Reuben Davis Grigsby - Early Loss

By Matthew Beard

After spending so much time investigating Aaron Grigsby and Sarah Lincoln, I started looking at the rest of the family. It didn't take long to find a story that would fascinate young children and adults alike. I found it in Aaron's father—Reuben Davis Grigsby.

This story has been covered to some degree in *Memorabilia, The Grigsby Family Reunion Book, 1779-1979,* pages 140-141 and pages 244-245. However, while digging through some of the files provided to me by Lutha Grigsby, I found a copy of a newspaper article about the event which provides more information than was previously published. Unfortunately, there is not a reference about where the article comes from, so if anyone recognizes it, please let me know so proper credit can be given.

The following is the article:

"The many years Reuben Grigsby spent in attendance and service at Little Pigeon Baptist Church tend to dispute some of the traditions that he always held to the sun-worshipping beliefs of the Indians who held him captive for seven years. However, his experience with the Indians did give him a bond with Thomas Lincoln and others who had such tragedies in their families.

Reuben was the fourth son in a family of five sons and a daughter.[1] Unfortunately, his father, Charles Grigsby, was away from home in June of 1777 when a party of Indians came through Harrison County, West Virginia where they lived. Even if he had been there it is doubtful that he could have prevented the subsequent tragedy.

Certainly, Reuben's mother, who was expecting another child soon, could do nothing against the marauders. The Indians went through the house and took everything that caught their fancy. What they did not want, they destroyed, including three of the older children.

When they could do no more damage, the Indians forced Reuben's mother, Reuben and a younger brother to go along with them. By the time they reached Lost Creek six miles from the Grigsby home, Mrs. Grigsby and the younger boy could no longer keep up with the party. So the Indians ruthlessly killed and scalped both of them and took Reuben on with them.

Although Reuben was only four years old when his mother was killed, it is doubtful that he ever forgot the incident and even years of comparatively good treatment would hardly blot out the memory.

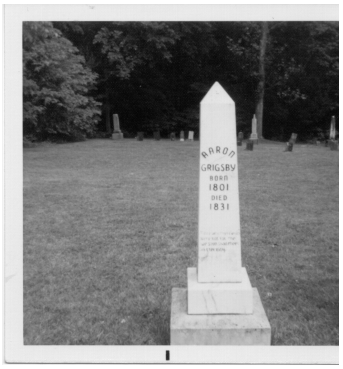
He was finally returned to his family when the white captives were released and brought down the Ohio River on a flatboat.

Reuben Grigsby married Nancy Barker and had eleven children: Aaron, Charles, William, Reuben Jr., Permely, Nathaniel, James, Elizabeth, Redmond, Lydia, and Mary. Aaron, born in 1801, later married Sarah Lincoln, and is buried beside her in the cemetery in Little Pigeon Baptist Church.

One of the early preachers of Little Pigeon Baptist Church also could sympathize with those who had tragedies connected with the Indians, although his turned out better. This was Charles Harper [2], an uncle of Nancy Hanks Lincoln, whose mother Sarah Elizabeth Shipley Harper was captured by the Indians in 1761. While in captivity she was forced to live with and Indian and when rescued in 1764 brought back a half-Indian boy with her. This baby, Peter, was raised by George Harper as his son. When Peter Harper died without descendants, his property went to his mother, brothers, and sister. Charles Harper was one of the brothers who moved onto the land in Kentucky that Peter left, then became a preacher and followed the Lincolns to Indiana."

Editorial Notes:

[1]– Reuben's mother was Elizabeth Lytle, but only Reuben is listed in the online database.

[2]– I could not find the reference, but I believe it was Charles Harper who was the preacher who married Aaron (in both weddings), and the double wedding of Reuben Jr. and Charles Grigsby.

Gravestones of
Sarah and Aaron Grigsby
at Little Pigeon Baptist Church
in Lincoln State Park