

## Up From Dixie

By JAMES L. SMALL

In a disused shed on some LaPorte county farm there might, perhaps, be found today a rusty, homemade iron poker with a rudely fashioned hook at one end, used in pioneer days to stir up the smoldering embers in the open fireplace of an Indiana homestead. Were it to be discovered, it would be treasured by members of the Small family, for it would serve as the last link connecting their lives with the Dixie from which their people came over a hundred years ago—as symbolic, in its way, as the plow in *The Covered Wagon*. That poker was well remembered by the late O. L. Small, who told the writer about it and of how it was wrought from a fragment of the wagon which conveyed the family from their home in the South to their newer one above the Ohio river.

Little is known concerning the origin of the Smalls.<sup>1</sup> It is probable that the first members of the American branch of the family came from England (or possibly from Scotland) in colonial times. In the early days of the nineteenth century, George Small, with his wife and family, in company with some of their neighbors, sold out and left their homes in North Carolina. Those homes were located in the northeastern part of North Carolina in Pasquotank County.<sup>2</sup> In the case of the Smalls there is a well established tradition that one of their principal reasons for migrating was a conscientious objection to slaveholding.

The emigrants made their toilsome way northward and westward, crossed the Ohio and took up land on the spot where the flourishing city of Richmond, Indiana, stands today. Later

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<sup>1</sup> This brief treatment of the Small family is a revision of the account which was published in 1928 as a small pamphlet of ten pages. The writer is the son of James Forester Small and Susanna Pratt Small. My father was a brother of the O. L. Small ("Uncle Dick" Small) mentioned in the paper. Most of this information presented was gathered from my Uncle O. L. Small when I visited him in his Indiana home for the last time in June, 1925. He was born in 1844 and died in 1928. His wife Alice Gardner Small was born in 1847 and died in 1928. The mother of O. L. Small was a pious Methodist, who named him after two divines of that faith whom she respected highly. Since one was the Rev. Orange and the other the Rev. Lemon, the boy was christened Orange Lemon Small. He disliked the name so much that he refused to use more than the initials, and chose for himself the name "Dick". Very few ever knew what the initials "O" and "L" stood for.

<sup>2</sup> It was the tradition in both the Small and Osborn families until recently that the family of George Small migrated to Indiana from some part of South Carolina near the North Carolina border. This tradition was embodied in my pamphlet of 1928. It was Mr. B. F. Osborn of Rippey, Iowa, whose investigations established the fact that the Small family lived in Pasquotank County, North Carolina. The U. S. census of 1790, shows the Small family as residing there and not in South Carolina. Mr. B. F. Osborn is a grandson of Rachel Small Osborn, daughter of John Small and grand-daughter of George Small.

they moved to Waynetown, near Crawfordsville. Before the removal to Waynetown, however, John, son of George Small, met, courted and married Mary Lennington, whose people (Pennsylvanians) had descended the Allegheny and Ohio rivers on flatboats, settling first in Clark County, Indiana, and then near the Smalls on the site of the present Richmond.

John and Mary Lennington Small did not go with the rest of their relatives to Waynetown, but with their growing family of little children set out for the extreme northern part of the state, where, on the shore of Lake Michigan, a village was beginning to take shape, now the municipality of Michigan City. Here one Col. Elston was platting streets and building lots and John Small helped him in the work. That was about 1832 or 1833. In 1835 the young couple, both of whom had come from a race of farmers, decided to take up land. They bought from a squatter (afterwards obtaining title from the government) a tract of 120 acres in Clinton township, three miles south of Westville. There the family of eleven children, some of whom were born after removal to this farm, grew up and there on October 28, 1851, John Small died of typhoid fever, with the ravages of which the folk of that day were only too familiar.

Meanwhile Phineas, John Small's brother, had been with him on the farm. He married Mary Pinney, whose parents had moved to Indiana from Virginia. After John's death the old home place was purchased by this brother and it is today in the possession of Eudorus ("Dode") Reynolds, a grandson of Phineas and Mary Pinney Small.

Names and dates are only useful as sign-posts. The interesting scene, the colorful incident—everything, in short, that has to do with the places where those we love and from whom we are descended have lived and died—must be limned for us by one who knows. Such a one was O. L. Small, ninth child of John and Mary Lennington Small. One of his sisters died a few months before his father, another a few months after. Most of those that remained wandered far afield. The mother died on March 27, 1874, in Girard, Kansas, whence several of her children had removed. Two of the brothers died in Illinois, one in Indiana, one in Texas, one in California and one in New Orleans. A sister died in Nebraska and another sister in Colorado. When, on September 12, 1928, "Uncle Dick" (O. L. Small) breathed his last, he had been for more than three

years the sole survivor of his generation. Save for several business and pleasure trips that had taken him to the far west and on one occasion to Europe, his entire life had been spent within a short distance of his birthplace.

Very few indeed of the Smalls have become wealthy or distinguished. Most of us are still "to fortune and to fame unknown." But whether prosperous or otherwise we have liked to turn back to Uncle Dick and Aunt Alice (Alice Gardner Small, the lovable and remarkable woman to whom he was married in 1865 and who preceded him in death by five years). We knew that they were waiting for us with the word of welcome and the smile of cheer. Surrounded by his children, grand-children and great grand-children, Uncle Dick was a patriarch, lacking the patriarch's suggestion of extreme age. To hear him recount the events of a time sixty or seventy years earlier was to have painted for one a picture of northern Indiana, and especially of LaPorte county, beginnings.

A good deal of this reminiscence quite naturally clustered around the old Small place, now occupied, as has already been noted, by a grand-nephew of John Small. Ninety years is a long time and about all there is left on the original farm to identify it with the past are three giant burr-oaks. They must be all of one hundred fifty years old, for they were already of ample size when Dick Small and his brothers, as barefoot boys, used to bask in their welcome shade. The old log cabin home eventually became a smokehouse and was succeeded by a good sized frame house, which, in its turn, gave place to another dwelling. The second house was moved to Westville, where for some time it was occupied by the local paper, the *Westville Indicator*. O. L. Small was the first and his son, Edmund Gardner Small, the last of the family to be born in that building.

The Indian mounds on the Reynolds farm, once of considerable size, can scarcely be traced now. Down in a remote corner there might have been found, as late as the summer of 1925, a few plants of the old fashioned tansy. In all probability they were descendants of seed sown by "Uncle Andy" and "Aunt Margaret." O. L. Small was the last one left who had known this quaint negro couple. "Aunt Margaret," he said in his quiet, humorous way, "used to spank us, just like Mother". The negroes had their own little cabin on the Small place. How

they came to Indiana is a matter of conjecture. Later on "Uncle Andy" went south with a trader, and as he never returned the belief arose that he had been sold into slavery. His wife went to Liberia with some missionaries to work among her race. Today, beyond a doubt, the bones of good old "Aunt Margaret" are resting in a grave somewhere in Africa.

Interesting also was Uncle Dick's description of the prairie's fertility in those early days. There was almost no clearing to be done and the soil that the pioneer's plow turned up was rich and virgin. Nor was social life without its amenities. The settlers were ambitious for their children and, so we were informed by Uncle Dick that his brother, Abram Lennington Small, eldest son in the family and known in later years as "Doc" or "Uncle Doc", was Westville's first school teacher. His son, Len Small has twice served as governor of Illinois.

John Small's sister, Rachel, married Jonathan Osborn, a relationship that is perpetuated in the Small-Osborn reunions, held annually. Jane Lennington, sister of Mary Lennington Small, married Jonathan Williams. The Williamses were Quakers and even in his last years Uncle Dick was wont to smile at the recollections of his boyhood visits at "Quakerdom", as the settlement was called, and of his attendance at "Quaker meeting". His younger brother Will used to recall the greeting of Uncle Jonathan Williams: "Make thyself at home, Willie. Thou art in thy uncle's house."

And so these tender memories come to us from out the past. The writer would have much preferred that someone more competent than he undertake the task of setting them down. But no one offered. So he has fashioned as best he could, and in the fashioning he has been made happy."

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\* The John Small family record is here given from a copy reproduced on May 4, 1925, from an older copy made on April 25, 1875, by my Uncle Wiley Small for another of my uncles, William Murray Small, from the original entries.

John Small [son of George Small]: Born May 7th, 1796. Married Nov. 2nd, 1826 to Mary Lennington, born Jan. 14th, 1806.

BIRTHS (Children of John and Mary Lennington Small)

Sarah Jane Small: Born Oct. 25th, 1828.

Abram Lennington Small: Born Sept. 5th, 1830.

Wiley Small: Born August 17th, 1832.

Phineas M. Small: Born August 8th, 1834.

Eliza Ann Small: Born Sept. 21st, 1836.

John C. Small: Born October 7th, 1838.

Mary Melissa Small: Born October 12th, 1840.

James Forester Small (father of the writer): Born June 4th, 1842.

O. L. Small ["Uncle Dick"]: Born April 22nd, 1844.

Harriet Susanna Small: Born Oct. 25th, 1846.

William Murray Small: Born April 22nd, 1849.