

THE ROBINSONS (#503)

Source: Heritage of Putnam County Tennessee – 2008 by Putnam County Heritage Book Committee and County Heritage Inc.

Pg. 185 & 186 – The Robinson descend from Lewis Robinson, a black pioneer who married Fanny Ballard, a freed woman. Lewis and Fanny were the parents of Joyce Alice Ferrell's mother, Sequarian (Sequin, "Sea") Louise Robinson Ferrell. Seguin Robinson (1881-1962) was the 13th child of Lewis Robinson and Fanny Ballard. Lewis' father was Gross Robinson, the oldest US documented line on Joyce's side of the family. Gross Robinson's line is where our Putnam story begins.

Emigration from the Robinson family sear in Scotland began with the birth of John Robertson, born 1620 and died 1668. John's son, William (1650-1709), had a son Thomas, born 1678, who married Mary McKenzie.

Thomas' son, John Robinson/Robertson (born 1694), married Tabitha Scruggs Jones and was the first to acquire land when he purchased 400 acres in 1761, from King George II, as noted in Cumberland County, VA. John's son, Field Robinson, Sr. (1720-1785), married Obedience Bradshaw. Their son, Field, Jr., born 1750, married Keziah Scruggs. Their son, Gross Robinson, married Susan "Sarah" Anderson and was a Protestant and a member of the Society of Friends. The Society of Friends were Quakers and were opposed to slavery. Yet, Gross was a slave holder and carpenter, who sold the mother of his son, Lewis. He was discussing his intention of selling Lewis, who was an infant, when his white daughter, Emily (1811-1900), at nine years, summoned the courage to intervene. "Don't you sell my brother", she screamed. This story was passed on through generations of the black side of the family. In 2007, the conversation was confirmed by a white family member, Sherron Marlowe, who had heard the story also, and disclosed that Emily was hiding under the dining table when she emerged with her demands. Lewis lived free, almost from birth.

Gross fell to his death in 1838, while working on the courthouse in Richmond, VA, generating a large inheritance for his wife Susan Anderson Robinson. Susan packed up her children and followed her brothers to Jackson County, TN. The land she purchased is known as Robinson Ridge. The white family members were very protective about their black kin. At no time did white family members deny their own. White family members claimed their blood, making sure that the black family farms were sheltered between the white farms.

After Gross' death and the departure of his white wife, Susan, Lewis stayed on in Richmond, where he monitored family properties held in Henrico County, VA. He owned two homes of his own, most likely safe houses. Lewis is reputed to have embraced abolitionism, as a result of his race, his faith, and the climate surrounding Nat Turner's rebellion when he was 11. He and his brother, Peter, later traveled by covered wagons through the Smokey Mountains to join their half siblings in Tennessee. Lewis, Fanny, and their children were situated on their farms on the Robinson Ridge by 1870, next to his white brother, Gross, Jr., according to the U. S. 1870 census. In addition to his farming skills, Lewis was known for his Protestant lifestyle and fasted on Sundays. The black and white Robinsons lived quietly side by side, legally as family, because the Black Codes against interracial families didn't become Tennessee law until 1875. Susan, Elizabeth, and Emily's farm was at the other end of the ridge. Lewis ignored the social restrictions imposed by the grandfather clause that prevented blacks from voting. He presented his land deed, paid a poll tax, and registered to vote in 1891, in spite of the new racism perpetuated by the surge of German, British, and Italian immigrants.

The new immigrants reactivated the Ku Klux Klan that had disbanded in 1869 and began to change the demographics and racial tolerance throughout the county. The changing social climate further influenced Lewis and Fanny's decision to move to Gallatin, and then to Chestnut Mound/Granville area where her people lived. The portion of Robinson Ridge that Lewis transferred to his son, John, was desired by new local whites and resulted in John's false imprisonment on trumped up charges when he declared the land would only be taken over his dead body. John, a seer, was referred to as Prophet by local blacks. After his release, John was sought after by some of the whites who helped to imprison him, to pray for rain in times

of drought. It is reported that “bellie full of rain” would fall, after he prayed, exemplifying “faith is all”. It is interesting to note that John was the name of the first Robinson to buy land in America and the last black Robinson to own land on Robinson Ridge. Lewis, Fanny, and John are reportedly, buried in the cemetery of the Ballard Chapel in Stonewall, TN. Fanny, was a free laborer when the War between the states began, and her family was an integral part of the Ballard community, that established the grounds of the Ballard Chapel where she is buried.

The foundation of Fanny’s American story belongs to Jackson County, a place she left, so that her offspring would not inbreed. Fanny, shared her knowledge of root medicine, healing arts, and mid wife skills with her daughter; enabling Sea to make positive contributions to the Silver Point community of Putnam County.

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*See The Family of Gross Scruggs Robinson.

*See Chapter 14 and Robinson family files at:

<http://www.ajlambert.com>