

Henry Keyser (born 1813)

Son of Christopher "Kit" Columbus Keyser

Henry Keyser was born on Jan. 13, 1813 in Giles County, West Virginia and died on Dec. 22, 1909 in Fremont County, Iowa. Henry married Abigail Clark on July 1, 1830 in Cabell County, Virginia. Abigail was born on Oct. 10, 1813 in Virginia and died on on Jan. 21, 1889 in Fremont County, Iowa.

Henry and Abigail had seven children: Christopher Columbus Keyser (1832-1919), Samuel Keyser b. 1834, James Russell Keyser (1835-1901), William Preston Keyser (1836-1917), Leander J. Keyser (1838-1932), John Barrener Keyser (1840-1923), and Mary Emaline Keyser (1848-1889)

THE FREMONT COUNTY HERALD - THE HOMECOMING

as published in "The Fremont County Herald", Sidney, Fremont County, Iowa, August 16, 1907

THE HOME COMING It is a pleasant thing for children who have long been separated from each other to return to the paternal home, to receive again the welcome smiles of those who love them, as did Mr. and Mrs. S.S. Orr, who on last Sunday was permitted through the goodness of God to sit at the table with their entire family of children whose ages run from 37 years down to 21 years, and to see them all the pictures of excellent health. Their family consists of two sons and six daughters, and they had not eaten at the same table with their parents for more than a score of years. To the parents it was a source of much joy to behold their children together with their 14 grandchildren and not a feeble person among them, sit and meet with their great-great-grandfather, Henry Keyser, who was at the head of the table and presided over the luxuries, being almost 95 years old and who presented such a healthy appearance, looking as if he would be with them for years to come. Those present besides the parents and the grandparent were:

Emma L. GIBSON with her three children of Thurman.

Mary A. MASON with her five children of Council Bluffs.

Chas. C. ORR and Margaret J. ORR of Thurman.

Francis L. ORR of Omaha

Frances L. RAWLINGS with her six children of Knox.

Stella E. TOMPSON of Sidney.

Alpha C. WILLIAMS of Ogallala, Neb., with her adopted daughter Alpha O. Mason.

-besides John R. Rawlings of Knox, Ed Thompson of Sidney and Miller Gibson of Thurman, sons-in-laws of Mr. and Mrs. Orr. The reunion of these children with their parents was very pleasant indeed and each goes back to his or her home and avocation with the assurance that however cold the world may seem, there is one spot on earth where there is warmth and love and that is called by the endearing name "home".

FREMONT'S OLDEST CITIZEN DEAD

as published in "The Fremont County Herald", Sidney, Fremont County, Iowa, January 7, 1910

Henry Keyser, familiarly known throughout the county as "Grandpa" Keyser, died Tuesday night at the home of Elder S. S. Orr, in the Brightside neighborhood at the remarkable age of 96 years, 11 months, and 6 days. Death can only be attributed to old age, for up to a comparatively short time ago, the old gentleman was hale and hearty and unusually active for one of his years. He is believed to have been the oldest resident of the county at the time of his death. It is impossible at this time to procure data sufficient to form a fitting history of the life and labors of this venerable centenarian who knew Fremont County long before she was a county, but we expect to be able to do so in the next issue.

Henry's Obituary

by S.S. Orr, as published in "The Fremont County Herald", Sidney, Fremont County, Iowa, January 10, 1910

"Autobiography of Henry Keyser"

In writing this biographical sketch of the late Henry Keyser of Fremont county, I wish to say, that it is done for the enlightenment of his many grandchildren and friends who have never been acquainted with him, or his past life as I have known it.

Henry Keyser was born early in the nineteenth century, in the Old Dominion, on January 13, 1813, a short distance from the Hot Sulphur Springs, Bath County, Virginia. His father's name was Christopher [Columbus] Keyser, the oldest son of William Keyser, who was said to be of Scotch Irish descent. Christopher Keyser, the father of Henry, married Frances Jones of Bath county, Virginia, and in a short time after Henry was born they moved from Virginia to Greenup county, Kentucky, and settled in the Big Sandy valley. Henry was 8 months

old when they came to the new country and they lived there till Henry was about 12 years old, when his mother died leaving him alone with his father, who took him to Cabell County, Virginia, where he married the second time to Peggy Bloss.

They lived at this time on a stream of water called Twelve Pole or one of its tributaries. Here he assisted his father on the farm on Beech Fork in various ways, in cutting away the timber and in rolling logs into heaps and burning them, until he became almost a young man.

During this time his father sent him to school to a man whose name was Tommy Knapper who proved to be so cross and ugly to him that he could not learn anything. This so-called instructor gave him a terrible whipping because he did not bow down to some girls who came to visit his school. So he learned nothing at Knapper's school.

When about 10 years old he was sent to another teacher by the name of Blankenship who was about as cross as Knapper, but he could get along with him better. He spent a little while when about 14 in a school taught by Sammy Clark, which was his last school days. The schoolhouse stood near where Lavalette is situated on Twelve Pole, Wayne County, West Virginia.

What a meager chance a poor boy had in those days to obtain an education! The stories of ghosts and witches told to the younger people were calculated to make cowards of them, rather than to enlighten them, and they could not hope even for better training under such blighting circumstances.

About the time he was 16 he hired to some men by the name of Koontz, who were running a forge, to chop wood. This forge was at the mouth of Buffalo creek some miles from his home. His wages were \$8 per month. After he had finished his wood chopping he returned to his father on Beech Fork with the intention of helping his father on the farm. His hopes were blasted, however, as his life was not pleasant because of the treatment received from his step-mother.

He concluded to look for a wife and so on February 18 at Louis Batcher's wedding he began a courtship with Abigail Clark. He was 17 years old at this time. His courtship was after the manner of courtships in that day and was brought to a close July 1, 1830 by a marriage. He and his little wife Abigail (for she was a very small woman) rented a home upon which they lived until 1834 when they bought a small farm on the east fork of Camp creek from Isaac Hatfield at which place they lived until 1845 when they sold their land to John Bailey. In 1846 near the close of the year, they with their six sons, moved to Andrew County, Missouri, another new county.

We now call the attention of our readers to the wisdom manifested by this couple while yet in their teens. Let it be understood that neither the husband or wife could read, but they believed the gospel and in the same year they were married in 1830 they became Christians and united with the Methodist Episcopal church and both of them remained true to their convictions as long as they lived.

In the new home in Andrew County, Missouri, on February 23, 1847, their only daughter was born. Selling their 80 acre farm in Andrew County, they moved in March 1850, with their six sons and daughter to Fremont County, Iowa. Here they lived and saw the county settled and here they enjoyed the friendship of many friends. Henry Keyser had the misfortune to lose his faithful companion on January 22, 1889, after which he tried life alone but being of a turn of mind that was not easily controlled he married the second time. January 2, 1891 Mrs. Martha Alexander became his second wife.

Old age had crept on him and after living together a number of years their friends thought it best they should not try to keep house any longer so broke up housekeeping. She went to California and he remained among his children and grandchildren which numbered at his death near 250 living souls.

Since coming to the State of Iowa he has made four trips to West Virginia and one to California. He plowed the first furrow in the city of Tabor and has seen 96 years 11 months and 6 days pass by as a weaver's shuttle. The children of his youth have become old men. A son and the daughter have been borne to the tomb. He has seen the changes that have taken place during the nineteenth century in the various modes of agriculture. He has had an opportunity of voting for the chief magistrate of the United States 17 times and enjoyed the privilege of voting to the last.

He was a noble man. No man perhaps loved his country more than he but his stay is over. He seemed anxious to go. He bore his sufferings with fortitude and died at this oldest granddaughter's [home] on the morning of December 22, 1909. He was borne to the tomb from the home of S.S. Orr and wife where the body of Henry Keyser will rest with his beloved wife till the morning of the resurrection when they will rise to praise the Father God who gave them their eternal being in His great universe.

Excerpt from

"A Biographical History of Fremont and Mills Counties - Iowa" published 1901

Christopher Keyser [son of Henry Keyser] is living a retired life on his large farm on section thirty, in Benton township, Fremont County. He was born in Campbell County, West Virginia, February 10, 1832. His father is an octogenarian and is identified with agricultural pursuits in Sidney township, Fremont County. Henry Keyser was reared to farm life in West Virginia until sixteen years of age, when he accompanied his parents on their removal to Missouri in 1848, making the journey by way of the water route. In the family were six sons, and one daughter who were born to them in Missouri. The father purchased a farm in that state and Christopher continued to aid in its cultivation until he had attained his nineteenth year, when in the fall of 1889. he left home and came to Iowa, one hundred miles north of his Missouri home. He worked by the month, hunted, fished and trapped, having become familiar with those lines of work in Virginia. He continued to reside in this locality with his uncles until his father sold his Missouri property and removed to Fremont county, following his two sons, Christopher and his younger brother, Samuel, who had previously come to Iowa, but the latter is now a resident of Kansas.

Christopher Columbus Keyser, of this review, was married on the 10th of October, 1851, to Olivia L. Lambert, of Benton township, Fremont County, who was born in Kentucky, July 13, 1837, and was then fifteen years of age. Their union has been blessed with the following children, of whom nine are now living: Elizabeth, wife of S. S. Orr, an extensive farmer of this locality; S. J., a farmer and business man of Percival, who is married and has eight children and has lost two; Abigail, who died at the age of thirteen years; Elvira, who became the wife of Paul Hineline and died leaving four children ; Emma, who died at the age of eighteen years; C. C, a farmer of Benton township, who is married ; Eddie, who is living on his farm in Benton township and has five children; W. W., who resides on a part of his father's farm and is married and has one daughter, Emma. who died at the age of eighteen years; Louisa, wife of Ambrose Parkerson, a merchant of Percival, by whom she has one son; Hannah J., wife of William Wood, of Benton township. and they have four children; Maggie, wife of Bert O'Connor, who operates a part of his father's farm and by whom she has one son; and Freddie, who is at home unmarried and assists in the operation of the home farm and also carries on business in Percival. Mr. Keyser is the owner of one thousand acres of the rich bottom land of Fremont County, worth not less than forty dollars per acre, and he keeps stock enough to consume all of the products of the farm, carrying on that line of business on an extensive scale. He raises fine red polled cattle, having a number of thoroughbreds. He also has good grades of horses, mules and jacks to the number of two hundred and has a valuable flock of Shropshire sheep. He has about five hundred acres planted to corn, yielding twenty thousand bushels, and this he feeds to his stock. He is a most enterprising, progressive and practical farmer, and his business has brought to him very gratifying success. He was a man of great strength and endurance and has been actively concerned in the control of his farm until recent years, when rheumatism forced him to relegate the more arduous duties of farm life to others. In 1897 he erected his present large and commodious residence, which stands within twenty rods of the old home in which his marriage was celebrated. He is a Republican in politics and has been township trustee. His wife is a member of the Methodist church. They were the first white people married in the county; Rev. John Todd performing the ceremony. From the period of early pioneer development they have been witnesses of the growth and progress of this portion of the state and have done all in their power to promote its advancement. As highly esteemed people and worthy early settlers they well deserve representation in this volume.