

HOLMES & SARAH KEITH NICHOLAS

Holmes F. Nicholas and Sarah Keith were married in Columbiana County, Ohio, the 7th of February, 1833 as recorded in Vol. 2, Page 520 of Columbiana County, Ohio Marriages by Michael Arter, Justice of the Peace. Holmes purchased Lot #3 in New Garden, Columbiana County, Ohio, the 28th day of April in 1833 or 1835. (I have a problem with the penmanship here.) The legal description being Sec. 9 Township 15, Range 4. All of Holmes and Sarah's children were born in Columbiana County, Ohio, except the youngest Josiah Armsted Nicholas who was born in Indiana in 1854. Sarah was the youngest child of Vincent Keith and his wife Bulah White. Bulah died soon after the birth of her last child, Sarah, who was born in Virginia, in the year 1815. This marriage record I found, and I did get some help from Alice Sloan, a researcher of the Keith family whom I contacted in Iowa in 1992. Vincent Keith moved his family to Ohio.

Sarah was not my great-grandma. My great-grandma was Elizabeth Hoy Kerr, nee Bradley, Holmes' second wife. But, I always have known about Sarah "Keith" and that she had died young of lung congestion in 1855 when "Arm was just a baby." I have always wondered whether she might have had tuberculosis. I am not sure when that disease was given its modern name. A similar cause of death was listed for her son Wilson Nicholas 1845-1887. His breathing problems were always attributed by the family to his service in the Civil War.

I have some, a little, information about my Grandfather Edwin Nicholas' half brothers and sisters. His mother, too, had been earlier married to Amos Kerr. They had a daughter Amy. Amos and Elizabeth Kerr were both teachers and he died soon after they arrived in Iowa of typhoid fever caused when their well water was contaminated by the neighbor's cattle pastured on higher ground. Elizabeth had been ill too but recovered. The family always included, "Because he was working outside, he probably drank more water."

This lack of a clean source for drinking water seemed to be a problem for early settlers in Iowa. Another William Nicholas (1820) and his oldest son, James FRANKlin Nicholas died in Des Moines, soon after their arrival from Ohio. This William is a son of William Nicholas born 1793, brother of our Holmes born 1812. William (1820) also had a brother named Holmes Nicholas born 1831. This fact caused me some problems early on in my Iowa research. I concluded that there just had to be two Holmes Nicholas in Iowa. He was surely related but how?

My most direct information about the children of Holmes and Sarah came from Julia MERLE Packard Blomenkamp, the grand-daughter of Eliza Ann Nicholas Martin daughter of Holmes & Sarah. Whenever credit is given to Merle, daughter of Sarah Winifred and John Ford Packard, IT IS THIS LADY.

She found me when my name appeared in the February issue of THE DAR MAGAZINE in the list of new members. She called to say she was delighted that someone had finally been able to prove our line. "I had given up," she said, "and joined on another ancestor in my father's family. I was so surprised to see your name."

If she was delighted to find me, only a true family tree history "nut" can appreciate how excited I was! She called me in the winter, probably late January 1973, and a few

weeks later in March, Spring Break from (then) Kearney State College (now) University of Nebraska at Kearney (UNK), found Vern and I on our way to Gunnison, Colorado, to meet a new cousin.

Merle was the first person who told me that Holmes and Sarah's oldest child was named Samuel and that he did not live long. Merle's mother was Sarah Winifred Martin. Her family all called her "Wintie" and she married John Ford Packard. (Merle had no children.) Merle died in November 1982. I do not know what happened to her research and family pictures.

She knew that our Revolutionary War soldier was married to Hannah "Annie" Parsons. She was called Annie Parsons. She had written a little something in 1955 when she was trying to prove her Nicholas DAR line. This is a wonderful piece of family history. So far I have not been able to prove this and I think I pulled every old church record book off the shelves in the Bucks County, Pennsylvania, Genealogical Society Library in Doylestown, to find proof for that maiden name. I did not find it, but I am content that it is probably accurate.

Also included in that writing was, "Holmes F. Nicholas was a carpenter by trade. The family resided some years in (eastern?) Indiana where he worked building houses." As soon as Sarah could travel after Josiah Armsted was born, the family moved to join the rest of the Nicholas family now gathered in Iowa.

Sarah died in eastern Iowa soon after but her daughters were not sure where. Two of them Eliza and Mary looked for her grave, but as I learned later. They looked in the wrong place. How discouraging that must have been for them. They had looked in West Liberty, Iowa, and she was buried in North Prairie Cemetery near Davenport, Iowa, in Muscatine County. This is another piece of information I got from Alice Sloan, a Keith descendant living in the Quad cities Iowa area.

Also in that 1955 history of the family, Merle said that her Grandma Eliza Ann Nicholas Martin remembered seeing her Grandma Annie. She came to stay with Holmes and Sarah in Ohio. I have never been able to discover where this grandma is buried. I have to think somewhere in Ohio, but I cannot guess who she might have been living with then. The only record I have about this is that Hannah's Widow's Pension Record, her death was record in 1861. She applied for her pension in 1844. Eliza Ann would have been 10 years old in 1851 and surely old enough to remember her Grandma Nicholas. Even if her death occurred before 1861, she might remember and the date is surely not off by ten years.

Eliza also wrote that as a family, they went down the Ohio River with all their possession on a flat boat to Indiana, stopping in a place called Poor Woods, so poor was the land that it could not raise they said, "white beans." From Indiana the family went by covered wagon to Iowa. Since travel by covered wagon was slow, the older children of the family usually walked. This included Eliza Ann Nicholas who told the story.

Following Sarah's death, Holmes purchased land near Fairfax, Linn County, Iowa. This is where Holmes met Elizabeth Hoy Kerr, nee Bradley who is my Great grandmother Nicholas.

I had always felt a certain advantage when in the 1970's and 1980's "Yours, Mine and Ours" became a catch phrase for modern families involved in divorces with step-dads, step-moms and half brothers and half sisters and uncles and aunts who were not blood relatives, represented on television situation comedies like "The Brady Bunch." I knew about that... Those were just like my Grandpa Ed Nicholas' family.

A few other "family" notes. I knew both my Grandparents Ed and Minnie Smith Nicholas. I was at their 50th Wedding Anniversary celebration in March of 1945. As an only child, I was amazed that "I" had all these relatives, and some were my Dad's cousins. I did not know he had any! I was nine, ten in the fall.

My father told me he did not remember seeing his Grandparents Nicholas, Holmes and Elizabeth. Homes was 58 years old when Ed was born, and Elizabeth moved to Washington State. He did not see his Grandpa Smith, who drown in the Mississippi River before he was born, but he did remember his Grandma Sarah "Sade" Wirt Smith.

AND now on the rest of Holmes and Sarah's children. I have assembled these pieces of information about Sarah's children from personal recollections of their descendants, from Federal and State Census microfilms, County Histories, City Directories and copies of pages from old Bibles. A few came from local or regional newspaper articles, often obituaries, and from other brief newspaper notes and from the personal columns and the society pages.

I AM SURE there are errors and omissions. All of this is subject to corrections, additions, and changes, as they occur, are found or show up unexpectedly. Please anyone who reads this and finds errors, please let me know. On computers changes and corrections are easily made.

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