

CHAPTER 16

Kentucky

by *Thomas Hubbell*

THE INDIAN FIGHTER AND A PIONEER MOTHER

CAPT. WILLIAM HUBBELL & WAITSTILL HUBBELL RUSK

The first record of a Hubbell in Kentucky I found was in Volume One of Lewis Collins' *History of Kentucky*.

In November, 1788, Major Benjamin Sites with a party of 18 or 20 landed at the mouth of the Little Miami River, constructed a fort, and laid out the town of Columbia. (The town now is within the city limits of Cincinnati, Ohio.) No mention is made of this Mr. Hubbell's first name, but I am of the opinion that it could be the Capt. William Hubbell (351).

In Volume II of Collins' *History*, I found the following story (edited):

Captain William Hubbell, the subject of this brief notice, was a native of Vermont, and served 5 1/2 years in the Revolutionary army, in the various stations of private, sergeant, ensign, and second and first lieutenant. He participated in the capture of St. John's and Montreal, and was engaged in many skirmishes during the war. Some years after the close of the war, Captain Hubbell removed to Kentucky, and settled in Scott County, where he resided until his death at a very advanced age. He enjoyed throughout life the confidence and esteem of his community.

In the year 1791, while the Indians were yet troublesome especially on the banks of the Ohio, Capt. Hubbell, who had been compelled to go eastward on business, was returning to his home in Kentucky. On one tributary of the River Monongahela, he procured a flat-bottomed boat, and embarked in company with Daniel Light and William Plascut and his family, consisting of a wife and eight children, destined for Limestone (now Maysville) Ky. On their progress down the river Ohio, and soon after passing Pittsburgh, they saw evident traces of Indians along the banks. There is every reason to believe that a boat which they overtook and which, through carelessness ran aground on an island, became prey to the merciless Indians. Though Capt. Hubbell and his party stopped some time for it in a lower part of the river, it (the boat) did not arrive. And never have the occupants been heard of since.

Before they reached the mouth of the great Kenawha, they had, by several additions, increased their number to 20, consisting of nine men, three women and eight children. The men were one John Stoner; an

The day after the arrival of Capt. Hubbell and his companions, the five remaining boats, which they had passed on the night preceding the battle, reached Limestone. Those on board remarked that during the action they distinctly saw the flashes but could not hear the reports of the guns. The Indians, it appears, had met with too formidable a resistance from a single boat to attack a fleet, and suffered them to pass unmolested. Since that time, it is believed that no boat has been assailed by Indians on the Ohio.

The force which marched out discovered several Indians dead on the shore, near the scene of the action. They also found the bodies of Capt. Greathouse and several others — men, women and children — who had been aboard his boat. Most of them appeared to have been whipped to death, as they were found stripped, tied to trees, and marked with the appearance of lashes. Large rods, which seemed to have been worn with use, were observed lying near them.

A section of *The Frontiersmen*, a well-researched and readable historical novel by Allan W. Eckert, is based on William Hubbell, "a methodical man" and faithfully repeats his story of the trip down the Ohio on March 23, 1791.

Before I tell about another pioneer, I would like to include an amusing anecdote about a well-known Kentucky Hubbell of a later period. The following is from the *Official Manual of Kentucky, Ohio*.

Hubble, Hon. R. L. (2399) (Dem.) Stanford, Ky., son of William and Martha (Hudson) Hubble. Was born in Pulaski County, Jan. 16, 1862. Educated in the common schools. Extensive land owner in Lincoln and Boyle Counties and is one of Kentucky's most influential stock raisers and farmers. Served as County Election Commissioner and for many years was a member of Lincoln County Democratic Committee. Married Miss Sallie Logan of Lincoln County in 1888. Elected Senator from Eighteenth District in 1905 and 1909.

This Robert Lee Hubble is the "Took" mentioned in the 1980 *History*. I have had some conversation with his niece, the daughter of Lorenzo (2401). She told me that he got the name "Took" because whatever he wanted he "took." She also related a story of a time when R. L. or "Took" was standing in the lobby of a Cincinnati hotel. It seems this lobby was lined with mirrors on its walls. Now R. L. and his brother, Frank, were tremendously similar in appearance. R. L. was standing, as I said, in the middle of this lobby as he read a newspaper. He happened to look up and spot his brother Frank at the other side of the room. R. L. gave a shout and with arms outstretched ran to embrace his brother, only to find, to his chagrin, that he was running into his own reflection.

WAITSTILL HUBBELL RUSK

The courageous spirit which inspired Captain Hubbell in his fight with the Indians was undoubtedly present in the person of Waitstill Hubbell (1189), a Kentucky woman who married Joseph Rusk. Their grandson George in his *History* of the family tells their story as well as he can from memory of his Uncle William's account

given him in 1936. (There are some omissions, additions and corrections by the present editors.)

In the year 1794, one Jothan R. Rusk left his home in his native land, Germany, and started for the U. S. A. He stopped at London, England, and there deposited in the Bank of England, 100 pounds sterling, as a trust fund bearing the rate of 8% interest compounded annually, and said trust fund was to be given to the first male child of one Milan Rusk as soon as said child should have reached the age of 21 years, or to his bodily heirs. Milan Rusk was the son and heir of the said Jothan Rusk and had come to America in 1791 and was residing in the State of Pennsylvania and had married an American girl. Shortly before Jothan Rusk sailed for America, a son was born to Milan Rusk in the year 1796 and was given the name Joseph W. Rusk, but was taken by a neighbor family to raise as their own child. When he was four years old, in the year 1800, the family migrated to Pulaski County, Ky. There Joseph W. Rusk grew up to marry Waitstill Hubble [Hubbell], a native of Kentucky of perhaps partly Irish descent, and to this union were born six sons, Ephraim, Milan, William H., Joseph, James and Joel, and three daughters, Serelda, Amanda and Sara Jane.

Let me return for a moment to Milan Rusk, who was then living in Tennessee. Soon after the death of his wife, he married a second time and had a family of boys and girls. From them we have Jonathan Rusk of Rusk, Texas, and also Jeremiah Rusk, who was the first Secretary of Agriculture in the administration of William H. Harrison, and who was at that time living in Madison, Wis.

Mr. Rusk does not spend any words on Waitstill, but we can imagine what her life was like as the wife of a pioneer. There would always be the housekeeping, of course, the cleaning, cooking, baking and sewing, the supervision of some help perhaps, and the bringing up of her nine children. She very likely, too, spun wool, wove cloth, and made clothing.

When her husband decided to move, there would be the dismantling of her home — doubtless with some heartbreak and misgivings, though with a hope of a still better life. There was the packing of household possessions, the camping by the wayside, cooking over an open fire, and living out of wagons or prairie schooners. Hardships and dangers would frequently have to be faced.

As the wife of the leader, she would be expected to keep up the spirits of the other women, tend the sick and maintain order among the children. And when she reached their new lands, she would have to wait at times until a new house could be built before she could unpack her belongings, hang her curtains, furnish the rooms and establish a new home. Waitstill's life, there is little doubt, would have been as full as she could have possibly wished. We should keep these facts in mind as we continue with the Rusk story.

A few years after Joseph and Waitstill married, they migrated to Indianapolis, Ind., and a few years later they moved 200 miles south where they bought 700 acres of limestone rock oil, engaged in the manufacturing

of lime, and soon became what was considered in those days as very wealthy. He employed at his peak of production as many as 100 men the year round. Finally the western fever overcame him and he sold out the lime business and started west in the late fall of 1852 with 10 wagons and several heads of cows and 24 horses. He had eight men with him, helping to drive the wagons and stock. Before they got to the Mississippi River, they were told that the river was frozen over and there would be no ferry until spring. So Grandfather, as he will be known henceforth, after much effort in locating a farm house that was empty for their winter quarters, finally found a farm, with 40 acres of good corn not gathered, for sale, and the house for rent. Grandfather said, "Right here is where we stop." The men were put to work gathering corn and the family moved into the 10-room house. There they remained until spring.

This farm was located a quarter mile from the home of the Thomas Lincoln family, including their son, Abe. Mrs. Lincoln (Abe's mother) would send over bread and other viands cooked in the Lincoln kitchen for the Rusk family. Many were the days that the three Rusk boys would chop wood alongside Abe Lincoln. Ephraim, Milan and William were the only ones old enough to take a hand with the timber. Abe used to get the Rusk mail and deliver it to them at their home. He carried the mail in a high silk tophat on his head and, as the narrator of this bit of history told, Abe Lincoln used an axe with a handle more than five feet long and could cut more wood than any two men. When asked why he used an axe with such a long handle, Abe replied, "You see, I am a long man."

When spring broke up the river, Joseph and Waitstill resumed their western journey. About April, 1853, they camped at a point near what is now Udell, or Cincinnati, Iowa, on the open prairie. Grandfather bought 640 acres of land, paying cash for it. (He had \$50,000 with him). One of the men he brought with him was a Mr. Oliver, who was a very good carpenter and had been with Grandfather for a number of years serving as a millwright. So Grandfather soon had a large house erected. Some of the other men were put to plowing the soil; they planted 100 acres of corn and 20 acres of buckwheat the first spring. Not having a grist mill near them, Mr. Oliver built one by going to the timber and cutting a large white oak tree and sawing off a block of about six feet. This he sank into the ground and mortised out a smooth hole in the end and made a pestle to fit the hole. This weighed a ton and had to be lifted by a lever and then dropped from a height to fall into the hole where a half bushel of corn or buckwheat had been placed. Just a drop or two and the grit was pulverized into the finest flour.

While the family was living there, Grandfather received a letter from his half-brother at Rusk, Texas. He was told to come down there and the brother would set them up with all the land that they wanted and they could become independent in a short time. Grandfather sent Mr. Oliver to Texas as an ambassador or agent to look over the land to see

if it was really as his half-brother Jonathan had said it was, flowing with milk and honey. Mr. Oliver was gone so long that Grandfather had given him up. He sold his farm in Iowa and relocated in Missouri. He found and rented a large farm. All the men who came with him from Indiana had gone back. He also sent his son Milan back to make some collections from some firms who owed him for lime and had not paid. Milan collected \$5,000 and brought it back. He was four months on this trip. By this time Ephraim had gone back to Kentucky and married. Also Mr. Oliver had returned from Texas. Milan and William were both married and Mr. Oliver's report was anything but good. Oliver was a banjo player and had his banjo with him and said he would not give his banjo for a whole county of that Texas land! So Grandfather forgot that.

Uncle Billy was married in Sullivan County, Mo., as he had gone to the town of Milan and got his permit there. But the Rusks lived on the Grundy County side. However, as the fence was just a few rods east of his home, Uncle and his bride climbed over the fence and stood under a large tree in Sullivan County, and were married there to fulfill the law. Soon after this time, around 1860, with the war imminent, the boys, being grown up, were all restless and wanted to do something for themselves. William had set up a home for himself, Milan had left, and Father, the next oldest, had joined the Home Guard, and James was wanting to go. So Grandfather moved over to what is known as the winter place just east of the old cemetery in Galt, and lived there until the outbreak of the war. He then moved up to what is called the old Rains place, just north of our old home. There Grandfather and Grandmother both died.

This is the story of Waitstill Hubbell and her husband, Joseph Rusk. Nothing was ever done about the money in the Bank of England, as Joseph had made his fortune and felt no need of more.

All Hubbells can be proud of the great courage of Captain Hubbell of Kentucky and of the pioneer spirit and industry of Waitstill as she trekked bravely westward to three different states while bringing up a family of nine children.

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