825, and the

house of logs, and this was his home until his death. The family lived in the most frugal manner in keeping with the spirit of most all the settlers. Everything the family needed such as clothes, shoes, etc., was made at home. Herbs formed the basis of practically all medicines, doctors being unknown, and all remedies being "home-made". Many of the articles of furniture in the home were home-made, such as chairs, bedsteads, feather and cotton beds; shelves took the place of dresser drawers; sometimes a mirror graced the home of some of the settlers. Everything to eat was raised on the farm and taken from among the wild game of the woods and the fish of the rivers. Only such things as coffee, indigo, pots and pans, and other supplies that could not be produced, were bought at the faraway markets. Trips to the county-site, then a mere hamlet of less than a dozen buildings including homes, were made by the men-folks once or twice a year. To

records of the church show he was already an ordained deacon and was received as such, from Hebron Church in Emanuel county, which, had ordained him some years before. The church minutes refer frequently to him during the short five years from the organization in 1825 until his death five years later, and shows that he was often serving in capacities like associational delegate, on committees, and led in public prayer.

Josiah Sirmans was born in 1767, a son of Edward Sirman. (The name was originally spelled Sirman until about 1850-1860). The family lived in Bulloch or in that part of Bulloch cut off into Emanuel county when it was created in 1812. Record is found in Bulloch county where John Jones and Josiah Sirmans applied to be appointed administrators of Edward Sirman's estate Sept. 9th, 1805, whereby we infer Edward died in 1805. No further mention could be found of the estate. We have been unable to identify John Jones definitely except that the late C. H. Smith of Homerville told the writer that John Jones whom he knew of as Jack Jones lived in Emanuel county and married a Hardman and a sister to Josiah Sirmans' wife; and that Jack Jones had a son of the same name who married a sister of the late Gen. David Johnson of Clinch county, and they were the

the nearby church it was once a month and it was there the neighbors found most of their social intercourse. Such is a brief description of the way in which Mr. Sirman and his neighbors lived in that early day of the history of this section.

The following children were born to Mr. and Mrs. Sirman:

1. Benjamin, born Feb. 6, 1792, married Martha Johnson, sister to Gen. Dave Johnson. Died May 1st, 1863.

2. Abner, born 1793, married Bettie Kirkland; died in Early county in 1837.

3. Rachel, born 1794, married Hus-tice Studstill.

4. Bettie, born 1795, married Dryden (Dred) Newbern.

5. Sarah Ann, born 1797, married an Adams of Florida.

6. Jonathan, born 1800, married Martha Rouse of Berrien county.

7. Joseph, born May 16, 1808, married first to Rebecca Smith, secondly to Mrs. Sallie Howell. Died October, 1888.

All of these children lived and died in either Clinch or Berrien counties, except Mrs. Sarah Ann Adams who it seems went to Florida where so it seems to the writer that all track of them and their descendants has been lost. All these children had rather large families of children, and many of them became men and wo-

parents of Harrison and Mitchell Jones who lived in Clinch and Berrien counties during the 1860s and 1870s.

Josiah Sirman married Harty Hardeman in Bulloch or probably in Burke county before Bulloch was created in 1793. It appears they were married in 1790. We are informed she was a daughter of Thomas Hardeman.

It was in 1822 that Josiah Sirman decided to join the emigrants from Bulloch and Emanuel counties who were moving southward to settle up the newly-laid-out counties of Appling and Irwin which then took up all the territory from the Altamaha River to the Florida line and as far west as Thomas county and Early county. The years 1820 to 1825 were years of great activity among those seeking new locations and new homes. The influx became so great those years that in December, 1824, the legislature created Ware county out of about half of Appling county, and Lowndes county out of about half of Irwin county.

Josiah Sirman and his family joined with others of their kith and kin and neighbors to move here. We are told that at the same time came

an of distinction and leadership. With the passing of the late Isaac Sirmans in 1920 (a son of Joseph Sirmans by his last marriage), passed away the last of the living grandchildren of Josiah Sirmans. Another grandson, Abner Sirmans (son of Abner and Bettie) died a short time before at the age of about 91.

Josiah Sirman died January 6th, 1830, age 63 years, and was buried at the Fender Cemetery not far from his home about two miles away. His funeral was conducted at the grave by his beloved pastor, assisted by another beloved brother in Christ, Elder William A. Knight. The funeral service was largely attended. Mentioned of it is made in the church minutes of Union Church.

Space in this article forbids any mention of the worthy lives lived by his children, nor of the prominence achieved by many of his grandchildren. All of this must be left to a later article or articles.

Note: Much of the data in this sketch is given in very brief form in the writer's "History of Clinch County" published twenty years ago).

the Johnsons and the Tomlinsons, followed very quickly by the Stud-stills and Roberts' and others. Josiah Sirman settled on what is known to Clinch county people as the old J. B. Strickland place in the Mud Creek district of now Lanier county; the place is now the home-place of Mr. John W. Joyce and he only a few years ago tore the original Sirmans house down to make room for himself a new residence.

Across the Alapaha River only about three miles away was organized in October, 1825, the first church to be organized anywhere in this immediate section, and it was named Union, and was of the Baptist faith; later after the split between the Missionaries and Primitive Baptists faith. The church stands there to-day it became of the Primitive Baptists on the same spot where Josiah Sirman worshipped and served as the church's first deacon.

When Josiah Sirman first settled there the territory was Irwin county, but three years later as already indicated it became Lowndes county. Then in 1850 it became Clinch county and in 1921 it became Lanier county. He lived about 2½ miles from the original county line between Irwin and Appling which line in 1825 became the line between Ware and Lowndes and is now the line between Clinch and Lanier.

The Dupont P. T. A. had its January meeting, January 28, 1937, in the Dupont school auditorium.

The following program was presented by the fourth and fifth grades:

Song—"He Leadeth Me."

Devotional—Miss Daye.

Piano Solo—Elgene Bass.

Playlet—"Sick Doll".

Rhythm Band—Selection.

Playlet—"Mary's New Dress".

Piano Solo—B. D. Jones.

Playlet—"Getting Even With Sis' Beau."

Harmonica Selection—Sixth and Seventh Grades.

Glee Club—"Grandfather's Clock"
"Drink To Me Only With Thine Eyes".

After the program a short business meeting was held.

The sixth and seventh grades were hostesses and served very delightful refreshments.

The honor roll for the month of January is as follows:

First grade: Donald Lee, Marjorie Henderson, William Dame.

Second grade: Brunelle Young, Candler Register, Herbert Register, Lois Tomlinson, Isabelle Hughes.

Third grade: Maxine Bullard, Osie Hughes.

Fourth grade: Wilma Eunice Guess, Rubie Doris Lankford, Sid-

The land he settled on, was excellent farming land. Indeed all the territory up and down the Alapaha River found faster settling up than did the wiregrass country to the east towards Waresboro. Mr. Sirmans cleared up a small farm, built a

ney Mosely.

Fifth grade: None.

Sixth grade: L. E. Hunter, Christine Lee, Grace Smith.

The box supper and cake walk, sponsored by the second, third and eighth grades Friday night January