

## **SC-81 Thomas Morrison Papers (ca. 1792-1880)**

**(4 Items)**

Thomas Morrison was an early settler of the Miami Valley.

### **Item List**

1. Updated transcribed copy of Morrison's experiences that was typed in Feb. 2009
2. Six transcribed pages of Morrison's experiences.
3. Sixteen original handwritten pages of Morrison's experiences, after moving from the Miami Valley.
4. Translated and reproduced copy of a Quit Claim Deed.

Typed by  
Lucy A. Morrison Witlock  
April 4, 1956

A History of Thomas Morrison  
(Copied from hand-written original)

To give a history of myself, it is best to say something of my grandparents and parents.

My grandfather, Samuel Morrison, was born in Stewartstown, Tyrone County, Ireland, December 25<sup>th</sup> O. S. A. D. 1700, Jan. 5<sup>th</sup> A. D. 1701 N. S. and was married to Miss Mercy Mayse, A. D. 1735 N. S. Mercy Mayse was born, same place, A. D. 1716, both of Irish Parentage. They emigrated to America A. D., 1740, and came over in the good ship, Sally of Coleraine. Children of the above 1<sup>st</sup> Anna born in Ireland A. D. 1739, died in infancy and buried at sea. 2<sup>nd</sup> Margaret born in Bucks Co., Pa. A. D. 1743. 3<sup>rd</sup> James born same county and state Jan. 3<sup>rd</sup> A. D., 1745, O. S. He served in the Indian war that preceded the Revolution and died in Warren Co. Pa. Sept., 4<sup>th</sup> A. D. 1839. 4<sup>th</sup> William born in same co. and state A. D. 1747, and died Aug. 2<sup>nd</sup> A. D., 1810, in Lycoming County, Pa.- 5<sup>th</sup> Ephriam, born in same county and state A. D. 1749 and died in infancy. 6<sup>th</sup> Rachel born in same county and state A. D. 1751 and died in infancy. 7<sup>th</sup> John born in same county and state A. D. 1753, he served as first lieutenant, in Capt. Thomas Ferguson's company in the Revolutionary War. He was a very large and stout man and could shoulder nine bushels of Alum-salt and carried a cannon that weighed 600 lbs. – he died near the mouth of Pine Creek, Lycoming County Pa. A. D. 1786 with 3 days sickness. 8<sup>th</sup> Samuel, was born in the same county and state, Jan. 7<sup>th</sup> A. D. 1756, served as wagon master in the Revolutionary War. Emigrated west and settled in Miami County, Ohio Nov. 15<sup>th</sup> 1800 and died in same county May 7<sup>th</sup> 1811. The 9<sup>th</sup> and tenth Ephriam and Jonah, twins, were born in the same county and state June 5<sup>th</sup> 1759. This brings me down to my father, Ephriam Morrison,

Grand Mother, Meroy Morrison, died at Jersey Shore, Lycoming County, Pa., Oct. 30<sup>th</sup> A. D. 1795 aged 82 years. Grandfather, Samuel Morrison died at Jersey Shore, same county and state May 5<sup>th</sup> A. D. 1801, aged 100 years and 4 month, after willing all his landed property, consisting of two farms of 300 acres to Uncle William Morrison. He was buried in the old Pine Creek Cemetery. Ephriam Morrison, my father, was five feet nine inches in height, weighed 175 lbs, fair complexion, brown hair, blue-gray eyes and Roman nose. He served in the Revolutionary Army and was wounded in the battle of Brandywine, Sept. 11<sup>th</sup> A. D. 1777. Was married to my mother, Mrs. Nancy Hettick (whose maiden name was Foster) July-A. D. 1787. The Morrison families must have settled near the mouth of Pine Creek on the beautiful bottoms of the west branch of Susquehanna in 1777 or 1778 as Uncle Abbe Cady, Aunt Margaret's 2<sup>nd</sup> husband, was killed by Indians in the spring of 1777 opposite the mouth of Pine Creek. Father continued to reside there until October 1795 when he and mother, two half-sisters, my brothers Ephriam and William, Myself, and sister younger than I set out for the western country. I was born on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August 1792, consequently I was a little over 3 years of age. I can remember of our starting and of our crossing the Allegheny Mountains, and of arriving at Red Stone old Fort. Here we embarked on board of a boat for Fort Pitt, as it was then called. As it was getting cold, father thought it best to remain here for the winter. We lived in an old cabin where Allegheny City now stands. In February the ice broke up, and after it had all passed by, I with my two older brothers went to the river, where I fell in. This came near terminating my existence, and would, had it not been for a half sister who was a good swimmer, and who plunged in the river and bore me safely to shore. I still live to remember this deliverance. Father, being in a hurry, started on our journey down the beautiful Ohio River. We overtook the ice at Gallipolice, which had gorged up the river. Here we had to stay ten days, then start in our boats again. Our next landing point was Fort

Washington, the newly laid out Cincinnati. We remained here only a few days, then left for the mouth of Hogan Creek, where Aurora now stands, about 25 miles below Cincinnati. Here was an Indian cabin without floor or roof. Father repaired it and we moved into it. This then, was nothing but a dense wilderness, filled with all kinds of wild animals, from elk, bears, deer, wolves, panthers, wildcats, foxes, raccoons, opossums, ground-hogs, porcupines, minks, weasels, beaver, otter, muskrats and squirrels innumerable. Of the feather tribes, were immense flocks of wild turkeys, quails, bald-eagle, a great variety of owls and hawks, buzzards, ravens and crows, wild geese, brants, cranes, and ducks of 4 or 5 varieties. The old Indian Chief, Blue Jacket, with a band of Shawnees was encamped not far from us up Hogan Creek. Mr. Adam Flake had settled on South Hogan, about 1 ½ miles from us. We boys had several scrapes with the young Indian boys. I was hit in the forehead with a stone thrown by an Indian boy and knocked down, it cut a very bad place. This finished my playing with Indian boys. We lived here until Jan. 1800, then moved across the river to what was then called Tanner's Station, after John Tanner, a Baptist minister, who founded it. It is now called Petersburg. It then contained one frame and four hewed log houses and three log cabins. Names of families now recollected, John Tanner, Judge John Watts, Hawkins, Sebre, Robert Moseby, Voden, Kirtley and Alloway. We remained here until March same year, then moved opposite the mouth of Laughery Creek and about the middle of May moved opposite Aurora. Here we lived during the summer of 1800. In the fall of this year we moved in a perlogue, which Father made for Capt. Vance, to Whitewater River, one mile above where Reese and Bond's mill was afterward built. Here lived a family by the name of Bonham, two of the boys (John and Aaron) I was well acquainted with. Also a family by the name of Smith. This perlogue was made from a large poplar tree cut down opposite Rising Sun. We remained here until the first of May 1808. At this time there was no want of meat. Just go to

a deer lick and kill one any time, and the woods alive with wild turkeys. At the time we first came here, Simon Girty was here. He and Blue Jacket left together for Detroit. Blue Jacket borrowed Father's saddle to ride to Detroit. He brought it back but attempted to steal it afterward. Simon Girty never returned, though he had a son a very fine man, who resided many years in Dearborn County, He went by the name of Simon Peters. While living here brother William and I took the dog and started out over the bottom to hunt. We did not proceed far before we treed two cub bears. William, being an expert climber, went up the tree and caught one of them. It gave a sharp, shrill scream which soon brought its mother. We were obliged to let it go, and after a terrible fight between the dogs and bear, the cubs got separated so far apart that we succeeded in capturing one of them. At our Tanner's Creek home, Mother died December 16<sup>th</sup> A. D. 1803 and was buried on the sight of Hardinsburg. No stone marks her resting place. We lived here until December 25<sup>th</sup> (Christmas Day) A. D. 1804 when we started for the Mad River country. We reached Dayton the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of January 1805, and the next day left for our last destination, near Donald's Creek, Clark County, Ohio where we raised a crop of corn; then Father entered a half section of land 320 acres and began to prepare for building a house on it. The house was 44 feet long by 18 feet wide, an entry in the middle. It was raised to the square, when Father went to a house raising on Oct. 5<sup>th</sup> and got very badly hurt so that he never walked afterward. Us three boys finished our double log cabin and moved Father out to our new home where he died on the second day of February 1806. We were then left orphans, fatherless and motherless. Where we built our new log cabin it was a dense forest of Beech. Sugar, Elm, Ask, Oak and Hickory, so we boys, instead of going to school, out and cleared off five acres, as they saying is, "Smack and Smooth." Made rails, and fenced it in, planted it in corn. When the corn was up about four inches, the last of us five children left our double log cabin for the last time,

never to meet it again. In fact us five children never all met together. I always wanted to be a Millwright from my earliest boyhood. I built little mills on brooks and water wheels running. On the 1<sup>st</sup> day of June 1806 I set out. With poor clothing, without money or any schooling to learn the Millwright trade. I worked at it from June till the 25<sup>th</sup> day of December 1806, then turned out to shift for myself. As my Boss, Mr. Benjamin Lefel, had no wife and as he had no work during winter, I was turned loose to shift as best I could. So then I concluded that I would not try it again. In the spring Mr. Lefel came for me. I told him I had made up my mind to be a farmer. I was to get fifty acres of land which I expected to be near by where Mr. R. C. Crawford lived, the man with whom I was to live. The great Eclipse of the summer of 1806 took place. I remember it well, it was total, the chickens went to roost. I remained working on the farm of Mr. R. Cunningham Crawford from Dec 25<sup>th</sup> 1806 to the 26<sup>th</sup> of June 1809. I was then told Mr. Crawford would get my land away out in the "Beech Woods." I then concluded to leave the farming business. After I came to this conclusion Mr. Crawford offered me 50 acres of land where I expected to get it, a horse, saddle and bridle, 9 months schooling and a freedom suit of clothes which he had never offered before. But my mind was made up so on the 26<sup>th</sup> day of June A. D. 1809 I bid farewell to friends and country life and set out for Dayton. I arrived here about 12 o'clock, ate dinner, then went four and a half miles below Dayton to work. I had never walked 19 miles and did a half days work. I was very tired. I thought it was the longest day I ever saw. I stuck to it, never thinking of backing out. It was at Thompson's farm where we were working and worked 22 days for which my Boss charged \$11.00 then we came up home. In Dayton at this time there was a brick courthouse and four other brick buildings. South of Third Street it was called Cabintown, there were ten cabins and not one frame building, only three log cabins on the west side of Ludlow Street, and four cabins on the east side clear to the river. On

Main Street west side, there were seven log houses, courthouse, McCullom's tavern and Sandons house just put up. East side of Main Street 6 log houses, 2 frame and 2 small brick houses. The first work I did in town was in Sandon's house, where the Journal Office now is, then the best house in town, we finished it and went to work in the Academy and finished it. I then had the privilege of going to school for 22 days. At this time my Boos got a job of work, I was then taken out of school and put to work. This is the way I got my 6 months schooling, by piece meal and a portion at night school. Never got to learn figures, only what I picked up afterwards. This is the way I have worked my way through life to the present time. In 1810 we built Horatio Gates Philips dwelling house and in 1811 we built his brick store and Leatherman's dwelling. In 1812 we built the old frame Methodist Church and made the tent poles for Richard M. Johnson's regiment and short cotts, so that two could be put together end to end for one soldier to lay on. The army lay here three weeks, then came Col. Dudley's regiment, that was defeated near the rapids of the Maumee river, where Gen. Harrison had forbidden them to leave their boats, to take the batteries, spike the cannon, then come back. But when the Brittish and Indians ran off, the Kentuckians took after them, which led them into an ambuscade, the Indians getting between our men and their boats. This was not discovered until too late. The Brittish began an indiscriminate massacre of the poor Kentuckians. Very few escaped with their lives.

The next work I assisted in was the building a bridge across Mad River for the returning of the Kentuckians to cross on. It was in the middle of a cold winter. There was a series of earthquakes, first occurring the 15<sup>th</sup> of December 1811 and continuing occasionally to near the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 1812. Also a large comet appeared in the northern heavens in the winter of 1812. These things disturbed the minds of the people considerably in those early days. In Dec. 1812 the Battle of Mississiniwa was fought in Indiana some 75 miles northwest of Dayton. The wounded

of that battle were brought here. There were icicles of blood on some of the poor soldiers 6 inches long. It was a sad spectacle to behold. I was drafted to go to the relief of the River raised disaster, but did not go, for before we got ready we received orders to return. This ended our war doings for the present. In 1813 we built Smith and Akers Store, then T. McClure house. We had not finished it till the 9<sup>th</sup> of Aug. came then I became free. It came on Monday so Saturday was my last days work for my old boss, John Dodson. On Sunday I went to camp meeting about 10 miles distant south of here to Sugar Creek. I remained here until 12 o'clock Midnight, then started home, got to town at day break, got my breakfast and went to work for myself, making tools, squares, levels, &. There is part of one level here yet, the rest have long ago disappeared. I on Tuesday went to work on a brick house which I had contracted to build. I went to my own account. I never worked Journey work. In July, before I was 21 yrs. old, I bought the lot on which I built my first house and the lot where all my children were born. I mention this feat as an encouragement to my grandsons to try and get possession of property in early life because, if youth and early manhood be frittered away it never can be regained.

I built a house for judge James Steele in the Summer of 1814 and finished a log house for John Lehman. In 1815 I built a brick house for Henry Brown's father and my own house that I live in from the time of my marriage until I moved into my new house that was burned in 1867 and which is still standing. In 1816 I built William Vanderslices's house on Jefferson Street, which is still standing, the remodeled. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of February A. D. 1817 I was married to Miss Sarah H. Humfreville. In 1815 I built a house for Andrew Waymire, which is still standing, it was a frame house two stories high. It was in Main Street below Fifth Street. In 1817 I built my father-in-law, Mr. David Humfreville's house on southeast corner of Jefferson and Fourth Streets, still standing. This same year I built the old Journal office that was burned down by the rebels. In

1818 I built a dwelling brick house for Joseph Pierce on the corner of Fourth and Main Streets. It is still standing and is a good house yet. In 1819 I built several small houses. In 1820 I built Geo. C. Davis a house and sawmill at Carlisle and a house on H. G. Phillips farm. There was but little doing this season. In 1821 I built Thomas Clegg's factory and old foundry. I would remark right here, that the stringency in money matters continued. In 1822 I built a barn on the Little Miami River for William Freeman who was one of the first printers of Cincinnati. He was a son of Samuel Freeman, one of the original proprietors of Cincinnati and who was also a printer. Here at Mr. Freeman's I saw old files of newspapers of the last century. After this work was completed, I returned home. There was, at this time, no work of any kind in Dayton. Then the notion to go to Tennessee sprung up in my mind. I just built a house for Mr. Matlock, a good man but after all he died a drunkard, poor man. The man who bought his house was also a good and sober man, but he kept out of those "Hell Holes" as I call them. I should be the most thankful of all beings for my safe passage thru a long life this far without becoming a lover of one of the greatest curses the land was ever cursed with. The next greatest curse is tobacco. I feel thankful that the great ruler of the world has kept me from these great evils. On the 17<sup>th</sup> day of November 1822, I started down the river with a load of various articles of produce. On the 18<sup>th</sup> in the evening after I had been in the river tearing down a mill dam, it snowed slightly all day and freezing and just at dark we struck a stone and upset the boat. As she lay on her side I fixed all the things I could, then waded out to shore about 150 feet. My poor limbs stiff and cold. That was one of the days that all the gold in California would induce me to have gone back to the boat. My limbs were so numb with cold I had no feeling in them. I had two apprentices and one journeyman. So we got supper and lay down on a cabin floor to sleep, tired and worn out. I slept till about 12 o'clock, then awoke. My mind was so troubled I could sleep no more, studying what

to do. To return home I would lose all I had, for I had run in debt enough to take all I had to pay it. I did not know what to do—a wife and two babies left to battle with this world. But in those days there was more pleasure than now. All were as one family. If I could have stood the loss then as now, I would have gone right back. But in the morning of the 19<sup>th</sup> we had to unload our boat and dry all our things. We had a very good place, Frilling Mill, and a big stove. The 20<sup>th</sup> in the evening we got ready and started. I had to ship two loads by wagon to Cincinnati and had to pay one dollar per hundred from Franklin to Cincinnati. On the 24<sup>th</sup> we got to the mouth of the Miami River. On the 25<sup>th</sup> we walked to Cincinnati, there being no other way of travel at the time. There we fixed our things on flat boat. The Ohio was booming high. On the night of the 26<sup>th</sup> it snowed about 1 ½ inches. 27<sup>th</sup> clear. Snow went off so we started and ran to the mouth of the Miami. We crossed the falls of the Ohio on the 29<sup>th</sup>, continuing to the mouth of the Ohio. Got there on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December. Staid there about four hours and entered the Mississippi and on down it to the head of Wolf Island. Here we remained all day. We went out to hunt, killed one wild turkey and one raccoon. Dec. 8<sup>th</sup> we ran to New Madrid. This is where they suffered so much from the earthquakes before mentioned. We stayed all night here, put out our lines and caught one catfish, then continued our voyage and ran about 75 miles and landed on the left, or east bank, here remained all night. In morning ran to the mouth of Forked-Dear River, opposite Island No. 25. Here we landed and spent the night of the 11<sup>th</sup> fixing our load. The 2<sup>th</sup> of December we left for our destination, the Fort of Jackson, where we arrived in one month. Forked-Dear being so crooked and difficult to navigate. We landed our boat at Jackson, Tennessee, Jan. 11<sup>th</sup> A. D. 1823, after a very tiresome trip. We settled down till the first of Feb. I then contracted to build a storehouse for Doctor William E. Butler, who had married a niece of Gen. Jackson's. After that I contracted to build the first sawmill in that part of the country. So we

continued work there till the 9<sup>th</sup> of Sept. 1823. We packed up for home that was home and after nineteen days travel on foot, when we reached that long-desired home, it was the happiest day of my long-spent life, to meet a loved wife and two little ones, after ten months absence from them. No one can tell the joy I experienced. The nearer I got toward home, the more anxious I was to get there. The last night we traveled all night, although we had traveled nineteen days. We rested two days, then commenced work again in the fall. We went up to Mr. Jonathan Dayton Miller's and enclosed his brick dwelling house, and in September 1824 we went up and finished it. The next job was building a still house for Gen. Fielding Lowrey, and some small houses. Times here at Dayton were extremely dull, very little doing. In 1825 I began fixing for another trip south. I built a boat, on the first of October hauled my flour to Cincinnati. I started with my boat on the 26<sup>th</sup> of October 1825 and began tearing down milldams from here to the mouth of the Big Miami, then run our boat to Cincinnati, loaded it and started on our voyage Nov. 22<sup>nd</sup> and crossed the falls of Ohio on the 29<sup>th</sup> day of November and in 52 days reached the mouth of the Ohio. Got to the mouth of the White River and on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January 1826 started up the Arkansas River. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> got to the Post of Arkansas on the 27<sup>th</sup>. There we stayed until the 1<sup>st</sup>.

(Parts of nine lines missing from original copy as follows)

for our destination, which we

hard poling, we landed at

o'clock on the 26<sup>th</sup> of Feb. 1826.

until the 9<sup>th</sup> of April, when we

two canoes lashed together.

a boat and traded off our

a Keel Boat. When we got to

Arkansas River at Montgomer—

Passage on the Old Steamboat Paragon and ran to Memphis. Then I had to travel on foot 120 miles to Jackson with a very severe cold. I reached there in four days hard travel and only got \$300, out of the thousand which they owed me there. I started on foot to the Big Sandy 80 miles. Here I took a flat boat down the Tennessee River to its mouth, then walked to the mouth of the Cumberland River, took passage on a steamer for Louisville, arriving there May 18<sup>th</sup>, from there steamboat for Cincinnati for home on foot, after an absence of 6 months and 24 days. Found all well. My wife, in my absence only ran me in debt \$60 and spun and made a carpet and had it on the floor. Had made sheeting, table linen of her own spinning. These days of industry, toil and economy are gone, never to return. May 1826.