

Address of
Judge Thomas M. Bigger,
of Columbus, Ohio

at the
**Donaldson-Bigger
Reunion**

held
August 24th, 1929
at Robinson U. P. Church
Washington County, PA

INGLE NOOK MEMORIES

This is a joint reunion of the Biggers and Donaldsons, who trace their descent to Thomas Bigger or James Donaldson, or to both of them. The descendants of these two men, however, in the years gone by, did so much in the way of unions that to hold a reunion of either of them now would call out most of the others. So it was thought best not to attempt to unscramble what had become so thoroughly scrambled, but to hold a joint reunion. The representative of those bearing the name of Donaldson, and the representative of those who bear the name of Bigger, who will on this occasion sketch the early history of these two men and their families, are each equally related to both of these men. We are both grandsons of one of the sons of Thomas Bigger, and the other is the grandson of another son of Thomas Bigger. So that in our veins there flows an equal current of the blood of both of these, our common ancestors. If, therefore, either of us shall say anything about these ancestors which shall reflect credit upon their descendents, it will reflect credit equally upon both of us.

Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, some years ago, in a speech made in the Senate of the United States, had occasion to say something about the influence of heredity. He remarked that it was an interesting study but that it was attended by some danger. By way of illustration, he said that a friend of his had told him of his experience in tracing the history of his family. His friend said he had no difficulty at all until he came to his great grandfather, who was cashier of a bank in New England, and that he had traced him as far as Borneo and there lost all trace of him. There seemed to be some connection between his position as cashier of a bank and the difficulty of tracing him beyond Borneo. We do not anticipate any such difficulty in our case.

The writer of this sketch has been assigned the task of bringing to your notice something of the early history of the Bigger family in America, or rather that branch of it descendant from Thomas Bigger and Elizabeth Moore, who became his wife shortly before they emigrated to America. This labor of love has been imposed upon him, he has no doubt, by reason of the fact that he, together with his brother and sister, enjoyed opportunities in their childhood and youth not possessed by any other now living, to learn of the early life in this country of our branch of the Bigger family. Of eleven children born to Thomas and Elizabeth Bigger, three of them were members of our family, familiarly known as Uncle Tommy, Aunt Ann and Aunt Betsy. This was the unmarried portion of the family still living when we appeared upon the scene, two others, Matthew, the first born of the family, and Jean, who were also members of this unmarried portion of the

family, having died before we were born. Of this family of eleven children only four were married. The children of Thomas and Elizabeth Bigger were all born before 1800, the first in 1774 and the last in 1797. Of the three who were members of our family, Uncle Tommy was born in 1783, Aunt Ann in 1785, and Aunt Betsy in 1797.

It is by reason of the date of the birth of Aunt Betsy, together with our recollection of a statement we have frequently heard her make, that we are able to fix the date of the building of the central part of the ancestral home, still in a good state of preservation. This statement was that she had frequently heard her father and mother say that the house was built before she was born, but that they did not move into it until after that event. This fixes the date of its building as either 1796 or 1797, as Aunt Betsy was born in March, 1797. This central part of the house is, of course, constructed of logs, but since our recollection it has been covered by weatherboards.

These three old people in the long winter evenings, as we sat around the grate or log fire, for we had both, would sometimes grow reminiscent and would relate incidents of that early period which were of a character calculated to remain in the memory of boys and girls. It is by reason of this fact, and because there were three of them, all having knowledge of the facts about which they talked, that the writer and his brother and sister enjoyed peculiar opportunity to learn something of that early period.

It is the writer's purpose on this occasion to confine himself to the early period of the history of the family, leaving it to another occasion, and perhaps to another hand, to supplement it by sketching the later history of the family. To go beyond that would be impossible in a single paper on an occasion like this. Nor is it of such importance at this time, as that those who perhaps alone now living possess the knowledge of these matters should set them down before it is too late, so that they may be preserved for present and future generations.

The Biggers were Scotch-Irish, that is, they were Scotch, but at some period now unknown, and for some reason or reasons, also unknown, but perhaps because of religious persecution had be transplanted in the North of Ireland, in the County of Antrim. The writer has often heard of the old people in the family say that their father said his ancestors had be Lairds, that is, Lords, in Scotland.

Lee Bigger, of Iowa, who was touring Scotland some years age, in a letter to his cousin, Samuel Bigger, of Smithfield, Ohio, says that he obtained the information from Francis Joseph Bigger, Solicitor of Belfast, that the "Bigger" has been traced back in Scotland to 1136, and that the records in Edinboro show that on April 26th., 1136, a Bigger, who was then High Chamberlain of Scotland, paid a visit to King William at Northumberland.

Mr. Florence Biggert, of Pittsburgh, who visited Scotland and spent some time in tracing the family history

says that one Walter Bigger held a high office in the Royal household when Scotland had her own Kings, that of Lord High Chamberlain of the King's Household, and that records are still in existence to establish this fact. This would be verification of the statement made by Thomas Bigger that his ancestor had belonged to the nobility of Scotland.

The family had a coat-of-arms which represents a Pelican, with her young at her feet, vulning, that is wounding, her breast to feed her hungry brood from her own blood, according to the myth to that effect. The motto under the crest is "Giving and Forgiving". The ancient chiefs of the clan are said to have been retainers of the Royal Clan of Scotland, the Clan Stuart.

The father of Thomas Bigger was named Matthew. He died in Ireland before the emigration of his son Thomas to this country. The date of his death is not known. Thomas Bigger had three brothers who had emigrated to this country at some time prior to his coming. The names of these brothers were James, John and Samuel, and according to recollection this was the order of their ages, Thomas being the youngest. James and John, in 1773, were living at or near Chambersburg, Pennsylvania; But Samuel had crossed the Allegheny range and was living at the junction of the rivers Monongahela and the Youghiogheny, where McKeesport now stands.

Thomas Bigger and Elizabeth Moore were married shortly before they came to this country. It is reasonable to conclude that, before this marriage, his immediate family in Ireland, after the death of his father must have consisted of himself, his mother and one unmarried sister, for when he came he brought his mother and an unmarried sister and his wife. But he had at least one other sister, for he had in this country two married sisters. One of them was married to a man named Walker, and the other to a man named Andersoh. The date of the coming of Thomas Bigger, his wife, mother and sister, was 1773. Of course, they came in a sailing vessel, and the port of departure was Londonderry. When the green hills of Erin faded from view it was their last sight of their native land, for they never returned. This undoubtedly did not cause Thomas Bigger any regrets, For these old people in our family often told us that their father said that the last year he worked in harvest fields of Antrim, and after the last wheat had been cut, he threw his sickle as far as he could, declaring that this was the last wheat he would ever reap for King George. They also stated that he informed them that he had delayed his departure to this country for some time because of the danger of being impressed while on the high seas into the service of His Majesty's Navy.

It seems the Biggers were members of the Presbyterian Church at Ballomony, and the writer of the paper has in his possession the certificate issued to them by the Session of the Church at Ballomony in 1773. This certificate includes Thomas, his wife, mother and sister.

Thomas Bigger was a weaver by trade, but from what has just been stated, it would appear that he also worked, at

least in the harvest season, in the field. Before leaving Ireland, he had provided what he believed to be a sufficient supply of food for the four persons composing his immediate party. there were, however, long periods of calm, when the ship made little or no progress, and the voyage dragged out to a period of between two and three months; As a result, there was a serious famine on board. To meet this situation, the captain of the vessel requisitioned all the food on board, including that of our ancestor, and placed every one on board on short rations drawn from the common food supply thus created. Upon arriving at Baltimore, the termination of the voyage, the captain paid him in money for the food which he requisitioned.

Upon landing, Thomas Bigger's party started at once for Chambersburg, Penna., the home of his two older brothers, and the first winter of 1773-74 was spent with these older brothers at Chambersburg. In the spring of 1774 they crossed the mountains and came to the home of Thomas Bigger's brother Samuel, at the junction of the rivers Monongahela and Youghiogeny. It is not recalled that the old people ever said anything about the means of transportation from Chambersburg to the home of Samuel Bigger, but it must have been an arduous undertaking in 1774 to cross the rugged range of mountains, densely wooded and without roads. It is true that not long before that General Braddock, on his ill-fated expedition, had out a rude trail over the mountains, but it is not known to the writer at what point it crossed the range, not that they made use of it. Neither did we learn from the old people, so far as recalled, whether Thomas Bigger's mother and the unmarried sister, crossed the mountain with Thomas Bigger and his wife in the spring of 1774. From another circumstance often related by these old people, it is known that he did not have his mother or unmarried sister with him when he first established his home here. The story was often heard from the old folks that shortly after he came here information was brought to him that his mother had said that she had come all the way from Ireland expecting to live with her son Thomas, but that it now appeared she would not be able to do so. When he heard this, he immediately went for her and brought her to his own home, where she lived the remainder of her life, as a member of his family. The old woman was afraid to ride on a horse across the streams, and when they came to a stream he located a fording place, then took her off the horse and carried her across on his back, returning for the horse, or horses. From this it seems reasonable to conclude that the mother and unmarried sister were left in the spring of 1774 with James and John at Chambersburg. But whether he had only his wife with him when they crossed the Alleghenies in the spring of 1774, or whether his mother and unmarried sister came to Samuel Bigger's home with them, it was a dangerous trip in 1774. They must have known of the danger that confronted them. They had lived a quiet, peaceful life in a densely settle community. They were, therefore, unfamiliar with life

in the forest on the frontier, and the cries of wild beasts in the forests on the Alleghenies must have been weird music in the ears of these people from the pastoral hills and valleys of old Antrim. The truth about the dangers they confronted was bad enough, but as the description of such dangers seldom loses anything in the telling. It is easy to conceive that it required high courage on the part of these ancestors of ours to face them. as they sought a home in the trackless wilderness beyond the Alleghenies. During the preceding winter, spent at Chambersburg, they had undoubtedly learned that General Braddock's army had been cut to pieces by the French and Indians, near the very spot where Samuel Bigger lived. They also doubtless heard that at Great Meadows George Washington and his band of Virginians had also been defeated by the same foe. Of course, they could not fail to have learned of the lurking savages, who from ambush shot the settlers in their dooryards. They must have known that no white man or woman could establish a home beyond that forbidding range of mountains and be safe for a single hour in 1774. Yet they faced these dangers unflinchingly. At the time of his marriage Thomas was about thirty years of age, and his wife was nineteen years of age.

What must have been the motive of these ancestors of ours who were willing to face these dangers? Remember that they were not escaping from British rule, for the colonies were still under the rule of the British Crown. Two more years were to elapse before the Declaration of Independence were written. The impelling motive, as we learned it from their own children, was to secure a home for themselves which would really belong to them and their children. They had hears that in America fertile soil in prodigal abundance lay open to him who would take it and improve it. Compared to the land of promise beyond the sea; Ireland, to them appeared to be the land of bondage. To a people of high spirit and imagination their condition in the north of Ireland was deplorable and intolerable. It is difficult, if not impossible, for their descendants of today to realize and appreciate the land hunger of this Scotch-Irish race. The exactions of the landlords in Ireland left for them the barest subsistence, and the dreary prospect of their dependence upon others in their old age. The frontier line in America, pushing back the forest and its savage inhabitants, was composed predominantly of this hard race.

On arriving at his brother's home at the point where McKeesport now stands, Thomas Bigger borrowed a horse to carry him in his search for a location for his home west of the Monongahela River. How far he went in this search we do not know, but a circumstance which led to his decision to locate here we do know from the statements of the old people in our family. As he rode along the hillside above the site which afterwards became his home, he said he observed that the soil which the horse's hoofs turned up seemed to be rich, and he further observed below him on the hillside what appeared to be an opening in the forest; then he rode down to

it and discovered that some one had made a deadening in the forest, and erected a cabin of small logs to the square, but had not roofed it. That it appeared to him that whoever had made this improvement must have abandoned it.

While we do not know who made this improvement, we do know that no one ever appeared to claim it and the conclusion to which Thomas Bigger and his wife came was that he had either been frightened away by the Indians, or perhaps killed by them.

On returning to his brother Samuel's home he reported to his wife what he had found, and she decided the question in favor of that place as the site of their future home, and to it they came. There, their children were all born; but not all in the same house. None of them were born in the present building, which was the third building erected at the point by Thomas Bigger. This rude cabin which was their first home was not occupied long until it was succeeded by a better log building, which was occupied until the present building was erected, which, as before stated, was in 1796 or 1797. All of the children were born either in the rude cabin which he found in the forest without a roof, or in the second and more substantial cabin some time later. That Thomas was not much of a carpenter is indicated by the fact that, when he put a roof on the rude cabin, he did not extend the roof beyond the logs, but abutted the clapboards against the logs on the inside, so that the water ran down inside the cabin when it rained.

The old people in the family often stated that their father and mother had told them that they never wanted for the necessities of life, except during their first year here, when hunger was not an entire stranger to them. It would seem, with the forests full of wild game, bear, deer and wild turkey, that they should have had no difficulty in securing meat. From statements often heard from the old people, it appears that their father had little skill with a rifle, and no taste for it. It is not at all certain that he ever owned a gun when he first came here, and no gun, said to have been his was left in the family, so far as known. He must, however, have had some sort of a gun, for he belonged to the militia and was called out for duty at times.

That the children in the family enjoyed pets as much as the children of this sophisticated age, we learn, especially from Aunt Ann. She stated that the boys often brought fawns, which they found in the forest, to the home, of which they made pets, and she spoke of the great beauty of these little animals, but also remarked that when the bucks attained their growth, and a set of antlers, they usually became vicious and had to be slaughtered. She also stated that the boys shot so many wild turkeys that she grew tired of plucking the feathers, and for a time tried skinning them. In these days, when turkey has a money flavor, the descendants of these old Biggers and Donaldsons would do considerable plucking if that was all that stood between them and a turkey roast.

The statement was often made by these old people in our

hearing that their father was enrolled in the militia, and that he was called out on one or more occasions to do patrol duty along the Ohio River. Each man was given a station and his beat along the river extended one mile each way until he met the next patrol. This duty it seems was performed at times when danger of Indians raids threatened the settlers.

In 1774 there were no mills for grinding grain in these trackless forests in the west. The writer has the first mill which was used by the Biggers to obtain flour or cornmeal. It is a simple iron mortar and pestle. It is impossible to say how long this mill was used. The next was a small mill closely resembling the old fashioned coffee mill, which would only produce a coarse flour or meal. This is the possession of the writer's brother, A. D. Bigger. The third form of mill, which came some time later, was a horse mill--a treadmill upon which a horse walked and furnished the motor power for the mill. Some time later came the water mills, along the streams, which were in general use well within the recollection of the writer.

Thomas and Elizabeth Bigger and their children manufactured their own cloth for the wearing apparel of both the men and the women. That they might have woolen clothing, they early acquired some sheep, and the writer remembers distinctly of Aunt Ann saying that to protect these sheep from the wolves it was necessary to drive them into an enclosure every night. Among the heirlooms in the writer's possession is a ball of linen thread, spun in Ireland by Thomas Bigger and brought by him to this country. The strands of this thread seem to be as strong today as when first manufactured. From flax they obtained the fiber for linen thread and clothing. It was in the manufacture of cloth that Thomas Bigger's knowledge as a weaver was his trade. The whole family, however, learned from him the art of spinning and weaving, at least the female members of it. The writer has the spinning wheel of his great-grandmother Bigger.

Photography was, of course, unknown in that day so that we have little knowledge of the physical appearance of these our common ancestors. We, however, learned from the old people in our family that their father was of medium height and powerfully built, and that their mother was a large woman. This we also heard from our father, who clearly remembered seeing her in her old age. The writer's brother, A. D. Bigger, has a corset worn by her, and a glance at that corset would lead to the conclusion that she must have been an Amazon. The color of their hair is unknown, but their children presented striking contrasts, some being red haired and of a fair complexion, while others were black haired and of a somewhat swarthy complexion. Old Uncle Tommy's hair, we were told, was red in his youth, as was also the hair of the grandfather of the writer, Samuel; while Uncle Andy Bigger and Aunt Betsy were black haired, their hair remaining black until old age.

These ancestors of ours were a deeply religious people.

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Being Scotch-Irish they were, of course, Presbyterians, and they believed implicitly in the theology of Calvin and Knox. Their religion was no cloak in which to masquerade before the world, but a vital force in their everyday life. The Holy Bible was indeed their rule of faith and practice. It was read night and morning at family worship, and every one under the roof was not only expected but required to be present. The Sabbath was a Holy day, and observed as such, and even the children were restrained from any undue levity. These Scotch-Irish seem to have carried with them from Scotland to the North of Ireland, and then across the sea to America - the spirit of the Solemn League and Covenant of their ancestors. Of course, they were intolerant. But as we scan the page of history, we are compelled to admit that some of the greatest reforms ever wrought in the world were carried forward by men of deep conviction who were intolerant. The Catholic Church was anathema to them, and the Episcopal Church, the Established Church of England, which had relentlessly persecuted them, was in their eyes but little better. But notwithstanding their sternness and their intolerance, the writer has yet to meet an individual, whose childhood and youth were molded and shaped in such an atmosphere, who did not admit that it had been a powerful influence for good throughout his entire life. These Scotch-Irish ancestors of ours were stern but they were just. If they did not find it possible, owing to the weakness of our common human nature, to love their enemies they at least did them no harm. We who have in our veins the blood of both Donaldsons and Biggers have clearly stamped upon us the hallmark of the Scotch-Irish.

Of this Scotch-Irish race, Theodore Roosevelt has this to say in his "Winning of the West"--

"The backwoodsmen were Americans by birth and parentage and of mixed race. But the dominant strain in their blood was that of the Presbyterian Irish--the Scotch-Irish as they were called. Full credit has been awarded the Roundhead and the Cavalier for their leadership in our history. Nor have we been blind to the deeds of the Hollander and the Hugonot; but it is doubtful if we have fully realized the importance of the part played by that stern and virile people, the Irish, whose preachers taught the creed of Knox and Calvin. These Irish representatives of the Covenanters were in the West almost what the Puritans were in the Northeast, and more than the Cavaliers were in the Southeast. Mingled with the descendants of many other races, they, nevertheless, formed the kernel of the distinctly American stock who were the pioneers of our people in their march westward, the vanguard of the army of fighting settlers who, with axe and rifle, won their way from the Alleghenies to the Rio Grande and the Pacific."

In another place he says:--

"That these Irish Presbyterians were a bold and hardy race is proved at once by their boldly pushing past the settled regions and plunging into the wilderness as the

leaders of the white advance. They were the first and the last set of emigrants to do this. All others have merely followed the wake of their predecessors."

This is emphatically true of Thomas Bigger and his wife. They passed at once through the old and settled part of the country east of the mountains, and located their home on the extreme frontier, and being located--remained.

Thomas Bigger was a man of peace, but he was a man with a vision and a purpose. He had no desire for warlike deeds or military renown. To a boy fond of reading of the exploits of Boone and Kenton and Brady, and the Poes and others of like nature, there was a sort of feeling of disappointment that his paternal ancestor had not also shouldered his rifle and gone gunning for Indians. Upon more mature reflection, however, he has reached the conclusion that his quiet but indomitable facing of known perils, which constantly surrounded him, furnishes evidence of a courage, moral and physical, not surpassed by any of them. The quiet and patient facing of possible death before the battle is more trying on the brave man's nerves than the heat of the contest. Beginning in the spring of 1774 and continuing until the close of the Revolutionary War, these ancestors of ours were in constant fear of death at the hands of the savages, in its most cruel form. And what shall we say of the partner of the joys and sorrows of Thomas Bigger, who bravely stood at his side through all these terrible years? Here mere words are inadequate. No Spartan wife and mother, in the days when Greece was young, surpassed her in courage and supreme devotion. Let those in whose veins runs the blood of this woman silently uncover beside her tomb, as you do when the flag of your country passes. It is becoming in us, their descendants, at this late day, to pay some tribute to the memory of these our ancestors, Donaldsons and Biggers and all that generation of pure Americans who laid deep and strong the foundations of the heritage we now enjoy.

Shortly after Thomas Bigger established his home here, his brother-in-law, John Anderson and his wife, who was a sister of Thomas Bigger, came to live with them. That it was very shortly after they came here is evidenced by the following incident. An alarm of an Indian raid came to them. The two men started the women, with the children, to the East, while they went to find their horses, telling the women they would soon overtake them on the trail. The children were two in number, Matthew the older being large enough to walk, while Elizabeth carried the younger. The Andersons at that time had no children. After the women had gone some distance they heard an outcry behind them on the trail. Believing that their husbands were being murdered by the Indians, they struck off into the forest, at right angles to the trail. Walking by this time had become irksome to Matthew, and he demanded to be carried, refusing with true Scotch stubbornness to travel further on his own feet. Thereupon Mrs. Anderson said to her sister-in-law, in the broad Scotch dialect, "Thraw him awa", "Thraw him awa". That,

however, was asking too much of a mother with reference to her first born son. What Elizabeth's reply to this suggestion was we do not know, but we did learn that it resulted in a feeling of dislike on the part of Elizabeth for her sister-in-law, which she never entirely overcame. The men soon found the women and explained that, coming to a fork in the trail, they were unable to determine which one had been taken by the women and were calling to obtain an answering call.

In ploughing in the field it required the united efforts of both Thomas Bigger and his brother-in-law, one driving the team while the other held the handles of the plow. How long the Andersons continued to live with them we do not know.

Salt in bulk, during their early residence here, could not be obtained short of the eastern side of the Alleghenies, and a trip to Chambersburg required from two to three weeks, according to the weather, season of the year, etc.. When away Elizabeth remained alone in the cabin, but before leaving he blazed a trail for her through the forest to the nearest neighbor, to enable her to go there for fire in case her fire should go out, as there were no friction matches in those days. After he left she attempted to find this trail but failed. She, however, kept her fire alive during her absence.

The first year of their residence here, Thomas Bigger planted some corn in the clearing, and afterwards went on one of these trips for supplies. During his absence she cultivated the corn. Having a baby she place it in a sugar trough, in lieu of a cradle, and placed this trough in the shade of a tree, as the shadow moved she moved the trough, so as to keep the baby in the shade. While thus engaged, she heard a peculiar wild cry, in the forest surrounding the clearing. She at first thought it was a human voice, and was much alarmed, but in relating this incident said that she afterwards learned to know it as the cry of a panther.

On another occasion, during his absence, she heard a bear in the night take the pigs from a pen close to the cabin. The squeal of the pigs, as the bear or bears took them, one by one, notified her of the progress of the slaughter. She feared, however, to open the door to attempt a rescue of the pigs. The old people in our family often related that they had heard their mother say that in her husband's absence she had often remained awake in bed all night, fearing that she might hear the savage Indians at any time at her door.

On another occasion, when Thomas Bigger returned from one of these trips for supplies, on entering his cabin he discovered a new baby in the bed, but his wife was not there. A frantic search soon located her in the spring house near by. She had given birth to this child without a single adult person near.

In the spring of 1774, the same spring they established their home here, the women and old men belonging to the

family of the Indian Chief Logan, were brutally and treacherously murdered at the mouth of Yellow Creek by some renegade white men, while Logan and his party were absent hunting. This, of course, sent Logan and his people on the warpath to revenge the outrage. The place of this murder could not have been more than fifteen to eighteen miles distant from the Bigger home. This, and other outrages by the whites, against the Indians, such as the more extensive massacre of the Christian Indians at Gnadenhutten on the banks of the Tuscarawas, filled the Ohio Indians with a spirit of revenge, which spared neither age nor sex. We have often heard the old people in our family say that their parents often fled from their cabin, upon hearing rumors that the Indians were on the warpath. On one occasion they were just sitting down to dinner when the warning came, and closing the cabin door they fled without waiting to eat. On their return they found the cabin just as they had left it with the food on the table.

This brings us to an incident which came near to rendering impossible any reunions of the descendants of Thomas and Elizabeth Bigger. The reference is to the massacre, by the Indians, of the people who were in Fort Dillow. The location of this Fort was on the south bank of Dillow's Run, a tributary of Raccoon Creek, entering it from the west, the mouth of the Run being opposite to the residence of A. D. Bigger, the brother of the writer of the sketch, and our boyhood home. This little Fort was built by Thomas Bigger and Dillow, whose home was there, and at least two other men, whose names we do not know. It was built after the usual pattern of such Forts, with a stockade surrounding it. Its location was about a mile or a mile and a half up the stream from its mouth. The place was always called Fort Dillow, although in our time there was no fort there, but its position was marked by a tree of unusual variety in that neighborhood. We were told that on one occasion a woman, riding to the Fort, had struck the end of her riding switch in the ground where it took root and grew. The writer remembers seeing the trees, but does not know whether or not it is there to the present day. These four men, being neighbors and located upon the extreme frontier, felt that they should have a fort nearby, to which they might resort in case of danger, without being compelled to flee to a more distant place of safety. On the occasion to which reference is now made, these four men with their families had taken refuge in the Fort, by reason of an alarm that the Indians were on the warpath. During the night, Thomas Bigger said, a man named Quinn, whom he had known in Ireland, and who lived farther to the east, rode by and called over the stockade that a large party of Indians were crossing the Ohio, and that they should leave the little fort and escape to the east. It would seem that no one else in the fort heard this. When he informed the others of what he had heard, they said he must have been asleep and that it was only a dream. He insisted that he was awake and urged upon

them that they should all leave the Fort. This they refused to do. As soon as it became light enough to see to travel he started, with his family, for a stronger fort located probably twelve or fifteen miles to the east on Miller's Run, believing that when the others saw him leaving they would believe him and follow. They, however, remained behind. Some time during the day, the little Fort was surrounded by a large body of Indians, who soon captured it and took all the inmates of the place prisoner. The Indians then with their prisoners started back toward the Ohio River. On the way, in one of the deep ravines which lead down to the Ohio, they massacred the entire party, except one of the Dillow children, a boy about fourteen years of age, whom they carried with them and adopted into the tribe. This boy remained with the Indians ten years. When he returned to the settlements, for the first time the people on the frontier learned the fate of the inmates of Fort Dillow. The young man said he believed he could find the place where the massacre occurred, and took a party to the spot, where they found the bones of the unfortunate inmates of Fort Dillow scattered upon the ground. Thomas Bigger and his wife and children escaped safely to the Fort on Miller's Run. Some time after this occurrence Thomas Bigger met Quinn and inquired of him how he came to be at the Fort that night, and was informed that he never was there. We have frequently heard these old people in our family say that their father always insisted, as long as he lived, that on that night he was as wide awake as he ever was in his life when he heard Quinn's voice. The writer has no explanation for this, but it is as well established as any other fact in the early history of the family, and we probably heard this incident discussed by the old people more than any other, and they had no explanation for it.

After making their escape to the Fort on Miller's Run, they found their a group of settlers numbering at least thirteen, and a substantial fort. There may have been more men than the thirteen, but we have the names of these thirteen set down in the diary of a no less accurate chronicle of passing events than George Washington, the Father of his Country. The writer of this sketch has a copy of Washington's diary, containing an account of his trip to the West in the autumn of 1784, in which the name of Thomas Bigger appears, along with twelve others. After the destruction of Fort Dillow, and the disappearance of its inmates, Thomas Bigger feared to return with his family to his former residence, but purchased a farm from one of two brothers names McBride, whose descendants have lived side by side with the Biggers from that day to this. He immediately went to work, building himself another house and clearing land. This labor lasted for seven years, we have often heard the old people say.

But their troubles were not yet over. The Revolutionary Was having come to an end, the Father of his Country turned his attention to his own business interests. They had been

long neglected. Having property west of the Alleghenies, he mounted his horse at Mt. Vernon and rode across the range. He first visited the site of a mill owned by him near Fort Pitt, which he had leased before the War to a man named Gilbert Simpson, with the object of settling with him under the terms of the contract. Having concluded his negotiations with Simpson, he next turned his attention to some land which he claimed on Miller's Run in this country. As our venerated ancestors were living on this land, under claim of ownership, this incident is of peculiar interest to us. We often heard the story from these old people of the visit of Washington to their home on Miller's Run, but never dreamed there was in existence an account of this incident, written by George Washington himself. The writer of the sketch has a copy of Washington's own account of this transaction, in a volume entitled "Washington and the West", written by Professor Hurlburt, of Marietta College. The same account may be found in a publication of Washington's Diaries by the ladies of Mt. Vernon Association, which may be found in almost any well equipped public library. These Scotch-Irish settlers on Miller's Run having heard of Washington's coming, and of his claim to be the owner of their land, sent a deputation to see him while he was still at Gilbert Simpson's. They were unable to reach any settlement with Washington and returned home. On the 18th day of September, 1784, Washington set out from Gilbert Simpson's, in company with Dr. Craik, who accompanied him on his journey, to visit the land he claimed on Miller's Run. The colony of Virginia had made land grants to her soldiers who served in the French and Indian Wars. These grants were for certain definite amounts of lands, and the written evidence of these grants were often sold by the owner. One of Washington's neighbors at Mt. Vernon, a man named Posey, sold his grant for nearly three thousand acres to Washington. These grants of wild lands, belonging to the colony of Virginia, lying in the forests beyond the Alleghenies, were accounted of little value by the recipients of them. But Washington had a vision of the future growth of the country beyond the Alleghenies which few, if any, others of his contemporaries had. And the Father of his Country was thrifty. He, therefore, commissioned Colonel Crawford, his friend and an early surveyor like himself, to select for him a body of good land of the amount called for by Posey's grant, and to do whatever was necessary to perfect this title. Colonel Crawford, who was later burned at the stake by the Indians near Upper Sandusky, Ohio, chose this land on which these Scotch-Irish settlers were afterwards living. This was Washington's title to the land. True, it was not within the boundaries of the colony of Virginia, but was within the boundaries of Penn's grant. Mason's and Dixon's line, however, had not yet been established, except to the summit of the Alleghenies from the east, for the reason that the Indians refused to permit the commissioners of the King to cross the Alleghenies, and they had returned home. For many years thereafter it was unknown

whether the land lying west of the Monongahela River was a part of Virginia or belonged to Pennsylvania. Washington had paid Posey about twelve pounds, equivalent to about sixty dollars, for nearly three thousand acres of land on Miller's Run. Compare sixty dollars for nearly three thousand acres of the best land on Miller's Run, underlaid with valuable seams of coal, within a few miles of Pittsburgh, and you will agree that Washington was a man who had a vision of the future.

Returning to Washington's visit, and the failure of the deputation sent to meet him at Gilbert Simpson's, Washington states that on the 19th of September, which he says was on Sunday, he arrived at the home of a man named Cassons, or Casson, whom he calls Colonel. We think it probable that this was Colonel Cannon, from whom Cannonsburg takes its name. Washington was careless about names and he spells the name "Bigger" in different ways in his account, once correctly and again with a final "t". Casson, or Cannon, it appears from his diary, lived a short distance from this land on Miller's Run.

The following is quoted from Washington's Diary:

"Being Sunday, and the people living on the land apparently-very religious, it was thought best to postpone going among them until tomorrow, but rid to Doctor Johnson's, who had a copy of Colonel Crawford's surveying records, but not finding him a home, was disappointed in the business which carried me there."

Under date of September 20th he makes the following entry:

"Went early this morning to view my land and to receive the final determination of those living upon it. Having obtained a pilot near the land, I went first to the plantation of Samuel McBride."

He then states the amount of land which Samuel McBride had under cultivation, and the nature of the improvements thereon. He then states he came next to the home of James McBride, and again describes the land and its amount, and the portion of it under cultivation and the improvements, as he does in the case of each of these settlers on the land he claimed. He then came third, according to his account, to the home of Thomas Bigger, our ancestor, and here the entry is as follows:

"Thomas Bigger-Robert Walker living thereon as tenant. No meadow-about 20 acres of arable land, dwelling house and single barn, fences tolerable and land good."

This Robert Walker was undoubtedly Thomas Bigger's brother-in-law, who was married to his sister Jane, the sister he brought with him when he came to America.

all

After visiting the home of each of these settlers upon the land he claimed, the diary continues:

"The foregoing are all the improvements upon this tract, which contains 2813 acres. The land is leveler than is common to be met with in this part of the country, and good. A part of it is in white oak, intermixed in many places with black oak, and is esteemed a valuable tract."

Continuing his diary, under date of September 20th, he says:

"Dined at David Reed's, after which Mr. James Scott and Squire Reed began to inquire whether I would part with the land, and upon what terms, adding that they did not conceive they could be dispossessed, yet to avoid contention they would buy, if my terms were moderate. I told them I had no inclination to sell. However, after hearing a good deal of their hardships, their religious principles, which had brought them together as a Society of Seceders, and unwilling to separate or remove, I told them I would make them a last offer, and this was the whole tract at twenty-five shillings per acre, the money to be paid at three annual payments with interest, or to become tenants under leases of nine hundred and ninety-nine years of ten per hundred per annum. The former they had a long consultation upon, and asked if I would take that price at a longer credit with interest; being answered in the negative they then determined to stand suit for the land. But it having been suggested that there were among them some who were disposed to relinquish their claim, I told them I would receive their answers individually, and accordingly called upon them as they stood; James Scott, William Stewart, Thomas Lapsley, James McBride, Bruce McGeechan, Thomas Bigger, David Reed, William Hillas, Samuel McBride, Duncan McGeechan, Matthew Johnson, John Reed and Thomas Glenn, they severally answered that they meant to stand suit and abide the issue of the law."

Washington, after this meeting, proceeded with his usual vigor and thoroughness to carry out his purpose of ejecting these Scotch-Irish people from the land. He states that on the 22nd of the month he visited Beeson's town, and engaged a lawyer named Thomas Smith to bring an action in ejectment, which was done. This suit was brought in 1784, but was on motion of Washington's counsel transferred to the Supreme Court, and in 1786 it was tried before two judges of the Supreme Court and a jury at Washington. The verdict of the jury and the judgement of the court were in Washington's favor.

Colonel J. T. Holmes, one of the most distinguished members of the Columbus, Ohio, bar, stated to the writer that he had spent a great deal of time and money in investigation the early history of Washington County, Pa., as his ancestor was contemporaneous in this county with ours. He stated that

the failure of these Scotch-Irish settlers to establish a good title was due to the fact that they derived their title to the land from Colonel Crogan, an early Indian trader and surveyor in western Pennsylvania. This title of Crogan rested upon an agreement or treaty between Crogan and the Indians, while Washington's title rested upon a grant from Virginia. Therefore Washington's title prevailed and the settlers lost their land. If the question be raised as to how Washington could establish a good title to land in Pennsylvania under a grant from the colony of Virginia, it appears that the legislative body in Pennsylvania, after the western boundary of Pennsylvania had been determined, validated all of the Virginia grants of land in Washington County, and thus made good the title of Washington.

After the decision of this case, Thomas Bigger brought his family to the home he had occupied near this spot, and there continued to live for the remainder of his life. Thomas Bigger died on February 7th, 1829, in the eighty-ninth year of his age. He was buried in the churchyard of Candor Presbyterian Church, in the Village of Candor in Washington County. In his burial lot there had already been interred, of the Bigger family, the mother of Thomas Bigger, who died on May 20th, 1780, in the seventy-eighth year of her age; James Bigger, a son of Thomas Bigger and Elizabeth, his wife, who died October 1st, 1780, at the age of one year and seven months. John Bigger, son of Thomas and Elizabeth, who died on November 11th, 1808, in the twenty-ninth year of his age. Jane Walker, a sister of Thomas Bigger, who died at the age of eighty-eight years, was also buried there.

Martha Bigger, the mother of Thomas Bigger, dying in 1780, in the seventy-eighth year of her age, fixes the date of her birth at 1702. Matthew, the father of Thomas, who died in Ireland, being probably somewhat older than his wife, we shall not be much in error if we put the date of his birth at or a little before 1700, probably somewhere between 1695 and 1700.

Upon the death of the mother of Thomas Bigger, whose Christian name was Martha, but whose maiden name is unknown, or at least not known to the writer, the question arose, as we learned from old people, as to the place of her burial. There was no church yet built in that part of the country in 1780, and no cemetery established. Some one suggested that they should bury her beside the graves of three men who had been killed in a fight with the Indians at Fort Beeler, where the village of Candor now stands. There is no monument to mark the graves of these three men, but they are doubtless near to that of Martha Bigger, whose grave is marked by a substantial monument. Carved upon this monument there are also the names of the other members of the Bigger family buried there. The person who made this suggestion of a burial place also suggested that, if she were buried there beside the graves of these three men, it would establish a burying ground and might lead to the building of a church at that place. What influence, if any, her burial there had

upon the subsequent location of a church at that point the writer does not know. It may have been because of these interments at that point that the Candor Presbyterian Church was built there, or one of the factors in fixing its location. This Presbyterian Church at Candor was the first church in this country to which the Biggers belonged.

Elizabeth Moore Bigger, the wife of Thomas Bigger, died on December 12th, 1836. She is buried in the churchyard of Robinson U.P. Church. The reason that she and her husband, who had stood so long side by side in life, do not lie side by side in their long sleep, is due to that fact that Robinson U. P. Church was not organized at the time of the death of Thomas Bigger, but was organized before the death of Elizabeth Bigger, his wife. Upon the organization of Robinson U. P. Church, the Biggers became members of that church. The burial ground, where Elizabeth Bigger, and most of her children are buried, was donated to the Church for a burial ground by Matthew Bigger, the oldest son of Thomas and Elizabeth, from a farm belonging to him adjoining the Church property.

The writer is uncertain as to which of the three sons of Thomas and Elizabeth Bigger, who were married, was first married, but it was either James or Andrew. Andrew, after his marriage, established his home on the land of his father about a half mile west of the ancestral home. The grandfather of the writer of this sketch, Samuel Bigger, was the last of the sons to marry, and upon his marriage an addition was built to the ancestral home, which addition was occupied by him and his wife. Upon the death of Thomas Bigger it was discovered that he had devised the land which included the ancestral home to his son Andrew, and the land which included the home of Andrew he had devised to his son, Samuel. Evidently each of them desired to remain where he had established his home, and this led them to exchange deeds to give effect to this desire, and by which each of them became the owner of the land which their father had left to the other. This fact was only learned by the writer two or three years ago when examining a copy of the will of Thomas Bigger, and other old documents in the possession of his brother, A. D. Bigger.

James Bigger, son of Thomas and Elizabeth, married Mary Biggart. Her home, before her marriage, was somewhere on Miller's Run. Although the name was spelled somewhat differently by her family, it was a spelling used by some branches of our family, but they were unable to trace any relationship between them. Andrew Bigger married Sarah Campbell, whose home, according to recollection, was somewhere in Beaver County, Pa.. Samuel Bigger married Jane Wills, whose home was between the ancestral home and Pittsburgh. The daughter, Martha, was married to Nathaniel McBride, a near neighbor of the Biggers, who was a son of either James McBride or Samuel McBride, whom Washington ejected along with our ancestors from the land on Miller's Run.

Our ancestors were thrifty people. They owned a large body of land at the time of the death of Thomas Bigger. Their children were all industrious. Saving their money, they invested it in land. They not only accumulated much land in western Pennsylvania, but some of them invested in land in Ohio, which was then regarded as the Far West. The writer has a deed signed by James Monroe, President of the United States, and dated September 27th, 1819, which conveyed the title to 160 acres of land in Ohio to Thomas Bigger, one of the three who lived in our family. Both Aunt Ann and Aunt Betsy invested their portion of their father's estate, coming to them at his death, in Ohio lands. This they sold to a man named Markle, and the writer distinctly remembers his being present when the deeds were executed for this land.

All of the children of Thomas Bigger and Elizabeth grew up in the home, with a single exception. The son Thomas, familiarly known as Uncle Tommy in his old age, was indentured by his father to a man named Burgett, who conducted a tannery on the site of the town of Burgettstown, which drives its name from this man. He served Burgett seven years in learning his trade. When the service was completed he went over the mountain to Chambersburg, where his uncles James and John lived, and worked for some time as a journeyman tanner. He then returned home and built a tannery of his own, which was located just west and near to the land which belonged to his brother Andrew. For years he carried on a flourishing business. The buildings, which were three in number, were still standing in the boyhood days of the writer, but have long since disappeared. All of the other sons were farmers.

Of these children of Thomas and Elizabeth Bigger, only two of them, the oldest Matthew, and the youngest Elizabeth, were able to celebrate the anniversaries of their births. A record was kept of the month and year when the others were born, but not the day of the month. Thomas Bigger himself, in an account book, set down the day of the month and year when his oldest son Matthew was born, but the record goes no further. The writer has this old account book, which contains the following items:

"Thomas Bigger. I was born in Ireland in the County of Antrim. I was married the 23rd day of May, 1773, and sailed from Londonderry the 9th day of August, 1773, and landed in Baltimore the 16th day of October, 1773. My son Matthew was born the 9th day of March 1774". Amid the excitements and the labors of those early days, it is evident little attention was paid to making records for the benefit of their descendants.

In the War of 1812, James Bigger enlisted, and served under General Harrison, in his campaign in Ohio against the French and Indians. We have often heard Aunt Ann, who was a year and a half older than her brother James, say that she wove the blankets which he took with him on that expedition, and she frequently referred to the joy in the family when he

returned in safety.

Athletic sports are not a modern discovery. They engaged in athletic sports in the early days on the frontier. Uncle Tommy Bigger used to tell us something of the sports engaged in on the occasion which he called the "Musters" - that is, the occasions when the militia was assembled for military training. The sports were wrestling, running and jumping. He specially made mention of the athletic feats of a colored man named Nels Fullum, and among other things said he had seen him in a running jump clear two horses standing side by side. On these occasions, Uncle Tommy was one of the musicians and played the fife, which he constructed himself from a hollow weed.

Money, in the first years of the residence here of our ancestors, was scarce and of uncertain value, except specie, the principal coin in circulation being the Spanish Dollar. From the time the federal government went into operation in 1789, our coinage system was the decimal system, the dollar being the unit of value, but all the entries in the account book of Thomas Bigger are in pounds, shillings, and pence, as late as 1796. These entries are few, one or two a charge for weaving cloth, and two or three for meat, without specifying the kind. This little book is the only writing known to exist in the hand of Thomas Bigger.

In these prohibition days, one hesitates to call attention to the fact that most of the entries are for gallons, quarts and pints. Thomas Bigger at an early period, the exact date not being known, established a distillery, and the writer recalls the fact that Aunt Betsy, on one occasion at least, pointed out its location. As the first organized opposition to the federal government occurred in the western countries of Pennsylvania and one of the Virginia counties, known as the "Whiskey Insurrection" against the excise tax on whiskey, which President Washington promptly suppressed by sending troops against the rebels, the question becomes pertinent, did Thomas Bigger take any part in this insurrection? It is the conclusion upon these facts: first, that he never heard anything said about it by the old people in the family, and second, that all the entries in this account book are for whiskey sold in the three summer months of 1796, which was two years after the whiskey insurrection, which occurred in 1794. From the fact that all the entries for whiskey sold are within the months of June, July and August of 1796, it seems probable that it was in that year that he established his distillery, and that he soon ceased to sell to his neighbors, thereafter simply distilling for his own use. Men would not work for an employer who did not furnish them whiskey. It must also be remembered that no moral stigma attached to either the manufacture or sale of intoxicating liquor at that time. The statement of the old people is recalled that when the minister of the church made pastoral visits, the bottle and glass were always set before him, and that a failure to do so would have been regarded as a serious breach of hospitality.

From what we learned from the old people, the first business engaged in the Thomas Bigger which brought in my considerable return in money was the growing of wheat. This wheat was hauled to the grist mill and converted into flour. The flour was barreled and hauled to Pittsburgh, where it was sold, to be floated down the Ohio River on flat boats to New Orleans, where it was doubtless largely exported. The writer learned from his grandfather, Samuel, that he hauled the flour to Pittsburgh using six horses in his team. Wheat then grew luxuriantly, as the elements necessary to its growth were present in the virgin soil, which later were exhausted.

Another incident of that early period which should be made a matter of record is the following, which occurred shortly after Thomas Bigger came here, and probably the first year. Two young men were making an improvement for someone named Hollingsworth, at or near the place where James Witherspoon now resides. After the day's work was done, on a hot summer day, these young men went down to Raccoon Creek for a swim, and one of them was drowned. The other man, name unknown, went to his nearest neighbor, Thomas Bigger, and brought him to the spot, which was just below the mouth of Chamberlain's Run. The name of the young man who was drowned was Richard Dixon, and the writer's father often pointed out to him a large tree, at the foot of which Dixon's grave was located, but his tree has been long gone, as the land was afterwards cleared. While the young man went to Washington for the coroner, Thomas Bigger remained beside the body, passing at least one night in that lonely vigil in the forest. It might be well for the descendants of Thomas Bigger to do what the writer's father said was his purpose, to place a large stone near the spot, with the name of Richard Dixon engraved thereon, to mark the last resting place of this young man who was here as early as our ancestor, and who was his nearest neighbor.

As to the long period of time covered by the lives of this family of children of Thomas and Elizabeth Bigger, attention is called to the fact that of the ten brother and sisters of Aunt Betsy Bigger, seven of them were born more than one hundred years before her death, and one of them died one hundred and seven years before her death. The entire period from the birth of Matthew to the death of Aunt Betsy was a period of one hundred and thirteen years.

All of these children of Thomas and Elizabeth Bigger continued to reside during their lives in the immediate neighborhood of the ancestral home, except James. James Bigger established his home in 1816 or 1817 on a farm near Frankfort Springs, Beaver County, Pennsylvania, and continued to reside there until his death, which occurred on October 15, 1861. He is buried in the churchyard of Frankfort Springs U. P. Church.

But this sketch must be brought to an end. The bridge across this chasm of the years, resulting from childhood and youth joining hands with old age, may seem to some to be a somewhat unstable structure for the passage of authentic

records of events so far in the past; but as to the substance of the incidents related, it is believed by those who listened to the recital of them that they are an authentic statement of facts. Of the ten children of Thomas and Elizabeth Bigger, who grew to manhood and womanhood, the writer knew six of them intimately. These were the three who lived in our family, Samuel, the writer's grandfather; Andrew, who lived on the adjoining farm in our boyhood; and Martha, the wife of Nathaniel McBride. All of them were of sound mind memory. Aunt Ann in particular possessed a remarkable memory. These matters were stated as the truth by these old people, who were nearing the end of life; they were not addicted to the circulation of falsehoods. Wherever it has been possible to verify their statements, they have been verified. This is especially true of the incident which brings the Father of His Country into the picture. It was many years after we heard the old people speak of Washington's diary contained an account of it.

As to the Fort Dillow incident, the location of it was a matter of common knowledge in this neighborhood. It was always referred to as Fort Dillow, although the Fort had long ago disappeared, and was doubtless destroyed by the Indians.

It is believed that no one who has written of the history of this country has ever mentioned Fort Dillow, and the tragic fate of its inmates. Of course, they had never heard of it. It required something more than a mere report of an Indian raid to drive these ancestors of ours from their home permanently, for they had fled before on occasion of such rumors, but always returned again to it. The tragic fate of Fort Dillow, however, was a more serious matter, which impelled them to desert the home and buy another, when they already had expended some years of labor on the one they had. No one who knew these children of Thomas and Elizabeth Bigger, would for a moment believe they fabricated this story, or that their parents fabricated it. We have often heard these old people say that their father insisted, as he lived, when the subject came up, that on the night before the massacre of Fort Dillow he was wide awake when he heard Quinn's voice. None of the inmates of the Fort were left to tell the tale except the Dillow boy, and according to our recollection it was stated that he went back to live with the Indians.

Before closing this sketch the writer desire at this late day to say a few word of personal appreciation and acknowledge an obligation to one of these children of Thomas Bigger which was unusual in its nature. This obligation rests equally upon the writer and his brother and sister. We had the misfortune to lose our mother when the writer, the oldest of her children, was but seven years of age, and our sister but two years of age. Upon her deathbed our mother committed her children to Aunt Betsy, and asked of her that she take the place of a mother to her motherless children. Aunt Betsy was then sixty-six years of age, and this was a weighty obligation for a woman of that age to assume but the promise was given. The three of us are living witnesses to

the faithfulness with which that trust was discharged. Day and night, in sickness and in health, that benign influence surrounded us. The loss of a good mother is an irreparable loss; but no mother could have been more solicitous for the welfare of her own children than was this aged woman for our welfare. The moral grandeur of this daughter of Thomas and Elizabeth Bigger, her utter unselfishness, and her supreme devotion to the call of duty, glows more brightly with the passing of the years. Few now living knew her. Her life reflects light upon our common ancestors, which cannot be mistaken. We have often heard her say that God had prolonged her life in order that she might carry out the trusts reposed in her by our Mother. She lived for nearly a quarter of a century after she assumed that trust, dying at the age of ninety-one.

We, who are descendants of Thomas Bigger and James Donaldson, (for what I am now saying applies equally to both) have no reason to be ashamed of these our ancestors. They were plain, earnest, God-fearing people. In this highly commercial and industrial age, we are in some danger of losing some things which they regarded of greater importance than the mere accumulation of wealth. We belong to a virile race, which has had no superior in great achievements in every field of human endeavor. We are the bearers of the torch of the race. Let us carry it proudly and transmit it undimmed to future generations. Courage and integrity have been two of the outstanding characteristics of the race. These our ancestors stood ever ready to lend a helping hand to their neighbor in his time of need, often times to their financial loss, but to the everlasting gain of the memories we cherish. There are always the open door and a welcome to the board for the wayfarer. They perhaps did not possess many of the graces which mark polite society; but they possessed the fundamental traits of character which mark the highest types of manhood and womanhood, in all ages and under all conditions. In the light of everything we know of these ancestors of ours, let us each one seriously ask ourselves, are we worth descendants of Thomas Bigger and James Donaldson, and the heroic women who were their wives?

There is amended to this sketch the dates of the births and deaths of the children of Thomas Bigger and Elizabeth Moore, his wife.

- Matthew Bigger---Born March 9, 1774-Died November 11, 1849
- Jane Bigger-----Born March, 1776---Died August 30, 1851
- John Bigger-----Born March, 1778---Died November 11, 1808
- James Bigger-----Born March, 1780---Died October 1, 1780
- Thomas Bigger----Born March, 1783---Died February 8, 1870
- Ann Bigger-----Born August, 1785---Died August 9, 1872
- James Bigger-----Born March, 1787---Died October 15, 1861
- Samuel Bigger----Born March, 1789---Died March 17, 1873
- Martha Bigger----Born April, 1791---Died October 20, 1866
- Andrew Bigger----Born March, 1793---Died October 18, 1869
- Elizabeth Bigger-Born January 18, 1797-September 11, 1887

EXCERPTS TAKEN FROM AN "ADDRESS OF JUDGE THOMAS M. BIGGER OF COLUMBUS, OHIO AT THE DONALDSON-BIGGER REUNION HELD AUGUST 24TH, 1929 AT ROBINSON U. P. CHURCH."

"This brings us to an incident which came near to rendering impossible any reunions of the descendants of Thomas and Elizabeth Bigger. The reference is to the massacre, by the Indians, of the people who were in Fort Dillow. The location of the Fort was on the south bank of Dillow's Run, a tributary of Raccoon Creek, entering it from the west, the mouth of the Run being opposite to the residence of A. d. Bigger, the brother of the writer of this sketch, and our boyhood home. This little Fort was built by Thomas Bigger and Dillow, whose home was there, and at least two other men, whose names we do not know. It was built after the usual pattern of such Forts, with a stockade surrounding it. Its location was about a mile or a mile and a half up the stream from its mouth. The place was always called Fort Dillow, although in our time there was no Fort there, but its position was marked by a tree of unusual variety in that neighborhood. We were told that on one occasion a woman, riding to the Fort, had stuck the end of her riding switch in the ground where it took root and grew. The writer remembers seeing the tree, but does not know whether or not it is there to the present day.

These four men, being neighbors and located upon the extreme frontier, felt that they should have a fort nearby, to which they might resort in case of danger, without being compelled to flee to a more distant place of safety. On the occasion to which reference is now made, these four men with their families had taken refuge in the Fort, by reason of an alarm that the Indians were on the warpath. During the night, Thomas Bigger said, a man named Quinn, whom he had known in Ireland, and who lived farther to the east, rode by and called over the stockade that a large party of Indians were crossing the Ohio, and that they would leave the little Fort and escape to the east. It would seem that no one else at the Fort heard this. When he informed the others of what he had heard, they said he must have been asleep and that it was only a dream. He insisted that he was awake and urged upon them that they should all leave the Fort. This they refused to do. As soon as it became light enough to see to travel, he started for a stronger fort located probably twelve or fifteen miles to the east on Miller's Run, believing that when the others saw him leaving they would believe him and follow. They, however, remained behind. Some time during the day the little Fort was surrounded by a large body of Indians, who soon captured it and took all the inmates of the place prisoner. Then Indians then with their prisoners started back toward the Ohio River. On the way, on one of the deep ravines which lead down to the Ohio, they massacred the entire party, except on the of the Dillow children, a boy about fourteen years of age, whom they carried with them and adopted into the tribe. This boy remained with the Indians ten years. When he returned to the settlement, for the first

time the people on the frontier learned the fate of the inmates of Fort Dillow. The young man said he believed he could find the place where the massacre occurred, and took a party to the spot, where they found the bones of the unfortunate inmates of Fort Dillow scattered upon the ground. Thomas Bigger and his wife and children escaped safely to the fort on Miller's Run. Some time after this occurrence Thomas Bigger met Quinn and inquired of him how he came to be at the Fort that night, and was informed that he never was there. We have frequently heard these old people in our family say that their father always insisted, as long as he lived, that on that night he was as wide awake as he ever was in his life when he heard Quinn's voice. The writer has no explanation for this, but it is as well established as any other fact in the early history of the family, and we probably heard this incident discussed by the old people more than other, and they had no explanation for it".

....

As to the Fort Dillow incident, the location of it was a matter of common knowledge in this neighborhood. It was always referred to as Fort Dillow, although the Fort had long ago disappeared, and was doubtless destroyed by the Indians.

It is believed that no one who has written of the history of this country has ever mentioned Fort Dillow, and the tragic fate of its inmates. Of course, they had never heard of it. It required something more than a mere report of an Indian raid to drive these ancestors of ours from their home permanently, for they had fled before on occasion of such rumors, but always returned again to it... Thomas Bigger and Elizabeth Moore

Children

- Matthew Bigger ----- 1774-1849
- Jane Bigger ----- 1776-1851
- John Bigger ----- 1778-1808
- James Bigger ----- 1780-1780
- Ann Bigger ----- 1785-1872
- James Bigger ----- 1787-1861
- Samuel Bigger ----- 1789-1873
- Martha Bigger ----- 1791-1866
- Andrew Bigger ----- 1793-1869
- Elizabeth Bigger ---- 1797-1887

The writer Judge Thomas M. Bigger, was seven when his mother died and he was raised by his Aunt Betsy Bigger (see above 1797-1887). Also in the household was his Aunt Ann and Uncle Tommy -- all unmarried. These three told stories to the author and his sister about the early days that are as authentic as any we have on record.