

THE DEFOE FAMILY IN IOWA.

BY ONA ELLIS SMITH.

The romantic story of the settlement in America of the Defoe family,¹ has been retold many times by the eastern press but the fact that direct descendants of the original immigrant, Elizabeth Maxwell, niece of Daniel Defoe, have been residents of Iowa for three score and ten years, will revive interest in the story, and may prove of historical value.

In the year 1705, Daniel Defoe, on account of his persistent writing upon the exciting subjects of that day, was compelled to seek a safe retreat under the roof of his widowed sister, Elizabeth Maxwell, in the city of London. His pamphlet, entitled "Shortest way with Dissentors," for which he suffered the punishment of the pillory, fine and imprisonment, was written three years before he took up his abode in his sister's home.

An interesting personal description of Daniel Defoe, some of the characteristics set forth being noticeable in his Iowa descendants, was given in a proclamation issued by Queen Anne's ministers shortly after the publication of that pamphlet:

"Whereas—Daniel De Foe, *alias* De Fooe, is charged with writing a scandalous and seditious pamphlet entitled, 'The Shortest way with Dissentors.' He is a middle-sized, spare man, about forty years old, of a brown complexion, and dark-brown colored hair, but wears a wig; a hooked nose, a sharp chin, grey eyes, and a large mole near his mouth; was born in London, and for many years was a hose-factor, in Freeman's yard in Cornhill; and now is the owner of the brick and pantile works near Tilbury Fort in Essex; whoever shall discover the said Daniel De Foe to one of Her Majesty's principal Secretaries of State, or any of Her Majesty's justices of the peace, so he may be apprehended, shall have a reward

¹The Defoe Family in America, Scribner's Monthly, vol. xii, p. 61.



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of £50, which Her Majesty has ordered immediately to be paid upon such discovery."

On his release he was again imprisoned for writing political pamphlets, but through the influence of Lord Oxford he was liberated and in the safe retreat of his sister's home he continued to send forth his barbed arrows.

A small room was fitted up to be used as a study by him, and it was in this seclusion, in the year 1719, that "Robinson Crusoe" was written.

His sister's only child, Elizabeth, was five years of age when her uncle came to live with them, and she received her education in his quiet study under his teaching. It was doubtless her active mind and interest in her studies that aroused his interest in the higher education of women which he especially advocated.

At the age of eighteen the daughter, Elizabeth, engaged herself to marry one to whom her mother was bitterly opposed, and the engagement was very unceremoniously broken off by her. This so angered Elizabeth that she left home secretly and embarked for America on a sailing vessel, bargaining with the captain to be sold on her arrival to reimburse him for her passage.

Upon arriving at Philadelphia she, with a number of other passengers, was offered for sale.

Andrew Job, an inn-keeper and wealthy Quaker citizen of Baltimore, chancing to be in the city, bought this runaway Quaker maiden and took her with him when he returned to the "Blue-ball Inn," to aid his good wife in her many household duties.

Elizabeth Maxwell seems to have been satisfied in her new home, for six years later, in the year 1725, she became the wife of Andrew Job's son, Thomas.

Soon after her marriage she wrote to her mother and uncle, telling them of her new happiness and giving them the first knowledge of her location since her disappearance.

As soon as possible she received a reply from her uncle Daniel, stating that her mother was dead and that considerable property, in addition to her mother's household goods, was left

by will to her, in case she was found. An inventory of the goods was sent by him, and especially was she asked to cherish certain articles of furniture, because they had descended to the family from their Flemish ancestors. He also apologized for the condition of two chairs, the wicker seats of which had worn out and been replaced by wooden ones. These two chairs are still in a good state of preservation, one being now owned by a great-great-granddaughter of Elizabeth Maxwell Job,—Miss Hannah A. Griffith¹ of Calvert, Cecil county, Maryland—and the other by the State Historical Society of Delaware.²

In 1726 a son was born to Thomas and Elizabeth Job. Other children were born later to this couple but this eldest son, named Archibald, became the ancestor of the Iowa branch of the Defoe family. In the year 1752 on the 30th day of July, he married Margaret Reese.

During the Revolutionary War Archibald Job and his three grown sons gave much information and valued aid to Wash-

¹The following letter from Hannah A. Griffith gives some interesting information relating to the Job family:

"Calvert, Third month, twelfth. (March, 1909.)

"To Ona Ellis Smith:

"Thine of the 8th received yesterday. Rather a surprise to me for a relative to greet me from that distance. Was not aware that my name and the fame of the old chair had traveled that far. I have had several photos of the chair but now have only one which I would not like to part with, but have just written to the artist to know if he has any copies on hand. If he has I will try to get one for thee. That old chair has been the subject for numerous newspaper items. Thee asks if I have any other relics of the Job family. Not any so old as the chair, but I have a very nice sound stand that belonged to my great-aunt, Hannah Job, which is greatly admired; and I have a marriage certificate of my great-grandfather and mother, dated on the 29th of 10th month, 1758. It is written on parchment and is well preserved, except that a mouse has cut it slightly.

"I should have said those great grandparents were Daniel Job, son of Thomas and Elizabeth Job, and Mary Brown, daughter of Samuel and Elizabeth Brown, of West Nottingham, then considered in the province of Pennsylvania.

"Thee probably has read Mary E. Ireland's article on The Defoe Family in America. It has been very widely published and is more correct than many things that are handed down by tradition. If thee has not read it, I think I can send it to thee. I have always had a strong desire to know more of the descendants of the Job family in the western states. In my mother's life I kept up a correspondence for her with two of the daughters of Archibald Job, who lived in Ohio, but of late I hear nothing of the family.

"The Job family is so nearly extinct in this locality that I have felt curious to know if the name was being increased in any other part of the country. Some of the name emigrated to Virginia a generation ago, and there may be many of the name in some section there. There are but two of the name here now, Haines Job and a very delicate son.

"I fear I am making my letter tiresome and will draw it to a close. Hope thee will excuse my writing as I am in the 80th year of my age, and my hand not very steady, and whilst not an invalid, I am a shut-in in the winter time.

"With kind regards, I will close.

HANNAH A. GRIFFITH.

"Nottingham, Chester Co. P."

²Year Book, Historical Society of Delaware, 1901, p. 17.

ington and Lafayette's armies as they passed through that part of the country. Archibald and his sons, Thomas and Morris, were also members of a scouting party—of which Archibald was captain—which became so active that they were disowned by the "Society of Friends"—of which they were birthright members—for "encouraging and participating in war-like measures."

Two daughters of Morris Job became the wives of brothers, sons of William Blair—a Revolutionary soldier who is buried at Kossuth, Iowa—Sarah Job wedding David E. Blair and Margaret Job becoming the wife of Thomas Blair. These great-granddaughters of Elizabeth Maxwell Job came to Iowa when it was yet a part of Michigan Territory and their husbands and sons took a prominent part in early day politics.

Thomas Blair, husband of Margaret Job, represented Des Moines county in the first session of the Wisconsin Territorial Legislature and also in the second session of that body which assembled at Burlington. He was also a member of the first Iowa Territorial Legislature. David E. Blair was a member of the Fifth Territorial Legislature, and of the First General Assembly of the State of Iowa.

Morris William Blair, son of Sarah Job and David E. Blair, is well known throughout the State. He is the most distinguished representative of the Defoe family now residing in Iowa. Coming here more than seventy years ago, he still resides upon the farm in Des Moines county, which his parents homesteaded in 1837. With means to gratify any reasonable desire, he prefers the simple life, living alone; for he has never married.

In a letter he says: "I am living in the house my father substituted for the claim cabin in 1840, have never been away from it. The wind blows through the boards—but I have four fires; the roof leaks—but I have a dry corner for my gun, another for my books and yet another for my range and cupboard.

"I have three good cousins whose horses and cows I pasture, who fill my basket twice a week with a pie, a loaf, and a jar of milk; the garden, the old hens and I do the rest."

In him are conspicuous the characteristics of the Defoe family from Daniel down to the relatives of the present day; remarkable longevity, a disposition to remain unmarried or to marry late in life, and the indomitable independence of spirit so prominent in the character of Daniel Defoe and his niece, Elizabeth.

In the year 1845, Hannah, daughter of Thomas Job and wife of Job Ellis, came west from Ohio with her husband and family of eleven children, the eldest son, Thomas, having preceded the family two years. They settled upon a farm one mile south of the present village of Cairo in Louisa county, and there reared their large family to honorable manhood and womanhood.

The two younger sons answered the call to arms in 1861, Harvey, the youngest of the eleven, dying from disease contracted in the service. Albert, the tenth child, entered as a private, serving as Second Lieutenant, First Lieutenant, and Captain of Company C, Fifth Iowa Infantry, and as Captain of Company G, Fifth Iowa Cavalry, being honorably discharged for disability, November 9, 1864. He was in all the marches and battles of his command during his term of service.

After his return to civil life he took an active interest in local and state politics, representing Louisa county in the Twelfth General Assembly, was sheriff of Louisa county from 1876 to 1882 and in 1890 was appointed Revenue Agent by President Harrison—in recognition of his service to the Republican party.

He was an active figure in Iowa public life for thirty-five years, giving the best years of his life to the State.

In April, 1863, he came home from the front on furlough and married the daughter of one of Louisa county's pioneer citizens, Miss Alice Nichols. Of the seven children born to them only one now resides in the State, two dying in infancy and three daughters and a son residing in other states. Captain Ellis and his wife are now residents of Pueblo, Colorado.

Hannah Job Ellis, as well as her cousins, Sarah and Margaret Job Blair are buried in Iowa. Hannah rests in the Friends' burying ground at Pleasant Plain, Jefferson county, and Margaret and Sarah Blair sleep in the cemetery at Kossuth, Des Moines county.

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