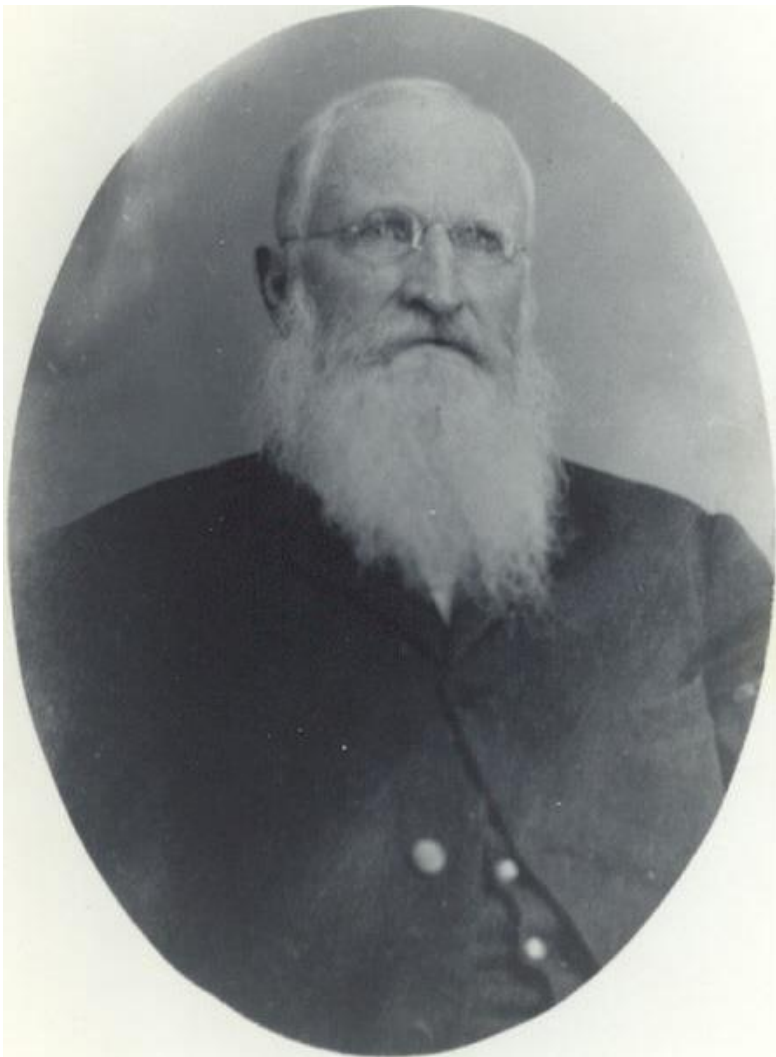


# Ferguson (Fergason), John Hunter

Department Commander 1928

Miller Co. Last Soldier

(25 Dec 1838 – 20 Jan 1940) of Iberia. 3rd Mo Cav Co M.



## JOHN FERGUSON- IBERIA'S GRAND OLD GENTLEMAN

Squire John Ferguson was one of most colorful figures in Iberia's past history. He lived to the advanced age of 101 years and was a noted and respected citizen of the Iberia community.

John Ferguson was born on Christmas Day in 1838 in the small village of Dumfries, Scotland. [See Next

Article for Issues Regarding His Birthdate – ed.] As a small

boy, age eight, he started working as an apprentice to local village shoemaker. He did not enjoy this type of work at all, so he quit and became an apprentice painter. He worked as a painter's apprentice for the next few years until he reached the age of 14 years learning this skillful trade. When he was six years old he began his schooling. These Scottish children were taught from the Bible and hardly anything else. At that time in history, the churches and the school of Scotland were under the control of the government.

When John was 14 years old, his father decided to bring his family to America. They left Dumfries in 1852, going overland to Liverpool, England, and departing Liverpool in September 1852. William Ferguson & his wife, Isabella Hunter Ferguson, their son John, and daughters Martha & Elizabeth began their long sea journey across the Atlantic. Unfortunately John's father did not live to see the shores of his new homeland in America. He died on board ship and was buried with the usual procedure at sea. He was sewn in a canvas bag with a large piece of lead at his feet, lowered over the side of the ship and after a brief funeral service, was lowered into his watery grave. Two other immigrants also died on the same ocean voyage before the ship harbored in New Orleans in October of 1852. The name of the ship in which the family made their journey across the Atlantic was *Colonel Cutts*.

Isabella Hunter Ferguson and her three children did not stay in New Orleans very long. They boarded a boat called "The Sovereign of Pittsburg" and went up the Mississippi River, arriving in St. Louis the latter part of October 1852.

Isabella had a sister and brother-in-law, the William Dunlaps, living in St. Louis so they went to the home of the Dunlaps and lived with them for awhile. William Dunlap was Mississippi River boatman and he hired John to work for him on the river. He worked there for about nine years, until the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861.

John Ferguson experienced some exciting times on the Mississippi and was a great story teller. Several incidents happened in his young life that would make a great plot for an adventure story.

During the war he was a witness to most of the Camp Jackson skirmish which took place near St. Louis. He said One time in an interview that "If had not been for the loyal German regiments, I believe St. Louis would have been captured by General Jackson and his Confederate forces.

John Ferguson drifted into Miller County in September 1861, but first stopped in Maries County where he had relatives living. I believe they were some of his mother's Hunter kinfolks. He moved westward to Miller County and began working on a farm about six miles west of Iberia. In June 1862, John married Dorcas Canzada Shelton, daughter of Thomas & Elizabeth Shelton, who had come to the Big Richwoods from McMinn County, Tennessee. John & Dorcas were married by Rev. Abraham Castleman, who was captain of a Confederate troop during the war. In order to get Rev. Castleman to come and marry them, John had to ride 15 or 20 miles to get him and then accompany him back home because Rev. Castleman

was afraid of the "bushwackers" roaming the area who might be seeking him out.

During the war, John joined Colonel McClurg's Osage Regiment at Linn Creek, Camden County, and later he enlisted in regular service in Company M 3rd Missouri Cavalry



Volunteers where he served with the Union Army until the close of the war. It is interesting to note that his wife's relatives were from the South and her uncle, William Rankin Wright, was a lieutenant in the Confederate Army in Miller County. This was typical of many families that were torn apart during this terrible time in American history.

### **John and Dorcas Shelton Ferguson**

Squire John and  
Dorcas (Shelton)

Ferguson were parents of 14 children, two of them dying

in infancy. Those who survived to adulthood were: William, Charles, Fred, George, Edward, Jack, Harry, Frank, Laura, Belle, Elizabeth and Martha.

After his discharge in New Orleans in 1864, Squire John and his family made Miller County their permanent home. Over the next 74 years, John was a prominent man in the Iberia area. For many years he was post commander of Miles Carroll Post 111 of the Grand Army of the Republic in Iberia and was instrumental in keeping the Post in active service. He very seldom missed one of the encampments, both state & national, and over the years he filled most all stations in the highly honored organization...On May 16, 1928 he was



elected Department Commander of the G.A.R. for the state of Missouri at its 47th annual encampment held in Springfield.



Comrade John Ferguson  
One Hundred Years Old  
Christmas Day, 1938



Greetings~

Celebrating the  
One Hundredth Birthday of

John Ferguson

at Iberia, Missouri

December 25, 1938



You are cordially invited to attend.

THE FERGUSON FAMILY.

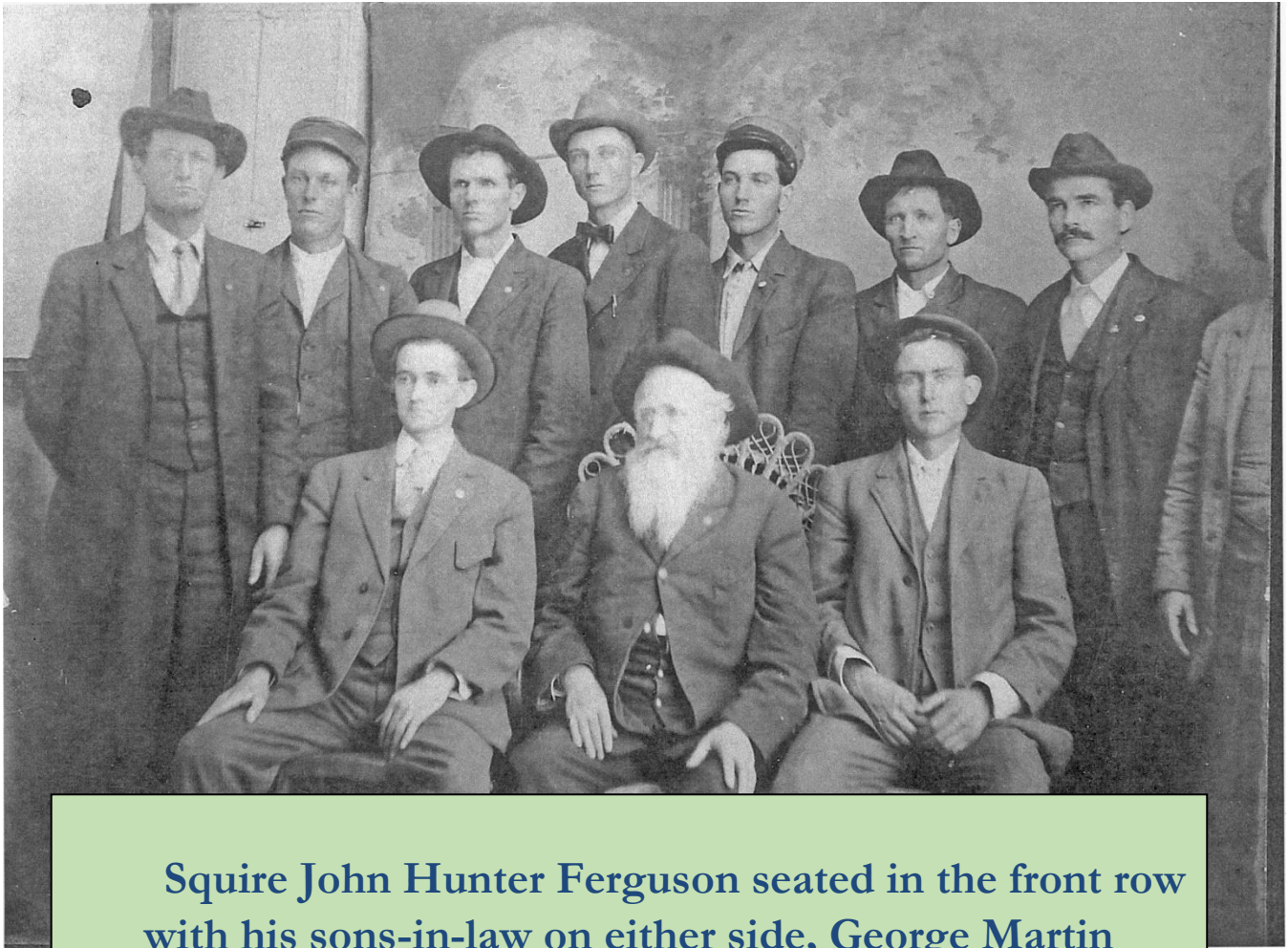
John was active in the religious, political and public affairs of Miller County and was justice of the peace at Iberia for more than 50 years. In 1939, Iberia lost one of her most remarkable and unforgettable citizens...Captain John Ferguson, also called "Squire". He had reached his 101st year. There are many folks today who remember him so vividly and are still reminiscence of those long-ago days when he could be seen on the streets of Iberia with his snow-white hair and long, white beard, much like a patriarch of old. There are many



**Family reunion showing his children and grandchildren.**

descendants of Squire John Ferguson who still live in central Missouri in the counties of Miller, Pulaski and Camden as well as those who have moved all over America.

**Probable last soldier of Miller Co. He died 20 Jan 1940.**



Squire John Hunter Ferguson seated in the front row with his sons-in-law on either side, George Martin (Laura) (L) and Willie Mace (Martha) (R). Back row L-R: Fred Ferguson, George Arnold (Isabelle), John Richard "Jack" Ferguson, Frank Ferguson, Harry Ferguson, William T. Ferguson, George Ferguson. Cut off-Edmund Scott Ferguson. Not present-Charles D. Ferguson and Grand Williams (Elizabeth)





## **JOHN HUNTER FERGUSON – LARGER THAN LIFE**

**By Nancy Arnold  
Thompson**

-used with permission-

When my great-grandfather, John Hunter Ferguson celebrated his 100th birthday in December 1938, I was only a few weeks old and attended his birthday party. There was a huge celebration at the old GAR hall in Iberia; friends and relatives came from all over and a special

birthday cake was sent by relatives still living in Scotland.

Squire John, as he was known, loved to tell stories about the past and had a knack for getting his name and his photograph in the newspaper. Many interviews and articles have been written describing his journey from Scotland as a young lad, the hardships he faced growing up, his work aboard steamboats on the great rivers, his role in the Civil War...he was a very colorful man and a shameless self-promoter.

When I first started compiling my family genealogy, I took as gospel all the written accounts of his life that I found in

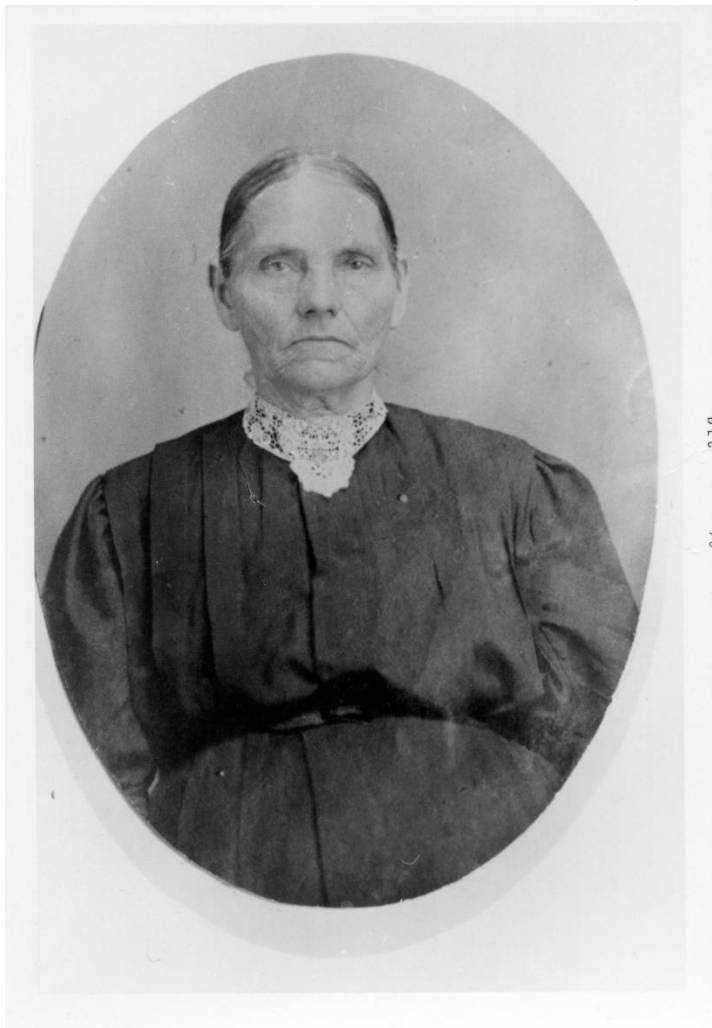
various newspapers and publications. Closer inspection of public records, however, suggests there may have been errors in some of the generally accepted dates, and I feel compelled to set the record straight.

His birth date has been given as 25 December 1838. However the June 6, 1841 Census in Warrenhill Hamlet, Torthorwald Parish, Dumfriesshire, Scotland lists John's age as 5 months which would make his likely birth date December 25, 1840. In 1851 the family had moved to Mulligans Close in Maxwelltown, Dumfries and census taken there on March 30, 1851, lists his age as 10, again putting John's birth year as 1840. In the 1860 U.S. Census, taken in August of that year, John is living with his aunt and uncle, William and Elizabeth Dunlap, in St. Louis, Missouri. His age is given as 19 years and his occupation is the same as his uncle's, "Riverman".

There was another revealing piece of information in the Scottish census records. John's parents, William and Isabella Hunter Fergusson had a daughter named Mary who, according to census records, was born in 1848. She apparently died before 1855, because there is no record of her with the family after that date.

The second disputed date was the year of the family's arrival in this country. All accounts tell how the family boarded the Colonel Cutts in Liverpool and arrived in New Orleans in September or October 1852. John's father, William, died on the journey and was buried at sea. An examination of the ship's records reveals that the Colonel Cutts arrived in New Orleans on

3 December 1855 and William Furgueson's death aboard ship was recorded as November 20, 1855.



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Isabella Ferguson and her three young children, John age 15, Elizabeth 12 and Martha 2, came up the Mississippi River to St. Louis to the home of Isabella's sister, Elisabeth and her husband William Dunlop (written as Dunlap in the U.S.). In those days, if widowed women could show no visible means of support, their children were made wards of the court. This is probably why Elizabeth was indentured to a German family in St. Louis and John was left in the care of his

uncle William Dunlap who taught him the riverboat trade. Isabella then took the baby, Martha, and moved to Maries County, Missouri where she lived with her father, John Hunter, who had immigrated to this country at an earlier date. Isabella is listed as his housekeeper in the 1860 census.

Perhaps this is the time when John's birth date became clouded. Since he was not of age, he would have been made a ward of the courts. Declaring his age as 17 would give him

some protection and make it easier to get a better job with better wages. John is known to have complained in later years that his uncle, who apparently was supposed to be holding his wages for him, never turned them over and cheated John out of his money.

N. B.—Every item of information should be carefully supplied. AGE should be stated EXACTLY. PHYSICIANS should state CAUSE OF DEATH in plain terms, so that it may be properly classified. Exact statement of OCCUPATION is very important.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
 BUREAU OF THE CENSUS  
**FILED FEB 21 1940**  
 Missouri STATE BOARD OF HEALTH  
**STANDARD CERTIFICATE OF DEATH**  
 State File No. 3090  
 Registration District No. 582 Primary Registration District No. 4531 Registrar's No. \_\_\_\_\_

<b>1. PLACE OF DEATH:</b> (a) County <u>Miller</u> (b) City or town <u>Iberia, Mo</u> (c) Name of hospital or institution _____ (If not in hospital or institution, write street number or location) <u>2</u> (d) Length of stay: In hospital or institution _____ (Specify whether years, months or days) In this community <u>Home born = 79 years</u>				<b>2. USUAL RESIDENCE OF DECEASED:</b> (a) State <u>Missouri</u> (b) County <u>Miller</u> (c) City or town <u>Iberia</u> (If outside city or town limits, write "RURAL") _____ (d) Street No. _____ (If rural, give location) _____ (e) If foreign born, how long in U. S. A.? <u>87</u> years			
<b>3. (a) PRINT FULL NAME</b> <u>JOHN FERGUSON</u> (b) If veteran, name war <u>Civil war</u> (c) Social Security No. _____				<b>MEDICAL CERTIFICATION</b>			
4. Sex <u>Male</u> 5. Color or race <u>White</u>		6. (a) Single, widowed, married, divorced <u>Widowed</u>		<b>20. DATE OF DEATH:</b> Month <u>Jan</u> day <u>20</u> year <u>1940</u> hour <u>9</u> minute <u>0</u> A. M.			
6. (b) Name of husband or wife <u>Anna C. Shelton Ferguson</u>		6. (c) Age of husband or wife if alive _____ years		<b>21. I hereby certify that I attended the deceased from</b> <u>1-12-40</u> _____, 19____, to <u>1-20</u> , 19 <u>40</u> that I last saw him alive on <u>1-20</u> , 19 <u>40</u> and that death occurred on the date and hour stated above.			
7. Birth date of deceased <u>Dec-25-1838</u> (Month) (Day) (Year)		Immediate cause of death <u>Influenza</u>		Duration _____			
<b>8. AGE:</b> Years <u>101</u> Months _____ Days <u>25</u> If less than one day _____ hr. _____ min.		9. Birthplace <u>Dumfries Scotland</u> (City, town, or county) (State or foreign country)		Due to <u>Branches - pneumonia</u>			
<b>10. Usual occupation</b> <u>Justice of Peace - Retired 1938</u>		<b>11. Industry or business</b> _____		Due to _____			
<b>MOTHER FATHER</b>		<b>12. Name</b> <u>William Ferguson</u>		Other conditions _____ (Include pregnancy within 3 months of death) <u>HW</u>			
<b>13. Birthplace</b> <u>Maxwellton Scotland</u> (City, town, or county) (State or foreign country)		<b>14. Maiden name</b> <u>Elizabeth Hunter</u>		<b>PHYSICIAN</b> _____			
<b>15. Birthplace</b> <u>Dumfries Scotland</u> (City, town, or county) (State or foreign country)		<b>16. (a) Informant's own signature</b> <u>J.C. Ferguson</u>		Major findings: _____ Of operations _____			
<b>(b) Address</b> <u>Iberia, Mo</u>		<b>17. (a) Burial, cremation, or removal</b> <u>Burial</u> (b) Date thereof <u>Jan 21-1940</u> (Month) (Day) (Year)		Of autopsy _____			
<b>(c) Place: burial or cremation</b> <u>Madden Cem - Iberia, Mo</u>		<b>18. (a) Signature of funeral director</b> <u>E.L. Casey</u>		<b>22. If death was due to external causes, fill in the following:</b>			
<b>(b) Address</b> <u>Iberia, Mo</u>		<b>19. (a) Date received local registrar</b> <u>Feb 8-1940</u> (b) Registrar's signature <u>M.M. Dowd</u>		(a) Accident, suicide, or homicide (specify) _____ (b) Date of occurrence _____ (c) Where did injury occur? _____ (City or town) (County) (State) (d) Did injury occur in or about home, on farm, in industrial place, in public place? _____			
<b>23. Signature</b> <u>U. A. Duncan</u> (M. D. or other) _____		<b>23. Signature</b> _____ (M. D. or other) _____		While at work? _____ (Specify type of place) (e) Means of injury _____			
<b>Address</b> <u>Iberia, Mo</u>		<b>Date signed</b> _____		<b>Underline the cause to which death should be charged statistically</b>			

(Licensed Embalmer's Statement on Reverse Side)

There has always been some confusion as to where the youngest child, Martha was born. It was known that her birth date was circa 1852-1853 and if the immigration year of 1852 were true, she would have been born in this country. However,

the 1860 census records for Maries County, Missouri lists Isabella Furgerson and her daughter, Martha, living with Isabella's father, John Hunter; all are listed as being born in Scotland. This further confirms 1855 as the year the family immigrated.

At any rate, the 1860 Census has John Ferguson, age 19, "Riverman" living in St. Louis with his uncle William Dunlap. It is said he came to Miller County in 1861, going first to Maries County to visit family. Records show John Married Dorcas Cansada Shelton 4 June 1862 in Miller County, Missouri and fourteen children were born of this union. They raised their family in the Madden area and later moved to a house in town.

The stories and newspaper accounts still remain fascinating and entertaining reading...some of the dates just need to be changed.