

## The Descendants of John Shawhan (1771-1845)

By Robert E. Francis and Ronald T. Shawhan

John Shawhan, the fourth child of Daniel Shawhan (1738-1791) and Margaret Bell (1742->1810), was born in Hampshire County, Virginia, on October 23, 1771. Shortly after his birth, the family moved to Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. It is recorded that his father purchased 640 acres six miles out of Fort Pitt, in the vicinity of the Old Mt. Lebanon Presbyterian Church, a section now called Carnegie, Pa., but then called St. Clair Township.<sup>1</sup>

It was here that Daniel Shawhan established the Shawhan tradition of whiskey making by producing "Monongahala" rye whiskey.<sup>2</sup> He and his sons were quite successful in this business until the growing unrest of what eventuated in the Whiskey Rebellion forced him to pull up stakes and travel with some members of his family down the Ohio river to what was then western Virginia, present-day Kentucky. One son, Robert, and a daughter, Elizabeth, remained behind. Robert continued distilling whiskey and became a footnote in the history books.<sup>3</sup> Daniel's family arrived in Bourbon County, Virginia, about July, 1788.<sup>4</sup>

The Shawhans settled about 6 miles north of present day Paris, Kentucky, and set about establishing their whiskey business. Only three years into the new venture, Daniel Shawhan died on May 11, 1791. John and Daniel III continued in their father's footsteps, eventually turning the fledgling operation into a successful family business. Daniel Shawhan III eventually moved to Rush County, Indiana. John was joined in the business by his younger brother Joseph.

In 1793, John fell in love with and married Margaret "Peggy" McCune, the daughter of the neighboring farmer, William McCune.<sup>5</sup>

John lived on the 130 acres of land of his father Daniel, taking care of his widowed mother Margaret (Bell) Shawhan, his sisters and young brothers. He cleared the land about the house and made improvements and raised crops toward their support. Shortly after 1809, his mother and youngest brother Joseph went to live together near an

### Mount Carmel Christian Church Cynthiana Road, north of Paris, Kentucky

This exceptionally handsome and well-preserved Greek Revival Church is dated 1859 on the sandstone plaque centered in the broad pediment over the pair of entrances. The stone foundations form an effective base and there is a deep brick entablature below the roof. The facade is articulated by freely spaced wide pilasters, which are paired at the ends, with a gap in the center between those flanking the

doorways. The large windows, forming five bays divided by similar pilasters on the sides, have plain plank lintels. Although the glass has recently been replaced, they retain the original twelve-over-twelve pane sash.

According to Perrin, the building was erected about 1822-23, and only remodelled in 1859. The congregation was formed after a camp meeting in 1818 by five members of the old Stonermouth Presbyterian Church near Ruddles Mills who had been denounced from the pulpit by their pastor for attending the famous Cane Ridge revival of 1801 (BB-284). Early preachers at the Mt. Carmel church included many noted ecclesiastics, including both Barton W. Stone (BB-21 on the Little Rock-Jacksonville Road) and Alexander Campbell. The congregation is still active and responsible for the excellent condition of the church building.

There is a possibility the Mt. Carmel church was designed and built by John Giltner, who also was responsible for the 1857-58 Paris Christian Church, the former Antioch Christian Church, and others in the county. It is likely that his son, Rev. William S. Giltner, at one time an architect and builder, assisted in the construction of the churches. In proportion, articulation by pilasters, base, and entablature, and fine brickwork, the Paris church bears definite resemblance to the Mt. Carmel Church, although the latter lacks the Federal holdovers of the Paris design.

*Perrin, p. 150; cf. Butler, "First Christian Church," pp. 27-30.*



improvement set up by John's brother Daniel, after John married and had several children of his own.<sup>6</sup>

In some of the early deeds of Bourbon County, John spelled his name in the old way, Shaughen, and these deeds show that the McCunes and the Shawhans had adjoining land; "William McCune to John Shaughen, for consideration five shillings and for divers goods caused hereto moving, land on Townsend adjoining land to said McCune, John McClure, heirs of Robert Bell, and heirs of Daniel Shaughen, containing 38 acres. December 20, 1802." And again in "William McCune to John McClure in consideration of 42 pounds, deeds 33 acres in Bourbon County, Ky., bounded by lines of John Shaughen's line and Jos. Ren's line, January 22, 1807."<sup>7</sup>

We are fortunate to have a recorded incident which sheds light on the character and person of John Shawhan. John was a member of the Stonermouth Presbyterian church in nearby Ruddle's Mill, Kentucky. Beginning on August 3, 1801, the Rev. Barton Stone, an Anglican priest, began a week of preaching that became known as the "Great Revival" at the Cane Ridge Meeting House, just east of present day Paris, Kentucky. John and four other men—William Bodkin, John Brown, Nathan Sellers,<sup>8</sup> Mr. Vennerman—attended the revival. We read these words from a Bourbon County, Kentucky, historian:

"John Shawhan was a large man with a tendency to be blonde; his personality such that he had followers of uncommon intelligence. He was a member of the Older Stoner Mouth Presbyterian Church and was one of the five men denounced from the pulpit by their pastor, Rev. Samuel Reynolds, for attending the revival of the Rev. Barton Stone at Cane Ridge in 1801 when the Christian Church was formed. A camp meeting was afterward held on John Shawhan's farm about 1818, and from the converts of that camp the present Mt. Carmel Church was formed."<sup>9</sup>

"John Shawhan and his colleagues in the whiskey business were the object of the following denunciation by those against the Great Revival: "As expected, the crowd drew many unrepenting sinners. There were whiskey dealers who carried on a lucrative business..."<sup>10</sup>

The present day Mt. Carmel church is located on land deeded to the church by John Shawhan.<sup>11</sup> It was near this location that the Shawhan's originally established their distillery. A favorite old family legend claims that, when the family first came to Bourbon County, Daniel stopped and drank from a limestone spring which ran behind the Mt. Carmel church. He reportedly told his wife that "this water would make good whiskey" and bought 20 acres of land upon which to build his distillery.<sup>12</sup>

The census of 1810 reports John Shawhan as having three boys and two daughters under 10, two children from 10-16, two family members from 26-45, and one family member 45 and up. It is presumed from this that his mother was with him at this time and either a sister or sister-in-law.<sup>13</sup>

John Shawhan served in the War of 1812 in Captain James Johnson's Company, 3rd Regiment, Kentucky Mounted Militia. He enlisted on September 1, 1812 and served to October 15, 1812.

In 1822, William Pugh Chiles brought a suit against John. It is a very interesting document in that it provides a great deal of information about the Shawhan family. (NOTE: Refer to Vol. II, p. 364 for an excerpt from this suit.--REF)

John eventually turned his business over to his son Daniel "Casher Dan" Shawhan. Daniel, along with his uncle Joseph, expanded the business by shipping the whiskey by flatboats down the Ohio and Mississippi to New Orleans. The nickname "Casher Dan" was given to Daniel because he conducted all his business dealings in cash.

John Shawhan died April 5, 1845, and his will was dated March 7th and proved April 7, 1845. John's will is as follows:<sup>14</sup>

"In the name of God Amen, I, John Shawhan of the County of Bourbon and State of Kentucky, do make, ordain and declare this my last will and testament.

"Item 1st—When life is no more with me I commend my sole (sic) to Almighty God that gave it and my body to be decently buried.

"2nd—After my Decease I wish all debts to be punctually paid.

"3rd—After the payment of my debts, I wish all my property to be kept together during wife Margaret Shawhan's natural lifetime and I wish her to have the benefit of the hole (sic) of my land and negroes and all personal estate, as long as she remains my widow. If she should ever marry again, she is then in that case, restricted to her thirds during her lifetime and at her death, it is my wish that my son Daniel Shawhan shall have the preference of buying my place that I now live on, thought to be 180 acres, at a fair price and I wish him to have five annual payments on it, and I desire it shall not be put at Public Auction without it is

Daniel's wish to have it done, I just wish him to have it at a fair price and to make the thing more plain, I here give my reason for wishing him to have it. I don't wish it to go out of the family and thinking from the present prospect of things at this time he will be better prepared, to buy it than any of my other children and at or after my wife Margaret's death, I wish all negroes and whatever be of my personal estate and the proceeds of the land, equally divided among all my children. Daniel to have an equal part with all the rest of the children of the hole estate, real and personal and furthermore I wish it understood that whereas I have paid a considerable amount of money for my son Joseph Shawhan to Noah Spears, Hugh (initial) Brent, Calip Morris and Joseph Shawhan, Guardian for Mays (may be "Ways") heirs, and other small debts to dependent persons, which will show on my books, also the notes with what I have applied, where he was principal and I was security with all the interest up so paid by me, I furthermore state that he must account for the above mentioned debts and money paid by me for him on said debts further than up to the time that I paid the debts which will show on the Book and if he should fall behind with my estate and the business is entirely round up, I don't want my Executor or any of the rest of my heirs to compel him to pay anything back to the estate.

"Furthermore it is my wish and desire that if any of my negroes should become turbulent or ungovernable in the family that my Executor shall sell such negro for the best price that can obtain for it or them and account for the money with interest therein or the estate as above mentioned.

"Furthermore I wish and desire my daughter Susan Allison to have my home here with her Mother in the same way she has heretofore with me as long as she remain single, free of any charge.

"Furthermore I wish my Executor to finish a wall that I have begun around the Graveyard and it is my wish and desire that in all sales, transfers, or change of hands or property, the said Graveyard shall be reserved from Sale or from any other use other than a burying ground.

"Furthermore and lastly, I appoint my son Daniel Shawhan, my Executor of this my last will and testament, Given under my hand and seal this 7th day of Mar 1845."

—John Shawhan

Attest:

Joseph Shawhan

P.B. Furthermore on reflection I have thought it proper to name in addition to the above that it is my wish as I have full confidence in my son Daniel, that he shall not be bound to give security on the administration on my estate this haveing (sic) always for sometime back been my intention but omitted letting it until it was closed but thought of it immediately afterwards, And it is my wish and desire, that it shall have the same affect annex here below as if it was in the above body of my will I also have set my hand and seal this 7th March 1845. John Shawhan (seal)

attest

Joseph Shawhan, Sr.

Sam,l Ewalt

At the April term of the County Court of Bourbon County Kentucky on the seventh day of April 1845 this last will and testament of John Shawhan Deceased was produced and proved in open court by the oaths of Joseph Shawhan, Sr. and Sam,l Ewalt the subscribing witnesses thereto is ordered to record, \_\_\_\_\_ Thomas P. Smith Clerk of said Court the date above.

Tho. P. Smith clk

J. M. Smith (?)

Margaret (McCune) Shawhan died March 24, 1857; her will dated March 29, 1855 and probated April 6, 1857 (W.B. P. 638). Among others she mentions her daughter Margaret Reading (the spelling is given in error as "Redding").

Margaret Shawhan Will<sup>15</sup>

In the name of God Amen. I Margaret Shawhan of the County of Bourbon and State of Kentucky, do hereby make and Constitute this my last Will and Testament.

Item 1st. When life is no more with me I wish my body to be decently buried and all my funeral expenses

paid and also all my just debts if any there be, to be punctually paid which I know at this time is very few and none of magnitude.

Item 2nd. Whereas my husband John Shawhan deceased, did by will leave and give to me the use and benefit the whole of his land and negroes during my lifetime or so long as I remained his widow to have the whole benefit of the said land and negroes and all his personal Estate, and as I have managed so as I think there will be something left to which I have made off of the place and negroes since the death of my husband, which consists of cash notes and personal property—and I do hereby dispose of the whole of my Estate in the following manner, to wit: I give and bequeth to my Grandson John Shawhan who is the son of my son Jos. Shawhan deceased fifty dollars. And the balance of my Estate whatever it may be equally divided amongst my Children and Grand Children as here named. Daniel Shawhan, Wm. M. Shawhan, John L. Shawhan and Elizabeth Smith, Margaret Redding (sic), Nancy Rush, and whereas my Daughter Susan Allison has three daughters, and whereas I believe my daughter Susan has disposed of her property by will or deed of conveyance and cut off her two oldest daughters with a very small portion of her estate, as I have been informed, therefore I give and bequeth unto my daughter Susan ten dollars. The balance of the one seventh part of my Estate I give to my two Grand daughters, namely, Amanda Smith and Margaret Hinkson who is the daughters of Susan Allison, to be equally divided between the above named Amanda Smith and Margaret Hinkson. That is they are to have one seventh part of my Estate after the ten dollars which I have given daughter Susan is taken from the seventh part of whatever it may be, the remainder I give to my two above named grand daughters—And furthermore I appoint my friend and brother-in-law Jos Shawhan my Executor of this my last Will and Testament.

Given under my hand and seal this 29th day of March 1855,

att

Jno. L. Shawhan

Henry Ewalt

Margaret (her mark) Shawhan (seal)

Bourbon County Court April Term, April 6th 1857.

This last Will and Testament of Margaret Shawhan dec'd was this day produced and proved in open court by the oath of John L. Shawhan and Henry C. Ewalt. Attesting witnesses thereto having been sworn by Jos. Shawhan the Executor therein named is ordered to record. Witness H.J. Brown Clerk of said Court the date above. H.J. Brown Clerk

Both John Shawhan and Margaret "Peggy" McCune are buried in the John Shawhan family cemetery.<sup>16</sup>

## POSTSCRIPT

The children of John Shawhan and Peggy McCune are presented extensively in this genealogy. Refer to the Table of Contents for their names and order of presentation.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Isobel Madsen records that "the property (as of 1951) was still in the hands of the family under the name of 'Shawhan Place.'" (Madsen, p. 11.) This reference has recently been verified through e-mail correspondence with Mr. Dale Patterson, a descendant of Robert BELL and Agnes FLEMING (the parents of John Shawhan's mother Margaret Bell). Mr. Patterson writes (in an e-mail message dated October 13, 1998): "I had always heard that Margaret and her family had moved on past Carnegie to Kentucky with several of the Bell brothers, but someone from that family came back at some time and settled, because at the base of the hill, close to where James and Johns' (sons of Robert Bell) claims touched each other, there was a small section of Carnegie that has always been known as Shawhan's Hill. Dad remembers his grandfather saying that one of them came back, and John sold them a little piece of his property. I'm not certain who it was that came though, but I know that one little section is still referred to (by the old timers), as Shawhan Hill."

<sup>2</sup> This tradition remained in the family until the Prohibition. The Shawhan family recipe continued to be produced

until the middle 1970's. Refer to my article "The History of Bourbon Whiskey and the Shawhans" in Volume II, p. 89, for a thorough treatment of this subject.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Shawhan is mentioned as one of the whiskey producers who agreed to pay the hated excise tax on whiskey. He and some other compliant men were the subject of animosity, having their barns burned.

<sup>4</sup> Filson Club Publication No. 27, page 121—petition No. 57 a request of the inhabitants of Bourbon Co. for the establishment of a town at Bourbon C. H. lists the names of DANIEL SHAWHAN, Daniel Shawhan, Jr., and John Shawhan, July 1788. Reported in *The Kentuckian-Citizen*, Paris, Ky. Tuesday, March 28, 1944, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Refer to the essay "The Biography of William McCune" for further information about the McCune family.

<sup>6</sup> Hills, William G.; Shawhan, Violet Romer; Norton, Nell Downing; Lemley, Marie Perrin. "Shawhan-Shaughen Genealogy," p. 32.

<sup>7</sup> Suit-File Box 733, Bourbon County Circuit Court.

<sup>8</sup> Walter E. Langsam, William Gus Johnson, *Historic Architecture of Bourbon County, Kentucky*, Paris, Kentucky: The Kentucky Heritage Council, 1985, p. 59.

<sup>9</sup> *History of Bourbon, Scott, Harrison and Nicholas Counties, Kentucky*, ed. by William Henry Perrin, O. L. Baskin & Co., Chicago, 1882. p. 150

<sup>10</sup> Philip Ardery, *Heroes and Horses: Tales of the Bluegrass*, The University Press of Kentucky, 1996, p. 103.

<sup>11</sup> Bourbon County Deed Book Y, p. 135.

<sup>12</sup> "The Shawhan Distillery" by Mildred L. Shawhan, an article published in the Jackson County (Missouri) Historical Society, p. 10. Refer also to Dorothy Butler's newspaper article titled "Lone Jack Once Famous for Whiskey and Tobacco" in an unnamed publication. The article was sent to me by Zac Shawhan II, a descendant of John Shawhan through his son Daniel "Casher Dan" Shawhan.

<sup>13</sup> "Shawhan, Smith, Chandler, Madsen (1699-1951)" compiled by Isobel Chandler Madsen, p. 14.

<sup>14</sup> "Will of John Shawhan," Will Book M—pp. 291-292, Bourbon County Court House, Paris, Kentucky. Refer to the appendix "Will of John Shawhan" for a copy of the original document.

<sup>15</sup> "M. Shawhan Will," Bourbon County, Kentucky Will Book P. pp. 638-639.

<sup>16</sup> The location of this family cemetery is 5.5 miles north of Paris, Kentucky, on State Highway 27. It sits just behind the current Custom Wood Products company. Earlier genealogies listed the cemetery on the farm of Tom Hollandon. Refer to Vol. II, p. 284, for a thorough updated listing of the John Shawhan family cemetery.