

# John L. Ferguson 1928



## 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. As a small boy, age eight, he started working as an apprentice to a 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.

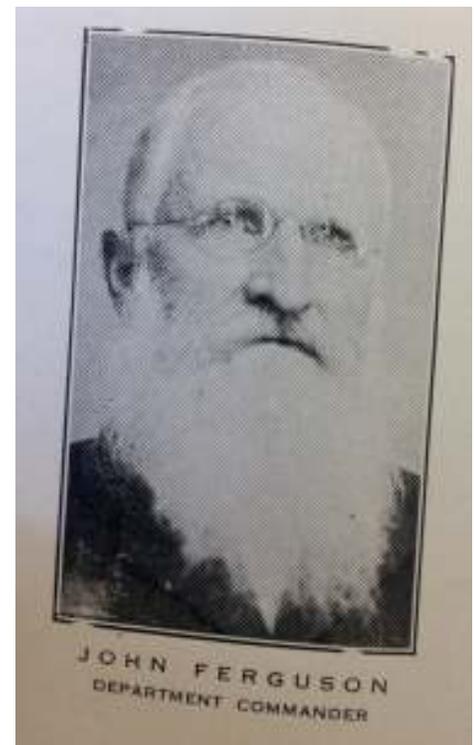
#### John and Dorcas Shelton Ferguson

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.

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 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.