

# Old John

*Following the 200 Year Old Trail of an Ancestor*

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*(Robert C. Neel wrote: "This information was found among some records given me by Zina McDonald, sister of my mother, Mary Elizabeth Turnbow Neel. Copied to my records 1 August 1992.)*

*Celebration of America's Bicentennial kindled an intense interest to know what my ancestors had done to help form this nation. I remembered reading that one of my forbearers had served in the American Revolution. With a little searching I found what I was looking for in an autobiographical sketch written by a second great-grandfather, Samuel Turnbow. The words that triggered my memory stated:*

"I, Samuel Turnbow, being born of goodly parents in Lexington, Kentucky on 16 Day of Oct: 1804. My father, Isaac Turnbow, was the son of a Turnbow who lived at the time of his death in Forkedeer, State of Tennessee. He fought in the Revolutionary War to establish freedom and independence in our land, and he died in his one hundred and sixth year, and eleven days."

At this point, I started on the trail of this Revolutionary War ancestor and his sons. The trail was first charted through the records these pioneers left as they migrated and settled this new land. This process was not easy and it required hundreds of hours of research; going through family records, a book compiled by a distant cousin, correspondence, and personal research in micro-film copies of the original records.

After a couple of years research I had built a large file of information on "Old John" and his numerous descendants. I call him "Old John" to differentiate between him and a son with the same given name.

At first the charting of their migration route was only spotty at best, but as additional information was compiled the route became apparent.

Traditions passed down through various branches of this large family served as clues in research. One persistent tradition in many of the branches is that "Old John" was "Pennsylvania Dutch." Another branch of the family traces

"Old John" to Alsace-Lorraine, a German-speaking region prior to the time he immigrated and a French-speaking part of France since the Napoleonic Wars. Unfortunately, I have not yet found the documentation to prove this birthplace or the fact that he lived in Pennsylvania. History does show that a large percentage of those who settled the Upcountry of the Carolinas were of German descent from Pennsylvania via the Great Valleys of Virginia.

The first place where I can document the location of "Old John Turnbough" is in Chester District of colonial South Carolina. On the 3rd of March 1776, he had 150 acres of vacant land surveyed on Jacob's branch of Rocky creek. The same tract of land was resurveyed the 2nd of March 1773. On the 11th of March he had this survey certified in Charleston. The following year this tract of land was granted by the Province to John Turnbough.

John had probably partially cleared this land and gotten a few good crops off of it when the drums of war were heard throughout the colonies. When open warfare first broke out most poor farmers were loyal to the crown. As the partisan war ground on the "King's soldiers" indiscriminantly ravaged the countryside in reprisals and loyalties changed. Soon the rich, Church of England clergy, members and colonial bureaucrats with strong ties to the mother country made up the loyalist majority.

Guerrilla warfare units sprang up across South Carolina from the tidewater swamps to the upcountry. Even backwoodsmen from "over the mountain" in what is today Kentucky and Tennessee became so incensed with the threats of reprisals they banded together. These "over the mountain" men played a decisive role in the Battle of Kings Mountain that took place 7 November 1780. The British Commander, Patrick Furgeson, was killed and his command of American "loyalist" troops was wiped out or captured. Commander of the local militia, Chester Troops, was Col. Edward Lacey who was serving in the stead of General Sumter who was recovering from a wound. Lacey lost his horse in the action and replaced it with one of Ferguson's chargers.

The free spirit of Col. Lacey was no stranger to warfare on the frontier. When 13 years of age he ran away and joined the Pennsylvania troops serving in the packhorse department during the French and Indian War. he was in Braddock's defeat. After two years his father found him and took him home. A year later he ran away again, immigrating to Chester District, South Carolina. There he indentured himself to William Adair to learn the

bricklaying trade and a good English education. In 1766 he married and settled on the head waters of Sandy River, six miles west of Chester Court House. When the Revolution broke out he became a Captain and served in Williamson's Cherokee Campaign. He led the detachment that captured the infamous British Captain Huck. Prior to "Kings Mountain," he served with General Sumter at Rocky Mount, Hanging Rock, Carey's Fort and Fishing Creek. Col. Lacey was present at Cowpens when General Daniel Morgan won this important battle by using both militia and seasoned continental line troops. Following "Kings Mountain" Lacey served under Sumter at Fish Dam Ford and Blackstock. In early 1781 he again served under Sumter at Orangeburg, Biggin Church, Quinby Bridge, and Eutaw Springs.

It was during this early 1781 period my fifth great-grandfather John Turnbough served under Col. Edward Lacey in Captain Samuel Adams company. "Old John" served three terms of enlistment in 1781 as follows:

February 40 days Horsemen's Duty

April 21 days Horsemen's Duty

July 53 days Horsemen's Duty

These short terms were typical for enlisted men who served in State Militia units during the Revolution. When a campaign was about to be launched, the officers would recruit men of a short-term basis, then when the campaign or the term of enlistment was up they would return home to their farms or businesses. The number of men available for a battle or campaign varied greatly because of these short enlistment periods, causing no small concern for the generals trying to win the war.

Following the "War of Independence", the Turnbough family continued to live in Chester County for a few years. During this period John received compensation for his militia service and loss of a horse at Wright's Bluff while in the service of the State of South Carolina. A battle was fought at Wright's Bluff. A British stronghold located in Clarendon County, South Carolina of 27 February 1781. Sumter, the patriot commander, lost 18 men and the battle.

In 1785, one of John's oldest sons, William Eli Turnbough, moved to Greenville District, South Carolina where he received a land grant. The following year "Old John" and the rest of the family moved to Greenville

District where John received a 373 acre land grant on the Enore River. The first U.S. census taken in 1790 shows "Old John", his sons, William and John, each with separate households in the Greenville District. "Old John", his wife and 7 sons were living in one household. William Turnbough was shown as single with one young man under 16 years age living with him. I have concluded this must have been one of his younger brothers helping him work his land. The younger John Turnbow (spelling as recorded by the census enumerator), his wife and children, no boys and 2 girls, are shown in a third household. "Old John" and his children continued to live in this area another four years. On 17 April 1794, John and his wife, Margit, sold their property and moved to Kentucky. In this period of time it was no easy task to pack up your family and possessions and move across what is today two states and then half way across the next.

Their migration route took them through the Saluta Gap into North Carolina, across its western tip and then northward across Tennessee to Kentucky and the Cumberland Gap. From there they followed the Wilderness trail established by Daniel Boone a quarter century earlier to Washington County, Kentucky. It is believed that they camped for a year or at least part of one on property owned by Thomas Montgomery, a brother-in-law to Isaac Turnbow. This Isaac Turnbow was a son of "Old John's" and a 4th great-grandfather of the author.

After a season in Washington County, the family moved to their own land in two different counties. Isaac Turnbow went to Logan County, Kentucky and settled on Big Whippen Will Creek a few miles southwest of the present town of Russellville. (Per Logan County Court Order Book, 1, page 240-, dated August 1804.) Widow Elizabeth Talkington located 200 acres of land in addition to her former claim lying on both sides of Big Whipper Will adjacent to Isaac Turnbow's property. From this and other indirect evidence, it is concluded that Elizabeth and her late husband Robert were the parents of Isaac's wife Margaret Talkitten (Talkington.)

"Old John" and his wife and all but two of the remaining sons settled in what was the Green County, Kentucky. Six years later (1802) Adair County, Kentucky was formed which is the present location of the area they settled in.

One son, John, settled eventually on Caney Creek in Ohio County, Kentucky. William Eli Turnbough, the eldest son, stayed in Greenville

County, South Carolina in is believed eventually to have immigrated to Australia.

Prior to the War of 1812, most of the Turnbow family moved to Maury County, Tennessee. Exceptions to this move were the son, John Turnbough, of Ohio County, Kentucky who eventually moved to Lincoln County, Missouri where he died. His widow, Barbara Anne Robinson Turnbough, migrated to Pike County, Illinois with most of the children and their families. The other exception to the Maury County, Tennessee move was the son, William Eli, who is believed to have immigrated to Australia. This is substantiated somewhat by some of the descendants of John and Barbara Anne Turnbough who report that in the early 1930's three brothers, some of the Australian Turnbows, attempted to establish contact with three American cousins living in the St. Louis, Missouri vicinity.

Back in Maury County, Tennessee the Turnbows became involved with the War of 1812 when Andrew Jackson recruited many of "Old John's" sons and grandsons to put down the Indian rebellion and defeat the British at the Battle of New Orleans. During this period many Indian lands and lands to be acquired by the U.S. in the near future were exposed to the view of Jackson's troops. Following the war many moved to these former Indian lands, including the following sons of "Old John Turnbough."

Isaac and Joseph Turnbow moved to Mississippi Territory in what is now Perry County and Jefferson County, Alabama. The former being the author's fourth great-grandfather. Other of the Turnbo's moved to the southern counties of Tennessee.

George, one of "Old John's" sons, moved to Lewis County and has many descendants still there.

Jacob Turnbough moved to Shoal Creek, Lawrence County, Tennessee.

Samuel Turnbough, the only one of "Old John's" sons that was literate, lived in Maury, Hickman and McNairy Counties, Tennessee. In 1827 he sold his McNairy County land and taught school in Arkansas and then settled in Washington and Crawford Counties, Missouri. In 1845 he died in Crawford County, Missouri where today there are many descendants who live in that and surrounding counties.

Andrew Turnbow is first documented in Giles County, Tennessee on the 1820 census. The following two years he received land grants in Giles County. He is found in that county on the 1830 and 1840 census. Later he moved to Pope County, Arkansas where he died in 1855. His widow, Gracie Coffee Turnbow and several children moved to Erath County, Texas where many descendants remain to this day.

James Turnbough, the youngest known son of "Old John", married Phelicia Coffee on 11 April 1811 in Maury County, Tennessee. He later moved and is documented first in the Giles County court records during the year of 1818. He is also documented in that county on the 1820 census, 1822 land records and 1823 court records. In 1824 he appears on the Maury County tax list. He died 19 August 1826 in Maury County at only 45 years age.

The previously mentioned 1820 census showed an older man living in the James Turnbough household and this believed to have been "Old John", for he was living with James when they left Kentucky and moved to Maury County, Tennessee. After this period there is no known record (to the author) of the whereabouts of "Old John Turnbough" except for the mention in Samuel Turnbow's biographical sketch (quoted at first of this history) that his grandfather died in his 106th year and 11 days at Forked-Deer, Tennessee. Following the death of James in 1826, it is believed that "Old John" went to live with another of his descendants, of which there were many. More than sixty descendants of "Old John" can be accounted for in the year 1826. It is very possible that the descendant he lived with was a granddaughter who therefore did not carry the Turnbow surname and thus thwarted efforts to trace the whereabouts of this immigrant ancestor. Should any other researcher have information that might help complete the Turnbow story, the author would greatly appreciate receiving this information.

Information that would be of help is as follows:

1. People, places, dates and events in the lives of Old John or any of his descendants, with documentation or information source.
2. Information of female descendants in very limited and would greatly help.
3. Traditions passed on through the various branches of the family could provide valuable clues for further research.

Hugh Turnbo, Sr. is undoubtedly a descendant of "Old John", but the exact relationship has not yet been established. He logically could be a son of any

of "Old John's" older sons. Most probably he would have been a son of William Eli, George or Jacob. It is even possible Hugh, Sr. could have been "Old John's" youngest son. According to one source Hugh was born in North Carolina approximately in the year 1793. He is documented to have married Sally Bearden in Maury County, Tennessee in 23 August 1809. He is next mentioned in the 2 July 1810 court order of Adair County, Kentucky in association with "Old John" and James Turnbow to assist with road work over which James was the surveyor. Just seven weeks later "Old John" sold his 195 acres on Russel Creek and most of the Turnbows moved to Maury County, Tennessee. The 6th of August 1814, Hugh married again, this time to Mary (Polly) Poscell (Powell), the daughter of Ambrose Powell.

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