

James Porter, Eliza French and Robert Farquharson

James Porter, in his mid-late 20's, first settled in Shepherdsville, KY where he had acquired 101 acres of land on Coxes Creek, married his wife, Eliza (Elizabeth) French, in January 1810 and become the father of a daughter, Rebecca, in December of that same year. He may also have been the same James Porter who assumed the position of Postmaster in Shepherdsville in 1808. But, promise was in booming Nashville, TN and perhaps encouraged also by his brother, Joseph, who was in Nashville, the young couple moved. It was some time between June of 1811 and December of 1812 when the move was made. Shepherdsville acquired a new Postmaster in June 1811 and the young family welcomed the birth of their second child, and only son, William "Nathaniel", in Nashville in December of 1812.

The first record of James in Nashville is noted in the Minute Book of Davidson County, 1813 which show James serving on a jury along with Robert Farquharson. That is also the first known reference to Farquharson in the County. James' occupation was a merchant-business man. Exactly what business is unknown, He made a land purchase in the city in June of 1814 when for \$3,575.00 he acquired what was described as that certain lot – approximately one half acre and situated in Nashville, town plan being one half of Lot 37. It was further described as "containing the yellow house at or near the north west corner of the Public Square." Eliza was buried from that yellow house in 1864. James joined the Mason's in Nashville and was a member of the Cumberland Lodge No 8, F & A.M.

All life was not rosy for early settlers, however, and the family did not escape the unfortunate, common tragedies of the era. 1815 and 1816 went well with the births of daughters, Ellen (or Eleanor) and Elizabeth. 1817, however, began some dark times for Eliza. In June of 1817 James died and Eliza was expecting her fifth child, Josephine, born the following February in 1818. Trouble didn't stop and little Elizabeth, not quite two years old, died in June only four months after the birth of Josephine. The baby, Josephine, was to die in January 1823.

The census of 1820 shows that at least some of Eliza and the children's support came from boarders in their home. Whether having boarders began after James' death or was already established isn't known. That census shows a total of 22 persons living on the premises, including - in addition to Eliza and her children: one woman over age 45 and 10 men ranging in age groups from 10-16 up to age 45. Five individuals were cited as working in commerce or manufacturing. The household also contained 6 slaves (3 adults and 3 under the age 14).

Robert Farquharson. was a native of Bogarrow, Banffshire, Scotland. He arrived in Baltimore, Maryland in 1799, migrated to Clarksville, TN in 1802 and moved to Nashville in 1813. He, like James Porter, was a merchant-businessman. He married Eliza Porter in September of 1821 and they made her home their residence. Together Robert and Eliza had one child born in 1824, Dr Robert J. Farquharson.

Robert's will of 1857 references the original homestead property plus two frame offices he had added to it in 1830. Other properties acquired by him are also referenced. His bequests were to Eliza, their son, Robert, some of his Porter stepchildren and several of his Farquharson relatives. Eliza Porter Farquharson died in 1864 and her will is recorded in Davidson County Will Book 1861-1865.

Robert and Eliza's son, Dr Robert J. Farquharson, became a Dentist. He, married Lydia Smith in 1855 in Nashville and had four known children. Note this Robert is not the one of the same name who was Colonel of the 41st Reg., TN Volunteers but likely a cousin.

Of James and Eliza's surviving children:

Daughter, Rebecca, married Memucan Hunt Howard, a very interesting man who did a lot of early survey work of West Tennessee and whose "Recollections" done in the 1880's can be found on the internet – fascinating reading. Mr. Howard was an astute businessman and philanthropist who made several contributions to Nashville. At one point he purchased land from Sam Houston in Davidson County. Eliza and Robert Farquharson are buried in the City Cemetery plot purchased by Mr. Howard for his and Rebecca's only child, Porter Farquharson Howard

Son, William "Nathaniel" Porter, was only four when his father died and at some point in his childhood went to live with a Porter Uncle in Henry County, TN. Relations, however, remained strong with his Mother Eliza as he served as Administrator of her estate. Nathaniel married Evalina Hagler and had 13 children. He owned a large amount of land in Henry County and was one of the infamous Representatives to the TN House who chose to "absentee" himself from the Session called July 4, 1866 by Governor Brownlow to ratify the 14th Amendment to the US Constitution (to meet Federal conditions after the Civil War). Nathaniel had had one son killed at Shiloh and another spend over a year in a Federal prison camp.

Daughter, Ellen (Eleanor) married first in 1835 to Young Joseph Porter, an Attorney from Columbia, TN. He was reported to serve as US Consul to the Republic of Texas in Houston. They had one child, Josephine Porter. Young died in 1840 and Ellen remarried in 1847 becoming the third wife of General Robert Desha of Sumner Co., TN. Robert had served as both a Captain and Brevet Major in the War of 1812, was a member of the U S House of Representatives from TN during the years 1827-31 and was the brother of Joseph Desha, 9th Governor of Kentucky. Ellen and Robert had one daughter, Emma Dellet Desha.

James Porter was the son of Nathaniel and Mary Emmitt Porter

Eliza French's parentage includes conflicting information.

Prepared by Pat Wilson - March 15, 2013.