

William Todd Thornton [born 1817]

Edited by: Louis Dolton

William Todd Thornton was born April 5, 1817 in Aux Vasse, Callaway, Missouri. He was the oldest son of William H. and Sally (Todd) Thornton. Also in 1817, on March 4, James Monroe succeeded James Madison as President of the United States of America. On December 10, Mississippi is admitted as the 20th U.S. state, formerly the Mississippi Territory. This year the first steamboat reached Saint Louis from the mouth of the Mississippi.

William married Hannah Todd, daughter of Jesse and Lucy Dalton Todd, on October 10, 1837. Hannah was eighteen years old at the time of her marriage. She had her sixteenth child in 1867 at the age of forty-eight. When she had her last child, Richard, her oldest child, Sarah, was twenty-nine years old. She lived to the age of sixty-two years and William to the age of eighty-nine years.

William and Sally were the first Thornton's to come to the Southwest Park of DeKalb County, Missouri. They came in 1839 from Callaway County with their little daughter, Sarah Isabel Thornton; an uncle, William Adams; a brother-in-law, Isaac Agee; their families and other families. William Todd and family settled first near Jordan Creek but soon learned that this was unhealthy so purchased land on higher ground in 1840. It was unhealthy in that this property tended to flood and they lost the first home they built in DeKalb County for this reason. They bought another property, for \$1.25 per acre, and moved the following year.

They built a home there and William resided there for the next sixty years. They built their house from the forest, as first only two rooms with low ceilings, fireplace, split hardwood floors and walnut siding. Later they built on two more rooms. On the mantel the old clock with wooden wheels worked for fifty years. Much of the meager furnishings were also made from materials on the farm.

William T. was a farmer and engineer. He helped build and put into operation the saw mill and grist mill.

In the 1840 US Federal Census is a record of the William T. Thornton family. They were living in Clinton County, Missouri, and there were three persons in the household; two adults and one child. Also living close by was the household of William Thornton, Isaac Agee, Jesse Todd, and Joab Todd.

William Todd Thornton was christened on June 15, 1842. Baptized with his wife Hannah by Elder J.M. Evans of Bethlehem Church of which he was a charter member. William was Clerk of Bethlehem and Salem Church from 1851-1901.

On 1 May 1843 William Obtained US Patent for 40 acres in De Kalb Co., MO: SW 1/4 of SW 1/4 of section 3, T57N R33W.

William is also listed on the First Assessment List of Real Estate Owners in 1845 for DeKalb County, Missouri. It is from the first assessor's book in possession of W.T. Doherty. It has a complete list of resident owners of real estate in the county in the year of organization (1845).

On 1 Nov 1848 William obtained a US Patent on another 40 acres on the NW 1/4 of SE 1/4, section 34, T58N, R33W. 5. He then obtained a US patent on the same 40 acres on 1 Jan 1850: NW 1/4 of SE 1/4 of section 34, T58N R33W. (This duplicate property is so abstracted in the BLM records.).

In the 1850 US Federal Census for District 28, DeKalb County, Missouri, enumerated 26 October 1850, is detailed the family of William T. Thornton and his wife Hannah. William T. Thornton, age 33 [born 1817], farmer, his property is estimated to be worth \$1,200, and he was born in Missouri. Hannah was 31 and had been born in Kentucky. The children were: Sarah I. Thornton, 11; William J. Thornton, 9; James R. Thornton, 7; Lowiza [Louisiana] J. Thornton, 5; Serena [Cyrenia] Thornton, 3; Mary F. Thornton, 3/12. All the children were born in Missouri.

Listed nearby on this census are the families of Jessie and Lewcy [Lucy] I. Todd; Simeon and Betsy Thornton; Eli & Martha Adams; William & Anna Adams; Jeptha and Martha Thornton; John and Sally Thornton; Isaac and Cordilla Agee; Peter and Lowiza Adams; and William and Sally Thornton.

The US Federal Census for 1860 in Washington, DeKalb, Missouri, has a record for the William and Hannah Thornton family. William Todd Thornton, age 43, male, farmer, born in Missouri; Hannah Thornton, age 41 [born 1818 or 1819], female, housekeeper, born in Kentucky; William J. Thornton, age 19 [born 1840 or 1841], male, farmer; James R. Thornton, age 17, male, farmer; Louisanna J. Thornton, age 15, female, housekeeper; Syrenia A. Thornton, age 13, female, born in Missouri; Mary F. Thornton, age 11, female, born in Missouri; Lydia Thornton, age 9, female, born in Missouri; Benjamin S. Thornton, age 8, male, born in Missouri; Joseph R. Thornton, age 6, male, born in Missouri; Jeremiah J. Thornton, age 4, male, born in Missouri; and Thomas F. Thornton, age 1, male, born in Missouri.

The Civil War hostilities began in 1861 and largely ended with the surrender of the Confederate Army under General Lee in 1865. Missouri's Civil War actually began about seven years before the Civil War in the conflict known as "Bleeding Kansas." "Bleeding Kansas" was a series of violent events, involving anti-slavery Free-Staters and pro-slavery "Border Ruffian" elements that took place in the Kansas Territory and the western frontier towns of the of Missouri between 1854 and 1858. The conflict was over the question of whether Kansas would enter the Union as a Free State or slave state. What happened was that many people from the North and South hurried to Kansas in order to try and vote Kansas over to their side.

In 1861 at the start of the Civil War there was fighting over whether Missouri would enter the war as on the side of the North or the South. In the end, Missouri voted to enter

the war as both a free state and a slave state. The governor, who was pro-slavery, convened the legislature in the town of Neosho, Missouri that declared Missouri's secession from the Union and alliance with the Confederate States. The Confederacy recognized this convention's work and accepted Missouri into the Confederate States. However, only the State Convention could do this. When the governor left town, the State Convention declared his position vacant and filled it. They met and voted overwhelming to stay in the Union with the North. President Lincoln recognized the convention's work and acknowledged Missouri as part of the Union. But, this was all over, and the Civil War was underway when Joseph moved to Madison County, Missouri.

Missouri was the northern-most state where slavery was legally permitted. That meant that the Civil War in Missouri was going to be vicious and it was. Missouri was the site of more engagements (over 1,000) than any state except Virginia and Tennessee. Throughout the war, no one in Missouri was secure in their person or property.

William was a confederate sympathizer. He would not have been anxious to have been drafted into the Union Army. U.S., Civil War Draft Registrations Records, Consolidated list of all persons subject to do Military Duty in the Third Congressional District in the State of Missouri. Carroll R. Peck, as Provost Marshall made some additional enrollments in May 1864. This list for Logan in Reynolds County has the enrollment of a certain William Thornton, age 44, white, farmer, married, born in Missouri, having had no military experience. [If this is William Todd Thornton, then this means he would have to have been born in mid to late 1819 or early 1820. So either this is not William Todd Thornton or he misrepresented his age to make himself two years older than he really was.] Although there is no evidence he served in the military, at some time he had the honorific of "Colonel" conferred on him and carried it with him the rest of his life.

After the death of his wife, Hannah, and the sale of his farm in 1901, he lived in the home of his son, Thomas F. and Miriam Mann Thornton until his death. Obituary reads as follows: "Thornton, Col. W.T. (Billy) -- died 25 April, 1906. He was born in Calloway County, Missouri in 1817. He was about 98 years of age. In 1837 he married Hannah Todd, a daughter of Elder Jesse Todd. They had 16 children and 6 still live. In 1839 he came to Clinton county, Missouri, and then to DeKalb County, Missouri. In 1870 he made Master Mason. Burial in Thornton Cemetery." Either the person giving the information or the typesetter made a mistake in this obituary. Subtracting the date of death from the date of birth gives an age of eighty-nine years at death; not the 98 years given in the obituary. William's entire family is buried in the Thornton Cemetery.

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