

JOHN WREN GRAYSON

Son of Wren Grayson, Sr.

A Biographical Sketch

by: Richard Roland Grayson, M.D.

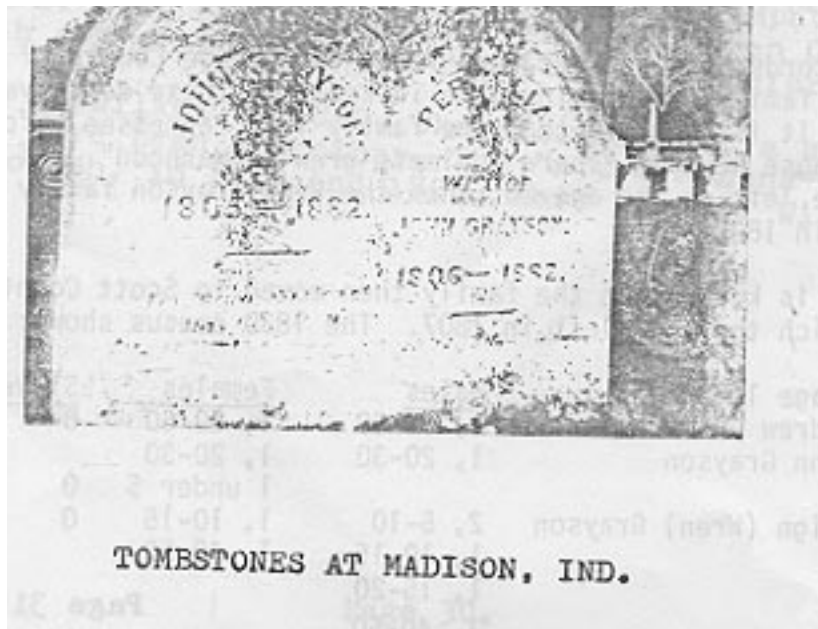
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JOHN WREN GRAYSON AND PERMELIA





"I was born in Scott County, Kentucky on the second day of November, 1805. My father's name was Wren Grayson and my mother's maiden name was Betsy Owens".

"I have six brothers and one sister; brother Lewis died in childhood and another, Henry, died after raising a large family. My other brothers are Wren and Sanford Grayson of Decatur County and Joseph and Benjamin Grayson of Tipton County, Indiana, all men of honest repute among those who know them. My only and beloved sister is Mrs. Nancy Hamilton, widow of William Hamilton of Decatur County".

In 1807, when I was two years of age, my parents moved to Tennessee and settled in Bledsoe County. There I almost grew to manhood and was familiar with the scenes and incidents attendant upon those early times, in adventures with Indians and wild animals in the Sequatchie Valley and upon the Cumberland Mountains".

"I was always physically strong, healthy, and hearty. At the age of seventeen, at a religious meeting held at the house of Richard Stone, I began to be conscious about my condition as a sinner. Mrs. Stone had been converted to God, embraced the faith of the Cumberland Presbyterians, a very earnest set of Christian people".

"Mr. Stone, as soon as he had found peace, constantly appealed to his friends and neighbors to 'flee from the wrath to come.' While listening to him I was deeply convicted, felt very bad indeed, and was glad when the meeting closed, remarking as I left that they would not get me back there again. But the spirit of the Lord had taken strong upon me, and I realized the necessity of yielding to the call of my Master, and led by his help, to a new and better life." (Copied from the Madison Courier, February 1, 1882; "an autobiography of the deceased written by him some years ago and carefully placed away by him".)

Records have not yet been found in Bledsoe County of the Wren Grayson family, so nothing more is

known of these early years than the above. It is surmised that the family left Tennessee before John was 21, because he said "There I almost grew to manhood". If by that, he meant he left at the age of 20, then the Wren Grayson family left Bledsoe County in 1825.

It is know that the family then moved to Scott County, Kentucky, from which they had left in 1807. The 1830 census shows:

(Page 156) Males Females Slaves

Andrew Cummins 1, 50-60 1, 50-60 0

John Grayson 1, 20-30 1, 20-30 0

1, under 5

Wrign (Wren) Grayson 2, 5-10 1, 10-15 0

1, 10-15 1, 40-50

1, 15-20

1, 40-50

John Wren Grayson married the only child of Andrew Cummins, Permelia. Her obituary stated that she "was born in Scott County, Kentucky, in 1806. Her maiden name was Cummins, she was being the daughter of Major Andrew C. Cummins, who distinguished himself in the War of 1812. She married to John Grayson in 1829, and removed with him to this state (Indiana) in 1837".

The 1810 census of Scott County, Kentucky, showed Andrew Cummins age 16-25, his wife, age 16-25, one daughter under 10.

Andrew Cummins had arrived in Kentucky by way of the Ohio River in 1802. He was born December 13, 1779, was a private (not a Major) in the 28th Ky. Regiment in the War of 1812, and fought at the Battle of the Thames in Michigan. He died at the home of John Wren Grayson January 1, 1864, age 84. ("Items from Early Newspapers of Jefferson County, Indiana 1817-86, p. 219 pub). 1945; Ind. State Library;" and Military Records, National Archives.)

Sometime between 1830 and 1832, the Graysons and Cummins left for Indiana. John Wren Grayson's first child was Rebecca, born in 1830 in Scott County, Kentucky, probably named after his stepmother, Rebecca (B. ca. 1781 in Virginia; 1850 census, Decatur County, Indiana, P.309). The next child was Sarah A. Grayson, born in 1832 in Indiana. The entire family is shown in the 1850 census in Madison,

Indiana:

Census of 1850 Jefferson County, Indiana

P. 238 Dwelling 613; Family 645 5th Ward, Madison County Indiana

John Grason, age 48; (45?) Carpenter, born Tennessee

Permelia, age 43 born Kentucky

Rebecca, age 20 born Kentucky

Sarah A., age 18 born Indiana

Mary C., age 16 born Indiana

Celithia, age 14 (M) born Indiana in school

Andrew, age 13 born Indiana in school

John R., age 10 born Indiana in school

Jacob Merrick, age 19 Moulder born Indiana

Samuel Brisbane, age 19, Moulder born Indiana

John Wren Grayson and family came from Scott County, Kentucky, first to Madison, by 1832, but then "removed to Decatur County, Indian; entered government land there; sold out and removed to Madison." (Obit.; Madison Courier, 1 Feb. 1882)

He purchased land in Decatur County April 8, 1836: (Tract Book, Greensburg, Ind.): "John Grayson, Section 1, Township 8 N., Range 8 East, N.E.3 N.W.3 38.29".

"John Grayson of Sandcreek Township. His stock mark is a swallow-fork in each year. Oct. 31, 1836." (Stock Marks registered in Decatur County; Clerk's office, Greensburg.)

"Another land purchase is recorded in Indiana Land Entries vol. II, by Margaret R. Walters (Indianapolis, 1949), p. 144: "John Grayson, 9 Jan. 1836: SE-NW-S23." Analysis shows this to be a 40 acre piece of Land next to the land of John's brother, Benjamin Grayson; p. 144: "Benjamin Grayson, 31 Aug. 1835; 24 June 1836 (E-NE. SW-NES22; SW-NW-S23; E-SE-S22)." -3-

An entry from the tract book, Greensburg, Indiana, also shows John's brother, Joseph Grayson Living near his purchase mentioned first above: "Joseph Grayson, Section 2, Township 8 North, Range 8 East NW3 NE3 39.14 A". Dated 03/16/1837.

In 1840, the census from Decatur County, Sandcreek township show John Grayson and his family living near the families of his father, Wren Grayson and brothers Joseph and Wren, Jr.

1840 Census Decatur County, Indiana:

John Grayson Interpretation:

2 males under 5 1. Salathiel, B. 1837, age 3

2. Andrew Jackson, B 1838, age 2

(3. John W. not born till ca. 1842)

1 male 30-40 4. John Wren Grayson, B. 1805, age 35

1 male 60-70 5. Andrew Cummins, B. 1779, age 69

2 females 5-10 6. Sarah B. 1832, age 8

7. Mary B. 1834, age 6

1 female 10-15 8. Rebecca B. 1830, age 10

1 female 30-40 9. Permelia Cummins Grayson B. 1806,

age 34

1 female 60-70 10. Wife of Andrew Cummins

It is assumed that the father and mother of Permelia Grayson, Andrew Cummins and wife, were the elderly couple living with John Wren and family, because Andrew made an affidavit when applying for a war pension on 23 Oct. 1845 stating that he had resided in Decatur County for "14 years previous to his residence in Madison, Ind.", and that he had (in 1846) lived in Madison for 3 years." The figures are not exact, for the census showed him in Scott county later in 1830; one can infer that the Cummins' left for Decatur County directly from Scott County shortly after the 1830 census. Then, in 1835/6, when John Wren Grayson moved to Decatur County from Madison, they all lived together.

John Wren Grayson and his family moved back to Madison in 1841, according to the obituary of his son Andrew Jackson Grayson. Shortly after settling in Madison, John was appointed Sexton of the Springdale Cemetery (John Grayson's Obit., 1882.)

A letter is at hand from three of John's brothers, Henry, Sanford, and Wren, Jr. to their 1st cousin, Henry Grayson, son of Joseph in Marion County, Tennessee, which describes life in Decatur County, Indiana. The letter is dated May 1st, 1842 at Westport, and the original copy is in the hands of Miss Bobby Dykes of Chattanooga, Tennessee. Miss Dykes is a descendant of Henry Grayson, to whom the letter was addressed:

May the 1st, 1842

"Dear cousins I take this opportunity to in form you that we are all well at present Except Wrens wife She was bin ill for some time we received your letter the 22nd day of April which gave us much satisfaction to hear from you all that you are all well your letter stated that some of our connection were deceased and some of them has moved to Texas we would like to know some more about them when you write again you wish to know about our country and land and grain you want to know about Aunt Nancy we heard from her last fall she is well and hearty except she is draud down like here Mother the rest were all well as far as I know: as for our Country it is Healthy as any county that I know it is remarked by all person who have lived hear

we have great prospect of a crop of wheat this fall our land is as productive as it is in kentucky it raised good corn wheat and oats and potatoes the land is generaly good and cheap as it can be wished as for health it cant be beat by any country wich I know ther was a farm sold joining Father a few days ago that had a saw mill and griss mill on hit and a bout fifteen acres clerd for four hundred and fifty dollars a track of Forty Acres ther is land that is second rate that is vacant that he Entered at one dollar on a quarter per acre and land that is second handed very cheap and good it woul be great consolation to us all if you would come to this country and by land and live in our country we would like to see you all face to fact and injoy the sweet community of our long absence?

as for the price of produce wheat is worth forty cents now and corn twenty cent per bushel and it is offering to in gage wheat after harvest at twenty five cents per bushel sault is cheap the Rail road cars comes with in eight miles of us salt is worth 313 cents per bushel and sugar is 5 cents per pound and coffee is eight cents per pound labor is (?) ther wages is generly fifty cents per day money is scearse and times is tolerable hard we wish you to come if you think it will soot you it would be the greatest consolation all your friends

we want you to write write to us every month we feel willing to receive a leter any time and as many as you will send we wish you to write to our friends in texas and then write to us and find out the post office that we may write to them and them to us we all live at the same place that we did and expect to remain hear we have no notion of leaving this country we want you to write a

about all our old friends and how they all are doing and their health and all we want you to write if you do not move and if you think you will come it will be great satisfaction to us all and I think that you will be very well please with our country and satisfied with our state we wish you to come and see us any how it is not so far but what some of you will come and see us all we want you to not for get us no how if we should not meet in this world try to meet in the next wher parting is no more is no more at present but remain you affectionate friends cousins until death"

"Present Wren Grayson jr

Henry Grayson

Sanford Grayson"

John Wren Grayson was appointed Sexton of the Springdale cemetery of Madison in 1842 and performed the duties of several years before a successor was chosen. In 1852 he again accepted the position as Sexton and served until his death 30 years later.

In addition, John was volunteer fireman. At his death in 1882 he was called "the oldest member of Western Fire Company #3 and in his days of vigor was truly a noble fireman. For many years he was in such high esteem by the members that they gave the fire engine the name by which he was known among them: Pap Grayson." This tale is proven by the actual cast brass sign which is now in the possession of John's great-grandson, Roland Howard Grayson, the son of Howard and father of the author of this biography. The sign is curved to fit the stack of the old steam fire engine and is to this day a work of art and beautiful to behold. The sign was salvaged from the engine years later by Fred Friedersdorf, Sr., who gave it to George who gave it directly to Roland Grayson, his nephew, because he was the only male Grayson of the generation from the line of Andrew.

Fred Friedersdorf, Jr. of Madison, stated (telephone conversation, 1974) that his father, (Fred, Sr.) was engineer on this same fire engine in 1900 and before, that it was pulled by two horses, that the twin steam-driven pistons pumped the water, and that the water came from cisterns which were located all over town.

Andrew Jackson Grayson wrote a letter to the Madison Courier from Kansas City many years later in which he said, "In 1849, when I was but eleven years of age, my father was employed as a cupola tender in the Lewis and Crawford Foundry. When Western Fire Co. was organized and received its charter from the State of Indiana in 1850 the company's first engine house was a frame carriage house in the rear of Samuel Crawford's residence, now the home of the Hon. Manly D. Wilson, and the fire company's membership was employees at the foundry, which is now the Mckim-Cochrane furniture factory.

"Among other prominent members that answered the tap of the foundry bell were George and Henry Armstrong, coppersmith, who had their shop near the northwest corner of Second and Elm streets, Louis and William Eddy, Joseph M. Crawford, George Saberton, and John Grayson, who was then acting as

'Messenger' in charge of the engine house."

Andrew Jackson Grayson wrote one other article concerning his father which tends to show that John was a man of unusual courage and physical prowess: "*On Thursday, Sept. 3, 1846, a most sorrowful calamity befell the denizens of Crooked Creek Valley, causing great loss of life and property. It had been showery all day, but in the afternoon the rain poured down in torrents, flooding our streets...cellars... and even residences in the central part of the city.*

"Crooked Creek rose to an enormous height, overflowing its banks from its headquarters down to the mouth, where it empties into the Ohio River, sweeping everything before it---houses, bridges, fences, and other property. The water was all over Springdale Cemetery and was fully five feet high in that enclosure. ---Twelve persons were drowned, seven of their bodies being found after the waters assuaged in a field at the foot of Wilbur's hill---now the new addition to the Springdale Cemetery....

"John Grayson, the venerable Sexton of Springdale, who was then driving team for the late F. L. Thompson, was one of those who narrowly escaped from drowning. The waters had completely surrounded the home of old Aunt Lettie Stafford and she and her daughters, Becky and Lucy, were crying piteously for help, having taken refuge in the loft. Mr. Grayson put his horses in Aulenbasch's stable, and he and Charles Dugan, Sr. started to swim out to pacify or save them. Mr. Dugan found the current too swift and returned, but Mr. Grayson reached the house and assured the frightened colored folks they were not going to drown. Then striking out for shore, his strength proved insufficient to make it and he was borne down with the rapid current from a point just this side of what is now Butz's brewery to Ritchie's brickyard, above Bunker Hill Tavern, where he floated near enough to the bank to grasp a pole that was extended to him. It was first thought by everybody that he was lost, and word to that effect was conveyed to his family."

(The above stories are from the Mary Hill collection of articles written by Andrew Jackson Grayson of Madison, Indiana, on file in the Genealogy Section of the Indian State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana.)
Salathiel Grayson, the eldest son of John Wren Grayson, was born 1837 and died in 1916. married Mary Lackland, (B, 1837, D. 1895.) Salathiel was first a reporter, then the city editor of the Madison Courier, and finished over 60 years of faithful service with that newspaper. Their children were: 1) Charles Meriam Grayson, B. 1857 in Madison, Indiana, died 1931, married Josephine Dreiss. Charles was a printer for the Madison Courier. 2) Helen Grayson, Born 1861, Madison, died 1958, married Harry Martin Goold, b. 1856, died 1943; one son, Harry Grayson Goold, B. 1888, D. 1901. 3) Mary Francis Grayson (Mame), B. 1865, D. 1942, never married. 4) Gertrude Grayson B. 1868, died ?, married John Bernier. 5) Maude Grayson, B. 1881 D. 12 March 1968, m. 1st. Cornelius DeWeese, 2nd, Percival Moore, children: 1. Mary Francis DeWeese, B. 1905, m. John Speed; 2. Cornelia DeWeese, B. 1908. D. 1968, m. John Miller; 3. Maude Winslow DeWeese, B. 1911 in St. Louis, m. James L. Price, now living in Louisville, Kentucky; 4. Gertrude Ann DeWeese, B. 1914 Carrolton, Kentucky, D. 1920; 6) Bertie Grayson B. 1874, D. 1877 was a child, Willie, found present in the 1880 census. Sources: Mrs. Winslow Price, December 1973; tombstone inscriptions, Springdale Cem., Madison; newspaper clipping, Franklin Republican, Madison, 1914.)

John W. (Wren?) Grayson, son of John Wren Grayson born 1840 or 1842 in Madison, Indiana died 1901 age 60, married Lucinda Virginia Wilson B. ca. 1846 in Virginia, a second cousin of Pres. Woodrow Wilson. John W. was a printer (Census of 1880, Jeff, Co., Ind. p. 171) and in 1879 was assistant superintendent of the Springdale Cemetery when his father was the superintendent. (from the Madison, Ind. Directory p. 46.) Children: 1) Alice Virginia Grayson B. 1862, D. 1927 age 64 married Dr. George Eugene Bragdon of Canton, N.Y.; her daughter is Mrs. E.D. (Grace) Thomas of Columbus, Ohio. 2) Stella Grayson B. 1864, married, no children; 3) Harry Grayson, B. 1867, had one daughter; 4) Bertha Grayson B. 1869, no children; 5) Joseph Grayson, B. 1872, had one son; 6) Luella Grayson, B. 1875, married, 2 children; 7) J. Herbert Grayson, B. after 1880. D. ca. 1964, had 2 sons. (Sources: 1880 census above; letter from Mrs. E.E. Thomas, 3/22/74.)

Andrew Jackson Grayson, son of John Wren Grayson, B. 26 December 1838, Decatur County, Indiana, D. age 74 on 22 July 1913, married Matilda Lawrence 18 August 1860 at age 22 between enlistments in the 6th Indiana Regiment in the civil war, fought at the Battle of Shiloh, served as Sgt. and as 1st Lt., honorably discharged 22 May 1862. Occupation, printer and writer for Madison Courier. Children: 1) William Morton Grayson, B. 22 July 1865, D. 4 Sept. 1946, m. Bettie Turpin ___ * B. 21 July 1889, D. 14 March ___ 2) Frank E. Grayson, B. 8 June 1868, D. 1947 in Riverside, Calif. m. Loretta:3) George Edward Grayson, B. 5 August 1871, D. 21 January 1954 m. Mary Elizabeth _____.; 4) Lotta B. Grayson, B. 25 March 1874, D. 1913-1920 m. John Jones; 5) Howard Grayson, B. 15 Oct. 1877 m. Una May Tasker. 6) Laura H. Grayson B. 6/13/1862 D. _____m. Albert J. _____. The descendants of these families will be recounted in a later chapter. (Sources: Military records, National Archives; family tradition.*

Sarah A. Grayson, daughter of John Wren Grayson, B. 12 May 1832, D. 7 April 1896, married John W. McCoy, B. 25 Oct. 1827, D. 2 Nov. 1878. Their daughter, Jora E. McCoy, B. 18 June 1852, D. 2 Feb 1886, married James H. Smith. Jora McCoy is buried in the Springdale Cemetery, Madison, with "4 infant children." (Source: tombstone inscriptions.)

Rebecca J. Grayson, Born 1830 in Scott County, Kentucky, eldest child of John Wren Grayson, married William P. DeMent. A son, William DeMent, was born 1857, died 30 January 1860. (Item from Early Newspapers of Jefferson County, Ind., publ. by D.A.R., Ind. State Library, p. 162.)

Mary C. Grayson, * "Aunt Kate", youngest daughter of John Wren Grayson, born 1834, married Sewell Lloyd on 30 July , 1860. (Source: *ibid.* p. 162.) Died 1913-1920. *Issue: Son John, unmarried, 2nd son (name?) had 2 daughters, Goldie and Pearl in Indianapolis.

JOHN W. GRAYSON obituary, Madison Courier Feb 1 1882

"The well known and venerable Sexton of Springdale Cemetery, John Grayson, died at the home of his daughter Mrs. S. Lloyd on Broadway at ten o'clock last night. The bells of different Fire companies tolled long for the departed, and among the firemen the words passed from lip to lip "Pap Grayson has gone at last". In the death of John Grayson Madison lost a good citizen; a kind

neighbor; an honest faithful public officer and one who was regarded almost as a father to thousands in Madison from having performed kindly offerings for them in hours of sadness. He has been Sexton of Springdale Cemetery for many, many years. He was appointed to the place in 1842 and performed the duties for some years before a successor to him was chosen. In 1852 at the solicitation of Mr. C. Vail, has again accepted the position of Sexton and held the place with exception of one year intermission, from that time till his death. In the capacity of Sexton he placed the sod of the valley above fully five thousand people, and there is scarcely a family in Madison who has not had a representative interred by him; but his well worn spade is laid aside and another one has fromed for the "old Sexton" the windowless chamber where he will sleep and rest.

He was the oldest member of Western Fire Company #3 and in his days of vigor was truly a noble fireman. For many years he had been a messenger of that Company and was held in such high esteem by the members that they gave the fire engine the name by which the good old man was known among them "Pap Grayson."

His venerable wife survives but is in very feeble health. Their six children are living, the youngest being past forty years of age. They are Mrs. Rebecca Dement, Mrs. Sallie A. McCoy, Mrs. Mary C. Lloyd and Messrs Salathial, Andrew J. and John W.

The deceased was a constant member of the Methodist Church and Rev. L.G. Atkinson will officiate at this funeral which will take place a two o'clock from Trinity Church.

In compliance with a request of the deceased he will be interred in a black walnut coffin. (Copied from the Madison Courier, Feb. 1, 1882.)

An article concerning John Wren Grayson's death was published in the Madison Courier Feb. 14, 1882: "Western Fire Company: At a meeting in the Western Fire Company last night, the following changes among the officials were made: Mr. Samuel Moses was elected Messenger, and resigned his post as vice-president. Mr. Salathiel Grayson was chosen vice-president. Lon Holding resigned his position on the standing committee and Mr. Henry Mabrey was appointed to fill the vacancy.

"The company, also, by a unanimous vote, the members standing in silence, adopted appropriate resolutions of respect to the memory of the late John Grayson, who at the time of his death was the oldest No. 3 fireman. The President's desk and the engine "Pap Grayson" will continue draped in mourning for thirty days."

Only two weeks later his wife Permelia also passed away. At 6:00 am the morning of Feb. 14th, 1882, she died *"at the home of her son-in-law, Mr. Sewell Lloyd, on Broadway,---she had been a sufferer for about one year with debility and a pulmonary affliction, and her illness was rendered the more*

distressing by the illness and death of her life companion...yet she was patient in her sufferings, and calmly resigned the world to join her beloved husband."

Copied from the Madison Courier

From the Madison Courier

Madison; Feb. 14, 1882

Contributed by John and Lucille McGuire; Madison, Ind.

DEATH: Another Venerable Pioneer Gone

We are called upon to chronicle the death of another venerable pioneer--Mrs. Permelia Grayson, widow of the late John Grayson. Her death occurred at the home of her son in law, Mr. Sewell Loyd, on Broadway, at 6:00 o'clock this morning. She had been a sufferer for about one year with debility and a pulmonary affection, and her illness was rendered the more distressing by the illness and death of her life companion which occurred two weeks ago; yet she was patient in her sufferings, and calmly resigned the world to join her beloved husband who recently passed to the other shore.

They trod life's journey together for so many years, sharing with each other the joys and vicissitudes which fall the lot of man and wife and, at a ripe old age, after lives well spent, they sleep peacefully beside each other under the friendly sod of the valley.

Mrs. Grayson was born in Scott county, Kentucky, in 1806, and hence was in the 76th year of her age. Her maiden name was Cummins, she being a daughter of Major Andrew C. Cummins, who distinguished himself in the War of 1812. She was married to John Grayson in 1829, and removed with him to this state in 183_?. The biographical sketch of Mr. Grayson "The Old Sexton" published in these columns two weeks ago, forms, in a great measure the biography of the one whose death we are now recording.

The funeral will take place at 1 1/2 o'clock from the residence of Mrs. Loyd, on Broadway, Rev. L.G. Adkinson conducting the religious exercises.