

When Springfield, Missouri, Was The West

Of course it wasn't Springfield then. It was Indian Territory in the early 1820's. Starting with the many square miles of the Buffalo Prairie north of the Pomme De Terre River, Southwest Missouri was occupied by Osage Indians. Numerous bands of this tribe had lived there no one knows how many years. Hundreds of years they had used South Missouri for villages and hunting. In 1829 a few White trappers and traders had settled here. Two brothers of the adventuresome Patterson family, Thomas and Alexander, had settled their families beside James River as early as 1819. Thomas's son, Albert G., built a homestead on The James in 1822. Another brother settled on the river in what is now Webster County. How brave they were. Twice they had to move east when the Meensee Indians drove them from the land. There was also trouble in the family when some of the Patterson girls married Indian men against their father's wishes. I believe what really saved the Pattersons was the fact they were millers and built mills on the river that the Indians realized were very handy.

Years before, the tribe that greeted and helped the Pilgrims at Jamestown, Virginia, was the Lenni Lenape Tribe. After being persecuted, pushed, and tricked into a westward movement many times, they were forced on an early "Trail of Tears" in 1820. The large body of what was left of this tribe had been given land on James River, south of what would be Springfield, Missouri. By this

time these Indians were known as the Delawares. The land and game by this time was not sufficient to support them and the tribe faced starvation. Their Chief Anderson wrote the now famous letter telling of their plight. In spite of the appeal to Washington many Indian families starved when their crop failed.

By this time many other tribes of Indians were in the area. In 1819 a reservation was given to the Kickapoo Indians sweeping from the Pomme De Terre River south. A Kickapoo village was in the area that would later be Springfield, Missouri. A village was near what would later be Strafford, Missouri. Cherokees were given a reservation in Arkansas. Sac and Fox Indians were trying to find a living along the Pomme De Terre River. The Osage were resentful of this intrusion on what had been their hunting grounds for years. Whiskey was plentiful and always available to the Indians, which added to the problem. Into this hotbed more settlers began to drift.

In 1827 J. Polk Campbell and his brother E. Mat Campbell came to the area of Southwest Missouri looking for a place to build homes for their families. During the search the families had been left in Tennessee.

During an autumn storm the two men took shelter with the Indians in what was called Delaware Town. The Delawares had just brought in a small band of Kickapoos they had rescued from the Osage Indians. One young brave was very ill and near death. John P. Campbell had some knowledge of herb medicine and thought he could save him with herbs he had in his saddlebags. The boy grew more ill. The Campbell brothers were afraid they would be blamed if he died and worked very hard to save him. The young Kickapoo did pass the crisis and lived.

In 1828 the two Campbell families came back to this area in a wagon train. The weather was so cold they crossed the Mississippi River on thick ice. The men had marked a tree and the families were the first to settle where Springfield, Missouri would be.

The young Kickapoo brave, thankful to John Campbell for saving his life, stayed very close to the family.

The first white baby born in the area was born to John Polk Campbell and his wife Louisa Terrell Chairs Campbell. The baby was a girl named Mary Frances. The baby was a beauty and

finally flushed him out and killed him Daniel Parry's young son rushed up and shot several more bullets into his body.

Samuel Maples became a rancher in Canada and froze to death in a blizzard there.

The men lived with their horse and gun. Their life and their family's life depended on them. Those early Americans were called long hunters, because they carried the long rifle, also known as the Pennsylvania rifle or Kentucky rifle. These guns had been put together by German gunsmiths in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. It was the first American firearm, especially crafted for the wild frontier. The guns were beautiful with hardwood stock and brass fittings. Later many men carried the long rifle into the Civil War. A backwoodsman with his own long rifle was considered an asset to any company.

In 1851 Josiah Jr., and all his grown sons were in a wagon train. In this train were the Maples, Wilsons, Littles and Greenways (Greenaways) families. Because of some trouble the train would have to leave before planned. The wagons; left before daybreak. Frank Wilson's brother bragged he would shoot the first Indian he saw. Thirty-five miles from White's Fort (Knoxville) an Indian squaw crossed the trail and Frank's brother shot her. The woman had small children. Cherokee Indians captured the wagon train and threatened to kill every man woman and child if the killer were not turned over to them. They took him and killed him and skinned him and brought him back and laid him across the trail and made each wagon roll over him as they left. The wagon train went to Mississippi. Another wagon train of Josiah Maples brother, William C. Maples went there also and later settled in Huntsville, Alabama. There is much history of that family and of their success. What I remember most is William C. married Nancy Long. They had 21 children and she lived over 100 years.

Before the 1860's the same families in the Maples's wagon train decided to travel on to the area of southwest Missouri. Arriving at Springfield, Missouri they secured land south that had been Delaware Town. The Delaware Indians had been placed on the banks of James and Finley Rivers. They had struggled there, many had starved. The land had been depleted of game. Many

Indians were trying to find a living there. The government had moved the Delawares on to Kansas and Oklahoma. The Maples started the hard work of building farms. Log houses were built and the trees cleared for farms. A church was started in various homes. The Civil War came soon. The Maples had many men that had to leave for military duty. The church building was put off until after the war and then a log building was built at Boaz, Missouri. The Maples donated land. The seats were made of split logs. Some of this land is still in Maples' hands today. The church was named Frasier Chapel, but it was also called Splitlog Church.

In May of 1861 Union Home Guards were formed in Springfield, Missouri. Twelve Hundred men joined. Many Maples joined. Several sons and grandsons of Josiah Maples Jr. joined. Springfield, Missouri was a very important spot for the Union, or the South, to control. During the war it changed hands several times. During the conflict five forts were built in the city. Munitions were manufactured in the city. In that spring of 1861 men were marched to that hotbed to try to get control of the South or the North. Colonel Franz Sigel started from Rolla, Missouri. He had the 3rd Missouri Volunteers. General Sweeney arrived in Springfield, Missouri on the First of July with the 1st Iowa Infantry, a portion of the 2nd Kansas, and a battalion of regular dragoons. On the third of July General Lyon left Boonville, Missouri for Southwest Missouri. He had with him about 2000 men. About 1600 men left Kansas City, Missouri for Southwest Missouri. They were under Major S. D. Sturgis. The confederates were coming up from the Southern States. General Ben McCullough of Texas had been ordered to South Missouri. Louisiana and Arkansas State Volunteers joined him. The Southern Forces were composed of men under General Price, General N. Bart Pearce and General McCullough. Officials had agreed not to have the battle in Springfield, which saved the city and many lives. Before the battle the Missouri Home Guards were ordered to stay in Springfield, Missouri. Some buffs think this was a grave mistake on General Lyon's part. The Guards, mostly from farms, and with their Tennessee Longs, would have been a great asset and might have swayed the outcome of the battle in favor of the North. Many of