

## John and Diana [Friend] Mitchell

John Mitchell, an early settler in (Petersburg) Addison Township, was the son of James and Elizabeth (McElhenny) Mitchell. James, the founder of the family, was born in Northern Ireland. He emigrated to the Colony of Pennsylvania before the Revolutionary War and settled in Bedford County holding land there by "Tomahawk Rights". This was a tradition of marking trees by chopping the bark away on borders of their property. About 1780, he moved to the Turkeyfoot region and settled near Confluence where he spent the remainder of his life. James and Elizabeth were buried at the "Six Poplars Cemetery" near Harnedsville.

Their children were: James, Thomas, John, Lewis, Sarah (married McKinney) and Margaret (married Wilkins). There are many descendents in the area today from these six children.

The third son John was born at the homestead in Bedford County on February 22, 1766 and came with his father to Turkeyfoot. In 1789 he was married to Diana Friend, daughter of the pioneer, Captain Andrew Friend, famed Indian fighter.

At the time of Diana's birth in September of 1773, the Turkeyfoot region was remote and sparsely settled. Indians were still roaming the country side and were not always peaceful.

During an uprising while Captain Friend's Militia was away from home, an alarm circulated throughout the neighborhood that an Indian attack was expected. Andrew's wife, Josepha (Drake) Friend took her small children and fled into the cornfield and spend the night. When morning finally arrived, she heard voices and expected the worst. She was very relieved to find that it was her husband. They went to the Stockade Fort at Turkeyfoot where later that day Diana Friend was born.

John and Diana Mitchell settled on a farm in the Turkeyfoot area until the spring of 1812. They then moved to the Newbury Grove Tract, remaining there two years, then moving to the Spencer Tract on the National Road.

John was appointed Justice of the Peace in 1800 and held office until his death. According to Moses A. Ross, his son-in-law, "John Mitchell, Esq. was considered a good officer, meting out full justice to all offenders, especially if against aged or poor men. He was frequently in the Township Office and was a Arbitrator."

John and Diana had eleven children: Levi, James, Andrew, Joseph, John, Elizabeth, Jesse, Hiram, Diana, Mary and Cynthia.

As with many families in the early days, they had their share of misfortune. The first child, Levi, moved to Vicksburg, Mississippi and lost touch with his family.

The second child James, born in 1794, died from choking on a peach seed at six years of age and was buried at the "Six Poplars Cemetery".

The fourth child Joseph, when last heard from, was at Barbados, West Indies. A letter from him to his parents dated September 2, 1824 has survived and speaks of numerous fevers on the Island and of his being ill.

The tenth child Mary, grew to adulthood and married Ralph Thyer but was semi-invalid much of her life.

The ninth child Diana, was married several years before dying at 27 years of age and leaving two small children. Moses Ross preserved a note, dated September 1828 sent to him by John Mitchell. Moses had only lived in the area for several months by this time. As you read in the note that follows, John concludes by wishing him "a good and handsome wife". This leads one to believe that either John had a good sense of humor or that he was playing matchmaker for his sixteen-year-old daughter Diana. Diana Mitchell and Moses A. Ross were married on March 7, 1833. Later Moses A. Ross (after the death of Diana) married Diana Mitchell's sister Cynthia Mitchell and had nine additional children.

In a newspaper article from the Somerset Standard in 1895, the following information was written about the

Mitchells. "Thomas Kylar of Confluence, now in his eighty-fourth year, lived with them as a boy for a number of years and was always, he says, considered and treated as one of the family. He has many reminiscences of "Mother Mitchell", as with advancing years she was universally called, and speaks very highly of her tact, management, etc".

Diana (Friend) Mitchell's great-great granddaughter has in her possession a linen tablecloth and three linen sheets which were woven by this pioneer lady.

John and Diana Mitchell's home was consumed by fire on October 31, 1828 and they lost nearly all of their household goods. This house was located on the property where his son John Mitchell, Jr. built a Tavern around 1832 and is now Edgar Augustine's estate.

John Mitchell, Esq. died about a year after this tragic fire on October 6, 1829. His wife survived him nearly ten years dying July 23, 1839. Both of their bodies interred in the Mitchell Family Vault in the "Newbury Cemetery".

NOTE: This is posted on behalf of the: "THE OLD PETERSBURG-ADDISON HISTORICAL SOCIETY" by Lawson L. "Buddy" Duckworth

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