

Chapter Three

THE CULBERTSON FAMILY

There is available, in seeking the story of the forebears of Margaret Culbertson, wife of John Thom, the work on family genealogy on which Dr. Lewis R. Culbertson spent many years.

The first edition of the "Culbertson Genealogy" was published in 1893, the second in 1896, and the third, a much larger and more complete volume in 1923. Doctor Culbertson evidently undertook to trace the descendants of all of the members of the Culbertson clan who came to America, quite a serious task as there was not one immigrant but many, brothers and cousins who had grown to manhood in "Culbertson Row" in Ireland came to this country and built a new "Culbertson Row" in Pennsylvania. Others settled in Delaware and other parts of the country. The efforts of Doctor Culbertson to separate these different families and to find all of their descendants was only partially successful, as in very many cases he was unable to get complete dates of birth and death, in some instances none at all.

The chief criticism of the book is the fact that it has no index either of Culbertson, or of other families. It was necessary therefore to go through the book page by page looking for the particular Margaret Culbertson, who married John Thom, out of the dozens of Margarets (a favorite family name), who were listed. On page 303 the record was found, giving the family of Thomas Culbertson, father of Margaret, with the name of Margaret's husband spelled "Thorn," and this same spelling given in the listing of her family.

Doctor Culbertson has classified and listed the descendants of fourteen Culbertsons who came from Ireland, among them Samuel Culbertson who emigrated from County Derry, Ireland, in 1729 and settled in Chester County, Pa., the g.g.g.g. grandfather of Emma Hynes Riggs; and Robert Culbertson of "Mill Creek Hundred" Newcastle County, Delaware, (the grandfather of Margaret (Culbertson) Thom), who is here treated as the first generation in America. He also found partial records of as many more who settled in different parts of the country.

Doctor Culbertson says in his study of family history that he found that the "Culbertson families in Scotland were all found in Roxburgh, a County on the southern border, or from the peninsula of Cantyre (or Kintyre) a peninsula on the west coast which stretches toward and very close to Ireland." So far as the Doctor's investigations went they developed the fact that many of the name "lived in Scotland in the 17th century, that some of their descendants are still there, and that some of the families went to Northern Ireland where their descendants still remain and that many of the families that lived in Ireland have emigrated to America."

This describes perfectly the "Scotch-Irish," and, as all of the families treated of in Doctor Culbertson's book were Presbyterians, the picture is complete.

ROBERT CULBERTSON "OF DELAWARE" - FIRST GENERATION

Whether he was the immigrant from Ireland, whether he came over with his father, or whether he was connected with the family of William Culbertson, who emigrated from Scotland to County Derry, Ireland, between 1665 and 1687, or his brother John, it is impossible to trace.

The four sons of this William Culbertson, John, Robert, Andrew and Samuel, and a nephew of William named Cliver all came to America in the first half of the eighteenth century, all five of them lived in Chester County, Pennsylvania, only a few miles from the home of Robert Culbertson of Delaware.

There is no record of the date of his arrival in America or of birth or marriage of Robert Culbertson. He lived at "Mill Creek Hundred," New Castle County. There is a deed of record to him from Charles Bryan and wife dated Feb. 14, 1783, recorded in Deed Book w. 1 p. 131. He died in 1766 or 1767. His will is not of record in New Castle County, and court officials there informed Doctor Culbertson that it was probably destroyed by the British during the Revolution as records were then at Chester, Pa., and all were burned during the war. The writer has been in touch with the Register of Wills at Wilmington, Delaware, since his examination of the Culbertson Genealogy and the above statement in the book has been confirmed. The only Culbertson will in New Castle County, of that period, is one of William Culbertson of Pen. Hundred who died in 1786, about twenty years after Robert Culbertson.

There was, however, a will of Robert Culbertson. This will be referred to in the settlement of Robert Culbertson's estate (settlement record D. 1. 346 New Castle) "Joseph Barton and his wife Sarah (late Sarah Culbertson, relict of Robert Culbertson) of this county said Sarah, executrix of Robert Culbertson hereby files account * * * * *, disposed of as per will of Robert Culbertson deceased." This settlement was approved in 1772.

On January 15, 1768 Sarah Culbertson, widow, of Mill Creek Hundred, sold land to Alex Bryan, "said Sarah Culbertson being a daughter of Sarah Murphy and the latter was a daughter of John Campbell." About this same time Andrew J. Bryan was appointed guardian for Alexander and Robert Culbertson, "minor heirs of Robert Culbertson, deceased."

Right here it is necessary to do a little clearing up of genealogy. The writer finds that John Campbell, referred to in the foregoing paragraphs, maternal grandfather of widow Sarah Culbertson was in New Castle County, Delaware, in 1712. His Scotch ancestry is proven by his name. He made his will in 1726 and it was probated in 1728. His daughter Sarah married 1st Thomas Sealy. Their daughter Sarah was a small child when her mother married a second time. Sarah Sealy, daughter of Sarah (Campbell) Sealy-Murphy, married Robert Culbertson of Mill Creek Hundred.

From Earhart, Boyd and Allied Families, by Lida B. Earhart, privately printed by the American Historical Society, Inc., New York, 1935, the following more detailed account is taken:

"Robert Culbertson died prior to Jan. 15, 1768 when his wife is mentioned as 'widow' in a quit claim. 'Above Sarah being then relict of said Robert Culbertson, to David Culbertson now deceased and to the above named Thomas, Robert and Alexander Culbertson, sons of said Robert Culbertson and directed that said parcels be sold when said Alexander should be 21 years of age, now sold for 495 pounds.

"Robert Culbertson married Sarah Sealy daughter of Thomas and Sarah (Campbell) Sealey and granddaughter of John and Julyan Campbell. - John Campbell was in Mill Creek Hundred, New Castle County, Delaware, in 1712. He died between 1726 and 1728 and had at least three children, Charles, Mary Ann and Sarah. Of Thomas and Sarah (Campbell) Sealy their great-great-granddaughter, Jane Morrison, granddaughter of Robert and Elizabeth (Culbertson) Morrison wrote;

"He (Robert Morrison) found a friend in Rev. Selye, an estimable minister of the Presbyterian Church, who for some time had taken a kind interest in him and often invited him to his house. Mrs. Selye was Sarah Campbell, of Campbellton, Scotland, who numbered in her connection some of the most deserving nobility. They were of the same denomination of his father's family and some, the Hamilton family, and his mother's people, had intermarried with the Campbells, making a kind of kinship, and with them he was beginning to feel quite at home."

Certain New Castle County records throw light on the story. Joseph Barton and Sarah his wife, late Sarah Culbertson, executrix of the estate of Robert Culbertson deceased, presents account of 197 - 8/9 and balance of 112/11/7 to be distributed according to will of deceased.

Thomas Duff, "Sherrif," to Joseph Barton for 147/10/- on London line 100 acres 6 perches Mill Creek Hundred, May 20, 1766.

Dec. 14, 1786 Joseph Barton, yeoman of Mill Creek Hundred, lease to Thomas Culbertson and Sarah Barton, both of aforesaid hundred, to farm where he now dwells in the London line 100 acres 6 perches.

This lease by Joseph Barton to his wife and his step son is the last record of Thomas Culbertson as a resident of Delaware, the next reference to him in New Castle County shows that he had moved to Pennsylvania.

From this data, especially from the records of Lida B. Earhart a descendant of Elizabeth Culbertson and Robert Morrison, we can piece together the story.

It is a reasonable assumption that Robert Culbertson was born in the early or middle 1720's, probably about 1725, and probably in Ireland. Just when he came to America is unknown, but the great flood of Scotch-Irish immigration was in the period 1735-50.

He met Sarah Sealy in New Castle County and they were married about 1748-50. The most full and complete record of their family is that of Miss Earhart.

Children of Robert and Sarah (Sealy) Culbertson:

1. David, died prior to October 26, 1786, mentioned in father's will.
2. Elizabeth, born 1753 died Mar. 14, 1816, buried New Providence Church, near Carmichaels, Greene County, Pennsylvania. Married Robert Morrison.
- *3. Thomas, born in 1754, died August 12, 1823 in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, mentioned in father's will. Together with brother, Robert, he moved to Westmoreland County, Penna. prior to August 15, 1797, when they gave power of attorney to their stepfather, Joseph Barton:

"Thomas Culbertson of Derry Township, Westmoreland County, Pa. and Robert Culbertson of Salem Township, Westmoreland Co. Pa. Power of attorney to dear friend Joseph Barton of Mill Creek Hundred to recover debts. Aug. 15, 1797."

4. Robert, born in 1758-59 died in 1835 in Westmoreland County, Penna., mentioned in father's will; a minor in 1775, when a guardian was appointed for him and his brother, Alexander.

"Come into court Robert Culbertson and Alexander Culbertson minor orphans of Robert Culbertson late of this County deceased and chose Andrew Bryan (bro.-in-law of their grandmother) as guardian, April 18, 1775."

5. Alexander, born about 1760, died in 1833; resided in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania and Wayne Coutny, Ohio, mentioned in his father's will; a minor in 1775."

It is evident that Joseph Barton stepfather of these young folks after the death of Robert Culbertson in 1766 or 1767 and the remarriage of his widow prior to 1770 was a good father to the sons of Robert Culbertson. This is evidenced especially by the power of attorney given by the oldest boys to Joseph Barton, a document which shows their absolute confidence in him.

THOMAS CULBERTSON, SECOND GENERATION apparently settled in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, about 1787 as indicated by his power of attorney to Joseph Barton. The only other record of him in Delaware is found in Vol. II of the Delaware Archives where it is recorded that Thomas Culbertson of Mill Creek Twp., New Castle Co., took the oath of allegiance on Jan. 9, 1778.

The census of 1790 shows his residence in Hempfield Twp. Westmoreland Co., Pa. The census of 1800 placed him in Derry Twp. These few entries in the records appear to be all that Dr. Lewis Culbertson found of Thomas Culbertson. His grandson Thomas, of Ashland County, Ohio, wrote in 1892 to Doctor Culbertson that his grandfather married Nancy Ogle who lived near Wilmington, Delaware. This marriage was evidently shortly before the removal to Pennsylvania as the list of their children gives the date of birth of the oldest as 1788, about a year after the apparent removal as indicated by the Power of attorney.

An examination of the records in Westmoreland County shows the purchase by Thomas Culbertson in 1803 of the patent known as "Long Bottom," containing 121 acres; of the purchase from his brother Alexander of the patent known as "Rover" containing 182 acres. These with his original grants show him to have been a large land holder.

Several pages might be filled with copies of land transfers to and from him, but it is deemed sufficient that he was a large land owner and evidently a prosperous farmer.

George Dallas Albert's History of Westmoreland County, on page 590, says, in discussing Derrry Township:

"Thomas Culbertson, a wheelwright by trade, settled early on land north of Latrobe. He is said to have built the first stone house in his part of the country."

Thomas Culbertson was married to Nancy Ogle, of New Castle County, Delaware, in the middle 1780's. His removal to Westmoreland County in 1786 or 1787 was evidently shortly after his marriage.

Nancy Ogle, born in 1758, was evidently a descendant of a numerous family in New Castle County. We have as yet no definite record of her parentage. There are wills on record there of James Ogle, who died in 1634; Catherine, widow of Thomas, died in 1645; Thomas of White Clay Creek Hundred, who died in 1771 and of his son Thomas who died in 1785, and there were living, and evidently old enough to be parents of Nancy, Thomas of Mill Creek Hundred, David, Alexander, George, Joseph and Benjamin.

The Ogles were prominent and well to do, and search of the records more closely may connect Nancy with one of them.

The children of Thomas and Nancy (Ogle) Culbertson, as found in the Culbertson Genealogy is as follows:

1. Alexander Culbertson, b. 1788, d. 1852, m. Lavinia Stone lived in Unity Township, Westmoreland Co. Pa.
2. Moses Culbertson (no record)
3. Thomas Culbertson, b. 1793, d. 1838, m. Elizabeth Craig lived in Derry Twp. Westmoreland Co. Was wheelwright and school teacher.
4. *Margaret Culbertson, b. about 1795 or 1796, d. about 1834. Married John Thom, son of Joseph Thom of Westmoreland Co.
5. Anna Culbertson, b. about 1797, d. Feb. 14, 1864.
6. Elizabeth Culbertson, b. about 1800 d. _____ m. Walter Bell of Westmoreland County, later moved to Indiana Co., Pa.

The record indicates that the descendants of Thomas Culbertson were men of ability and prominence. His grandson Alexander Culbertson, Jr. was a Presbyterian minister, two great grandsons were in Who's Who in America; one, William S. Culbertson was very prominent in international affairs and served on various Federal commissions. The record shows that several won honorary degrees and military decorations.

Dr. George Culbertson of Greensburg, Westmoreland Co., Pa. wrote in 1892 that Thomas Culbertson and his wife are both buried in the cemetery of Unity Presbyterian Church near Latrobe, and that he died Aug. 12, 1823 aged 69 years. Nancy, his wife, died Feb. 18, 1838 aged 80 years. Inasmuch as Doctor George Culbertson was his great grandson (Alexander 1788-1852 - Alexander J. 1819-1871 - George) and as all four generations lived in Westmoreland County, George having later moved to Kansas and being of enough prominence to be in Who's Who in America, we may definitely accept the accuracy of these dates, as undoubtedly Doctor George Culbertson had access to family records in Westmoreland County.

Thomas Culbertson was of military age at the time of the Revolution. The author of the Culbertson Genealogy seems to have made no particular effort to find out whether any individual was a Revolutionary soldier, but a few of the family were so outstandingly prominent in the war that they could not be missed. In the tablet on Rocky Spring Monument 42 Culbertson names are listed, among them are 8 Johns, 6 Roberts, 5 Samuels, 6 Williams, and 3 Alexanders. All six Robert Culbertsons served in the Pennsylvania militia as did the two Alexanders. No Thomas appears on the list.

Another tablet, erected in 1907 by the Culbertson Memorial Association of Culbertson Row, Pa. carries the same 42 names, showing that two served in the Indian war of 1748, four from 1755 to 1758 and 36 during the Revolution.

These Revolutionary tablets, the fact that no Thomas Culbertson served, lead us to wonder whether the Thomas who took the oath of allegiance in 1778, who undoubtedly was the son of Robert, was by any chance loyal to England. His father had died eight or nine years before the war. His brothers Robert and Alexander may have served, leaving it to Thomas to remain at home and help his stepfather operate the farm.

The will of Thomas Culbertson is as follows:

"In the name of God, Amen. I, Thomas Culbertson of Derry Township, Westmoreland County and the State of Pennsylvania, being in perfect health, his memory and understanding, as he believes, not materially impaired, but believing that it is appointed for all men once to die, do make this my last will and

testament, written with my own hand and witnessed at my request.

"I will and bequeath to my son Thomas Culbertson the whole of my lands and tenements, goods, chattles and effects of every kind and description whatever, having implicit confidence in his honor and filial affection for his aged mother, my loving wife, that he will furnish her with all things necessary for her support and comfort during the remainder of her journey through this world, in which, if there is pleasure there is also pain, and that he will pay my daughter Peggy Thom one hundred dollars, which obligation will be cancelled on delivering to her husband John Thom of Armstrong County, twenty five spinning wheels at any time after the signing of this will, and that he will pay or cause to be paid to my daughter Betsy Bell, intermarried with Walter Bell, near Zanesville in the State of Ohio, the sum of fifty dollars, any time after this date, if before my decease it will be a compleat bar against this clause. And that he will pay my daughter Anne Culbertson four hundred dollars in addition to her bed, saddle and wearing apparal, Bureau and whatever else she had already purchased in her own name, consisting of tea wear, etc., the above to be paid in money, or its value, in four equal annual installments commencing one year after my death.

I bequeath my son Moses my domestic Encyclopedia in five volumes and lastly I constitute and appoint my son Thomas Executor of this my last will and testament, trusting and believing that he will in good faith and conscientiously execute the same according to the time intent and meaning thereof. In which case the above property of every description, whether lands, goods or chattle, will and of right ought to belong to him, his heirs and assigns forever.

Signed, sealed and published as his last will in presence of us who have subscribed as witnesses at his request on this 26th day of August in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and nineteen.

Robert Patton,

Samuel Patton.

Proved before me by the subscribing witnesses on this 28th day of August, A.D. 1823 and Letters Testamontory issued to the Executor.

Robert Montgomery, Register.

Will Book #2, page 98, Westmoreland County Court house, Greensburg, Pennsylvania.

This will raises a possible question as to the accuracy of the list of children by the omission of Alexander, given as the oldest son. The fact may have been that Alexander, the oldest son, had already received substantial amounts from his father and was so well established that he did not need even nominal recognition. Indeed the five volume Encyclopedia of Moses could hardly be classed as more than nominal.