

The Read Family and the Civil War

John Read was opposed to the secession of the States from the Union. Consequently Northern soldiers favored him by not burning his home, but they did burn his gin house in which he had stored the cotton from three years crops. They took all of his slaves, his horses, mules, cattle, sheep, hogs and chickens, in fact, everything that they could take away, except the clothing and furniture. Many of the family's hogs had been hidden in the woods. They were the only means of food, except what Dicey Read had hidden in the house. Cavalry horses were turned into the gardens, orchards, and into the growing crops.

As the family was now "prisoners of the Army of the North," they had to draw rations from the army commissary just as the soldiers did. Each Saturday, old John Read, who was too old for service in the war, went into the enemy's camp and drew what was allotted him for the next week. The family had never eaten such food, and hardship was great. The food consisted of fat meat, hard tack, a little flour and coffee. The meat had worms and the hard tack contained weevils. Dicey soaked the hard tack in water and fried it in the grease that came from the meat.

When the gin house was burned, John and his son-in-law Arthur K. Barlow, whose family was burned out of their home by Union troops, took long poles with forks on the end and fished out eighteen bales of the burning cotton. This they rolled into the creek nearby and later hid it away in the woods. Sometimes after, when they were almost starved, the two old men put one bale of this cotton on an old cart that had been left. They dragged it into the Yankee camp and sold it for a good price.

When John and Arthur reached home with a few things they had bought in town, they hid the money in a secret drawer, in a dresser, in Dicey's room. Before night, two men, who had evidently seen John and Arthur receive this money, came to the house. Placing a pistol to the old John's temple, they said "hand out that money, old man." Dicey had large rolls of Confederate money in her wardrobe, so that is what she gave the men. They seemed satisfied and left. The money was worth nothing.

One day the advance guard came into the Read yard and told them to vacate the place as the line of battle would be drawn through their yard. Dicey got her knitting and the two old people took their seats on the front porch and said: "Come on, gentlemen, I will die, where I have lived." The line of battle, however, was put down below the garden in an old field. The family all sat about. They saw the flash of the first cannon and heard the bellowing of the great guns. They saw the tops of trees cut off, and trees splintered into shreds. They heard the shrieks of the dying and wounded men and the yells of the commanding officers.

Battles raged all around the Read home. Their house, as other houses nearby, was turned into a hospital. Everyone was expected to do their part. The wounded, both North and South, were cared for by Dicey and her daughters. Everyone did what they could. Every man, woman and child was doing his part. Some were packed away in caves dug in the sides of the hills. Old people and little ones, languished from the heat, and lack of food. Brave ones were doing their best to rout the enemy who had destroyed all they had. For forty-seven days they were exposed to the elements. They were cut off from all help. The city was surrounded on all sides, but even if it had not been, there was nothing in the country to send them. Hunger, and death from bullets was the inevitable. It is said that they ate the flesh of horses, mules, dogs, cats, frogs, or anything they could find. There was left, only the gaunt human creatures, who stared at each other with bloodshot eyes, and parched lips. They were in the enemy's power and never knew what would be their fate.

Before things had gotten so bad, the Read family had hidden everything they could. They had some shingles taken from the roof of the back porch, and many things put up there. All of their silver and jewelry were packed in boxes and hidden in holes dug under the parlor. Dicey had put a layer of hams between two mattresses, on a bed in one of the bedrooms, so they could get them easily when wanted. When they knew the Yankees were about a daughter was instructed to lie in this bed, and feign sickness, as one of the grandchildren stood by her with a fan. (11)

At the end of the war, John Read filed a claim against the United States Government for property taken from him at his home near Edwards, Mississippi. The claim, amounting to two thousand one hundred sixty dollars was settled in 1916, long after John's death in 1874. (12)

In 1867, Dicey Read took one of her granddaughters, Ida Barlow, by train to Carroll County, Mississippi to visit John and Dicey's son Jesse Read. Dicey died 23 April 1867,⁽¹³⁾ while on this trip.⁽¹⁴⁾ She was taken home to Edwards, Mississippi, and laid to rest in the Old Hinds County Cemetery. She lies between her son, John D. Read, and two grandchildren, the children of her daughter Mary Elizabeth Read Hall.

After Dicey's death, John Read sold his home at Edwards, and moved to Carroll County, Mississippi to live with his son Jesse. John died there 28 April 1877.⁽¹⁵⁾ and according to his great grandson, Roby M. Read of Vaiden, MS., John is buried at old Bluff Springs Cemetery, or as it is known to residents of the area, "The Frog Pond."

1. Philip Brueck, Park Superintendent, Horseshoe Bend National Military Park. Alabama.
2. National Archives, Washington, D.C.. War of 1812 Pension Application #8859. 21 August 1871
3. *Ibid.*
4. Evelyn Duke Brandenberger. **The Duke Family.** (No date or place of publication given), 1979, pp. 176-177.
5. Mrs. I. P. Trotter, Jr. **Trotter Genealogy.** Privately printed 1948, pp. 19, 151-154.
6. Bureau of Land Management. Cahaba Land Office Files 285, 286, 459, 460.
7. Madison County, Mississippi. Deed Book A, pp. 737-739.
8. Gillis. **Mississippi Genealogy and Local History.** Volume V. p.11.
9. Hinds County, Mississippi. Deed Book 27, p. 696-697.
10. Madison County, Mississippi. Deed Book C. pp 358-359.
11. Winona Times. Various articles by Ida Barlow Trotter printed between 1920 and 1926.

12. Civil War Claims Commission. CS #646B.
13. *Hinds County Mississippi Gazette*. 10 May 1867, and 28 June 1867, P. 2.
14. *Winona Times*, September 24, 1920.
15. Goodspeed Publishing Co. **Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Mississippi**, Vol. III, 1891 Chicago, Ill. p. 688.

John Read d. age 84. Read family was in AL by 1822; Madison Co., MS by 1828 proven by the 1828 Madison Co. Ms. Tax List; Hinds Co Ms. by 1850; and the widower John Read in Carroll Co, Ms by 1870.

John Read enlisted 28 Jan 1812 in War of 1812 at Montgomery Co., TN & was discharged 18 May 1814 at Fayetteville, TN. He was in Capt. Hagards TN militia, Mounted Cavalry. On 27 March 1814 he fought the Creek Indians under Chief Red Eagle at the "Battle of Horseshoe Bend" on the Tallapoosa River in AL under Gen. Jackson.

This article from the 5 July 1814 issue of the Nashville Clarion: "Dickson County Salutes Its Soldiers at Barbecue" Charlotte, Dickson Co., June 1814 - Saturday the 18th inst. being the day fixed upon to give officers and soldiers of this county a dinner - one somewhat emblematical of a soldier's He was prepared in the skirts of a wood near Charlotte, adjacent to a fine spring. An elegant barbecue of flesh and fish, of all the various kinds which the county affords, was handsomely served up in rural style. Never did greater harmony pervade any circle nor guest of any entertainment appear to enjoy more social ease than did the numerous concourse present. Mr John Read was appointed president. Dinner over, the Patriotic Greys under the command of Capt. Nesbett, formed around the table when toasts were drunk, etc." (The occasion may have marked Dickson County's noisiest celebration ever. In all, it appears there were 37 toasts, 48 gun salutes and 150 cheers.

The following are statements made in John Read 's "Claim against the US Government.: P.33": Attorneys say John served as a soldier in 2 wars. (besides War of 1812, what other war?) P.29: Jesse Read says his father d. 1878; C. K. Farr says he died directly after the close of Warhis hair was white as snow. Dotson said he died about 1874/75, and was about 90 years old. P. 268: for a copy of his 1812 pension certificate #5013, p. 308-309: Letter from John Read, p. 268: 1812 Survivors Pension. John Read in 1872 said he was 78 years old, and took amnesty oath in Vicksburg, MS. John Read in his testamony says he Lived at Edwards Depot, Hinds Co., from April 1, 1861 to June 1, 1865.

An obituary for John Read in the New Orleans Christian Advocate, August 9, 1877: In part: "Bro. John Read is dead. Bro. Read was born December 6, 1794 in Halifax Co., N. C. In early life he emigrated with his father, and settled in East TN. He was a soldier with Gen. Jackson from 1812 to 1814, but when his country no longer demanded his services in war, he returned to his home in TN where he was soon after happily married to Miss Dicy Duke. On a few months passed away before they professed religion and joined the Methodist Episcopal Church. This was perhaps as early as 1816. Brother Read, after his marriage, first moved to N. AL; afterward to MS., and settled in Madison Co.; thence to Hinds Co., and settled near the present site of Edwards' Depot, where he lived for a number of years. Some 10 years ago his wife passed to her eternal reward. Bro. Read then removed to Carroll Co., and spent the remainder of his long life at the pleasant home of his only living son, where on 28 April 1877, he bade adieu to earth. Bro. Read was confined to his room, and most of the time to his bed, for more than a year. We often visited this man of God in his last months, and never without profit to ourselves." This was written by Thomas C. Parish & Thomas J. Newell, P.C. in Winona, MS July 12, 1877.

Dicey died on a visit to her son Jesse in Carroll Co., MS at 68 years of age. At the time of Dicey 's death only 2 of her children were living. Dicey and John had 20 grandchildren and 2 GGrandchildren.

Mary Kuyendall of Amarilo, TX said family members told her that Dicey was very short, wore a size 4 shoe, piled her hair high on her had, and when she was angry, she hollered so loud and stomped so hard that her hair fell down.

An obituary for Dicey Duke in the New Orleans Christian Advocate, June 8, 1867: In part: it said she was united in marriage to John Read when she was just 17 years old. She leaves her husband, 2 children and 20 odd grandchildren and 2 great grand children. Written by Wm. F. Camp, Vicksburg, Ms. 20 May 1867.