

Itawamba Settlers

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The Burt Family

The story is told of the three Burt brothers who came to Mississippi from South Carolina and Georgia after the death of their mother and the remarriage of their father. One brother, John, settled near Nettleton while the other two went to other parts of the state. John had been born in Georgia 9 September 1818.

John Burt married Margaret W. Brown in Monroe County, Mississippi on 23 January 1846. Margaret, born 24 August 1828 in South Carolina, was the daughter of Robert Brown and Dorcas Strait. The Brown family had moved from South Carolina to Alabama and finally to Mississippi. Upon her marriage, Margaret's well-to-do parents provided her and John with a gift of money with which to buy their land and build their log cabin, according to a granddaughter, Margarete Lou Burt Stultz. In addition, the Browns also gave the Burts slaves. Ten children were born to this union of John Burt and Margaret Brown.

By the time of the outbreak of the Civil War the seventh child was born. The first child was serving as a private in the Mississippi State Cavalry. As one might expect, John was on the Confederate side, holding some type of political job during this war between the states. Like many others, the Burt family was raided by the yankees as they marched through the countryside.

Grandson Sam Burt called John a "teacher of the old school." This very well educated man spoke excellent English. An avid reader, John might be found outdoors or inside by the fire with a book in his hands and Webster's Unabridged Dictionary by his side. No word would escape his understanding.

Margaret would busy herself with either garden work or cooking. On winter evenings she might be found knitting, completing a sock in one night. According to grandson Sam she was at her best whenever she decided to rest, relax and smoke. Her clay pipe would be filled with crushed, home-grown tobacco then dipped in hot embers. Then she was ready to sit back and enjoy herself with the delightful aroma given off by "Stengy-green." In her later years Margaret was completely

toothless. She is known to have said she would rather have one good swallow than a half-dozen sets of teeth. Margaret was a great talker who did not leave out the smallest detail when relating something to others.

The Burt home was located in the New Chapel Community where the family worshipped at the Presbyterian Church. The kitchen was separate from the house, as was the custom in those days. Inside the house, the broad fireplace could hold a four foot log. On either side of the fireplace were built-in places to sit. From these vantage points the children could watch as their mother cooked in the wintertime. The pot or kettle would be suspended from a rod well above the fire.

As the Burt family expanded so did their log cabin. At some point over the years the Burt dwelling became a dog-trot house. About 1965 the house was torn down by the present owners of the property. The well and smokehouse, however, are still standing in 1987. A few fireplace or chimney bricks can be found scattered around. Rotting floor-boards with their hand-made square nails are in a pile.

A favorite activity for grandchildren of John and Margaret and probably, earlier, their parents, was sliding down the hillside near the house on barrell staves. When they sat on the back ends of the staves the hiked-up front ends gave the youngsters smooth sailing down the pine needle covered hillside.

At the foot of the hill below the house was a grove of chinquapen trees. This was a favorite gathering place in the fall when the chestnut-like chinquapens were ripe. Chestnut trees could also be found on the property with their fruit ripening about the same time as chinquapens. Unfortunately, some years ago a blight attacked and killed all of the chinquapen trees.

After the death of Margaret on 16 February 1897, John made his home with his youngest child, Maggie, and her family. There he died 21 April 1900. Both John and Margaret were buried in New Chapel Cemetery.

The ten children of John Burt and Margaret W. Brown were as follows:

1. William Christopher Burt was born in Mississippi 30 November 1846. On 30 October 1872 he married Mary Alice Pennal, who became the mother of their seven children. William died 10 May 1934 near Nettleton; burial was in New Chapel.

2. Mary A. D. Burt was born 8 December 1848 in Mississippi. She married M. Thomas Rogers 18 February 1880 in Itawamba County; they had two children. Mary died 6 July 1891, was buried in Pine Grove/Rogers Cemetery in Monroe County.

3. Robert Burt was born in Lee County 5 April 1851. On 13 December 1873 he was married to Eliza Harriet Monts, also in Lee County. They were the parents of four children. Robert died 5 May 1926 in Verona; burial was in Verona Cemetery.

4. Zaccheus "Zack" Burt was born in Itawamba County 10 January 1854. In Lee County on 16 December 1885 he married Maggie Ophelia Fancher; their children numbered eight. Zack died 29 July 1922 and was buried in New Chapel Cemetery.

5. James Buchanan "Buck" Burt was born in Mississippi 12 October 1856. He died 6 April 1894; burial was in New Chapel Cemetery.

6. John Burt was born 1 January 1858 in Mississippi. He died 21 March 1940 at Meridian and was buried at New Chapel.

7. George Samuel W. Burt, named for two of his mother's brothers, was born in Monroe County 25 April 1861. On 18 November 1885 in Lee County he married Melissa Elizabeth McClung; they had ten children. George died 16 October 1945 in Texas. He was buried in Plainview Cemetery in Hale County.

8. Harriet Frances "Fannie" Burt was born in Mississippi 7 February 1865. In Lee County she married William Buchannan "Buck" Springer on 18 November 1897. They had only one daughter. Fannie died 23 November 1953 in Belden. Burial was in Glenwood Cemetery.

9. Sarah "Sallie" Burt was born in Itawamba County 6 November 1867. At Nettleton on 7 December 1890 she married Robert Forest Fancher; they became the parents of eleven children. Sallie died 10 May 1948. Burial was at New Chapel.

10. Maggie Burt was born 11 October 1873 in Mississippi. She married James Blythe "Jim Bly" Leslie in Lee County on 11 October 1873. They were the parents of three children. Maggie died 15 February 1904 and was buried in Unity Presbyterian Cemetery.

These were the grandchildren of John Burt and Margaret W. Brown: John Robert Burt, William Thomas Burt, Jefferson Alva Buchanon Burt, Wilder Douglas Burt,

Mary Margaret "Mae" Burt Nabors, Myra Alice Burt Walker, Ada Rogers Beachum, Willie Belle Burt Patterson, Sam Burt, Cola Burt Bourland, Ila Burt Billingsley, Julia Burt Hawkins, Betty Ophelia Burt Ridings, Mary Burt, Grady Burt, Tracy Buchanan Burt, Carl Burt, Sammie Burt, Herbert "Hub" Burt, Fleda "Fee" Burt Haun, Grover Cleveland Burt, Margarete Lou Burt Stultz, John Howard Burt, Neva Burt Campbell, George K. Burt, Carl McClung Burt, Charles Olen Burt, Lottie Springer Cox, Carroll Fountain Fancher, Fannet "Fannie" Fancher Riley, Hattie Mae Fancher Morris, Alver F. "Doc" Fancher, John Robert "Hoot" Fancher, Lois Fancher Roebuck, William M. "Pete" Fancher, Grover Forest Fancher, James Buchannon "Fiz" Fancher, Percilla F. "Cilla" Leslie Huggins Dempsey, James Bryan Leslie, and Julia Margaret Leslie Martin.

Several of the Burt sons could play the fiddle. They all farmed, as their father did, and two of them were also in the mercantile business. All but one of the children remained in Mississippi; George Samuel moved to Texas. Many teachers can be found among the Burt descendants, who are now scattered all over the country. A good number of the males have performed their patriotic duty by serving in the armed forces in times of war as well as peace. John Burt and Margaret W. Brown would indeed be proud of each of their descendants.

The countryside around the pinehill community of New Chapel has probably changed little since John and Margaret settled there those many years ago. We are assured that "the more things change, the more they remain the same."

