

Mason Valley Man is Named for First Postmaster

Josh Mason made Postmaster of Mason Valley Postoffice in 1873. Served 25 Years.

Living upon the same farm for more than 54 years and making a good living from the same, besides acting as postmaster for 25 years, is the achievement of Josh Mason, 81 years old, after whom Mason Valley was named. For more than half a century this fine old man has lived in his house by the side of the road and been a friend to mankind. This man is part of the valley, and the valley is part of the man.

From a higher point on the highway before entering Mason Valley, one can see the land stretch out before him like a patchwork quilt ~~with~~ of many hues of greens and browns. It contains some of the richest soil in the county, which nearly a century ago attracted the pioneers seeking to homestead or to buy land. Perhaps the first settlement was made in the vale about 1830 by a man named Anderson who had come from Kentucky and took up a Government Claim. The other families occupying the first settlements of land were the Staceys and Hollands, either Carolinians or Tennesseans. The valley had no name and the nearest of the few postoffices was Osage Mills. Wild game and wild fowls abounded in the country about. Herds of deer and flocks of wild turkey greeted the eyes of the pioneer family by whose name the valley became known. This was John J. Mason, who with his family had come in a covered wagon across the country from North Carolina. There was with him his two brothers, Joe Mason and Billy Mason.

The wagon trail in which they had traveled had crossed the Mississippi at Golconda, a little below St. Louis, passed through Springfield, and reached Benton County in the fall of 1856. Paying \$1.25 an acre, John invested in 180 acres in the valley where he made a home for his wife and six children.

In time came the uneasiness throughout the country upon the great question before the nation, then came the war. Each of the settlers did as each thought right. Some went north and some went south. Two of John Mason's sons joined the Union Army, choosing the field artillery. These were Josh Mason, then 16, and his older brother. They were in the same company in the 1st Arkansas Battery. Their Commander was General Thayer and their Battery saw active service in south Arkansas and in Louisiana. Receiving his discharge at Ft. Smith in 1865, Josh returned from the war to help work his father's farm. As the years passed other settlers made their home in the country about and several different states were represented by the inhabitants. In 1870 Josh married. His bride was Sallie Parker, a member of a neighboring Missouri family.

In 1870 the Government decided to establish a Postoffice in the valley, they named Josh Mason Postmaster. A few years later, to supply the needs of travelers and the families, he put in a general merchandise store.

The store and the postoffice were on the Hico road which led from Bentonville to Hico, a settlement nearly at a point where Silcoam Springs is now located. It was also a traveled route to the Indian Territory.

The young postmaster also bought an eighty acre farm, upon which he made his home and continues to live upon it. For 25 years Josh delivered the mail, ^{and} from behind the counter, provided the material wants of the people about him. During the passing years the wild game was nearly exterminated, the Indians moved to the reservation, and the country became more populated. After a quarter of a century Mr. Mason left the postoffice and store and moved to Highfill. But he was destined to handle mail for he was made postmaster there. One night thieves broke into the building but as the veteran postmaster had that day removed the postal money there was no loss.

After a number of years Mr. Mason returned to Mason Valley, where from his comfortable home by the roadside he watches the world as it passes by his door and enjoys the fruits of his useful life. Of the early Mason family there remains Josh and his two cousins, Mike and Milt (Marshall) Mason. The latter lives upon the Stacy farm once owned by one of the first pioneers of the community. Mike's daughter and her husband dwell upon the farm purchased by his father in 1856. Some of the children live near them and others are scattered into distant states.

So on into the next century may there be Masons of the original family living in the valley.

Excerpt from the BENTON COUNTY HERALD, Bentonville, Arkansas, About Feb., 1, 1930

ANOTHER PIONEER DIES AT HIS MASON VALLEY HOME

Funeral services for Joshua Mason, widely known pioneer of this county, veteran of the Union Army, and for 62 years a Mason, who passed away at his home in Mason Valley, a few miles southwest of Bentonville, Arkansas, on Wednesday, January 22, 1930, aged 83 years, nine months, and nine days, were held at 2:30 o'clock on Monday afternoon the 27th, at the Vaughn Presbyterian Church, of which he had long been a member. The services at the church were conducted by the pastor, the Rev. F. A. Bradshaw, with the services at the grave in charge of the Hazel Valley Masonic Lodge of which Mr. Mason was a charter member. The Masonic services were conducted by Storm O. Whaley, of Sulphur Springs, Past Grand Master of the Arkansas Grand Lodge of Masons, assisted by a large number of other Masons. Interment was in the family plot at the Coffelt Cemetery.

Born at Bridgewater, North Carolina, April 13, 1846, Joshua Mason was a son of John Jefferson Mason, born 1809, and Emily Connolly Gibbs Mason, born 1814, and a grandson of the Rev. Michael Mason and Margaret Hunter Mason. In 1856, at the age of 10, he moved with his parents from Lenoir, North Carolina, direct to what is now known as Mason Valley, Benton County, Arkansas. The valley where his father had homesteaded on their arrival here was named for Mr. Mason when, in 1873, he was appointed Postmaster there by President U. S. Grant. From that date until several years ago when the post office was moved to Highfill, a small nearby railway point, Mr. Mason conducted the Mason Valley post office and a general store there at the same time living on and managing his farm. With the change of the post office he moved his store also to Highfill and served as Postmaster at the two places more than forty years.

With his brother John T. Mason, he enlisted in the United States Army at Springfield, Missouri, in 1863, and served with the First Arkansas Battery of the Federal Army until the close of the war between the states.

Mr. Mason became a member of the old Masonic Lodge at Springtown, Arkansas, near his home in 1868, and later became a charter member of the Hazel Valley Lodge, now at Vaughn, death terminating his active Masonic service of about 62 years.

On March 6, 1870, Mr. Mason married Sarah Catherine Parker, and to this union six children were born. Mrs. Mason died some three years ago. The children surviving Mr. Mason are Oliver F. Mason, an Attorney-at-law of Miami, Oklahoma; James H. Mason, a grain and stock dealer of Hooker, Okla.; Thomas C. Mason, a salesman for National Cash Register Company at Shreveport, La.; Miss Ida Mason, a teacher, of the home, and Mrs. A. H. Kimberling, of Springfield, Mo. Another son, Luke Mason, was drowned in the Columbia river at Arlington, Oregon, in August 1901.

The nine grandchildren are Charlie L. Mason, of the Mason Valley home; Joe Mason, Hooker, Oklahoma; Glenn Mason, Blackwell, Okla.; Jack Mason, Shreveport, La.; Lindsay, Paul, and Byron Kimberling, of Springfield, Mo.; Miss Dorothy Mason, of Miami, Okla.; and Mrs. Paul E. Johnson, of Kansas City, Mo. Mr. Mason also is survived by two great granddaughters, Mary Jo Amos, daughter of Mrs. Ava Mason Amos, deceased, and Margaret Louise Mason, of Blackwell, Okla.

Mr. Mason's grandfather, the Rev. Michael Mason, served in the Continental Army, and among other engagements of the revolutionary war, fought in the battle of Kings Mountain. He was born in Virginia in Alexandria, and died in Alabama in 1821. Among others of the many ancestors distinguished for their services was George Mason who, as a member of the Continental Convention of the United States, became especially noted because of his failure to sign the draft, and his insistence upon and success in bringing about the adoption of the first 12 amendments thereto, which many term "the people's" Bill of Rights

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Benton Co., AR - Biographies - Joshua Mason

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Joshua Mason, merchant and postmaster at Mason Valley, Ark., was born in McDowell County, N. C., April 13, 1846, and is a son of John Jefferson and Emily (Gibbs) Mason, the former of whom was born in Alabama. Joshua Mason removed to Benton County, Ark., with his parents in 1858, and was here reared to manhood. He was educated in the common schools and by private study, and in contact with business life he has acquired a good practical education. His early days were spent in following the plow, but he afterward engaged in mercantile pursuits (about 1883), and his efforts in this direction have been followed with good results. His mercantile stock is valued at about \$4,000, and his property in the country at about \$3,000. All this property he has accumulated by hard work, honest dealing and good management. In September, 1863, he enlisted in the Union service, in Company A, First Arkansas Battery, and served under Capt. Denton D. Stark, his field of action being principally in Arkansas, Indian Territory and Missouri. He belongs to the Masonic lodge of Hazel Valley. He was married to Miss Sally Parker, who was born in Polk County, Mo., and is a daughter of Julia F. Parker, and he and wife worship in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Nearly all of Mr. Mason's people are engaged in farming, and are of Irish descent. The father, John Jefferson Mason, was born in Burke County, N. C., July 12, 1809, and is a son of Rev. Michael and Margaret (Hunter) Mason. Michael Mason was born in Pennsylvania, removed to Alabama, and there died in 1824. He was a minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church from early manhood until his death. His wife was born in North Carolina, and died in her native State in 1865. John Jefferson Mason was educated in the old-time subscription schools, and in 1835 was married to Emily Gibbs, who was born in North Carolina on the 22d of September, 1814, a daughter of Joshua and Rebecca (Conley) Gibbs. Mrs. Mason's grandfather, John Gibbs, was a Methodist minister for fifty years or more, and died at the age of eighty years, in North Carolina, in 1853. Mr. and Mrs. Mason became the parents of three sons and three daughters, and in 1857 [p.867] immigrated to Arkansas, where he entered eighty acres of land and engaged in farming. He and wife are members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and are old and highly honored citizens of the county.