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5 February 2008

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

OBJECTIVES

- Seek further evidence that John Dowell (born 1810) was the son of John (born 1775) and Sally Dowell.

RESULTS

- Searched civil court files and church records for Lawrence County, Indiana and tract books for Lawrence and Washington Counties, Indiana for mention of the surname Dowell, with negative results.
- Completed an extensive study of 1830 and 1840 census records in Missouri to see if John and Sally Dowell may have moved there after living in Indiana. Again, results were negative.
- In an analysis of the 1830 census in Lawrence County, Indiana, found a John Dowlin who could possibly be John Dowell (born 1775). A John Dowlin, probably the same man, also appears in the 1840 census in LaGrange County, Indiana.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Search for further information about the John Dowlin found in Lawrence County and LaGrange County, Indiana to see if he may actually be John Dowell (born 1775).
2. As all circumstantial evidence to this point suggests John Dowell (born 1810) was probably the son of John and Sally Dowell (and nothing has been found to disprove that assumption), accept the connection as correct and move on to other research.

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RESEARCH REPORT

Research for this period focused on strengthening the tie between the John Dowell (born 1810) who lived in Washington County, Indiana and his prospective parents John and Sally Dowell of Rowan and Iredell Counties, North Carolina. During the previous research session some significant clues were found on John and Sally Dowell. A Wilkes County, North Carolina estate record for John Dowell, dated 1825, definitely proved John Dowell (1775), the husband of Sally Dowell, as the son of John Dowell, Sr., who was born 1740/1750. Court records of Iredell County, North Carolina, dated 1828, showed parties interested in the proceedings of the estate as inherited by John Dowell (1775). Due to debts owed, it was noted that John Dowell (1775) was a resident of Lawrence County, Indiana at that time. This places the prospective father of John Dowell (1810) in Indiana a few years before John Dowell (1810) married in Washington County, Indiana. Lawrence County and Washington County, Indiana neighbor each other, making it significant that both men lived so close together in about the same time frame.

The client has sent various data compiled by others that mention a John F. Dowell of Lawrence County, Indiana and other Dowell individuals who moved on from Indiana to Missouri. The burning question is what happened to John and Sally Dowell after they were noted in Lawrence County Indiana in 1828? Did they move on to Missouri? Is there any evidence anywhere that could definitely tie John and Sally Dowell to the known Dowell ancestors of Washington County, Indiana? The data compiled by others and forwarded by the client does not supply any direct answers to these questions.

While it would be convenient to find a specific record that would tie John Dowell (1810) to John and Sally Dowell, chances are that such a record does not exist. It is more common with family research before 1830 (the period when children would not be listed by name with their parents in a census) that establishing connections between parents and children is a matter of

building a case proving relationships beyond a reasonable doubt. Rather than focusing on locating the “ONE” record, it is necessary to go into a research mode of building such a case with various pieces of evidence. This is comparable to an attorney building a case from various pieces of evidence, rather than having direct eyewitness proof.

Initial record searching focused on the few records that would be available for the 1825-1830 period of Lawrence County, Indiana. Previous research by others focused on deeds, and while there was some data for a John F. Dowell, research has shown him not to be the same John Dowell who was born about 1775 and who married Sally Dowell. This does not mean that John F. Dowell is not in some way related and studying his life could lead to some additional clues.

One set of records that had not been researched were the civil court files of Lawrence County, Indiana. Since it appeared there was civil court action in North Carolina in respect to John and Sally Dowell owing debts, it seemed possible that records of other civil proceedings could be found in Lawrence County, Indiana. The indexes for the civil court date back to 1818 for Lawrence County, Indiana and the indexes were quite voluminous.¹ A careful search was completed and there was no mention of any individual surnamed Dowell. Another set of records that we thought might be of some help to this case was the early Presbyterian minutes for a church in Lawrence County, Indiana. A careful study of this resource failed to show any mention of Dowells.

It was known that there were various persons named John Dowell who acquired land in Lawrence and Washington Counties of Indiana at an early time period from the Federal Government. Copies of the land grants as purchased through the cash sale program of the Federal Land Offices were received from the client. Those individuals who completed the land grant process and acquired land have copies of their grants posted by the Bureau of Land Management on the Internet. The GLORE database, which comprises the General Land Office Records, only includes those entries that went through to completion. The percentage of those claims that went

¹Lawrence County, Indiana, County Court, *Index to Civil Files, 1818-2000* (Salt Lake City: Genealogical Society of Utah, 2000) [Microfilm of original records in the Lawrence County Courthouse, Bedford, Indiana], Family History Library microfilm 1426834.

to completion is small in relation to the total number of claims. Thus, there are tens of thousands of claims listed in the federal land tract books that never appear in the GLORE database.

In the case of John and Sally Dowell, they might have attempted to acquire land from the federal government in Lawrence or Washington Counties of Indiana. If financial problems thwarted these attempts, there would still be a listing of the initial attempt to acquire the land, as well as a file at the National Archives. Even though it would be a time consuming task it seemed well worth the effort to analyze the tract books covering Lawrence and Washington counties to see if there was any other mention of John Dowell. Data surrounding the land acquisition could add clues to what happened to John and Sally Dowell and possibly add clues to their relationship to John Dowell (1810).

As was expected, the reading of the tract books was a very time consuming chore as these records are not indexed. It appeared the books covering Lawrence County, Indiana were not complete and that some of the books covering the townships might be scattered among other books. In the case of Washington County, Indiana the tract books were organized in better fashion. A study of the townships around where we know the ancestral John Dowell (1810) lived uncovered some listings.² Note that the land that was previously recorded on the patent in section 15 was located. There was also listed an earlier acquisition in 1835 on section 14. This was undoubtedly also the 1810 John Dowell. There were no other listings that could be construed to be the 1775 John Dowell.

There was evidence gathered by family members that various relatives of John Dowell (1810) had moved to Missouri from Indiana. It was suggested that John and Sally Dowell may have moved west to Missouri shortly after their appearance in Lawrence County, Indiana in 1828. This would mean they possibly could have been enumerated in Missouri in 1830. Up to this point there had been no success in locating either ancestral John Dowell in the 1830 or 1840 censuses.

² United States, Bureau of Land Management, *Tract Books*, (Salt Lake City: Genealogical Society of Utah, 1984) [Microfilm of original records in the National Archives, Washington D.C.], Family History Library microfilm 1445501: townships in Washington County, Indiana. Document 1.

Before explaining the efforts in searching the censuses, some concepts about census taking for this time period need to be understood. Data on census reports, especially surnames, can have a myriad of variants. There are various reasons for this. First, problems arise at the outset when the enumerator visited the family. When the census taker asked for the name of the head of household, the enumerator wrote what he heard. It was very uncommon and even frowned upon for the census taker to ask for the spelling of the surname. There was always a risk that the householder would be embarrassed if he was illiterate. The census taker might ask for the person interviewed to repeat the name and then the enumerator did his best to write on scratch paper what he thought he heard. Secondly, problems also arose when the enumerator at some future time, possibly several weeks later, had to copy his scratch notes to the official printed census forms. Many times the census taker could not read his handwriting or the notes of others and mistakes in the transcription were not uncommon. Lastly, modern researchers are dependant on indexes compiled by genealogical publishers and Internet companies. There is a higher indexing error rate than most companies like to admit. Put all of these factors together and it is understandable why some families are difficult to locate in the census.

An extensive amount of time was spent analyzing the 1830 and 1840 U.S. Censuses of Missouri. This included carefully analyzing all persons with the given name of John and taking into account all possible surname variations. Special attention was made to locate an older head of household who would match the John Dowell who was born about 1775. There were several possible entries, but none were old enough to be the ancestor. Family sources do point to Greene County, Missouri for some of the family. This county appeared to be settled by some Dowell relatives after 1840. Considering that John Dowell (1775) would have arrived in Missouri well before that time all areas of the state were considered, but with no success.

Taking all of the above noted factors into consideration, a careful and time consuming analysis of the 1830 U.S. Census of Lawrence County, Indiana was completed. It was known that John F. Dowell was listed and it was known that he was not a direct ancestor. Since the 1775 John Dowell was noted in Lawrence County, Indiana in 1828 it would seem that he should be listed there in 1830, though maybe in some corrupted form. We did find an interesting entry, an

enumeration for a John “Dowlin”.³ Note that he was aged 50-60, which fit for a man born about 1775. He also had older males and females in the household that would fit for John Dowell (1810) and the other family members noted by modern-day research. What is even more intriguing is that possibly the same John ‘Dowlin,’ aged 70-80, was located in LaGrange County, Indiana in 1840.⁴ Also nearby were younger John and Richard Dowlin households. It was known that John F. Dowell lived in LaGrange County as well.

To see if we could prove these Dowlins were not the ancestors, we proceeded to locate persons who were listed as Dowlin or Dowling in other records. The deed index of Lawrence County, Indiana was analyzed and it was interesting to note that there was no one with the Dowlin/Dowling surname making land transactions. This left the option open that the name was actually Dowell.

There was some indication in the family data supplied by the client that some of the Dowell relatives were involved in the Indian Wars and possibly had applied for pensions from the U.S. Government. This idea was investigated and the various war compilations from the early Indian wars previous to the War of 1812, the War of 1812, and the Indian wars and disturbances following the War of 1812 were analyzed. There was some mention of persons surnamed Dowell applying for pensions for service in the War of 1812, but none of them matched with known family members. Otherwise there was never any mention of Dowells involved in the various Indian wars.

In summary, as noted in the calendar there were fewer sources checked than what would normally be expected for the time spent. This was because the land and census searches were so involved. Fortunately, this time consuming effort did uncover an interesting piece of data that might be worth pursuing further. The finding of a John Dowlin in Lawrence County and LaGrange County, Indiana is somewhat intriguing and this man may actually be the 1775 John

³ 1830 U.S. Federal Census, <http://ancestry.com>: Lawrence County, Indiana, Page 64, Line 24, John Dowlin Household. Document 2.

⁴ 1840 U.S. Federal Census, <http://ancestry.com>: LaGrange County, Indiana, Page 218, Line 7, 15, 16, John, John, and Richard Dowlin Household. Document 3.

Dowell. This may be the reason that John and Sally have not been located under the Dowell spelling.

As the research suggests, all involved in this difficult project should realize that one record proving the connection between John Dowell (1810) and John Dowell (1775) probably does not exist. However, up to this point all evidence strongly points to the connection and there has been no evidence to suggest otherwise. We must therefore decide at what point the connection can be accepted and research move on to the earlier generations or to another line. We look forward to continuing research according to your direction, whether that means pursuing more information about John Dowlin or accepting John Dowell (1810) as the son of John Dowell (1775) at this point.

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