

Stringtown

The Stringtown community lies along the watershed that in former days was called the "dividing ridge." Rainfall along the ridge flowed north to Crooked Creek in Grant County or south to Raven's Creek in Harrison County. The families settled along three different paths or roads, a feature that may have suggested the name Stringtown. Today the three roads are listed as the Stringtown-Corinth, the Stringtown-Webber, and Kentucky Highway 36 East - formerly the Old Leesburg Pike. The first settlers, the Thompson and Robinson families, migrated from Virginia. They joined a wagon train for the sake of safety and arrived along the Grant County-Harrison County line about 1818. The new arrivals included Francis and Mary Terrell Robinson, their son-in-law, Thomas Thompson, and his wife, Frances Robinson, several children of each couple, and twenty-five slaves. Also with them was a tiny girl who was discovered early one morning in one of their wagons. After an unsuccessful search for her family, she was brought up as a Thompson. Francis Robinson chose land on the south side of the "dividing ridge" about one-half mile from the Old Leesburg Pike. He built a huge log house for his family and built several cabins for the slaves. The total number of Robinson children was fourteen - three sons and eleven daughters.

For a burial ground the Robinson family used their own front yard for family members and also for slaves. The Robinson Cemetery was not established until forty-four years after the two families settled near the "dividing ridge." The unmarked grave of Francis Robinson lies beneath a clump of bushes in the former Robinson yard on the Stringtown-Webber Road.

In July 1862, Benjamin Robinson and his son William Benjamin marked off a generous plot of land on the west side of the mud road for a family cemetery. A few days later, William Benjamin rode horseback to Cynthiana on business - a distance of approximately twenty miles. On that day Morgan's Raiders invaded Cynthiana; the young man was hit by a stray bullet and died a few days later, July 17, 1862. Thus, William Benjamin became the first person to occupy a grave in the new cemetery.

The Dunn Cemetery, slightly north of the Robinson Cemetery was established on land donated by Abraham Dunn, who had married Agnes Robinson in 1822 (daughter of Francis Robinson). The plot includes many graves of the Dunn descendants but has often been used by distant relatives and neighbors.

According to oral history, Thomas Thompson purchased two thousand acres of land on the north side of the dividing ridge for twenty-five cents an acre. For his home site, he chose a hollow near a spring at the foot of a hill. A half-mile ridge that branched off from the Leesburg Pike led to the house in the hollow. As each son or daughter married, Mr. Thompson gave the couple a plot of land and a slave and built a cabin in the vicinity of his own house. In time, his dwelling was encircled with the cabins of his children. Until recent years "the original Thompson home site could be recognized by the circle of chimneys that remained standing long after the buildings had collapsed". The five Thompson daughters married into families with the well-known names of Daugherty, Denny, Dunn, Harris, and Ramey. According to family accounts, the Thompson

couple had sixty-six grandchildren. Although Mr. Thompson established a cemetery at the north end of the ridge, at least five of his ten children usually clung to the old custom and buried their dead in their own front yards.

A son, Napoleon B. Thompson, established the Thompson and Skinner Cemetery at his home on Denny Road. The first marked burial there was that of his wife, Sarah Elizabeth Barnes Thompson, 1829-1878, a sister to Samuel Barnes of Stringtown and Charles Wesley Barnes of Cartersville, and a granddaughter of Harrison County's Revolutionary veteran John Barnes. She was, according to Barnes genealogists, Ms. Byron and Ms. Pease, born in Danville, Vermillion County, Illinois, where probate records gave Family Bible birth dates. She came to brother Samuel's Stringtown home in 1846 after her parents Oliver and Mary Brown Barnes died. Her 1847 marriage to Napoleon B. Thompson brought them four children, with three of them (Mary, John and Ada) also being buried in this graveyard. This cemetery has thirteen marked burials spanning 88 years (1889-1966), with at least ten unmarked graves.

The name of Thomas (Tommy T. Thompson) has been perpetuated by his countless descendants and until recent years by the annual Thompson-Robinson reunion at Stringtown. Nellie Thompson Hill (now deceased) provided the following story to explain the slight change in Thomas Thompson's name -- When the two families arrived in the area that became Stringtown, a tribe of Indians lived at Cordova. The Indians were friendly and shared their knowledge of medicinal herbs. As a result, the two large families never required a doctor except in times of childbirth. The chief suggested that Mr. Thompson insert an additional "T" in his name to bring good luck and promised that his name would never die. The "T" may have been in honor of the Famous Indian warrior Tecumseh who had been killed in 1813 during the War of 1812. Mr. Thompson accepted the chief's suggestion and from that time until the present he has been called Tommy T. Thompson. Thus far, his name has endured for more than two hundred years from the of his birth October 22, 1787, and his name is always spoken or listed before the name of this father-in-law, Francis Robinson.

In his account of the Thompson-Robinson family, the late Milford Readnower stressed the number of schoolteachers, doctors, lawyers, and politicians among the descendants. A son James Henry Thompson served Grant County as a judge and as a superintendent of schools - five grandsons became doctors - including Dr. W. H. Daugherty, a prominent citizen of Corinth. A Thompson daughter who married William Denny has ten daughters, all of whom became teachers.

The first Stringtown school was a log building near the junction of Denny Road with the Leesburg Pike. The one-half acre of land was donated by W. H. Morgan and wife. The first trustees were James C. Ruddle, Thomas J. Oder, and William Denny, a grandson of Tommy T. Thompson. When the log school was replaced by a white frame building about 1909-1910, the first teacher was Nannie Mae Stone Lowe, of Cordova and Williamstown, now one hundred and one years ago. In 1926, the school was abandoned. Stringtown children were picked up by a school bus and transported to the new Corinth Consolidated School.

The first recorded business in Stringtown was that of Samuel Barnes who, with his wife Sara Dunn Barnes, kept a tavern at his home "thirteen to fourteen miles southwest of Williamstown"

according to tavern licenses issued for 1852 and 1853. After he died in 1856 at age 46, he along with his fifteen year old daughter Malissa became the first marked burials in the Samuel Barnes Cemetery on the east side of the road one-half mile from the Stringtown Church. This cemetery was inventoried in 1989 and contained 35 to 40 unidentified graves plus a 1914 Patterson and a 1924 Dunaway burial. In 1859 Mr. Barnes' widow, guardian of their four underage children, an experienced businesswoman, married Alexander William, a grocer with a liquor license in Cordova.

The best known business in the history of Stringtown was the general store of Newt and Lute Dunn. The small store was a part of their dwelling at the intersection of the Stringtown-Corinth Road and the Old Leesburg Pike. The Dunn's store with no refrigeration carried only non-perishable foods and other household needs. After a few automobiles appeared in the vicinity, the Dunns installed a gas pump operated by a handle; a glass bulb at the top showed the number of gallons; the cost was twenty cents per gallon.

The Stringtown Christian Church was the first and only congregation ever established at Stringtown. Organized July, 1848 by Minister Cyrus H. Williams, the first elders were Perry Wheat, Leonard Barker, T. S. Oder, and James Dunaway. The first deacons were Abraham Dunn (who had married Agnes Robinson), J. M. See, and John Colson. The first building was log; the first person baptized was Elizabeth Robinson.

In 1877, a white frame church was built on land donated by Elizabeth's father, Benjamin Robinson, who seemingly stipulated that the church be called "Elizabeth." The new sanctuary was thirty feet wide and fifty feet long. Short benches were placed on each side with long benches in the middle divided by a partition that ran through the entire center. Inside the door, men and women separated; men always sat to the right of the dividing partition and women to the left. The custom prevailed until the church was remodeled 76 years later.

>During the years before and after 1900, the congregation was fortunate to have a singing master (teacher) named Luke Stone who taught adults, young people, and children how to sing in harmony. His only musical instrument was a pitch pipe, and the tiny song books without notes contained only the words and the key, yet most of the people in the church were able to sing parts. When permission to use a musical instrument other than a tuning fork was granted about 1900, the congregation purchased an organ; at some time later, the Ladies Aid obtained a piano.

On November 21, 1954, the church celebrated its 105th anniversary with a dedication service for the new improvements. Seventeen years after the remodeling, May 1971, the church was struck by lightning and burned to the ground. All improvements and furnishings were completely destroyed. Under the supervision of the church officer, Harold Milner, a new brick church was built with labor donated by members. Furnishings were replaced with help from other churches, and from the Corinth Fire Department. The new church was dedicated in 1972; the building was insured. Approximately one year later, June 27, 1973, the new brick church building was also struck by lightning and destroyed. Using the same plans with a few improvements, Harold Milner built a second church. This time lightning rods were installed. The building was dedicated May 12, 1974.

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Home - Communities

