

JOSEPHAS F. POE

This is the story of my Great Great Grandfather, Josephas F. Poe. I think of him as "Josephas the Responsible." He bore the responsibilities of other people all his life and did it with a dignity and strength that is found in very few people.

Josephas F. Poe was the name given him by his parents, Joseph and Frances (Fanny) Harman Poe. I have never discovered what the "P" represented, but it was probably "Finias", several other Poe men were gifted with that name. Josephas was shortened to "Joe" by family and friends, and My Great Great Grandfather became known as "Joe Poe." He sometimes shortened his name even further to "Jo Poe."

He was born December 10, 1822 on a farm in Robertson County, Tennessee near the border of Kentucky. When Josephas was four years old, his father sold the farm in Robertson County, Tennessee and moved to Henry County, Tennessee. Josephas lived for twelve years on the farm in Henry County. Josephas' father sold this farm in May of 1839, and made preparations to move to Pope County, Arkansas.

Lydia, Mary and Keziah, Josephas' married sisters, Sarah Frances, his younger sister, and John Morton, his unmarried brother, made the journey to Arkansas, leaving two brothers, Alexander and William D. Poe in Tennessee. Another brother, David, who had moved to Kentucky with his second wife, Frances Lewallen, joined the family shortly after their arrival in Arkansas.

They probably traveled by wagon, ox cart and riverboat. This must have been exciting for Josephas who was sixteen years old. This journey from Tennessee to Arkansas was probably the last carefree adventure to be had by Josephas.

Joseph, his father, died, either on the journey, or shortly after their arrival in Arkansas, probably in October of 1839, just two months prior to Josephas' seventeenth birthday. According to the diary of Josephas' second son, George, there were only three white families living in the area where Josephas and his family settled. (Appleton) There were no stores, other than the stores along the Arkansas river, and a few Indians still lingered near their old village, called Glassvillage, after one of their chiefs. The country was wild, and heavily timbered.

One year after the death of his father, the 1840 census of Pope County, Arkansas, lists Josephas as head of the Poe household. He was two months shy of his eighteenth birthday. Fanny, his Mother, age fiftythree, and his youngest sister, Sarah, age fourteen, are living with him in Liberty Township. The whereabouts of John Morton Poe, age twenty-seven, Josephas' older brother, is unknown. Josephas at this young age, had taken on the responsibility of caring for his Mother and Sister.

Josephas sister, Mary, and her husband, James Green Caudle, are living next door. James has opened a primary/common school and is teaching twenty-one pupils, in addition to fanning. Lydia, Josephas' other sister, and her husband, John Caudle, are living a short distance away, and John is farming with his older sons.

Josephas has two slaves listed as living in his household on the 1840 Pope County census. James Green Caudle has six slaves listed in his household, and John Caudle has five slaves listed in his household. These slaves are probably the slaves of Joseph Poe. John Caudle, the Administrator of Joseph Poets estate advertised the sale of Joseph's slaves in the "Arkansas Times and Advertisement" paper in 1843. However, Josephas retained ,one slave, named Wiley, who is listed on the 1850 slave census of Arkansas.

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A mutual bond of respect and care seems to have arisen between Josephas and Wiley. Wiley was ten years old when the Poes came to Arkansas. It is said within the family, that Josephas did offer Wiley his "freedom,. but Wiley refused this offer, preferring to remain with Josephas and the Poe family. Wiley attended services at the Sulphur Spring Presbyterian Church with the Poes, and is listed on the membership roll as .Wiley, a servant.. Wiley died February 26, 1857. The regard the Poe family held for Wiley is reflected in the fact that Wiley was buried in the Appleton Cemetery near the Poe family he served so well during his lifetime.

Josephas married one month before his 20th birthday. Roben Rankin and his large family had migrated from Gibson County, Tennessee and settled near Appleton in 1838. They were probably one of the "three white families. who had settled in the area when the Poes arrived in 1839. Roben and his wife, Isabelle Rankin, had a farm just outside of Appleton. They had a daughter named Isabelle Jane. She was born September 14, 1826. Isabelle Jane Rankin was a descendant of another Roben Rankin of Scot descent who had immigrated from County Donegal, Ireland to Lancaster County, Pennsylvania in 1750, and settled in Guilford County, North Carolina. Josephas and Isabelle Jane, met and fell in love. They had a double wedding with Isabelle's sister, Selena and William Johnson. William A. Barker, a local deacon in the Methodist Episcopal Church, married the two couples on November 8, 1842.

Josephas found a tract of land East of Appleton in 1843. He built a log cabin on the property. It had two large rooms with a hall in the middle. The fire place was eight feet wide with a large Oak mantle. The fireplace hearth bears the inscription "1845. and can still be seen today. (1996) A large cellar was built beneath the two rooms to provide storage space for the family's foodstuffs. Josephas and

Isabelle, and his Mother, Fanny, moved from Liberty Township to Griffin Township, and settled in their new home. Sarah, Josephas' younger sister, had married William Rowland in 1841 and started a home of her own.

Isabelle lost two members of her family shortly after her marriage to Josephas. George, her older brother, was hunting one day, and accidentally dropped a hot shell into his powder pouch, fatally burning himself. Two years later, on September 28, 1845, Isabelle's father, Roben, died. The respect the Rankin family held for Josephas and his abilities, is shown by their appointment of the twenty-three year old Josephas as Administrator of Robert Rankin's estate. Conway County Probate Court records show that Josephas took this responsibility to his Mother-in-law and her family seriously. Annual reports on the estate were made well into the 1850's. One interesting report, filed May 2, 1848, reads as follows:

Probate Court, Conway County, Arkansas, May 2nd, 1848 "Now on this day on motion, it is ordered that Josephas Poe, Administrator of Robert Rankin, deceased, have leave to retain in his possession a \$5.00 gold piece. Filed in his account current supposed to be counterfeit. .

I wonder what happened to that \$5.00 counterfeit gold piece?

Josephas performed several different kinds of work in order to support his family. According to family members, he was injured in an accident in his early years which left him a cripple. This did not seem to have effected his ability to work. The application he filed for homestead rights, in October of 1860, in order to receive title to the 120 acres of land he had worked since 1843, stated that Josephas had twenty-five acres of land under cultivation, a dwelling place, and several out buildings. Carpentry seems to have been an additional source of income for Josephas. He, and his son, Christopher, built several houses in the Appleton area, and the first frame building of the Sulphur Spring Presbyterian Church was built by Christopher Poe. Josephas also built wagons, and made coffins for the residents of the area.

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Josephas' Mother, Fanny, died after the 1850 Pope County census was taken. He had lived with his Mother all his life, she, first caring for him, and he, later caring for her. Josephas must have felt very deeply the loss of his Mother.

Josephas and Isabelle possessed a deep abiding faith in the Lord and attended church regularly. The Glass Village Cumberland Presbyterian Church was near their home, and Josephas became an elder in the church. The church was named after Chief Glass, a Cherokee indian who for some reason remained behind in Appleton when his tribe was removed to Indian Territory. Chief Glass was a regular attendant to the Glass Village Presbyterian Church services.

The Glass Village congregation split apart in 1856 and a new church was formed called the Sulphur Spring Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Josephas and Isabelle became members of the new church. Josephas and his brother, John Morton Poe, became Elders in the new church, along with Isabelle's two brothers, A. L. and Ruben Rankin. Josephas was appointed the Clerk of the Church, and held that position until his death in 1897, a total of forty years.

The Civil War effected Josephas' family as it did all those in Pope County. Two of his sons, Christopher, the elder, and Theron, the younger, fought in the Confederate States Army. No record of service for George, his middle son, has been found, however, he too, may have served. Christopher handed down to his family the tale of being trapped behind enemy lines and crawling into a hollow log to avoid captivity. He was forced to remain in the log for three days, which resulted in pneumonia. Theron fought with General Sterling Price on his raids through Mississippi, and later drew a Confederate war pension. Both sons returned home safely from the war. It is unknown if Josephas served in the war, however, it is probable that he did perform some service, as the headstone above his grave bears the inscription "a veteran of the country and the C P Church. "

Josephas' sons survived the war, but two of his brothers did not. Alexander died in 1862 after a long illness, and William D. Poe, while riding to Dover to have some meal ground, was murdered by a Northern sympathizer after the war ended.

Josephas and Isabelle had Thirteen children. The names of ten are known. Three of the children died young, and I have been unable to find their graves. Two of the known children, also died young. W. S. Poe died at the age of three months and ten days in 1858, and had the dubious honor of being " the first in the yard" of the newly formed Sulphur Spring Presbyterian Church. Josephas and Isabelle suffered the loss of their fourteen year old daughter, Martha Jane, in 1871. The love they felt for this child is expressed in the fact that among all the "hand made" headstones in Josephas' family, Martha's alone, carries decoration.

Throughout his life, Josephas accepted the responsibilities handed to him, and I should include Isabelle, as she was by his side, and shared all things with him. When their son, Christopher and his second wife, Lucinda, both died in the year 1887, Josephas and Isabelle took their younger children into their household, providing them with the same love and attention, they gave their own children.

Josephas died January 15, 1897, and was buried in the "yard" of his beloved Sulphur Spring Church.

Isabelle died two years later on February 14, 1899, and was buried beside Josephas. Her obituary reads as follows:

Again, we have been called upon to witness the sad scenes of death. Mrs Isabelle Poe after an illness of several weeks died at her home near Appleton, February 20, 1899, age 73 years 5 months and 4 days.

She has been a member of the C. P. Church ever since her youth and has lived a consistent Christian life and raised her children in the admonition of the Lord.

Her husband, "Uncle Joe" Poe has been dead over two years and now God in his goodness and wisdom has granted her the sweet privilege of meeting him in a glory world.

May we all live and act as "Aunt Ibbie" so when God calls us we will be ready to go. She leaves five children and many other relatives and friends to mourn her loss.

(Note: Isabelle's headstone says she died February 14th, her obituary says February 20th, I don't know which is correct.)

Josephas and Isabelle suffered many hardships and trials in their lifetime, and they overcame them with their faith in the Lord, their strength and courage, and their love of family. It would have been an honor to have known them.

Submitted by:

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