

GENEALOGICAL GLEANINGS

OF

SIGGINS

AND OTHER

PENNSYLVANIA FAMILIES

**A Volume**

OF

HISTORY, BIOGRAPHY

AND

COLONIAL, REVOLUTIONARY, CIVIL AND  
OTHER WAR RECORDS

*INCLUDING NAMES OF MANY OTHER WARREN COUNTY PIONEERS*

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## GEORGE SIGGINS.

George Siggins, eldest son of John Siggins, was born in the parish of Drumcliff, County Sligo, Ireland, in the year 1778. When fifteen years of age, his father emigrated to America. Having been a well to do land holder, he possessed means enough to engage in business, but having lost money by going security for a friend, he finally leased a farm in Centre county, Pennsylvania, at a place called Spring Creek. Here in 1800 George was married by the Rev. David Stephens, to Jean, eldest daughter of the Rev. William and Jean Young of the same place. She was a beautiful child, being but sixteen years of age, was converted at the age of fourteen years, and was a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church. We have very interesting notes, dates, and incidents relating to her family. Her father was a man of unusual talent and spirituality. He was converted when twenty years of age under the labors of Rev. Charles Graham, one of the first Methodist preachers sent by Mr. Wesley to the north of Ireland. Mr. Graham is spoken of by Frances Baird who was a sister of George Siggins, as the first one she, as a young girl, remembered as a Wesleyan preacher. William Young was born in County Sligo, Ireland, May 1, 1755. He was joined in holy wedlock to Miss Jane Simpson in 1780. She was born in County Sligo in August, 1752. Her father was John Simpson. He and all his family were members of the established Church. One of his brothers came to this country about the year 1748 and settled in Bucks county about twenty miles from Philadelphia. The father of William and John Simpson was the great-great-grand father alike of Gen. Ulyssus Simpson Grant, of Jefferson Davis, and of my father—George Simpson Siggins. In 1801, after his father's death, George Siggins moved to Pithole, Venango county, Pa., where he bought a tract of land from the Holland Land Co. Here after many discouragements, and having learned the advantage of living near the river, he chose a farm in Warren Co., Pa., below Tidioute. He retained possession long enough to build a home, improve the land, plant an orchard, and leaving the stamp of the genu-

ine pioneer, he gives the evidence of yet superior judgment, by making a final move to what is now known as West Hickory, Forest county, Pa. He bought several hundred acres of land facing the Allegheny, and extending back to Hickory Creek. Upon the high bank of the Allegheny and gently sloping fields, which he and his sturdy sons had cleared, George Siggins built another home. The first was of hewn logs, and which I remember having seen. Here the brave wife of the pioneer must have found hope springing up in her heart. The unwritten annals of her life might well form the theme of romance, the pathos of which would touch every heart to the depths. Her children of whom there were now eight, were all living. Her eldest son was eighteen years of age, and with a daughter perhaps twelve, she, with boys of all ages around her might well hope to one day see her toil repaid by a home of comfort and plenty. Here her husband planted orchards again, the land was fertile, and the location full of beauty. The river with its crystal flow, the islands, and the hills, where the dark shadow of the evergreen trees cast a veil of tenderness over the June verdure of the other trees, that growing among the pines and hemlocks must have charmed the woman whose poetic nature has been a rich heritage to her children, and her children's children. Grandfather was a religious man. He was a true disciple of the Reformer and philanthropist, John Wesley. One of his first radical stands was for total abstinence in regard to whiskey, which was so commonly indulged in at that day. Neither would he provide it for men who worked for him, nor for the "loggings", or "raisings", where it was at all times so freely provided elsewhere. The same year that he came to Hickorytown, on June 22, 1818, Jane, second daughter and eighth child was born. Though in reality, in good circumstances yet a pioneer life, of necessity in these early days, must have entailed many hardships, and deprivations of the comforts of life. Once when I was arranging the pillows for her daughter, my aunt Mary who was an invalid, said in thanking me, "I am very comfortable. I often think of my dear mother. When sister Jane was born she lay with her sad-

dle for a pillow. She was so proud spirited; she spun flax and wool, she sewed, knit, wove and cooked that her children might be well provided for. She entertained company, sang hymns, prayed for her children, and taught them that the fear of the Lord was the beginning of wisdom." One of the sweet memories of our family is the legacy of love and respect with which her children kept green the hallowed records of her patient life. In 1821, another daughter, Rebecca, was born, and worn with the many years of toil this tired mother slipped away from earth into eternal rest. Small wonder it was that the proud spirit and weary body so soon parted company. Her last resting place is in the green and quiet family burying ground at West Hickory. Rev. David Kinnear, her nephew, in writing of her says: "She was a woman of a remarkable religious nature, sensitive, gentle yet full of spirit. Was very handsome, tall, fair, with abundance of waving light curling hair of a peculiar sunny tint, so unusual, that the beauty of her hair and her handsome blue eyes were always mentioned." Jane Young Barnes, June Siggins Wheeler, and a number of others of her grand children have inherited these characteristic features. Her son George who was twelve years of age at the time of her death retained such vivid memories of her beauty and spirituality, that he always spoke of her as "My Angel Mother," or "My Sainted Mother", and nothing pleasing him or his brothers more than to trace in their daughters a likeness to their mother. Here is a copy of her Church letter sent her eight years after her removal to Western Pennsylvania:

"This is to certify that the bearer, Jean Siggins, is an acceptable member of the Methodist Society, Northumberland Circuit, August 27, 1808."

JOHNSTON DUNHAM.

Your chronicler must of necessity use the personal pronoun, as the material for what is to follow is largely drawn, not only from the recollections of others but from her own personal memories. Realizing that such knowledge with

the passing of this generation would be lost, not only to the family but to the church and world, I have tried to present a true picture of a man, the nobility of whose character, his assembled descendents may well emulate. I can hardly realize that at my first memory of my honored grandfather, which began as early as two years of age, that he must have then been seventy years of age, but it is so. Among my first memories of him is one of the family sitting before the great fireplace, where huge logs fed the flames that were roaring up the black throat of the chimney; and of step-grandmother cooking, and baking before the fire, where on the ample hearth she had drawn the glowing coals. There was a cooking stove in the same room, but habit is strong, and the old way seemed best. Here they would gather when the day's work was done, where we heard him tell of the early times, and hear the Bible read, night and morning, he, after the manner of the patriarch offered prayer. His son, my uncle Isaac, who lived at home used to sing grand old hymns for him.

Mrs. Jane Ferry has furnished some notes that are fitting here—she says—“My first recollection of grandfather is when having family prayers, they all stood and sang, “Lord in the morning Thou shalt hear my voice ascending high.” And so they began the day. At this time the family consisted of grand-father, grandmother (his second wife) aunt Mary, aunt Jane, uncles Isaac and James. I have heard him say he remembered sitting on his mother's knee to hear John Wesley preach.” Her sister Mary says that once when grandfather was with his father at one of Mr. Wesley's meetings, being frightened at the noise, he ran to his father who was at the altar, and clung to him crying, when John Wesley laid his hand on his little head saying, “See the little lad lays hold of the altar.” In old Asbury Chapel grandfather always began his testimony, or exhortations with, “My dear children,” and always said “I am glad I am a Methodist” I also remember his goodness to me as a child, and that neither he nor grandmother ever spoke an unkind word to me, nor do I remember of ever hearing him speak unkindly to any person. He used to tell

that when their Catholic neighbors in Ireland used to quarrel, they called his father in as peace maker. They were Episcopalians until they heard Mr. Wesley preach. Grandfather was a born aristocrat, and had fine ideas of society, and displayed good taste in all his belongings and in the planning of all his buildings. Grandfather Siggins was married the second time to Pheobe Dawson, a woman considerably older than himself, who is the grandmother I recollect. If the elasticity, vivacity, and devotion of her later years are an index to her younger days, I would say she was at the time of her marriage a very handsome little lady. She died at the age of ninety four years, and then her face scarcely showed a wrinkle. She was a most devoted wife; her love and respect for her husband were most marked, and in all things where he was concerned, she was most unselfish. His comfort and wishes were the law of her life. They were very gentle and kindly in their manner to each other; and in my memory I see them sitting each by their window in the old home,—On Sunday he with the big red Bible, she with Baxter's Saint's Rest, the sanctity of the Sabbath was to him so reasonable a service, that he read no secular papers on that day. At Hickorytown he was instrumental in having a little meeting house built, and also a school house. "He organized debating clubs, and encouraged his sons to take part thus training them to that which was to them a most useful acquirement." He built for himself at the place in Hickory sometime in 1830, a home which had the distinction of being one of the first and best frame houses built in the country, containing six rooms, with many windows, and a wide porch the whole length of the house facing the river and the east. Here on summer evenings, the family rested with the river and hills to keep them company. The river was then the great highway. Steamboats, rafts, keelboats and other craft, held an unfailing source of interest for all. During the spring and summer freshets, thousands of families floated by to new homes further west. It was considered a fitting courtesy demanded by the interest of the occasion for those on shore to call and ask them where they

were bound; the answer varied between "Western Reserve" "Indiana", "Ohio" or "Illinois". Household goods, cows, horses, wagons and other possessions were distributed over the rafts until they looked like a section of a farm afloat. Grandfather could tell us wonderful stories of Ireland, and sang songs, part of which were Irish words. He often held two of us upon his knees while he told us stories of the famine in Ireland and of the cruel officers who came for the rent, taking their property, the pig, or cow to the anguish of the poor cottagers. I do not remember of hearing him speak of any want among his friends, but always of their being comfortable. George Siggins was a tall noble looking man, one whose face bore the imprint of a strong and kindly soul. He had dark eyes, his head was bald, but with a circle of soft curling gray hair that hung around his neck. His grandson, John Siggins of Tidioute contributes his estimate and recollections, saying—"George Siggins was a large, strong, muscular man about six feet tall, and well proportioned. He had some of the Irish accent with his speech. He was very much devoted to the Church. I hold the original license given him in Centre county, about 1800, to exhort and conduct religious meetings in the Methodist Episcopal church. I have his old saddlebags that he used when he traveled as he did by horse back. In later years he had a horse and buggy and he and his wife would drive on Friday to Asbury Chapel, Tionesta, or starting earlier in the week, would drive to Franklin, Warren, or Youngsville, or some other place, when they would attend Quarterly meeting and enjoy the hospitality of their friends and relatives. Grandfather was a man who enjoyed the pursuit of a farmer his father before him desired all his sons to possess a farm, and he in turn had the same ambition. He has the credit of planting four orchards, the last, at Hickory, was a very large one. Many of the trees remain standing and bear fruit at the present time. The tree planting is inherited by the writer (John Siggins) as well as by some others in the family. Grandfather had a silk hat for state occasions, and a curly maple cane turned with a knob, and painted a

dark red. One he used every day was a "staff", a natural crook that he used for years. The following is a copy of the license spoken of which however bears date 1810: "Eyre" Circuit—which is I presume the old style of spelling Erie Circuit.

"Know all men by these presents that George Siggins is authorized to exhort in the Methodist Episcopal church so long as his walk and conversation corresponds with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Given under my hand this sixth day of October, in the year A. D. 1810.

JOSHUA MONROE.

Minister in Charge.

George Siggins was a great reader, so was uncle Isaac. Uncle took the "New York Tribune" and the "Philadelphia Post". They also had the National Magazine, issued by the Methodist publishing house. It was a work of genuine literary worth. The great galaxy of literary stars that shone for us in the central years of this century were contributors. It is a treat to read a number of it to day. Grandfather had the "New York Advocate" from the first copy issued. He subscribed for the history of Methodism written by the Rev. Dr. Abel Stevens who passed away in December—97 having lived more than four score years. As the different volumes came from the press—there were five of them—he read them with absorbing interest. The last volume came out the year grandfather died, but was read by him with great interest and delight. Each day he would read up the news of the world. The Crimean war and the Civil war were followed by him with deep interest. Uncle Isaac, uncle William or my father enjoyed a visit with so well informed a man, and the news of the day was always faithfully reviewed by them. The library in grandfather's house was a priceless treasure to us all. There were Biographies, Histories, Travels, Philosophy, Poetry, Romance, Fairy Stories and a book of Bible Stories, all by standard authors, purchased from those early benefactors



of our country, the Methodist preachers, who, following the example and plan of John Wesley, furnished good books to the people, carrying them in their saddle bags on their long and perilous journeys; books so well bound that they are well preserved to day. I have several books myself that my father bought from these saddle bags. George Siggins and Thomas Dawson both early representatives of Methodism divided between them the privilege for many years of entertaining the preachers, after their toilsome circuit of hundreds of miles, making the trip perhaps once in six or seven weeks. Mr. Henry Kinnear, one of the first Methodists, met the Rev. Noah Fiddler of the Erie Circuit, Baltimore Conference, (the first conference), and requested him to visit the converts in Venango county, Pa., which he did in 1801, preaching in William Kinnear's house and organizing the first class composed of George and Jane Siggins, James Dawson, Sr., and his wife Elizabeth, Thomas and Hannah Dawson, James Dawson, Jr., Pheobe Dawson, William and Mary Kinnear and the widow Allender. George Siggins was their leader. This was the first class organized in Venango county, and where the Methodist church was first established in the county. The first quarterly meeting in this region was held in Crawford county in a barn. I have some items of interest given by my aunt, Mrs. Elizabeth Allender, a daughter of my grandfather Thomas Dawson. "This meeting was held at Gravel Run near Waterford in 1802—George Siggins and Isaac Conelly his brother-in-law walked all the way there to attend the meeting". Andrew Kinnear was present at this meeting. He had married a daughter of Rev. William Young. David was the son of Andrew Kinnear, is the one to whom we are indebted for the chronicles of the family so carefully gathered more than fifty years ago. Sarah Hood Siggins, mother of George Siggins, lived with him when his wife died and for a year or two after he married his second wife. Mrs. Allender, who lived about three and a half miles from Hickorytown, says that at the age of seventy years this woman would "spin her dozen a day", and so active at that age that she would walk to her place in the morning, spend

the day and return to Hickorytown in the evening. She was born in 1750, died in 1835, in her 86th year. She possessed a strong christian character. I have the remnant of a book of Bible stories from which she read to her grandchildren as they sat around her. I remember often of hearing my father speak of the teachings of this good woman, and of her reading to them from this book. She stood a faithful representative for the church and the religion of her choice, bringing as she did the teaching of John Wesley in all its scriptural simplicity and power into her pioneer home. Her life and that of her pure spirited husband are like ointment poured forth, the fragrance of which comes to us today as we recall this precious heritage of their lives.

George Siggins never seemed to tire of his grand children. They visited him by the score. Usually there was one or more of them living in his family. He welcomed all who came, and his table was always surrounded by some of them. He was appreciative of every little service. If we unfastened his shoes and put on his slippers, as grandmother had taught us, or beat up the big feather cushion of his chair, he called us "proper fine girls". The hire of the laborer was fully paid and the poor shared in his plenty. He had large orchards. I believe he never sold a bushel of fruit in his life. The whole country came and carried off apples by the wagon load. His peaches and grapes he shared generously with his friends each year. He loved to see his fruit grow and had very choice trees.

I remember Elder Chapin, who when I was a little girl, visited my father. He was one of the first pioneers who travelled the circuit. I had the pleasure once of being entertained in the home of this old minister and his wife in Westfield, N. Y. They told me many episodes of the early days, and of the kindness of my two grandfathers and their families, and especially of my own father and mother in their old home as young people. The first preacher, as has been stated, was Noah Fiddler in 1810. Then came Joshua Monroe, whose authority vested George Siggins with the

right to exhort and teach the divine ideals of Christian life. Then there was Jacob Gruber, an eccentric German, of whom many stories are told. Once when coming to my grandfather Dawsons, arriving a day or so ahead of their expectations, he found the family sitting down to supper, small in variety, but excellent in quality. He asked to return thanks, which he did by saying, "Lord bless the good mush, Amen". About fifty years ago, I remember seeing my grandfather reading "Uncle Tom's Cabin". The book was written in 1852, and was lent to him to read, by Mrs. Hamilton Stowe, whose friendship to him and all his family was a source of pleasure and comfort. I do not remember seeing my grandmother reading the book, which she undoubtedly did, but do remember hearing my mother and him discuss the principals set forth in the book. They both grasped the truth of the divine right of souls to liberty, and the wrong of human slavery. Out of the pathos of the book they saw what lead them and many of their grand-daughters to rejoice in the hope that some day the blot of slavery would be taken from our country. Being brought up at the feet of such a man, we were advance guards for the abolition of slavery and prohibition of strong drink.

Grandfather was contemporary with the history of the Church, and lived to see it number more than two million members with almost a century of his country's growth with the Indians, with pioneer life, and advanced civilization, and progress of this mid-century-yea, to see his country victorious in the contest for human freedom, honored by all the world, and undivided, in which his loyal soul rejoiced. He was a true patriot and gave his voice for every reform that he believed would lead his country on to its great mission. In 1812, he and his three brothers responded to the call, and the early close of the war permitted their safe return to their families. George Siggins was a firm friend and admirer of Abraham Lincoln. He grasped the greatness of the character in this hero in our crisis for human liberty and gave honor to him, the great Emancipator, far in advance of the day. Grandfather died a few

weeks before the awful tragedy on the 14th day of April, when the land was shadowed with the message "Lincoln is dead," and we all rejoiced that he had been spared a sorrow.

George Siggins owned a sawmill on West Hickory Creek, which he ran for two years, when he sold it to Mr. Ball. James Y. Siggins, his son, afterwards married this man's daughter, Sarah. Mr. Ball soon after sold this property and built a mill on Tionesta creek at the place since known as Balltown. At this mill on Hickory Creek George Siggins planted another orchard. Trees planted seventy years ago are still living and bearing fruit. At Stewart's Run, or Pithole, as it was then called, the first place that this pioneer settled, as well as at others where he lived, these marks of his benevolence, thrift and enterprise remain. The query arises, "where did he find the apple trees to plant?" There is an authentic account of an early benefactor of our pioneer days known as "Johnny Apple-Seed," who went about like John the Baptist, clothed in coarse garments, living on wild honey, and the products of the forest, who travelled thru the wilderness, stopping at intervals, when he would cut the saplings from a small patch of ground, fencing it with the same, then spading the ground he would plant a liberal amount of apple seeds which he carried in a large sack on his back. This he did in different portions of Pennsylvania, New York and Ohio. The early pioneers used to look for and carefully transplant these trees.

MRS. HARRIET E. HOWE.

From the Democratic Vindicator, of Tionesta, Forest County, Pa., July 21st and 28th, 1898.