

A Biographical Sketch of the Life of Noah Tomlinson ID0765 - Acc001123

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Noah Tomlinson

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A Biographical Sketch of the Life of Noah Tomlinson 1824-1918
By his son Asher Kellum Tomlinson April 24, 1931.

Noah Tomlinson was born in the south-east corner of Hendricks County, Indiana, in the territory which, was known at that time as, the "Little White Lick Country". His parents were Robert and Lydia (Kellum) Tomlinson. Noah was third child of a family of nine, having four sisters and four brothers. His early schooling consisted of learning a little of reading, spelling, writing, and arithmetic. He received most of his education by putting the foregoing into practice when he commenced business with other men. As to his education, however, it is said that the men with whom he worked always recognized his tools because they were invariably covered with figures. He was a man ~~who~~ ~~was~~ ~~man~~ who was well educated during his entire life because he never ceased to keep abreast of the time and was always eager to learn. His first school teacher was Noah Kellum, his grandfather and the school was held in a Friends Meeting house called "Fairfield", a mile or more up the creek from their home.

About the first incident he can remember of school life was when one evening going home from school the larger boys and girls were playing "Bear". Some one would run on in advance and hide in the bushes. These were bent almost to the ground by a heavy damp snow which had been falling most of the day. Then the one who had ~~had~~ hidden would jump out at the others as they came along, and all would shout "A bear, a bear", and run as hard as they could. After awhile, amid all of that fun a wild black bear actually did jump out from under the bushes and started for their lunches, the fun ceased; shouts and laughter were turned to screams and yelling; the larger children snatched up the smaller ones and ran down the path, never to stop until everyone was safe at home. It is said that one large girl snatched up a child and out-ran all the rest. They never knew what went with the bear.

Noah engaged in the work as the whole family had to do to make a living; when yet small he went with his father to sell a wagon load of apples to a road gang of men who were engaged in opening the National Road on west were camped on the high land of White Lick Creek west of Plainfield.

One of the main seasons at that time was the sugar making season. The family had a large sugar orchard on their farm, and every year sugar was made from the water from these trees. As soon as a child, boy or girl, was strong enough to walk through the woods and carry a gallon bucket and a tin cup to dip the water from the sugar troughs the child had to help make sugar. Their father had a furnace near the house withashed over it where he would boil the water, and the children would gather the water and pour it into a barrel which was on a sled drawn by a trusty old horse. When the barrel was full they would start the horse to the camp where their father would empty the barrel and start the horse back to the orchard. They always expected to make all the sugar the family needed for the year and a great deal to sell. For example, the first metal moleboard plow they ever had was paid for by selling sugar at Indianapolis.

Noah's parents decided they would better themselves by a change of location. This decision was reached for different reasons. One was, that there had been a mill dam built in the creek causing the water to stand a good part of the year over some of the best of their land which they wished to clear and cultivate. Also they believed the mill dam made it an unhealthful place to live.

In February 1837 they settled in Hamilton County, Indiana, two miles north of Westfield. Noah was now one of the young pioneer men in the woods of their new location and he busied himself in the work in which everyone was engaged-- that of building a house and clearing the land. In this work, Noah, soon became one of the foremost and most reliable. He also took great pleasure in hunting ~~in the~~ ~~woods~~ the wild game, especially the raccoon. He killed one deer in ten rods of the house. One night as he was going home from Westfield - just about the time he passed the Mile-Pond, which is one mile north of Westfield. He heard a noise behind him. He could not understand what was making the noise; he thought it might be a pack of wolves on his track and they seemed to get nearer to him. He reasoned for a while what he could do. It was too dark to try to run, and to climb a tree meant that he would

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have to stay un-til day light, so he concluded he would walk as fast as he could and when he had to do something he would. He arrived at home without getting any nearer. Next day he went down to the Mile Pond and that a large bunch of Blue ^{ducks} ~~hens~~ had settled there and were nesting and at times they would make an awful noise which at night sounded like the woods was full of wolves. One incident that created excitement was one night the dogs started something that seemed unusual, it was near where the Range Line Road (National road #31) now crosses the Dismal (swamp) the dogs would run up and back on out and kept on doing that until they got almost across the Dismal and the animal ran up a tree. As the boys drew near it came scrapping down the tree and the dogs came running back to the boys scared so badly that they would not hunt any more that night. The dogs were big and fierce. The boys thought it was a bear.

Another incident at the Brick Yard. It was Noah's business to make the mortar and another fellow to put it in a wheel barrow and wheel it up an incline plank and dump it on a table where another hand would mold the mud into brick. One day the mud wheeler told the other hands that he could wheel a load of mud up the plank and put it on the table that would make more brick than Noah could. Nothing would do the hands but they should try it out. They agreed that Noah should make the first load. He loaded up and started rather tottery, but soon become steady, and slowly moved up the plank. The nearer he came to the table the steadier he became and just at the right place he dumped it on the table. The molder made it into brick. Then the other fellow thought it an easy task to beat him. He was a big strong fellow. He took his load and started on the jump but become slower before he arrived at the top of the plank. And just as he thought it was at the right place and went to dump it on the table he let it fall to the ground on the wrong side. Then the hands all laughed and the funny boy rolled on the ground. The mud was made into brick and it made one more brick than Noah's did but he had dumped it on the wrong side, so he lost the game.

When Noah was about fifteen years old there was a man in Westfield by the name of Benjamin Chappell who made it a business of making brick, so when work was not pressing very hard on the farm, Noah would go and hire for a few days, to Chappell. He soon became foreman among the hands and an expert in making mortar from which the bricks are made. So valuable was he to Chappell would not do without him if he could help it. One little incident occurred there that was amusing to the hands. The custom of cutting a pie for dinner, was to cut it in square pieces, which left the middle piece without any edge crust. One of the hands would always take the middle piece, even if there had not been any taken from around it. That became rather funny to the boys so Noah proposed to play a joke on him. They arranged with the cook to make an apple pie and not put any apple in the center and cut it like common and pass it to the fellow first. It happened and the boys all knew what was coming, the pie was passed to him first and he went for the middle piece never noticing that there was nothing in it until he got it on his plate. The boys began to laugh and he could not stand it, so he left the table. One boy was so tickled that he ran out of the house and rolled on the ground and just kept laughing. That night the fellow quit and never came back. So the tricks of Noah threw Chappell out of a hand.

WAIGHING HOGS: The very earliest method of weighing hogs was to drive them out of the wild woods into a pen by surrounding them with men and dogs. Then in some way each hog would be caught, tied and weighed with steelyards. Men would raise the hog clear of the ground, balance the steelyards then knock his tushes out and turn him loose in the pen of weighed hogs. The men, who bought the hogs would drive them to Indianapolis to ship to Cincinnati. One day while they were weighing hogs in this manner they allowed one old and very fierce hog to get away without having his tush knocked out. The hog soon drove every man and dog up out of his reach, some jumping the fence and others climbing on logs that were in the lot, while he just walked around to see that every fellow was in his place. Once the hog came to the log where Noah was standing. He stood, clamped his tushes and scraped the ground, as if he would tear every fellow on the log to pieces. Noah could hardly stand that, he had a strong notion to jump right down on his back but it looked almost too dangerous for a light boy like him. The hog passed on and Noah decided if he came back he would jump on him. In about five minutes he came back madder than ever but Noah

was not to be whipped out that way so down on the hog he went and grabbed him by the ears. Then the others followed and held the hog while his tusks were knocked out. Nobody was hurt, but it was the common expression to Noah, that "I never would have done that" and "How could you do such a thing".

A TRIP TO LAFAYETTE : When Noah was about sixteen years of age his father sent him and his brother Milton with an ox team, of two yoke, and wagon loaded with wheat, to market at Lafayette, Indiana. A young man by the name of Noah Snow went with them with another ox team and a load of his own. The first days travel was without any excitement. They camped on the banks of Sugar Creek west of Kirklin. The next morning they wanted to get an early start and get their trading done that evening. The creek was crossed and on up the road they went. Noah was attracted by the echo of the crack of his whip and the roaring it made through the timber: it was fun to him and he would have more fun listening to it when they should reach the twelve mile prairie which was just a mile or two ahead. However when much to his surprise when he arrived there he was disappointed that he just quit, there was no echo at all except around the edge of the timber and that did not sound much. The Twelve mile prairie is a small prairie south-west of Frankfort which is about twelve miles across in either direction. The road to Lafayette went diagonally across it. There were several small ponds in it and the wild ducks were in great numbers around them. Milton and the man, Snow, wanted to go and see if they could a duck for dinner. They left Noah with both teams and Snows team had to be driven all the time. After he had been traveling about a half of an hour in this, he saw three wagons with six horses each, loaded with goods which he supposed to be going to Cincinnati. As there were men who made it a business of hauling between Cincinnati and Lafayette. Noah for a while did not know how he was going to manage, for his team was ahead going by themselves. He could not leave the others for they would stop. While thinking about it he came to a place in the road where it was just a track. Then a thought came to him that he would run and put their near one in the the right track and no horse nor man could make him leave that track but the other one of them and the off ox was always pushing ahead and no horse or man could stop him. So after getting them started right up the road he fell back to see what would happen. When they came to the place to take either side they took the track the oxen were on, the other was as good if not a little better. Noah wondered more than ever what would happen: he knew that ox never give in for horse or man.

When it was time for the teams to begin to get out out of the road the men saw that the oxen were not going to turn out. Then they began to hold their horses hard in the road and hollow at the oxen. But the oxen did not seem to hear them, and when the horses came close enough the old ox nodded his head and with his horns showed the horses where to get off the road. Then the driver, upon a high seat on the front of the wagon, did all whipping that ox over the head that he was prepared to do, but the oxen never halted or acted as though there was anything going on. There were two men on each wagon. The second team saw the fate of the first so he prepared a little better. He gave the lines to the other man and his best to the whip. Their whips were long so they reach the front horses. They came up to the oxen, and the ox nodded his head and horns which showed the horses what to do. But the driver thought he would hold the the horses on the oxen, and the man with the whip, with all he could say either good bad, the oxen went on up the road.

Then came the third and with his rage increased, made a little better preparations. He got out and stood on the foot board and with all the words he could say, lashed that ox over the head. But the oxen went on up the road track they were put on and as the wagons passed Noah and the other team all three of them were on the track they should have taken in the first place. as they passed they could not say hard enough things about those oxen and the fellow they belonged to.

Another trip to Lafayette: The same boys, Noah and Milton and the same oxen. On this trip there were four or five horse teams: they were to meet at Westfield and start from there. The morning they met and saw that Noah and Milton were going to drive the oxen they made all sorts of remarks about them and said we would be coming home before you get there. So, in the line up they put the oxen in the rear because none of them wanted to be held back by a slow ox team. When they camped the:

oxen were there, and next morning the oxen were ready to go. When Lafayette was reached rear was pushing the front. Every fellow had trading to do. The men got through first, they told the boys that they would go on down the road towards home and camp for the night and they would find them just out of town. When the boys got ready they started home. They found the men about where they expected just before dark. The men commenced making fun of their slowness and the boys held their own with them. The men said, "You will be a half day behind us when we get home", but Milton kept making fun of them; while they were saying everything they could think of, Noah spoke to the oxen to go on, Milton talking back to them. It was very dark and looked like rain. There was a place in the road where it was hard to discover the right track. Noah drove, walking by and holding to the bow of the near ox, until he was sure they were on the right track. He stopped the oxen and crawled into the wagon and told Milton, if there was any more driving to be done he might do it. Milton half asleep looked out and told the oxen to go on and both of the boys went to sleep. Just as they reached the other edge of the twelve mile prairie the boys were awakened by a stop of the wagon. They looked out just in time to see a bear sneaking out in the bushes at the side of the road. The oxen went on without telling and again they went to sleep. The next thing knew the wagon stopped and it was raining; they got out to see what the trouble was and found that a front wheel of the wagon had fallen into a hole in a culvert. They had to unload a part of the load so they could pry the wheel up again, pulled out on better ground and fed their oxen and stayed until the break of day. The oxen had traveled twelve miles or more and crossed the creek with driving. Next morning they started before sun up. When the horse teams got home the oxen had been home more than a half day.

Log-rolling and rail splitting was hard work that had to be done in making the farm. At both of these Noah was rather expert, not by strength, because he was counted as one of the weakest of the boys but by his tact.

Log Hauling: One day in the latter part of the winter Noah went out along the edge of the Dismal to get a log. It was thawing enough to let the wagon slip about so there was not much certainty as to where it might go. When he got to the log he soon found that on account of the condition of the road his load was too heavy for his team. He sent the hired man back to the mill to bring out two more yoke of oxen. Noah had hauled the log to a place in the road where he would not try to go any farther until help came. When the men came with the two yoke, they hitched on, Noah had in his mind just how he was going to do, he had five yoke of oxen, and all ready to pull. The hired man was to stay back and not bother the oxen, the road went around on the side of hill to keep out of a quag that was at the foot of the hill. Noah started the team and was getting along well but when he got to the very worst place the hired man thought he was not going to make it, and ran in with a whip on the front oxen. This threw the wagon into the Quag. Noah saw that the wagon was going to turn over into the Quag and quickly stopped. He worked with it quite a while but every move he made threw it to the Quag. He finally concluded he would pull it out or turn it over into the Quag and sure enough it went over and stopped with the wagon on top. They went to work, got the wagon off the log and put it on the other side of the Quag where the mire was not quite so soft. He rolled the log on and when the log struck the wagon, the wagon sank to about the top of the bolsters, or in other words, the log was laying in the mud and the wagon under it. Then he hitched the five yoke of oxen to the wagon and again told the hired man to stand back and not say a word. He pulled, mud and water out leaving a hole where they once were. This quickly filled water. He took the wagon, log and all the mud that stuck to them over to the mill; tugging it in with his whole string of oxen.

In July 1845 Noah was married to Abigail Davis, daughter of Benjamin and Ruth Davis, and settled on forty acres, all of which was in the woods. To them were eight children born, all living to be grown. Lydia, May 9th., 1846; Zeno, May 8th., 1848; Ruth, October 15, 1851; Robert, September 15, 1854; Zeruah C. March 19, 1857; Asher K., March 27th., 1861; Morton, February 15th., 1863; Finley, June 22, 1866.

In 1847 Noah helped his father build a frame barn, which is yet standing. It was quite a trait to use food-ads correctly and speedily, also to make a straight auger hole through the large timbers they put in the barns in those days. Noah was an expert in both. Riving boards was also a favorite work of his.

In 1849 Noah and his father and brothers built a steam-sawmill three miles north of Westfield, Indiana and one half mile west of the south side of the Dismal. It was the first successful steam sawmill in Hamilton county. There was so much sawing to do that at times the mill was kept running day and night. They sawed the timber for the first rail-road bridge across White River at Noblesville and hauled it with their oxen.

They became known all over the county, while running the mill as men that made things move. If any one had a hard job of work to do they would send for one of them and the oxen. Noah hauled boilers for big mills from Indianapolis. It might be said here that Noah fed his oxen on the west side of Pennsylvania street where it crosses Washington street. Perhaps it might be of interest to the reader to know the names of some of those oxen. They were Bill and Poulke, Sam and Slide, Black and Nigger, they were very large cattle. The others were smaller-- Ball and Van, Dave and Dal. The names of several others have been forgotten. At this time there were a great many framed houses and barns being built, the raising of these frames required several men. Noah was often chosen to be the boss of the raising. Making roads through the woods was one great task for the early settlers. Noah very soon became much interested. Almost every year for fifty years he was appointed by the County Commissioners to view roads for building. One similar incident at this work might be mentioned. The line crossed a big pond with low wet ground all around it. The other viewers wanted to run the road around it, but Noah said we will go right through it, then they will drain the pond and the road will be alright. Eli Phelps one of the viewers said my boots leak and I would not get my feet wet for the road. Noah picked him up and carried him across the wet ground almost one quarter of a mile. The road was made through it. He was appointed to secure "the right of way" for the Midland Rail Road through Washington Township.

The first settlement that was made in Washington Township was around Westfield on the high land of Cool Creek. There was no road to this place. The state started to run a line for a road on the west side of White River from Indianapolis to Peru on the Wabash River. That would make miss Westfield but men of this settlement persuaded the surveyor when he struck the Range Line in Marion County to follow that line to Westfield and then take off to the north-east. For a few years it was the only road through Westfield. Later it became a mail route from Indianapolis to Peru. For a few years the mail was carried on horse-back.

In 1859 Noah thought it would be much better for the country to have that diagonal road from Westfield three north laid down and a road opened on the range line for a distance of six miles north and graveled. He got a petition to lay the road down, and also one to open the range line. That met with strong opposition, they took it into court but Noah got the court decision in his favor. At that time John Chappel was making arrangements to build a brick house north of Westfield on the old road. Noah told him if he wanted his house to face the road he had better face it to the west for "this road is going to be laid down". John knew better than that. This road has been here too long to be laid down. So he built his house facing it. The brick house still stands but the road is gone.

The Range Road crosses the Dismal just three miles north of Westfield and people said that there never could be a road made across it. But Noah thought it could be done, and amid all opposition he worked steadily on at getting stocks to make a gravel road. He was told that he need not try to raise stock on the last mile on the north end of the road and he need not come into the neighborhood but went just

as though nothing had been said. The stock was raised and some of the men that said such things took stock. The man that preached Noah's funeral was a boy who lived on the last mile of the road at that time, and his father was opposed to the road. He made mention in his sermon of the opposition Noah met with in their neighborhood but he made the road and now for more than fifty years they had a good road.

Now back to making the road across the Dismal. It was a hard task. On each side at the bottom of the hill there were quogs that a horse could not walk across, and in fact almost all the distance was swampy. The first work was to drain it which was done by cutting a ditch along the side of the road. Then logs were put in the worst places to hold up the dirt. Then when the ground was frozen they hauled the gravel. The first work on grading the road was at the cross streets in Westfield in 1861.

The road was completed in about five years, which made a gravel road from the north end of this road to Indianapolis. Indianapolis was a market place for all that the farmers had to sell. The road made a great outlet to market for the farmers in the north part of Hamilton County, and south part of Tipton County and for several years all night long in the fall of the year the rattle of wagons could be heard.

At this writing one might ask what has this road grown to be? A very short answer would be, that, the traffic is immense. A great through-fare from South Bend to Indianapolis, there on to the Ohio River, and on and more than that: it is an outlet for the traffic on both the east and west side of Lake Michigan from Wisconsin and the north west of Michigan to the Gulf of Mexico. Authorities say there is more travel on this road than any other in Indiana.

Noah had the idea when he commenced work on it that it would be a great road, more than we can tell and told the people so, but few believed him.

After the completion of this road a company undertook to build the Layayette road from Noblesville to the Range Line road. The men in charge of it could not get along with the hands, they were doing no good. So decided to hire Noah to come and build it. In a short time everything was moving on rapidly and the road was finished.

Noah was known to be a great "Peace-maker". He was often called upon to settle disputed questions between men. He served several terms on the county jury.

As the farmers cleared their land they began to raise a great deal of corn and that helped them to raise more hogs, until it became a great hog country. There were men who followed the business of buying hogs, making great droves and driving them to Indianapolis to market. At this time Indianapolis had grown to be the best market near at hand.

Those traders knew that Noah was a head driver. When possible they employed him to boss the driving. This was by no means an easy task, as but very few places were there fences on both sides of the road and miles of the road was through the woods. At one time they had about eight hundred head driving them through Broad Ripple, then called Buzzards Glory. Whisky could always be bought there, so some of the hands went in, bought some whisky and got drunk. Some were so drunk they had to lie up in the wagon with the hogs that had given out and had to be hauled. One hand that gotten so he could hardly walk but he, somehow had secured a horse to ride. There was about one half mile of road just before they got to Fall Creek, where there had been a great storm which blew the timber across the road and every direction. With some of the hands dead drunk it made it very hard to keep the hogs going the right way. The drunken hand on the horse would ride in and drive the wrong way more than the right way. Noah had just about worn himself out so he went up to the man on the horse and told him to get off for he himself was run down and had to have the horse. The man swore by everything that was good and bad that he never would get off. Noah told him he meant what he said and if he did not get off he would throw him off. Just as Noah got to him he slid off on the other side. Then he did like the other men that were drunk, he quit, and Noah took the horse.

The first rail road train that Noah ever saw was seen when he was driving a drove to Indianapolis. About four miles north of the City, they put up to stay all night, and the next mornin while they were waiting for the hogs to eat they heard the engine whistle. They did not know what it was but the land-lord told them that it was a train coming up to Indianapolis. He told it would be in about one hour, so the hands broke out in a run of four miles to see the train. They got there in time to see the rear end going out of sight. Not long after that they took a drove down

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and putting it on that train went to the Ohio River with them. Noah and two other hands had to go along to keep the hogs from piling up on each other. They did it by running boards that were laid on top of open cars.

Once they had a thousand head in one drove when the foremost hogs struck Washington Street they scared and turned back with a run. They hands saw them coming and made all noise they could beating the hogs with clubs and whips and shoving with their hands until they had hogs piled as high as their heads. Finally, however, they turned them back.

The personality of Noah was very strong. Hewas about five feet five inches high and weighed one hundred sixty pounds. He was of even temper but positive in his speech. He was a life long member of the Friends Church and supported it to the end. He did more to build the meeting house Chester than any other member. He also gave his children the opportunity of a good education. He worked hard for Union High School, the first High School at Westfield. He was a Charter member of the Republican Political Party.

In the War of 1861 the Friends Church raised large sums of money to assist in caring for the sick and wounded and also for other purposes. Noah was appointed by the church to handle that money.

In that war he made several trips to the cities of Peru and Wabash with the soldiers. He himself was twice drafted as a soldier and twice paid out. He never drank whisky or beer or any thing of that kind, nor used tobacco. He was a great friend of the colored man and was an eye witness to the John Rhoades case which happened in Hamilton County. When he was about sixteen years old he was sent by his parents, on horse-back to Greens-boro, Henry County, Indiana to a free-labor store to get some spun cotton for the use of the family. When he started home, after a short time, it began to rain and snow. For a while he would stop to warm, but afternoon he thought perhaps he could make it home without warming. When he got home, he was so near frozen that his father and brothers had to take him off his horse and carry him into the house.

At an early age he became intered in the improvement of live stock on the farm. This resulted in about thirty years of owning thorough-bred Short-horn cattle and thorough-bred Cotswold sheep.

He served as director of the Hamilton County fair. He was a part owner of the first reaping machine that cut wheat in the neighborhood.

In 1886 he was driving a horse to a buggy the horse became frightened and ran, and threw him out on the corner of a rail fence. The thigh bone was broken in one of his legs, and ever after that, he walked with the aid of a cane. The latter part of life it took two canes.

At the age of eighty-eight years he purchased a Ford automobile. At that time his grandson, Morris Noah Tomlinson was just getting old enough to begin to learn to drive an automobile and it was the intention that Morris should learn to drive and take his grandfather around among his children and any where else he wanted to go. Noah got great pleasure out of this automobile. Oft times when he would be riding on the Range-line road across the Dismal, which now has become Indiana, U.S. 31, he would remark, "When I was building this road along here, I never thought I would be riding along here in this kind of a wagon".

When Noah was about forty-five years old he was going to Indianapolis with a load of wheat; while driving along the road between Broad Ripple and Indianapolis, he made the remark to the part of his family that was with him, that "Indianapolis and Broad Ripple would sometime come together". They were then seven miles apart, with no particular sign of such a union, but he lived to see the time when Indianapolis reached Broad Ripple and he traveled the streets in his automobile.

Written by Noah Tomlinson's son : Asher Kellum Tomlinson.

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