

IN THE LONG AGO

There appear to be some omissions in Elsie's description of her ancestors. (Some generations may be missing.) Please send any specifics you may know.

My Great Grandfather lived on the sea shore. They were ship builders. There came a dreadful storm and there was a shipwreck and the ship caught on fire and some of the people were lost. They brought one lady into my great grandmother's house and she was grief stricken because she had lost her baby girl. That was an ill-fated ship and her name was Elsie. Great Grandmother was looking for a little baby herself, and when it came, great grandmother named her Elsie and she grew up into a beautiful girl. Her people had plenty of money. She had everything she could wish for. She had an older sister and together they led a gay life, going to dances and other places of amusement of that day so long ago, having a good time. Great Grandfather objected to the gay life they

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were living but he could not very well help himself as Great Grandmother wanted the girls to have a good time while they were young. One night they had a big entertainment at their home with music, dancing and cards and in the middle of the fun they began to smell sulphur burning (people were more superstitious then than they are now). They never knew who put the sulphur in the fire; they thought it was a warning from some unseen source to stop the gay life they were living, which it did, and Great Grandfather was very smug with the result (the dear old rascal).

Soon after that my Grandmother met a red-headed Irishman with blue eyes and she fell in love with him. That brought on a storm of protest in the family and caused herself to be disinherited and out off from her family. Then she ran away with and married her Irishman and lived happily ever after.

My paternal Great Grandfather came over from Ireland when my Grandfather

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... brought a farm from a man and was one hundred and eleven

years old, near Philadelphia. My Great Grandfather was a younger son. His father owned an entire estate and my grandfather, whose name was Pat, grew up and met my Grandmother Elsie, and when they were married, they left and settled in the wilds of Alabama, fifty miles from any other habitation. My Great Grandmother bought a Negro slave woman and gave her to my Grandmother so she would have some woman to stay with her and wait on her. She was a blessing and in the days to come in that lonely wilderness, my Grandmother was a brave woman. Having been brought up in luxury, she took to the hard and lonely life of the early settlers of Alabama when Grandfather would go the fifty miles to get the supplies she would be left all alone with her faithful maid. It took several days to make the trip in that time so long ago to travel that fifty miles. Yet she was not

Patrick Hutton b. 1783 in PA, m. Elsie Germain (or Jarman) in Williamson County, TN in 1806; served in War of 1812. His father was Charles Hutton b. ca 1750; died 1813 Nashville, Davidson Co., TN.

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afraid. They kept a dog; I don't know what kind of a dog. I think he must have been the kind they kept in Norway, to send out to find travelers lost in the snow in the early days. My Grandmother called him a watch dog. They kept him in a warm place under the steps under the house. It was a log house and the roof was weighted down with split logs which were held in place with hickory spikes.

One night Grandmother heard a noise and she sat up in bed to listen and then she heard the dog at the door. She did not awake the maid; she slipped out of bed and softly set the dog in; then she heard the noise again and saw the dog standing looking up at the top of the room. Then he saw the corner of the roof slowly lift up; then the dog still standing up watching when a man came inside of the room the dog was so still the man had to turn his

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back to the wall so he could get down; when he hit the floor the dog had him by the throat. Grandmother tried to make the dog let the man loose but he would not because he was doing just what he was trained to do. At this time the man fell limply to the floor.

Grandmother and the maid dragged the man out into the yard but she kept the dog inside and that is where Grandfather found them when he got back home next day. Things went on very smoothly after that for a while. They had added more to the house with two rooms upstairs. She had some children and there were more settlers moved in by this time; the nearest neighbors were only ten miles away. Then they were not so lonesome. Still Grandfather had to go fifty miles to get the things needed at home; still there were robbers and outlaws traveling around

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that made their living stealing whatever they could find.

I will tell you of another time later on when Grandfather was away and they were all along. One night she took the children upstairs and told the maid to come with them; she was uneasy; it seemed as if someone was lurking around the place, so later in the night she heard a noise at the back of the house like someone was breaking in at the kitchen door. She got up to listen so she slipped downstairs and saw a man standing at the cupboard with a bottle of Lye in hand and before she could stop him he drank all of it; he sank to the floor and died. He thought it was whiskey. The man that was with him ran away and left him. Grandmother never knew what they were after unless they wanted something to eat. There she was with another dead man on her hands, so she called the maid. They were afraid to drag him out into the yard for fear there might be someone else out there; so they left him there until next morning so she sent for her next door neighbor ten miles away, for that was the next night after Grandfather went away. Later on more settlers came in the country became more civilized. Grandmother had several children and with others moving in they had children enough to start a school so they all pitched and built a log school house. They got a man teacher. The country was still wild.

One morning the children saw a big black bear coming. Before the teacher got

to the school house so the children tied the door from the inside. The children were afraid to let him in so he ran away with the bear running after him. There were some men after the bear so they killed him and saved the teachers life. My mother told me these things and many other things

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that happened when she was a little girl back in Alabama, a long time ago when the country was new and wild. I never knew much about my fathers people unlike my mother he did not tell us much only that his grand father came over from Scotland before the Revelutionary War. He was in that war and fought for the freedom of this great nation. After the war was over he did his part in building up this country. My grandfather was his son. He married and settled in the east Tenn. mountains, not far from Knoxville is now. The school was founded in the year of 1796. My father was born in the year of 1798. He went to school there. His father and mother died within 3 days of each other. My father being only

16 years old. He was the oldest. He took care of them with the help of an old Negro slave woman. When he was 21

(1) Is this name accurate? I've seen her listed as Rebecca & Milberry but not Elisabeth and spelled "Erwin" more often than "Irwin." (2) The "little baby" should be Sarah H. Duncan, b. 1840.

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he married, Elisebeth Irvin of Savannah, Tenn. They had 12 children. She died and left a little baby. Father had been very successful by this time. He had become very well off. Three years later he married my mother whose names was Harriett Hutton. My grand mother was a brave woman but I think my mother was even braver for she married a hardshell Baptist preacher with twelve living children. As far as I know they were very happy. My mother had seven children. When I was five months old my father moved over on the west side of the Tennessee river. He bought a farm one mile from Pittsburg landing, where later the Shilals battle was fought. By this time all his first children were married except the two youngest. My mother brought them up along with her children. My father did not believe in slavery except in a small way. He did not own only a few. They were

These people appear to be Joseph R. Duncan, b. 1836 & Sarah H. Duncan, b. 1840?

Elsie Caroline Duncan Hurt: The Long Ago

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named it Pleasant land. ← Pittsburg was a small river village situated on a high bluff over looking the Tenn. River. Father was a happy go lucky man, hale--well met king of a man. He made friends wherever he went. He loved to visit and have his friends visit him. He never was so happy as when he had a table full of his friends and the table loaded down with good things to eat. Being a preacher he visited the sick,--burried the dead,--married the young people. He helped the poor and preached the gospel to those who came to hear him. He treated all alike, the sick and the poor, the high and the low, and he never took a penny for anything. Always happy when a chance traveler passed by the way he would welcome the coming and God Speed the parting guest. It made no difference to him who they were as long as they were friendly. He always gave the right hand of goodfellowship. He was a great lover of fine horses. They rode horse back

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a great deal in the early days before the war. Sometimes when he would go off on a trip he would take mother with him and then I knew I would get to go with her. I would be so happy when we got on those fine horses. They were so slick and shiny they would throw their heads up as if they were happy to go.

Father was a very popular preacher. He was welcome throughout Tenn, Miss. Ala., and Georgia. He was called upon to help with protracted meetings at different churches. That was a big circuit for that day and time so long ago, with horse back,--and now and then a buggy or carriage. When we were small children it was a great event when he would call us altogether around him to pray and ask God to take care of us while he was gone on his journey. When he came home it was a delight to hear him tell of his travels which to us was wonderful. ~~These were~~ something there were sometimes

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when he would take another preacher with him and it was fun to hear them tell jokes on each other. One Sunday we went to church when an old man drove in with an ox hitched to a cart. When being asked about it he said that he had lost his horse. Then everyone came up and told him how sorry they were for him. Then

father came up and told the old man how sorry he was. He said, he was sorry and gave him five dollars. Then he ~~PRAYED~~ and called to the crowd and asked every one how sorry they really were. They came forward with one accord and when they were through the old man had money enough to buy a horse. Father was like that. He was always in the right. I never saw him in a bad humor, he did not scold nor whip us. I never ^{HEARD HIM} ~~spoke~~ ^{SPOKE} an unkind word to my mother -----.

Joseph Duncan's 1862 will mentions "my black woman Rachel Margrette."

Evan Duncan, b. 1861

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The distant rumble of war was being heard not enough to be uneasy about--just a rumor. About this time my baby brother was born. I was seven years old. I was grief stricken because he was not a girl. I had five brothers and I wanted a little sister so much I went to Margie, the nurse to see what we could do about it. She said that we could do nothing,--that she found it down in the sand pile. She said that the only thing that we could do was to swap it for a little girl.

About this time people began to realize that war was a surely coming--no time now to think about whether the baby was a boy or a girl, Because we were all going to be killed anyway, for the war clouds are hanging low and it behoves us to prepare ourselves and be ever ready to meet whatever befalls us in that unknown future, for the flames of war will light up our peaceful homes. As the

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Smoke drifts over us we know now that the war is surely coming and there is nothing that we can do. Everything is in confusion. Our peaceful homes will be broken up. Our men and boys will be taken away from us to fight for their native southland where they were born and brought up to love and fight for. Our slave were happy and peaceful and they loved our children. We were safe in their care. And they were always happy to have the little white children to come to see them and wer always ready to do anything for us. We used to watch Old Black John cook his dinner. He always cooked his dinner in the hot ashes. He would roast the chicken head and the feet in hot ashes,--wrap eggs in wet paper and put the cornpone in with them. We children went in there and begged him to give

of his supper but he said that white children could not eat anything cooked in the ashes. I told him we could eat the eggs and the cornpone. He said for us

Lettrie ←

Identity???

to go back to the Big house and tell ~~Lettie~~ the cook to give us some supper. I told him that Lettrie could not cook as good as he could and he said, "now listen to that child." Then Margie came calling us to come to supper. We were not ready to go yet,--we wanted to hear Ben play the fiddle. Black John said, "don't they want to eat my supper up from me and if they eats mine I will have to go to bed hungry myself." Ben began to play and sing. He sang ~~Wigger in the~~

~~Wood-pile~~

Nigger in the wood pile
Can't count he eleven
Put him in a feather bed
Would think he was in heaven
And a Nigger and white man,
playing seven up
The nigger beat the white man
and would not pick it up.

Is "Aunt Nancy" Nancy Jane H. Duncan 1831? If so, do you know the identify

I don't remember the one about the frost on the pumpkin vine. We were having

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a big time when Margie called us again and I bet you children don't know who is up at the house in the kitchen. I asked her who it was and she said, Aunt Nancy

and Darrie, Aunt Nancy was big and fat and Darrie was a little yeltow girl that

I use to play with. That brought us back to the house in a hurry, for we all loved

Aunt Nancy and we children were always glad when she came to see us. Like all the

old slaves she loved the little white children. She always brought Darrie with

her and made us happy. We loved our slaves and know they loved us and would

have stood by us in times of need, sickness, sorrow, and death beyond the grove

into eternity. This is only one case of among many others of the happy go

lucky slave life of the sunny south as any old slave could tell in the long ago.

Now nearly all of those faithful old souls have passed away. God bless every one

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of them is my earnest prayer now. The rumors of war is abroad in the air--the

sky is over-hung with darkwar clouds. We feel the ~~space~~ of coming evil as if

some terrible calamity was going to come to happen that no power on earth can

prevent. There is a feeling of unquiet, a fearful uneasyness through the south

land. Where peace and prosperity has reigned so long. If war does come our men stand ready to defend their homes and loved ones. (1861) Home be it ever so lowly be it a hut or mansion. There are many brave hearts that beat beneath a home spun shirt. The rich and the poor, the high and the low are ready to stand shoulder to shoulder in the forth coming struggle. Southern people are peaceful by nature. They would never try to stir up trouble. They were happy and contented. If they were let alone there would never be any trouble. The North got the South in a corner and they were not going to jump the fence. It is the quiet and the peaceful men that show the greatest courage when it come to defend loved ones home and country. Why did the north want to free the slaves? They did not care anything about them. The south was like the goose that laid the golden egg, and when the north began to squeeze the goose to make it lay two golden eggs then the goose ran away. I am writing of the things that I saw and heard, and made an impression on my mind that burned into my memory that will never be forgotten. Child though I was, it seems that everything ^{is} as plain as when it happened. I remember when we left home near the Shiloh Church where later the battle was fought. We were very much upset

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See the link to "Eastern Rock Hill" map for the likely location where the Duncan family moved--on modern Shady Grove Rd., off Hwy 22, south of Shiloh National Military Park.

and so was everyone else we knew. Everywhere was unrest. It felt like a great storm was coming. Men and women were talking about war and what they would do when our fathers and brothers and husbands were called to arms. I would listen with a great fear in my heart when I would hear them talking about the abolitionists coming and the Negroes rising and killing their white folks. Margie was our nurse and mothers maid and my father would send her to the meetings and the parties that the old slaves would have but nothing ever happened. She would say, "yes sir, they would rise up in the morning to eat their breakfast." That was about all a Negro cared about anyway and she was ~~sure~~ right about it too. There were men going around in disguise as agents ^{when} while they were really talking to the slaves trying to antagonise them

Do you know of any sources that would support this statement?

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They would tell them the white people were going to rise up and kill all the black folks. They knew that was not true. They were not afraid of that for they knew their white folks better than that. They did not scare at all. Another man tried to stir up trouble among the Negroes. He told one Negro that he would have to start in by killing his Mistress and he would be paid a lot of money besides getting his freedom. He slipped in to kill her and there she lay with one arm over her head and a little baby on the other arm. He looked at them and his heart failed him. He could not kill her. Our slaves were loyal and faithful and they are unto this day. Another time two young men had joined the army and they had left an old Negro man to take care of their wives, but they got uneasy and went back

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and found the girls both scared nearly to death kneeling by the window. Then they saw the old man out by the yard fence with a knife in his hand and when they saw them he ran off. The girls told them that was the third time he had been there. So next morning he came and told them that he had been hired to kill the girls and he could not harm them. Now you can do whatever you want with me, he said, for I need to be killed. They left him there to take care of the girls and he did. They knew then that they could trust him until death. About this time war broke out and everything was in confusion. The women had to get busy to help in every way they could. Sewing and knitting socks and making underwear for our boys had to be prepared to go to war to fight brother against brother. My father was a drill master.

Have you ever seen evidence to support this statement?

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He would prepare our young men to go into the army to fight other men that they did not even know, nor have anything against. I use to sit and watch them go marching by and I wondered how many of them would be killed. Yet they were going into it with a whoop and a holler. We had a concert at the last school. That was the last school that we ever had in that dear old Shiloh Church. The girls were all dressed in red white and blue. I spoke a piece about Abe Lincoln's goose that laid a golden egg. That was the south and when he squeezed to hard

it ran away. Then another little girl came out waving the Confederate flag and the girls sang Dixie. Then everything was in an uproar. Men were throwing their hats up yelling, "hurrah for Jefferson Davis and the Southern Confederacy." Now that old Shiloh Church did ring with ~~the~~? Many brave hearts that were there that night went forth to

If this is James K.P. Duncan, he was only 14 or 15 yrs. old. Joseph & Harriet Duncan's son James K.P. did receive a Confederate veteran's pension.

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fight that never came back or hobbled home on crutches. Many with arms and legs left on blood battle fields to go on through life with mangled bodies and stricken lives. My brother was off at school--he wanted to join the army but mother would not let him go. Then so many of the boys were going into the army. Then my father came home and told mother that my brother had joined. She took up the baby and I took hold of her dress. She walked all over the place screaming as if her heart was breaking and when she got quiet my father told her that he was going too. Then she sat down and said that she could not stand any more. Little she dreamed of the terrible things that she was going to go through with later. I believe it was her great faith in God that brought us safely through those trying times. She stayed there alone with her little children and faithful nurse, one a baby.

I've seen no evidence that the elder Joseph Duncan enlisted in the Confederate army. Could it be that he served as an unofficial volunteer chaplain?

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Mother told us that we must trust in the Lord and all will be well with us. I was a strong child. My mind seemed to be far ahead of my age. I listened to everything and would ponder them in my heart. I heard women talking with each other of which would be best to do in case there would be a battle near there. There was a cave in the edge of the woods just above the spring which was under a bluff, just back of the orchard. It was about the size of a large room. Father laid logs across the top and planks and made a floor and cover it with logs and covered them with brush,--then he made a trap and ladder to go down. That is where we kept things hidden. That cave proved to be a blessing in many ways. All through that dreadful war it was never found. There was a cabin in the woods which was another blessing.

Before father went into the army he put eight barrels of home raised flour upstairs and lots of other things for safe keeping. He hurried a large box of home raised hams in the garden and put a sweet potato bed on top of them. Father boarded up the windows and put bars of hickory wood that draped into iron slots for safety from within. All of the men left everything as secure as they could to protect their homes and families, and left them in the care of the Lord. These men were volunteers--many who were left behind were conscripted later. They made brave soldiers and were loyal to the south and the Southern Confederacy. They did not know how long the war was going to last. They thought the South was going to last. They did not realize that we were in for four long years of hardships, privations, and suffering, grief and sorrow. Our boys proved themselves to be brave as true Southern boys, that the old south was made of,--the dear old Southland for which they were fighting for--the old home land which we loved so well,--these men were willing to lay down their lives for the cause they fought for and lost. Men who fought because they dared to hope for freedom. They went through stormy days,--tempest and cold winds for peace and happiness for our loved ones and our homes. Father laid a foundation to build a place for us to have a place to go for protection in time of need. He never finished it. The thing began to happen so fast he had to leave to save his own life. That left mother alone with the children and the nurse and we were very lonesome with the men all gone to the war. I tried to comfort mother in every way I could. We helped Margie do the work. She said we must take care of

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Mother so nothing would happen to her. So one day I told her that I was glad that we had left the river where so many boats were near enough to hear. The Tenn. River which was the only connection we had with the

There were lots of trading boats on the river and some flourishing towns and lots of quite wealthy people--owners of bottom plantations. Among them was my father. Almost everyone owned slaves in a small way. The slaves were well treated and were very happy. Mother was very sad about leaving the old home. I told her that I like this place the best as there were so many pretty flowers and the house was set on a flat top hill surrounded by a beautiful forest with almost every kind of tree that grew--stately oak and maple, and birch and many smaller blossoming shrubs and wild flowers everywhere,--

Joseph Duncan's will, dated Mar. 22, 1862, lists several tracts along Lick Creek, including "eastern rock hill the land whereon my family now resides." This appears to be a tract he purchased from his brother, Evan Evans Duncan.

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with running brooks fed by bubbling springs which form ponds of clear water filled with white lilies with large leaves that floated on top of the water. There were many other kinds of water plants--the golden love vine that covered many shrubs with its golden beauty. There were fruit trees of every kind and berries of every kind and many other things. Those are the beautiful things that makes this home a pleasant place to live. When I was through telling her all about these beautiful things that makes life so beautiful and happy.

One morning Margie told me that the trading boat was due to land that day and that she had to go down there to get some things that we needed. She said for me to stay with Mother and that she would take Johnny with her to help her bring the things home. That made me feel like I was a big girl so I got busy waiting on mother and looking after the little children and the baby.

John Russell Duncan, b. 1851.

The 1860 census lists Joseph & Harriet Duncan's children as:
James K.P., 13
Noah G.P., 11
John R.B., 9
Elcy [Elsie] C., 7
Samuel B., 5
Napolian B. [Napoleon Bonaparte], 2