

A brief History of the John H and Sarah A. Milhon Brill's family, written by James H. Brill, their eldest son.

This family emigrated from Virginia to Indiana in 1852 and from Indiana to Missouri in 1867.

Copied from original by Mary Frances Crouch Baker, March 13, 1954. Mary Baker lives in Odon, Indiana. Her husband has a hardware store there. Mary is a great grand daughter of John H. and Sarah Anne (Milhon) Brill

CHAPTER I

John Harrison Brill was born 1819 in Frederic County, Virginia, son of Henry and Rachael Cooper Brill (his grandmother Cooper's maiden name was Richard, an old English family of distinction with a record of nearly 500 years) Henry Brill's father's name was Hermon. They were Dutch and of Lutheran faith. The land on which they lived was ceded by England to Lord Fairfax and the first survey was made by George Washington. John H. received his education like other boys of that day and place, when a man drove a team of six horses to a freight wagon hauling goods from Harper's Ferry, Virginia to Knoxville, Tenn.

Sarah Ann Milhon was born near Winchester, Virginia in 1821, daughter of Henry and Sarah Whetzel Milhon. They were Pennsylvania Dutch. Her father was a local preacher of the South M. E. Church. He was a soldier of 1812. Sarah Ann received her education as allotted to girls at that time and place.

CHAPTER II

John H. Brill and Sarah Ann Milhon were married in 1843. They moved to a farm on Timber Ridge. After nine years of hard work and poor crops an additional responsibility of six children was added. The outlook for support was dark. Father time had caught the advice of Horace Greely -- "Go West Young Man." Mother felt to leave Father and Mother, kin and friends was close to her heart, but greater than all else was her love for her family.

CHAPTER III

Father's uncle, Amos Marker, a man of some means and vision. He was a miller by trade and lived only a few miles from us. He told father he was going to move to Illinois and wanted our family to go with them.

Father said, "I am too poor to make the trip." Uncle said, "I will help you and the longer you put it off the worse it will be." After studying the matter it was agreed to start west, March 1, 1852. Only two or three months remained to make ready to start. Disposing of our plunder (we had but little) and to dispose that to the best advantage, was a problem. The covered wagon was a big thing. To carry eight passengers, clothes, bedding, cooking

utensils, then visiting, going and coming of kin. One of Mother's brothers and his wife came from Ohio to see us. Uncle had his silver case watch in a buckskin fob to protect the silver case. The caravan consisted of two covered wagons, one buggy, fifty-five horses, six adults and seven children - - - thirteen in all. The day to start was at hand and good-bye must be said.

We reached Cumberland, Maryland in due time. The road west was called the National road; and improved to Belleville, Indiana. This road is now called 40 or the Lincoln Highway. The road bed was either plank or stone, crushed. This road was built by the government extending from Cumberland, Maryland, to St. Louis, Missouri. It was helpful to hundreds of thousands to reach a new home. While crossing the mountains we found snow storms and when we put up at a tavern simply meant to rent two vacant rooms and a place to cook. Imagine Mother getting supper for eight persons, six of them helpless, so dirty, so tired, cold, sleepy and hungry. Supper over, the beds were spread on the naked floor. We kids were soon in bed and sound asleep. Mother planned for breakfast. Now we went to bed such as it was, tired, yes, very tired, but she couldn't go to sleep until she asked guidance from Him that is the Light of the World. In her dreams she may have smiled "Lead Kindly Light Amid the Encircling Gloom, Lead Thou Me On."

The things I most remember along the road were many movers returning from the west and saying that it was no good, and they looked like they were no good. They would ask, "Where are youins going?" We said "Illinois." They would say, "Don't go thar, the milsick (should be "milk sick") will kill youins, or don't go to Indiana the agee will git you."

The large white barns with green shutters as we passed through the state of Pennsylvania is to be remembered. The wire suspension bridge across the Ohio River at Wheeling, W. Va. The "Y" bridge at Zanesville, Ohio and the beautiful city of Dayton, Ohio. When within 15 miles of Indianapolis was a link of the worst mud road we ever saw. Five miles a day was all we could make. Then we had to wash horses and harness, clean the mud off those that walked, and nearly all walked to lighten the wagons. Indianapolis was not very attractive. I saw a cook stove for the first time. Two holes over a fire-box, then an offset with two holes. (Mother didn't get a cook stove for two years.

CHAPTER IV

On Saturday evening we stopped at a tavern about two miles east of Belleville and a mile from Cartersburg, feeling blue indeed. Little hope of getting to Illinois for fifty or sixty days. Empty purse called for a consultation and in two days, each family rented a house and ground to garden and farm crops. The crops grew fine and Father and Mother were much encouraged. Father bought a good milk cow and that helped. He also found work when out of his crop. Hauling on the Danville and Cartersburg gravel road helped us much.

We found good neighbors. There was a District school near. In early autumn the children of age started. Father and Mother were pleased to have better schools than what we left in Virginia. It was agreed to try Indiana another year and if favorable to stay in Indiana. During the next summer things looked bright. Uncle bought a water flour mill on McCrackens Creek about two miles from Center Valley. Mud roads cost Illinois thirteen citizens and Indiana gained a like number. The destiny of our family changed. It might have been better, it might have been worse.

CHAPTER V

In 1854 we moved to Bales sawmill on McCrackens Creek at Joppa or three miles northwest of Mooresville, Morgan County. The improvements consisted of a three room house, a smoke house, a good well of water, and ten acres of rich bottom black farm land. I was the principal worker on the farm. Father operated the saw mill, when the water was not too low. In spite of some drawbacks to the mill, we made money. We school children tramped nearly two miles to Hopewell school house. We found good neighbors. The girls were quite a little long help to Mother. Salem M. E. Church was about three miles west of us. Father and Mother took fellowship and the children started to Sunday school. Sometimes in the big wagon, and sometimes two or three of the children on a horse with a sheepskin for a saddle. About this time I first saw a reaper and mower, some years later a binder, cook stove and sewing machine.

Children coming to the family every two years or less, a larger farm and house was imperative. In 1858 father bought 40 acres a mile east of Uncle William Brill's and less than a mile from the Salem Church and school house.

More of us were able to work. Things were fairly well for the next three years. The farm debt was reduced. Father was appointed a church steward. This was the last straw to the camel, down in Virginia hospitality. When six or seven children started to school they had to be clothed, shod, books, etc., it isn't any wonder the family purse was empty. The family had necessities, only under-shirts and drawers were luxuries. A minister visiting at our house, getting out of bed, a little sister was present and could not understand the situation and said, "You are putting on your tuther britches."

We are in the midst of the Civil War. Friendships and churches torn asunder, sorrow came to nearly every home. Octavia's husband died in the service. The necessities of life went sky high. In 1864 we bought 10 acres more land, and to try to stem the growing indebtedness, but it could not be done. The free hospitality must continue. In January 1865, I went to work for my self. Father and Mother were not very well, and discouraged. Thirteen children had been born. Twelve living.

Billy a bright-eyed boy was cut off by spotted fever with an illness of twenty-four hours and final sleep in the old Salem church yard. The sore need for larger support for the family was much needed.

About this time some fit friends in Chariton County Missouri sent word that land was rich and cheap. Uncle Amos Marker and Father went to Missouri to see for themselves. They too were misled or they would never have made the selection they did. The lure of the swift muddy waters of the Missouri and the lazy current of the Chariton sounded well in poetry only. The spring of 1867 the farm was sold at public sale to dispose of all stuff that could not be taken west. The family had much tiresome labor to do. Nobody got lonesome that summer. Our family was now increased by three sons-in-law. Uncle John Bayliss's family called often, then the large number of real friends, and cousins. Mother and the girls were kept busy cooking and washing. Little time was had for privacy and domestic affairs. We were all glad when this ordeal was over. The time was near to start. Ten was the number to go. Four of us to stay in Indiana. All the children met to say good-bye to one another, some of us never to meet again. In parting with Mother was the most trying of all. The throat choke, the shower of tears still remains a precious memory.

Ten of the children married -- no divorces. Mother had 13 children. I was born on the 13th. The families moving from Virginia numbered thirteen Johan and I are all that are left of the last thirteen.

James H. Brill

William Thomas Brill was born August 30, 1870 at Center Valley, Liberty Township, Hendricks County, the youngest of six children born to William Thomas and Jeanette Mathew Brill. The family lived on a farm and as each child reached maturity left to follow his chosen profession.

The oldest son, George Woodward Brill became a most successful and prominent lawyer in Danville and served as Judge of Hendricks County Circuit Court, ~~from~~ ~~to~~ .

The second son, John R. Brill also followed the legal profession establishing a successful and well known firm in Evansville, Ind.

The oldest girl, Rachel Jeannette married Frank Sparks and spent her life in the vicinity of Clayton, Indiana.

The second daughter, Bess Virginia lived most of her life in Danville.

William Thomas, the youngest, chose the Undertaking profession, as called in those days. After studying in Indianapolis he came to Danville and established himself as an Undertaker. He gained the reputation of being the most efficient person in that calling in the county. On October 10, 1900 he married Glenrose Acton, only child of Aaron and Julia Amanda Acton of Clayton, Indiana. Mr. Acton was also an Undertaker and Carpenter so they were pleased with her choice.

A few years later, approximately 1905, William Brill and Frank Roberts formed a partnership, Brill & Roberts, Furniture and Undertaking. This partnership lasted over thirty years and became known over the entire county. Many a bride bought her first furniture there. When Victrolas came into being, a room was built inside the store for their display and the playing of records. Rugs, large and small were hung on racks that suspended them from the ceiling so they could be swung for the customer to view. The furniture store overall looked the same as furniture store today, one thing that has not changed in our changing times. The furniture, of course, came crated in wood, furnishing valuable and plentiful kindling for the two families involved for fireplaces and coal furnaces.

Until around 1913, the hearse was pulled by a beautiful team of draft horses. This type of horse was necessary to pull the hearse over and through the muddy and snowy roads in bad weather. The mechanical age made its appearance and the horses were put out to pasture for a motor. By the 1940's custom changed and Undertakers became Funeral Directors and Funeral Homes replaced the private home and church for services.

William T. and Glenrose were the parents of three children, Lorene Acton, William Thomas, Jr. and Rachel Virginia. Lorene was a talented musician and artist and William Jr. followed his father and became a Funeral Director. They established Brill and Son but upon the death of William Sr., his son went into other business. Virginia, after graduating from Indiana University followed a business career intermixed with politics and civic affairs much like her mother who was very active in

Brill
Family

the civic and social affairs of Danville at the time when it was starting to grow and become conscious of its responsibility as a progressive community. She married Dean O. Boettcher of Chilton, Wisconsin.

William Thomas Brill, Sr. died June 16, 1936. Glenrose Acton Brill died January 30, 1947.

Brill Family

B - born
M - married
D - died
R - resided

ANCESTORS OF

