The Puntenney Home

On February 27, 1793 somewhere in Virginia or Kentucky, Nelson and Jane Puntenney gave birth to their fifth child, a son, Aquilla.

Little is known of Aquilla's early years. But we do know that he enlisted in the militia in Worthington (Franklin County), Ohio. He served as a private in several Companies of the Ohio Militia from 1812 to 1814. His name appeared in the military roles as "Puttenney".

On December 28, 1850 Aquilla applied for and received 160 acres of bounty land in Parke County, Indiana, on account of his services in the War of 1812. During his life he would go to accumulate approximately 535 acres of property in the immediate area and in the nearby Wabash river bottoms.

Aquilla was allowed a pension on his application executed July 29, 1873 at which time he was resident of Armiesburg (Parke County), Indiana. He died in December 15, 1878 and is buried in the Hixon Cemetery near where he lived.

Upon Aquilla's death, John Guffy Puntenney inherited 120 acres of land. Like his father, John was a farmer. In addition, he also ran a store for some period of time in Armiesburg, located approximately one mile north of his home on Lafayette Road, now designated 600 West. John acquired a reputation in the community as a fair and honest business man. His obituary stated that he was "well liked by his neighbors and always ready to help others in distress.

John and his third wife, Margaret Hixon Weese (widow), were married on March 11, 1875. John and Margaret had two daughters,
Through the years John was able to acquire land holdings of over 350 acres. Although precise records are lacking, we believe John built his farmhouse around 1875. Prior to this John and his family lived in a small building or cabin just behind where the house stands today.

Originally, access between the main two-story portion of the house and the adjoining single story structure was made by using exterior doors. No interior doors between the two sections of the house existed.

Reputedly, John loved the candy-striped, red and white, bank barn adjacent to the house. Originally, the barn was located across the road from its present location. Precisely when the barn was relocated or how the move was accomplished is not known. It must have been quite a feat considering the tools and equipment available at the time.

In 1913, John divided his estate between his two daughters, keeping the main house and approximately 25 acres of adjoining land. Daughter Ethel and her husband, Virgil Marshall, lived in the home directly across the road. Daughter Minnie and her husband, Bert Cook, lived in the home on the corner approximately one-quarter mile south.
John and Margaret Puntenney. The two young boys are likely Margaret's sons from a previous marriage (Weece). Margaret is holding Ethel, she and John's first daughter. Note the building immediately behind the main house where they likely lived before the main two-story house was constructed. c. 1878. (#14)

Margaret Puntenney and her grandchildren. Note the open porch and decorative posts supporting the veranda with its ornate, picket-like fence. Reportedly, on hot summer nights some folks elected to sleep "out on the veranda". c. 1912. (#124)

Minnie and Bert Cook inherited the "home place" and some additional tillable land. Bert farmed the land for awhile but ultimately gave that up. Later he would run a Blacksmith & Carriage Shop (see check above) in Montezuma and manage a small bank in Mecca. Finally Bert and his son-in-law, George Richardson, would own and operate grain elevators in Mecca and Clinton. Bert and Minnie had three daughters, Bereniece, Maxine and Madonna.

The Cook Sisters (L to R):

(Left): Maxine, Bereniece and Madonna. c.1911. (#121)

(Right): Madonna, Maxine and Bereniece. c.1920. (#86)
Bert and Minnie made several significant changes to the house. They connected the two portions of the house by creating a large opening between the dining room and living room areas. They removed the walls from two downstairs bedrooms and hallway creating a large living room. And they enclosed porches on three sides of the house. A basement was also excavated and a concrete driveway constructed to allow storing early model automobiles in the “basement garage”. This was a significant construction project considering
In 1944 Bert Cook died. Minnie lived out her life in the Puntenney house. She truly loved the place—the land, the house, the woods, the valley and the connection to her ancestors in all represented. Her daughters and their families spent many happy hours with her "at the farm".

(L to R) Cousins: Rosemary Murphy, Sharon Richardson, Marka Richardson, and Lary Lewman. c. 1940 (#106)

Minnie loved horses so all the grandchildren got in the act. L to R: Rosemary Murphy, Marka Richardson, Sharon Richardson and Lary Lewman. C. 1942. (#111)

The Cook grandchildren at the farm for Thanksgiving. c. 1938. (#102)

Rosemary Murphy and Lary Lewman. C. 1945. (#167)

Marka (left) and Sharon Richardson. c. 1945. (#166)

Minnie (Puntenney) Cook. c. 1950. (#109)

Minnie Cook and her Lewman grandsons, Lary (left) and Mike. C. 1946. (#108)

Minnie Cook and great-grand daughter, Kyle Richeson. Minnie’s last Christmas. 1952. (#118)
Upon Minnie’s death in 1953, Madonna and her husband Parke Lewman inherited Puntenney home. They lived in the home with their two sons, Lary and Mike. In 1959 Parke died. Madonna and Mike continued to live in the home until 1966 when Mike left home. For 32 years Madonna lived alone until the time of her death in 1993. During that time she cared her home and the grounds with the same love and affection as her ancestors.

When Madonna’s health began to fail in 1993 she left her home and went to Columbus, Indiana to live with her son Mike and his wife, Kaye. Madonna never returned to her home again.

During her final illness she never spoke of the house until the day before she died. While in the emergency room at the hospital she asked Kaye, “What about the house?”. Kaye assured her that we would take care of the house. Madonna acknowledged Kaye’s reply, closed her eyes and never spoke again.

On December 23, 1993 Madonna died in the hospital in Columbus, Indiana. She is buried in Roselawn Cemetery in Terre Haute, Indiana along side her husband, Parke. Upon her death, Madonna’s sons, Lary and Mike, inherited the home. Later Mike and Kaye would buy out Lary and Nancy Lewman’s half of the home to become sole owners.

Over the years, the Puntenney house has seen much joy and sadness. Births, deaths, holiday celebrations, funerals, triumphs and tragedies have all taken place here. Although somewhat weakened with time, the walls John Guffy put into place so many years ago still stand as proud testimony to the strength and continuity of family. Oh, if the walls could only speak.

Prepared by Mike Lewman
August 1999.
The Puntenney Farm
A Hoosier Homestead 1832—2006

c. 1874 (#12)
c. 1879 (#14)
c. 1896 (#9)
c. 1910 (#124)
c. 1940 (#98)
c. 1950 (#221)
c. 1960 (#288)
c. 2006 (#313)