

Dinsmore Homestead Museum Newsletter

This has been a very unusual year for the Dinsmore Homestead museum—as it has been for everyone! Though many of our schools were unable to take field trips, we have been very lucky to have hosted several home-school groups, safely, and we were able to have our annual Pioneer-to-the-Past camp in July, with Covid adaptations. Although we have necessarily tightened our economic belt, we have been able to use the quiet time we have had to indulge in more research, to write grants, and to keep up the appearance of our unique historic site.

Volunteers from Safran Landing Systems in Walton brightened our appearance by painting our front fence and Richard Biggs has spent much of the summer and fall painting the Roseberry house—it looks beautiful! Any day now Hart Restoration will be out to mend & strengthen our graveyard wall.



Women in Boone County Vote for the First Time
On this historic hundredth anniversary of women's suffrage, I thought I might find some mention in Julia's journal about the passage of the 20th Amendment. I didn't. However, when November 2nd, 1920 came, I found the following (Susan Roseberry and her sister-in-law and brother-in-law, Ethel and Rastus Castleman were African American tenants who lived and worked on the Dinsmore farm):
"My darling b[ig] b[aby]
Your own is a full-fledged American citizen. I am just back from voting the straight Democratic ticket. Fanny [Gibbon] went to see the place and the performance--it was in the O[dd] F[ellows] Hall--the roads are dreadful puddles and ponds.... Susan went to vote with Rastus and Ethel in their car.... I had a chat with Lou Scott--she said she came off in such a hurry she forgot her lower teeth!.... We are jogging along--don't worry. Lord love my babies."



Julia Dinsmore and the Influenza Outbreak of 1918

As Julia approached the fall of 1918, news of the influenza outbreak mixed with accounts of knitting socks for soldiers and farming.

Sept. 30th--"The papers tell of the ravages of the Spanish influenza. Sally just brought up the Enquirer--it says there are over 85,000 cases in Mass. and the camps are full of it. I hope it won't spread West. It is a deadly German germ from the U-boats."

Oct. 3rd--"The influenza is horrible--the papers full of accounts of illness and deaths, in camps especially."

Oct. 12th--"The influenza is everywhere, so even church assemblies are stopped--it is worse in the East."

Oct. 19th--"The influenza is so bad the schools, churches &c in Lexington are closed as they are in most places. Miss Mary Furlong telephoned Sally that the Catholic Church was closed....I am so anxious to hear how Isabella got over it--if she really had it."

Nov. 11th--"Joe came out to work and says the whistles and bells were making a noise at four--so we suppose the Germans have accepted [the armistice]. ...We have been lucky so far in regard to the influenza--no cases in or near Burlington-- a few in Bellevue but no fatal ones and in Cin[cinnati] the epidemic is abating the papers say....Belle Clore said her boy was going back to school to-day."

A descendant of a woman who had been enslaved by James Dinsmore and brought to Kentucky from Louisiana contacted us by email because she saw her ancestor's information on our website. Judy Taylor was born about 1840 and would have been only 2 years old when she was brought to Boone County with her mother Sally. Court records show that she was married to Milton Jones and in 1870 she was living in Rising Sun, Indiana, with Milton and their son William. We had lost track of her there. But her descendant, Jennifer, found her in Preble County, Ohio, under the name of Julia, and a member of a Quaker parish. She had two more children, Luella (who died at 16) and James, who moved to Oxford, married, and had children. William moved to Connersville, Indiana, and his descendants were still there in 1940. James Jones' death certificate lists his mother's name as Julia Dinsmore! In the mid-1900s, a white neighbor of Julia Jones wrote down her memories of the elderly black woman who had lived next door: "She talked about being a house slave when quite a little girl. One of her duties was to keep the flies off the table while the white folks ate. Her fly broom being a stick on which were fastened quite a number of strips of narrow pieces of newspaper, at one end."

We hope that our new website will help us to connect to more descendants who were at one time associated with the Dinsmore family!

This summer, an archaeology student, JeMiah Cannon, came out with her advisor, Dr. Ken Tankersley, to conduct research for her Master's thesis in Anthropology. She chose Dinsmore because of our knowledge of our African American history. JeMiah is focusing her attention on Nancy Mcgruder, whose cabin was situated to the right of the Roseberry House. They began their research in the graveyard and then established the outlines of the cabin, which burned down in 1886. Julia Dinsmore wrote: "Ellen got out Aunt Nancy's trunk, 3 chairs and her sheets and bed clothes off her bed - but everything else was burnt up. Her bureau full - box full - all her little odds and ends and money that she had hid around in things and her rocking chair and the rest of her chairs - Her best Sunday clothes and shawls were in the trunk but all her every day clothes shoes flannel dresses &c - everything that I will have to replace - was destroyed." Nancy was then moved into the kitchen cabin and that is where she died in 1906 at about ninety-six years old. JeMiah will be back next summer and we look forward to adding new insight to our story of Nancy.



Nancy Mcgruder at her cabin, ca. 1886
Notice the broom she used to sweep her front yard.

In other important news, several descendants of Harry and Susie Roseberry have begun to generate interest in restoring the Roseberry house to what it would have looked like around 1930. Linda Thomas, Harry and Susie's great-granddaughter, has joined the Dinsmore Homestead Board of Directors, and her daughter, Angela, is working on the project from Memphis where she will join in the effort to enhance the story of the Roseberry family and other African Americans who lived and worked on the Dinsmore farm. We are always looking to add more 'breadth & depth' to our interpretation of the family through stories of the laborers & their families.



Harry, Susie, and Cleo Roseberry, ca. 1907, and the Roseberry house