

## PARSON JOHN TODD of LOUISA COUNTY and his FAMILY

*contributed by Mrs. Wilson G. Todd  
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The Todd family appears to have been a very clannish group, which kept in touch with each other in spite of the difficulties of frontier communication and married cousins to a remarkable extent. This characteristic was particularly true of Parson John Todd's branch in Louisa County. It seems useful therefore to provide some history of the early Todd generations.

The earliest member of this Todd family who has been definitely identified was Parson Todd's grandfather, John Todd of County Armagh in the north of Ireland. Family accounts report that he was born in Scotland in 1670 and that he was one of the Covenanters who found shelter in Ireland in 1679. Emillie Todd Helm described John Todd as a 'Scottish Laird', which means simply that he owned land in fee and was a landlord, not that he belonged to the nobility.

The hearth Money Roll of 1664 does not list anyone of the Todd name in Armagh. The name first appears in the Rent Rolls of 1714 which include the name of a John Tod, Presbyterian, as an undertenant of Drumculled in the parish of Clontakill. The Armagh County will index (1635—1857) indicates that John Todd of Drumgare wrote his will on 1 December, 1717<sup>1</sup> and died before the end of the year.<sup>2</sup> The will itself was destroyed in the fire of 1922. Drumgar is a townland in the parish of Derrynoose to the south and east of Tynan Parish. He was perhaps buried in the Tynan churchyard.<sup>3</sup>

The name of John Todd's first wife is unknown. She was the mother of James, Samuel, William, Robert, Elizabeth and Esther. His second wife was Mary Cornell, mother of Andrew Todd. James the eldest remained in Ireland; the younger sons came to America in 1737 — Samuel, Robert, Andrew, and perhaps William.<sup>4</sup>

Parson Todd's father was Robert Todd, born in Ireland in 1697.

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1. The basic genealogy of the Todd family was worked out some years ago, starting in the 1880's, by Emillie Todd Helm, the younger half-sister of Mary Todd Lincoln. Her work was published first in *Kittochtinny Magazine* (1904) and continued and expanded after that by others. It is now on file at the state library in Frankfort, Kentucky. It is possible that Mrs. Helm had a copy of the 1717 will of John Todd.
  2. Note that the year 1717 did not end on December 31st so that John Todd might have died any time between December and some date in March.
  3. The Tynan church records are incomplete for the period in question and there are no Presbyterian records of the time in Co. Armagh.
  4. There is some question as to whether William Todd came to America. He may be the man who married Jean Lowe and had daughter Lydia baptized in 1736 and son John in 1738 in the Abingdon Presbytery near Philadelphia. If so, he came before the rest of the family. William Todd of Abingdon may be the man living in Augusta Co., Va. near Samuel Todd. William's line apparently has not been traced.

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Robert's first wife was Ann Smith, mother of the two oldest sons, John and David. His second wife was Isabella (Bodley) Hamilton. Robert Todd settled in Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania, in 1737 — near Norristown. He died in 1776 and is buried in the Lower Providence Presbyterian Church cemetery.

Robert Todd's eldest son, John, was born in County Armagh in 1719 and came to America at the age of eighteen with his parents, younger brothers and sisters, uncles, aunts and cousins. It is said that he was a weaver by trade in the early years. Eventually he studied for the ministry and graduated in the second class of the College of New Jersey at Newark with an A.B. degree in 1749. The New York *Gazette* of Monday, Oct. 2, 1749, has the following item: "On Wednesday last [Sept. 27] was held at New Brunswick the Anniversary Commencement of the College of New Jersey; at which, after the usual public Disputations the following young Gentlemen were admitted to the Degree of Bachelors of the Arts, viz: John Brown, William Burnet, John Hoge, Thomas Kennedy, John Moffet, John Todd and Eleazer Whittlesey. After which a handsome Latin Oration was pronounced by Mr. Burnet, one of the Graduates; and the Ceremony concluded to the universal Satisfaction of a numerous Audience, the whole being conducted with great Propriety and Decorum." In 1753 the college granted John Todd his A.M. degree.

John Todd was taken on trial by the Presbytery of New Brunswick on 7 May, 1750 and was licensed on 13 November. On 29 November he took the oath as a dissenting minister and was ordained the following year on 27 May. In 1752 he was called to Virginia by his friend Rev. Samuel Davies to help establish the Presbyterian church in that colony.<sup>5</sup> Davies had received permission from the Virginia authorities for a limited number of churches. In 1748 the Presbyterians had petitioned for more places of worship, one of which was 'on the land of Joseph Shelton, near Owen's Creek, in the County of Louisa.' This was the site of the old Providence Church which John Todd was to serve as minister for over forty years.<sup>6</sup> Dr. Malcolm Harris describes the church as "a frame building, small, simple in its detail, surrounded by primeval oak and pine."

Samuel Davies and John Todd had known each other at the

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5. *The Old Free State*, Bell, Vol. P. I, 372, "in 1752 John Todd . . . came to Virginia. It was the purpose of Mr. Davies to locate him in that part of Lunenburg Co. which is now Charlotte, or in the territory which is Prince Edward . . . but the General Court objected to granting a license for more than the seven places already granted . . ."

6. Note that Robert Todd's church in Pennsylvania, Samuel Todd's church in Augusta Co., Va., and John Todd's church in Louisa Co. were all called "Providence" Church. The history of the old Providence Church in Louisa Co. was previously covered in the June 1970 *Louisa County Historical Magazine*.

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College of New Jersey. In addition to their work together in the Presbyterian churches of Virginia, they were to be related to each other by marriage. Samuel Davies married as his second wife on 9 October, 1748 Jean Holt, daughter of David and Margaret Holt of Hanover County.<sup>7</sup> Jean's oldest sister was Ann Holt, born about 1713 in New Kent County, who was the first wife of John Thomson, merchant of Newcastle in Hanover County.<sup>8</sup>

According to family records found in Kentucky, Rev. John Todd married 12 November, 1755 Miss Margaret Thomson, daughter of John Thomson. The will of John Holt written 1 October, 1749 mentions among others his brother-in-law Samuel Davies and his nieces Mary and Margaret Thomson, daughters of Mr. John Thomson of Hanover County.<sup>9</sup> On 14 September, 1756 John Thomson and his wife Kerrenhappuch deeded to his daughter Margaret and her husband John Todd 1797 acres in Fredericksville parish 'being the lower portion of a tract of 3544 acres on the south side of the South Anna'. This is probably the site of John Todd's house, school and mill near the crossroads now known as South Anna, [Orchid], a few miles north of the old Providence Church. In his day it was called Todd's Mill, later Dabney's and then Payne's Mill. Records show that Parson Todd ground grain for the American army during the Revolution.

The New Side Synod of New York set up the Hanover Presbytery in Virginia on 3 October, 1755, appointing Rev. Samuel Davies, John Todd, Alexander Craghead, Robert Henry, John Wright and John Brown.

In addition to his clerical duties, Parson Todd also conducted a classical school for boys. Harris calls it 'probably the first of its kind in the county . . . and the first under Presbyterian control in the colony.' A number of Parson Todd's nephews from Pennsylvania were students at the school, including three of his brother David's sons, John, Levi and Robert Todd, all of whom served with George Rogers Clark and had prominent places in the history of Kentucky.

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7. Samuel Davies' first wife was Sarah Kirkpatrick, daughter of John Kirkpatrick of Nottingham. She died 5 Sept. 1747. Pilcher's *The Rev. Sam Davies Abroad* indicates that Davies left his wife and family in the care of his friend John Todd while he was in England.

8. Ann (Holt) Thomson died some time between 1742 when her name was included in a deed of sale of some Thomson property, and 1749. John Thomson married again between August and October of 1751 Kerrenhappuch . . . She was almost certainly Kerrenhappuch Brame, daughter of Richins Brame and Hannah Cheedle and sister of Melchidezek Brame. From the Letter-Book of Francis Jerdone *Wm. & Mary Quarterly*, XI, pp. 153-6, 29 Oct. 1751, Yorktown; "James Brown of New Castle carried off John Thompson's eldest daughter some time last August to Maryland and there married her which has so much offended Mr. Thompson that . . . (he) immediately married his housekeeper who is young and not unlikely to have children . . ."

9. John Holt's will was written in 1749 while he was living in Williamsburg, Va. It was not proved until 1784 and by this time he was in New York City. His brother William Holt was one of the executors of John Thomson's will in 1759.

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As a graduate of the College of New Jersey, Parson Todd was considered well qualified to run such a school, providing education 'in the rudiments plus language and theology.' Rev. James Waddell of the Tinkling Spring Church in Augusta County was an assistant in the school while he studied for the ministry under John Todd.

Parson Todd was a noted patriot at the time of the Revolution.<sup>10</sup> He served on the second Committee of Safety for the county in 1775. In 1777/8 he was named in the minutes of the Virginia Council as chaplain and colonel of the Louisa County Militia.

It appears that Parson Todd was an effective preacher and that the combination of his preaching skills and patriotic fervor was evidently very persuasive.<sup>11</sup> Many years after one of his sermons, it was recalled by a former student and nephew. In 1832 John Parker, Sr. of Lexington, Kentucky, made a deposition that "he went to Louisa County, Virginia, in the year 1774, where he remained with his uncle, Rev. Mr. Todd, until February 1776 when he joined the regiment of minute men under Col. Samuel Meredith. It was on Sunday after a sermon from his uncle, of a patriotic character, that he enlisted, together with many others of the congregation. He remembers that one of the elders, by the name of Terrell enlisted at the same time."

It should be remembered that before the Revolution the Presbyterians were regarded as a dissenting church, struggling for acceptance in the face of the 'Established Anglican Church.' Yet one of the first documents of religious liberty in Virginia was the petition sent by the Presbytery of Hanover on 24 October, 1776 to the General Assembly of the new state of Virginia. John Todd as Moderator signed this petition.

John Todd was active in the establishment of Hampden-Sydney College where he was a member of the first board of trustees. He also helped obtain the charter for Transylvania Seminary in Kentucky which was opened in February of 1785 under Brother David Rice, one of Parson Todd's former students. Green and others report that John Todd left his library to Transylvania College. However, according to his will, the library was left to his children — half to son John with the bookcases and the other half to be sold and the proceeds divided among the daughters. The *Kentucky Register* (April 1962, p. 107) contains an article by Haynes McMullen on College Libraries in Antebellum Kentucky which states: 'In the late 1760's a certain Rev. Dr. Gordon of London had collected books and sent them to Rev. John Todd of Louisa County, Virginia, to aid in the education of young men

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10. *Louisa County Public Service Claims*, Claudia A. Chisholm, Expert Graphics, 1976. 21, 89.

11. The Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia has a copy of one of John Todd's sermons in his own handwriting — a very scholarly and philosophical discussion which opens with a Greek quotation. I doubt that modern church-goers would find it very exciting.

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planning to enter the ministry. These books, as well as some from Todd's own library, later found their way into the possession of one or both of the academies' which later became Transylvania University. It is thought that the books reached Transylvania through Brother David Rice.

In 1791 Parson Todd was executor under the will of his uncle Andrew Todd, half-brother of his father Robert Todd. Andrew Todd had been invited by his son Dr. Andrew Todd of Cottage Hill in Louisa County to come and live with him. A copy of a letter written by Dr. Andrew Todd on 10 January 1787 may be of interest to Louisa County history.

Honored father: You have before this I expect received a letter from me by Mr. Robt. Parker requesting you come and live with me — I did expect you this fall, but do not now before spring when I shall expect to see you if your health will permit, and after you have spent some time with us you will be best able to determine where your duty usefulness or your own improvement for a future state will require you to make your home . . . From Bedford to Old Town 45 miles — To Winchester 45 — To Culpepper C.H. 60 miles — To Capt. Porters on the Rapidan River, Bacon Ford 9 miles. To Rockbridge on the North Anna 18 miles. To Parson Todds or Andrew Todds on the South Anna River Louisa Co. 30 miles. I have the pleasure to inform you of the birth of a fine son<sup>12</sup> about two weeks since — Mother and child both well — I am at present busily employed moving from Mr. Todds house, where the situation of my wife detained me — when I wrote last Col. Robt. Todd and his lady were both in from Kentuck as also Robert Todds son Robert by whom this letter will go as far as Philadelphia. Brother Roby was well and safely returned from the expedition against the Indians about four weeks ago — he informs me he intends to be in here next summer. I have had and still have some thoughts of moving to Kentucky but cannot see my way so clear in going as I could wish. My best wishes to Billy & Sister Hannah — I am Dear Sir with love and affection.

Andrew Todd.

It is reported that Parson Todd was very feeble in his last days. There evidently had been some criticism of him by his church members who may have thought they needed a more active pastor. To demonstrate that he was still able to carry on his work, Parson Todd rode horseback to the Cove Church in nearby Albemarle County on 27 July, 1793 to deliver a sermon. On the way home he died either of a stroke or as a result of a fall from his horse. Next day he was found lifeless in the road near a river crossing. It is assumed that he was

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12. This child was Andrew and Mary Todd's first son David, born 11 Dec. 1786; later to serve as surgeon in Montjoy's 4th Kentucky Regt. in 1813.

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buried in the family burying ground near South Anna [Orchid] beside his young sons David, Robert and the first John. Descendants have placed a memorial marker outside the Providence Church. The burial ground is located along a fence line in a ploughed field and is unmarked.

John Todd's will was written on 10 February, 1792 and was recorded in Louisa County on 9 September, 1793 and in Fayette County, Kentucky, on 14 July, 1794. Will Book 3 in Louisa County indicates that a bond of 6000 pounds was set; his library was appraised at 1720-3-1. Bond for Elisha Purrington, administrator for the estate of his wife Sarah Todd Purrington, was set at 2000 pounds. The division of slaves is recorded as having taken place on 10 December, 1793 and was signed by Samuel Dabney, Lancelot Minor and Thomas Shelton. Also, a copy of the inventory was recorded.

John Todd left what seems a very large estate for a frontier minister. It included the mill and land in Louisa County (presumably the land received from his father-in-law John Thomson), some 20,000 acres in Fayette County, Kentucky, on Hinkston's Fork of Licking Creek, additional land in the Elkhorn Tract and on Lee and Brackin Creeks, a lot in Louisville, property in Hanover and Cumberland Counties, Virginia, and stock in the loan office at Philadelphia.

It is interesting to note that John Todd participated in an early Widow's Fund for Presbyterian Clergymen into which he made an annual payment of six pounds. John Ewing, trustee for the fund, noted the following: "Rec'd 1st May, 1778 of the Rev. John Todd by the Hands of his Brother David Todd six pounds for his annual Rate to the Widow's Fund . . . and also one hundred Pounds . . . for the Relief that ye annual Interest thereof may discharge his yearly Rates to the Fund during his Life, & the Principal be returned to his Family, together with their Annuity after his Decease . . ." A later item among John Todd's records; "June-78 — This Rec't to be kept with care along with the bond of the Corporation, for the fund for Clergymen's Widows, that after my decease my Widow & Children may receive the one hundred pounds back, together with the Annual rate due to them, viz 50 pounds annually". . .

On 11 April, 1809 Robert M. Cunningham, Moderator of the West Lexington Presbytery in Kentucky, certified that the widow and children of Rev. John Todd senior were in comfortable and independent circumstances 'so as to render unnecessary any discrimination in the distribution of the annuities agreed to be paid by the aforesaid plan.'

At some time after her husband's death, perhaps in 1807 with her son John, Margaret Thomson Todd moved to Kentucky where she lived with her daughter Mary, wife of Dr. Andrew Todd, in Paris. She

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died there on 17 September, 1809. The exact site of her grave is unknown but a letter written 12 August, 1880 by Margaret G. McClintock, granddaughter of Dr. Andrew Todd, states that Margaret Thomson Todd was "buried in my grandpa's burying ground in Paris. I was by and around her grave only a day or two ago." Margaret McClintock's other grandfather was Rev. Samuel Runnells, also of Bourbon County Kentucky, and there is no way to tell which grandfather she meant.

John and Margaret (Thomson) Todd had nine children, as recorded in copies of family papers in Kentucky. Somewhere along the line errors in copying have crept in on some of the dates but the list is essentially correct:

1. Anne (b. 26 Aug. 1756; d. 31 Aug. 1828 Lexington, Ky.) m. 31 Dec. 1781 (Louisa Co, Va)  
ROBERT TODD (b. 19 Apr. 1754; d. 20 Mar. 1814)  
Robert Todd was educated at Parson Todd's school, was wounded at McClellans Fort in Kentucky in 1778, served as a captain with George Rogers Clark in the Illinois Regt., was a Burgess to the Virginia Assembly, representing Kentucky, served as a member of the Danville Convention in 1785, senator in 1792; and later Circuit Judge of Fayette District.
2. Elizabeth (b. 8 June 1758; d. 3 Nov. 1809 Charleston, S.C.) bu. Old Wappetaw Churchyard cemetery, m. 7 Apr. 1778 (Louisa Co, Va)  
Rev. DANIEL McCALLA (b. 23 July 1748 Neshaminy, Pa., d. 6 Apr. 1809 Charleston, S.C.)  
Rev. Daniel McCalla was a Presbyterian minister, chaplain of Col. St. Clair's 2nd Penn. Btn., captured at Three Rivers 8 June 1776, paroled.
3. David (b. 14 Nov. 1760; d. 29 Aug. 1781)
4. John (b. 15 Mar. 1762; d. 24 July 1771)
5. Mary (b. 12 Mar. 1765; d. 24 Jan. 1838 Paris, Ky) m. 24 May 1785 (Louisa Co, Va)  
Dr. ANDREW TODD (b. 18 Mar. 1758; d. 20 May 1816 Paris, Ky)  
Dr. Andrew Todd's first wife was a Holt, probably related to the Major Holt who built 'Cottage Hill' in Louisa County on the South Anna near Thompson's Crossroads. Andrew Todd was an early doctor in Louisa Co; some of his records are included in the Overton Papers. He moved to Kentucky shortly after the death of his father Andrew in 1791. Dr. Andrew Todd's will is recorded in Fleming Co, Ky. A painting

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of his wife Mary Todd hangs in the Duncan Tavern museum in Paris, Ky.

6. Margaret (b. 18 May 1767; d. 7 July 1833 Lexington, Ky) m. 6 Sept. 1790 (Louisa Co, Va)  
Rev. JAMES MOORE (b. ca 1765 Walkers Creek, Augusta Co, Va; d. 22 June 1814 Lexington, Ky)  
Rev. James Moore was a rector of Christ Church (Episcopal) in Lexington, Ky; president and professor of Moral Philosophy at Transylvania University, and conducted a private academy at his home called Malvern Hill two miles from Lexington.
7. Sarah (b. 2 Nov. 1769; d. 16 Sept. 1793) m. 10 July 1792 (Louisa Co, Va)  
Rev. ELISHA PURRINGTON (b. Middleboro, Mass; d. 1820)  
Rev. Elisha Purrington was a Baptist minister. He came to Virginia in 1772 and served the Williams Church in Goochland Co. After the death of Sarah (who had one son named John T.) he married 17 Dec. 1794 (Fluvanna Co) Elizabeth Hughes.
8. John (b. 3 Oct. 1772; d. 13 Dec. 1839 Southport, Ind) Bu. Greenwood Cemetery, Greenwood, Ind.; m. 1 May 1794 (Rockbridge Co, Va)  
SARAH TODD (b. 2 Oct. 1775; d. 5 Feb. 1865; bu. Southport Cem, Southport, Ind)  
Sarah and John were third cousins. Sarah was a daughter of Samuel Todd and Jane Lowery of Augusta/Botetourt/Rockbridge Co., Va.<sup>13</sup> Like his father, John Todd was a Presbyterian minister, graduate of Dickinson College, served the Providence Church in Louisa Co. until 1807 when he moved to Kentucky, settling first in Louisville; then in Charlestown, Ind; back to Paris, Ky; and finally in Southport, Ind.
9. Robert (b. 11 July 1775; d. 20 July 1781)

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13. There is some confusion about the parentage of Sarah Todd, wife of the younger John Todd. Her son Dr. Henry G. Todd, writing to Mrs. Helm in the 1880's insisted that Sarah's father was named William. However, the marriage bonds signed 30 April 1794 on the eve of the wedding were signed by Samuel Todd as her father. The marriage was eventually recorded as John Todd and *Agnes* Todd. In addition, Sarah Todd's gravestone in the Southport Cemetery gives her place of birth as Louisa County but this seems unlikely as Samuel Todd's home was then in Botetourt County.