

An abbreviated Thompson Family history, 1800 to the present day

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By Brian Bragg

This branch of the Thompson family descended from a line of colonial pioneers who landed in Virginia and moved successively to North Carolina and then westward. The earliest ancestor with the Thompson name so far identified in this particular family's direct line was **Moses Thompson**, who took a Cherokee woman as his wife in the early 1800s. Although the wife's name has been lost to history, she bore Moses four children.

The first child, **John M. Thompson**, was born in Fleming County, Kentucky, in 1810. He grew up in that part of Kentucky some 70 miles (a journey of several days) southeast of the growing "Queen City of the West", Cincinnati, Ohio. When John was old enough to strike out on his own, he married his Fleming County sweetheart, **Sarah (Sally) Pattison**. John was 18 and Sally 17 at the time of the marriage.

John and Sally moved north, crossing the Ohio River into the young state of Indiana, and eventually settled in Orange Township, Rush County. They had 10 children (eight of whom survived to adulthood) over a span of 20 years as a hard-working farm family known for its generosity to neighbors.

John and Sally's ninth child, **William Melvin (Mel) Thompson** (b. 1847) moved to Grant County, Indiana, after the Civil War and homesteaded some 240 acres there in Liberty Township southwest of Marion. It was from Mel and his wife, the former **Sarah Whiting** (who grew up in Rush County as one of the Thompsons' neighbors) that the northern branch of the clan descended. Mel and Sarah Thompson raised three children to adulthood – Jimmy (**James Estes**), Day (**Claud Day**) and Sid (**Leota Elizabeth**).

The Thompson family which sprang from Rush County roots has gathered for an annual reunion 106 times in an unbroken sequence beginning when Teddy Roosevelt was president of the 45 United States. The first get-together of Thompson parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles and cousins was held on New Year's Day, 1902, at the Rush County home of **Hester Thompson Ross**, the fourth child of John and Sally Thompson. Sadly, Hester had less than two months to live after hosting that first reunion. She died in mid-February, 1902, at the age of 67.

From 1902 through 1916, the reunion was held on a winter holiday, when farming chores were at a slower pace. In 1917 the Thompson conclave was switched to an end-of-summer schedule, and its timing remained fixed on the second Sunday of every September for 70 years.

Horse-powered transportation was the mode in the early 20th Century, and it was an arduous journey for the Grant County Thompsons to make their way south for family visits in the early years. By the time of World War I, automobiles were easing travel for the well-to-do and adventurous, but the Grant County Thompsons had no such fancy and costly contraptions in those years. The annual reunions remained in Rush County, where most of the Thompson cousins lived, until 1941. In that year the northern branch of the family finally enjoyed the get-together without a long road trip as the gathering took place

at the home of **Bill and Gladys Thompson** in Converse, Indiana, at the eastern edge of Miami County.

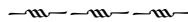
The reunion returned to Rush County for nine years. During the years of World War II, gasoline rationing curtailed the ability of the northern branch of the family to visit their Rush County cousins. And even though the 1951 gathering was at the home of **Carl and Carma Thompson Smith** near Sims in southwestern Grant County, it was not until the 1960s that the Thompsons began to hold their annual gatherings more and more frequently in Grant, Miami and Wabash counties.

The venue in recent years has been exclusively in this more northern neighborhood. The last Rush County gathering was in 1978 at the home of **Richard and Jalna Kellam**. Richard is the great-grandson of Hester Ross, the hostess of that first Thompson reunion so long ago.

Eighteen of the last 19 reunions have been held in Wabash County. Oddly enough, even though the annual reunion has stayed in Indiana, the only descendants with the Thompson surname from this bloodline reside in Illinois.

In recent years it has been traditional that the oldest descendant named Thompson serves as president of the reunion. The current president is **Jerry A. Thompson** of Geneva, Illinois.

The 107th annual Thompson Reunion is scheduled for 24 August 2008 in Wabash, Indiana.



This Thompson family tree may be found online, beginning with:

http://www.bragg.org/tree/wc01/wc01_205.html

which is the page for Moses E. Thompson and his first wife. Succeeding generations may be traced by following the available links to the present-day descendants. The author would appreciate knowing of any additions or corrections you might be able to contribute, with particular attention to the younger generations. Do you note any missing or incorrect entries? Do you see incomplete or incorrect birthdates or birthplaces, or missing middle names? If you can add any information to the record, please contact Brian Bragg by e-mail (brian@bragg.org) or by post at PO Box 318, Scranton, Arkansas 72863.