

The Story of Isaiah S. Clifton

My Great-Grandfather 1835-1912

By RICIGS member Jan McKenzie

Isaiah S. Clifton was a jack of all trades, an explorer, miner, farmer, soldier, father, blacksmith, miller, inventor, investor. He dug for gold with the "Forty-niners" in the California gold rush, volunteered as a Union soldier in the Civil War, married three women, one of them twice, and fathered seven children over a period of twenty-two years. Isaiah was five feet ten inches tall, and weighed about 165 pounds. He had blue eyes, that sometimes looked hazel, dark hair and a fair complexion.



Isaiah Clifton 1835 - 1912; Co. A, 6th Missouri Regiment

Isaiah Clifton was born November 20, 1835 [Note 1] near the South Fork of the Green River in Casey County, Kentucky. He died on Aug 31, 1912 in Laclede County, Missouri while in his seventy-sixth year.[Note 2] He was buried on his own farm in Laclede County next to the grave of his first wife, Drucilla (Northrip) Clifton.[Note 3] Isaiah was named for his father, an ordained minister. Isaiah Clifton (Senior) was a son of Job Clifton and his first wife, whose name is unknown to me. Isaiah's mother, Sophia (Canaday) Clifton, was the daughter of John Canaday, a Revolutionary War soldier and his wife, Mary (Shearer) Canaday, both of Virginia. Isaiah was an intelligent and literate man.

Isaiah was the second son and the youngest child in a family of six children. The oldest was Patsy, born about 1816, married William E. Huff and moved to Morgan County, Missouri in the early 1840's. Second was Rachel B., who married James Madison Chilton, Sr., and remained in Casey County; several of her children moved to Missouri. The third child was Liberty, a lifelong companion of Isaiah's. Liberty married Mary Shelton in Missouri in 1842 and died there in 1874. Polly J., the fourth child, married Charles Thomas about 1845. After being left a widow, she married John N. Cravens. She died in 1902 in Casey County, Kentucky. The fifth child, Elizabeth Ann, married George Washington Riggins and died in Casey County, Kentucky in 1898.

Isaiah left home at the age of thirteen with his brother Liberty, and crossed the plains to California in an ox wagon during the 1849 "gold excitement".[Note 4] Although the brothers apparently did not strike it rich, they were both able to establish

substantial farms on their return. Liberty Clifton had lived in Missouri before going west, and upon their return from California, Isaiah settled in Missouri near Liberty rather than returning to Kentucky.

Isaiah and Liberty joined the Missouri Homeguard together in May, 1861 and on Aug 12, 1861, they went to Rolla, Missouri and enlisted in the Union Army; Co. A, 6th Regiment, Missouri Cavalry. Liberty contracted measles, which, complicated by exposure, turned into pneumonia and the illness left him unfit for soldiering. He was given a disability discharge on 23 Nov 1862. Isaiah served his three year term of enlistment, mostly in Missouri and Arkansas, was mustered out on Aug 11, 1864 and honorably discharged at St. Louis, Missouri on Aug 18, 1864.

On February 4, 1866, Isaiah married Drucilla Northrip, in Laclede County, Missouri. She was the daughter of a farmer, William Northrip, and his wife, Mahala, who lived nearby. The children of Isaiah and Drusilla T. Northrip Clifton were:

Mahala "Tiddie" born Nov 25, 1866, died Jan 15, 1930
Dora Elizabeth born Mar 13, 1868, died Mar 20, 1925
Sarah Jennie born Oct 29, 1870, died May 31, 1956
Mattie Flora born May 15, 1873, died circa 1920
ArDell "Della" born Dec 23, 1874, died 1968

Drusilla Clifton died on October 10, 1884. She is buried on the farm where they lived in what is known as the 'Clifton Cemetery'.

On October 31, 1885, Isaiah married a twice-widowed woman named Martha Jane (Gum) Creekmore Archer. They had two children:

Fred Lee born Jul 19, 1886, died May 27, 1977
Ida Lorna born Aug 27, 1888, died Sep 9, 1980

Isaiah and Martha must have had a stormy relationship, as they were divorced in Laclede County, MO in 1890, remarried in Laclede County, Missouri on Mar 25, 1892, and divorced again for the final time in February 1911.

On March 8, 1911, Isaiah married another widow, Mary (Darrow) Davis who was twenty years his junior. Isaiah died less than a year and a half after this marriage, on August 31, 1912, at the age of 76.

NOTES:

Note 1 Isaiah Clifton's Civil War Pension Record.

Note 2 Laclede County, Missouri death certificate number 3641.

Note 3 Laclede County Rural Cemeteries, Volume II.

Note 4 The Lebanon Rustic. Thursday, September 5, 1912, page 1.

OBITUARY OF ISAIAH S. CLIFTON

THE LEBANON RUSTIC

Lebanon, Missouri, Thursday, September 5, 1912; Page 1.

Isaiah Clifton Dead

Isaiah Clifton died at his home near Sleeper last Saturday, aged 76 years. Mr. Clifton was one of the old citizens and was well known in the county, having resided here for many years. He served in the Federal army during the civil war.

Funeral services were held Sunday at the church in Sleeper and were conducted by Rev. Harald. A large number of neighbors and friends were present to show their last mark of respect to one they had known for many years. Interment was in the Clifton graveyard.

Isaiah Clifton was born in Kentucky, November 2, 1836. He, with his brother, Liberty Clifton, came to Missouri when he was only 13 years old. He crossed the plains to California in an ox wagon during the gold excitement.

He returned to Missouri and in 1865 was married to Drucilla Northrip. Of the seven children born to them four survive. She died in 1884, and in 1886 Mr. Clifton was married to Martha Archer. To them two children were born, both of whom are living.

On March 8, 1911, he was married to Mrs. Mary Davis, who survives him. Mr. Clifton united with the Christian church in 1888 and has been a member of this church ever since. His last work was soliciting members to organize a church at Sleeper.

As a neighbor and friend he had no equal and he never turned the needy away. During his last illness he suffered intensely, but uncomplainingly.

--- CORRECTIONS TO OBITUARY:

Isaiah Clifton was born Nov 20, 1835 according to his own statement in his in his Civil War Pension file.

Isaiah married Drucilla T. Northrip Feb 4, 1866.

Isaiah married Martha Jane [Gum] (Creekmore) Archer Oct 31, 1885.

Isaiah and Martha Jane were divorced in 1890 according to his own statement in his Civil War Pension file.

Isaiah and Martha Jane [Gum] (Creekmore) (Archer) Clifton were married again on in on Mar 25, 1892.

Isaiah and Martha Jane were divorced again Feb 11, 1911.

Isaiah married Mary J. [Darrow] Davis Mar 8, 1911.