

## PRETTYMAN MARVEL, SR.,

### — HIS LIFE STORY —

Prepared by Mrs. Ella Armstrong Yeakel.

In recent years there has been a growing interest, especially in the United States, in matters pertaining to genealogy. From the earliest times genealogy has formed the basis of all true history.

In ancient records, the lineage of an individual was the thread upon which were strung the stirring events of centuries. For many people genealogy has but small attraction, but that natural instinct which prompts one to love the place of his birth, and the chief circumstances in the lives of his progenitors is gradually attracting the attention of the general public.

There are very few families who can trace their ancestry beyond the eleventh century, for it was not until this period that people began to adopt family names. The Marvels date the origin of their name and family to about the middle of the eleventh century.

In the hamlet of Merveille, in Normandy, France, resided a man by the name of Robert. To distinguish him from others bearing that name his place of residence was added, thus—Robert de Merveille, (the de meaning of.)

In 1066, when the reigning Duke of Normandy, afterwards known as William the Conquerer, invaded England, Robert de Merveille left his home in Normandy to follow the fortunes of his ruler. After the Conquest he did not return to his former home, but established a home in Yorkshire, where he became the head of the family which bore his name. Which name in common usage soon became simplified into the present form of Marvel.

Passing over some six centuries of time, the early church records of our country show that one John Marvel, a descendant of Robert de Merveille, was one of the English Colonists who helped to subdue the wilderness which later became the great state of Virginia.

Perhaps it was not a desire for religious freedom alone, but also the blood of his sea-roving Norse ancestors coming down to him through the centuries, which called him to a more adventurous life in this New World.

He located in Acomac County, Virginia, sometime between 1650 and 1660. He remained in that locality a number of years, then removed to that portion of Maryland which later became a part of Sussex, Delaware. Here he made his permanent home and became the progenitor of a long line of Marvels who have spread over our country from its eastern coast to the sunny slopes of the Pacific.

John Marvel had two sons, John and Thomas. No records are extant of the descendants of John, but the records of Thomas show that he had four sons, namely, Thomas, Jr.; Philip, Robert and David. The last named son, David Marvel, was the father of Prettyman Marvel, Sr., who is the subject of this sketch.

From the earliest times peach growing has been one of the main industries of Delaware. So important it was that in later years the peach blossom was adopted as their State flower.

In the Springtime when the many orchards were in full bloom, the Delaware landscape was a scene of great pastoral beauty. Especially was this true of the Sussex County as the soil of that region was peculiarly adapted to peach growing. The Marvel family gave much attention to this industry. From the luscious fruit of their own orchards, they made brandy, and a flagon of this beverage always stood upon the family table, and occupied an important position upon every festal board.

They also gave their attention to the raising of fine horses. Of the four sons of Thomas Marvel, Sr., David was said to have an especial liking for horses. When he went courting no young man in Delaware rode a finer saddle horse. His sweetheart was the daughter of a wealthy English family named Prettyman, and Miss Sally was said to be the prettiest girl in that country. Young David obtained the consent of her parents and Sarah Comfort Prettyman became his bride.

Seven children were born to them, namely, David Jr., Burton, Elizabeth, Polly, Prudence, Patience, Prettyman. David Marvel, Sr., died about 1796. His wife, Sarah (Prettyman) Marvel surviving him.

The subject of this sketch, Prettyman Marvel, the youngest child of David and Sarah (Prettyman) Marvel, was born in Kent County, Delaware, January 29, 1763. He was a lad thirteen years of age at the beginning of the Revolutionary War.

In his later years he often spoke of those troublous times, telling how he joined with other youths of the settlement to protect their homes from bands of marauders who came to pillage and destroy.

Prettyman Marvel inherited from his father David a love of fine horses and being of slender build in his young manhood he was said to have been an expert rider of race horses, which he made quite profitable to himself. He married Lavina Rogers, daughter of John and Comfort Rogers, and a near relative of Gov. Daniel Rogers.

The young couple started life together apparently satisfied to make a home in their native state among their many relatives and life-long friends. A son whom they named John was born to them April 8, 1794.

Twice yearly, Prettyman and his family, together with one or two other families, would go for a brief sojourn at the coast. The men would go out in boats, casting their nets; in this way taking a large supply of fish, which they would salt for future use. The women and children of the party, after the simple duties of the camp were attended, wandered along the shore, gathering shells, which they took home to border their walks, or enjoyed themselves bathing in the spray of the incoming tide.

In this pleasant way the years passed, and in about 1796 a daughter came to cheer their home, they named her Patience, for her aunt Patience (Marvel) Knowles.

It is somewhat difficult to write the full history of one individual without including at least a partial account of other individuals and families. Especially is this the case where their lives are closely interwoven. For that reason we give a partial history of Patience Marvel, as her life followed along similar lines to that of her brother, Prettyman Marvel, Sr.

Patience Marvel married into the Knowles family, as did also her sister Prudence. The head of this family was one of the English Colonists who came into the settlement at an early date. His name is not known, but one of his sons bore the name of "Silver Head," as a young man he was somewhat of a turbulent character, and becoming tired of peaceable surroundings, he crossed over into Virginia and joined the army in a war against the Indians, however, he soon returned satisfied with his experience, leaving behind him a part of his brain covering, having had inserted in its place a sheet of silver. "Silver Head" Knowles had a son named Richard, this son was twice married, his wives being sisters. His first wife bore him four children—Richard Jr., Zechariah, Edmund, and Prudence. By the second wife he had two sons, Thomas and James. Richard Knowles, Jr., the oldest son, married Prudence Marvel, daughter of David Sr., while James Knowles, the youngest son and half brother of Richard Jr., married her sister Patience.

James and Patience (Marvel) Knowles, for about seventeen years lived happily in the land of their nativity. There were born unto them six sons and one daughter, as follows:—Prettyman, James, Eddy, Jesse, Comfort Marvel, Nathan (who died in infancy and was buried in Delaware.) There followed June 17, 1795 the birth of another son, and they called him Nathan also.

About this time the excitement produced by the invention of Eli Whitney in 1793, of the cotton gin, became well nigh universal. The glow of cotton enamored the farmers. They saw through it a sure and immediate way to wealth. The unsurpassable climate of Georgia, and the adaptability of her soil to the cotton plant was every where known.

Prettyman Marvel and his brother-in-law, James Knowles determined to leave Delaware for the Empire state of the South. As Prettyman could not leave at that time, his brother-in-law took the initiative. In the autumn of 1795, James and Patience Marvel Knowles left Delaware. With their goods in a covered wagon they took their long and tedious journey through Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas into Green County Georgia about fifteen miles below Greensborough the county seat, where they settled down apparently satisfied for life, many things being plentiful and convenient. Three sons were born to them in Georgia as follows: Ephriam, Eli, and Asa which made eight living sons and one daughter. James Knowles was a very strict Presbyterian, and as regular and as certain as the first day of the week came, the children were all thoroughly drilled in the catechism. Patience, his wife, was baptised in infancy and never united with any church being perfectly satisfied with her relation to the New Covenant.

In 1796, Prettyman Marvel, having closed up his affairs in Delaware, together with his wife and two children, left his native state to join his brother-in-law in Georgia. They made the journey by the water route, taking with them Mr. Marvel's nephew, the son of Richard Knowles, Jr., and Prudence (Marvel) Knowles. Young David was said to resemble his Uncle Prettyman Marvel, both physically and mentally. In Georgia he married Nancy Piper, and two sons were born to them in that state.

There is no record of Prettyman Marvel having owned land in the South until the year 1805, when he purchased Two-Hundred Eleven and Twenty-five hundredth acres of his brother-in-law, James Knowles. As the years passed both families became somewhat dissatisfied for they very soon found to their sorrow they had made a poor exchange of countries.

Delaware was a fertile plain with few hills while Georgia was seemingly all hills, and two or three years cultivation exhausted her soil. They heard many things favorable of Indiana which at that time embraced all Illinois. According after a long and serious consultation with his brother-in-law, circumstances being such that James Knowles could not leave at this time, it was decided that Prettyman should make the venture of removal to this new country. To use his own words, Prettyman, who was in poor health from the effects of the climate, "Had enough of Georgia." Accordingly in December of the year 1808, he disposed of his farm and shortly afterwards departed for the Northern wilderness. Besides himself and wife, there were seven children as follows: John, Patience, Comfort, Prettyman, James, Wiley, and Nancy. The last five named having been born in Georgia. David Knowles, who had accompanied this family on their journey to Georgia, gathered up his goods and his family and departed with his Uncle, whom he loved and obeyed as a father. It is said they met with many trials and hardships such as bear heavily on the soul of man. Yet this

man of faith and works pressed forward through all obstacles, while morning and evening the sweet incense of prayer arose from his tent to God. Evil tidings of Indian massacres came out of the North, and floods of water retarded their journey so to be safe they stopped through the summer of 1809 in Kentucky. A daughter whom they named Elizabeth was born here. In the autumn they crossed the Ohio River coming into the Territory of Indiana, where they stopped near "Old Fort Branch." They made their home here for a period of three years.

Prettyman Marvel having left some business unfinished in the autumn of 1810 returned to Georgia, settled his affairs there and arranged with his brother-in-law to come to Indiana the following year. When he returned his nephew Jesse Knowles and wife accompanied him. Jesse packed his goods on the back of an old horse, the wife with a babe in her arms was seated on top of them, while Jesse walked in front and in this manner they made their way through to the North. As had been arranged James and Patience Knowles condensed their property in the South, and about November first, 1811, together with their children and their families left Georgia for Indiana. In all they made a caravan of twenty-three souls. They were an independent traveling community, doing their own cooking, sleeping on their own beds, having their own camp fires. They passed through the Cherokee Indian Country and found them friendly willingly selling them all the provisions needed. As they neared the Ohio River news reached them of the battle of Tippecanoe on November fifth, when many were slaughtered while it was yet dark by Tecumseh's warriors, marshalled under the Prophet. Some-one brought up a proposition to stop in Kentucky but it was voted down, saying "We started for Indiana, and to Indiana we will go." On the evening of December 16, they encamped on the Northern shore of the Ohio river, which was to them the very border of the "Promised Land." That night they were called to witness as a remembrance, the earth reel to and fro as a drunken man. It was the time of the great earthquake of 1811. Many of them were much frightened, however, the next morning after an early breakfast they took up their line of march, and after a few miles to their great joy they were met by John Marvel and their son Jesse Knowles who had come to pilot them to "Old Fort Branch." Late in the day of December 17, 1811 they arrived at Prettyman Marvel's. After a few days rest, they came into the locality where Mount's Station now stands and a short distance west of that place they settled on a quarter section and built them a cabin of poles in the midst of a dense forest. It was here, surrounded by screaming panthers and howling wolves they spent their first Christmas in their new home.

In the spring of 1812, Prettyman Marvel moved from "Old Fort Branch" and located near them on the land now owned by Samuel Marvel. So the two bosom friends, as well as brothers-in-law were close neighbors in "Hoosier Land."

Another relative, Elisha Marvel moved into the settlement in 1811. His parents were Thomas and Susanna Marvel. Elisha was born in Delaware, October 28, 1771. He married Orpha, daughter of John and Comfort Rogers, thus he was cousin as well as brother-in-law to Prettyman, Senior. Elisha and wife left Delaware in the year 1798 going by the overland route, through Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas into Green county Georgia. He disposed of his holdings there a short time before Prettyman, Senior and came into Kentucky, where he remained about two years. His children were named as follows:- Paynter, Comfort, Levina, Elisha, George, Polly, William, Orpha, Thomas, Ceny, and John Rogers.

The circle of relatives was still futher enlarged by the coming of David Knowles and family in 1812. He left Georgia with his Uncle Prettyman in 1809, but had tarried in Kentucky. Two sons were born while there. When he crossed into South Western Indiana, he lived for awhile in another locality but after a few years moved nearer his relatives. Four sons and four daughters were given them after coming to Indiana making twelve in all as follows: William, Richard, Marvel, Archibal, Elizabeth, Comfort, John, David, Lavina, Henry, Permelia, and Logan.

Indiana at that time was a wilderness. There were no mills at all, and bread was made from corn meal beaten by a pestle in a wooden mortar made by burning a hole in the end of a log. Indian massacres were of frequent occurrence during and before the war of 1812, and the settlers were often compelled to flee to the stockade for safety, however, the Indians were subdued after a few years and did not trouble the settllers. The pioneers cleared some land each year and raised abundant crops. They builded better houses and were prepared for more comfortable living. But in the midst of prosperity, trouble came. Patience (Marvel) Knowles passed away May 5, 1817. She having had symptoms of consumption for several years before leaving Georgia. Patience Marvel was born January 31, 1758 and was five years older than her brother Prettyman.

James Knowles was married a second time to Elizabeth (Fugat) Clark, a widow with five children. To this union two children were born, a daughter Prudence, who died in infancy, and one son, namely, John Lowery Knowles.

In the autumn of 1814 James Knowles in connection with Samuel Montgomery organized the first Cumberland Presbyterian society in Indiana. He was an elder in this church for many years. He died October 23, 1839 and was laid to rest beside his wife Patience.

Prettyman Marvel and his wife united with the Methodist church under the ministry of the first preachers in this country. It was said by one who resided in his home that Mr. Marvel was very devoted in the observance of his duties as a Christian. He always began the day by "entering into his closet" and spending a little time in prayer alone. Beside the family worship held regularly morning and evening, he also read the scriptures at the noon hour. Their house was one of the first preaching places in Indiana when there was only one presiding Elder and six preachers in that state. During the severe earthquakes in 1810 and 1811 the rough pioneers flocked into Mr. Marvel's cabin begging him to pray for them, thinking that the end of the world was at hand. The children of the Marvel family had a knowledge of the scriptures imparted to them early in life. They were trained as were the children of the Knowles family in all the precepts of the New Testament, this no doubt exerted a wonderful influence in giving to the sons and daughters of these families the high moral characters which they possessed.

The Marvels had been settled in Indiana but a few years when the children began to desert the home of their parents to establish homes of their own. Patience, the oldest daughter was the first to take this all important step. She was married in the year 1813 to Robert Montgomery, a young man who came from the locality of the old home in Georgia. Nancy Marvel married Mahlon Stone, and both these sisters made their homes in Indiana. Elizabeth married Edmund McReynolds, and they journeyed West in a prairie schooner as far as the Territory of Iowa. Elizabeth died here in an early day, but the open spaces called to Edmund McReynolds and as Iowa became more settled he left that state for Texas, where he fell beneath the arrows of the savage Comanche Indians. James Marvel married Comfort Knowles, the daughter of his father's favorite nephew, David Knowles. They made their home in Indiana. Wiley Marvel married Charity Clark, daughter of Braxton and Elizabeth (Fugat) Clark, she was also a step daughter of James Knowles. They came into Illinois in an early day. Three of the Marvel children married into the family of John Barr, Jr., who had moved into the neighborhood in 1810. John Barr, Jr. and his brother David, accompanied by their father John Barr, Senior, emigrated from Antrim County, Ireland in 1788 and settled in South Carolina. John Barr, Jr., was married in that state to Nancy Hamilton, daughter of the Revolutionary soldier, Wm. Hamilton. They with their family of eleven children moved into Tennessee in 1808. Two years later they came North to Indiana. The Barr family, like the Marvels, are said to have originated in France. In that country their name was de Barre, the de signifying a name of place. They were of the Huguenot faith, and following the massacre of St. Bartholemew they fled across the English Channel. In the British Isles the prefix de was dropped, also the final e, and the name became Barr as it is today. John Marvel married Polly

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Barr who died soon after the birth of her third child. John Marvel was married a second time to Elizabeth Williams. They made their home in Indiana. Prettyman Marvel, Jr. married Rebecca Barr, and Comfort Marvel became the wife of John Barr, who was the third to bear that name. Prettyman Marvel and John Barr became pioneer settlers in Central Illinois.

It is said that Lavina (Rogers) Marvel had ten sisters, all of whom were skilled in the dispensation of the medicines of that day. In this Mrs. Marvel was not unlike her sisters. She went much about the neighborhood, looking after the needs of the sick. It was while engaged in this benevolent practice that she had two falls from her horse and suffered injuries from which she never recovered. Mrs. Marvel had one sister who resided across the Ohio river in the "Blue Grass" country, and the young people of the family took much pleasure in visiting their Kentucky cousins, a party of them often making the journey on horseback.

George Rogers, the only brother of Mrs. Marvel was a baptist minister. He lived to an old age, riding much about the country in a sort of two wheeled cart called a gig. A son was born to Prettyman and Lavina (Rogers) Marvel, March 8, 1815. They named him George Rogers in honor of his Uncle. In 1834 George Rogers married Sarah H. McReynolds. He and his wife remained at the old Marvel homestead in Gibson County until 1859 when he purchased a farm in Posey County. This farm was located about five miles of Poseyville and a little more than that distance from New Harmony, Indiana. He removed there taking his parents with him. He built a small comfortable house for them near his own, where they received very careful attention, but the mother Lavina (Rogers) Marvel died in about 1850, and thereafter Prettyman, Senior lived in the home of his son.

In 1851 George R. Marvel moved to Franklin county, Illinois taking his father with him. In 1854 Prettyman Marvel, Sr. came to Central Illinois to visit his children who resided in DeWitt County. On account of the infirmities of age, he was unable to return. On October 1, 1856 while at the home of his daughter Comfort (Marvel) Barr, he passed out of earth life as one who falls gently asleep.

These Pioneers of a day long past were a sturdy, brave and self-reliant people. For them the "Promised Land" lay beyond the last frontier. Nature had flung relentless barriers in their way, but they pressed ever forward. Their caravans made their way through dense forests and across trackless prairies, oftentimes facing the menace of flood, of savage beasts, and of more savage red men. Overcoming all obstacles by their great industry they carved out for themselves homes in the Middle West and left to us, their

descendants, a goodly heritage in this broad land of ours where we may dwell in safety, free of the many dangers and difficulties which beset our forefathers.

Our debt to them can never be paid. We can but voice our great appreciation and gratitude as we do today.

“There are no new worlds to conquer  
Gone is the last frontier,  
And the steady grind of the wagon train  
Of the sturdy pioneer.  
But their memories live like a thing divine,  
Treasured in Heaven above,  
For the trail that led to the storied West  
Was the wonderful TRAIL OF LOVE.”

NOTE: The above historical sketch was read by Mrs. Litta Starkley Hunt, at the 4th annual reunion of the Marvel family, held August 26, 1923 at South Park, Peoria, Illinois.