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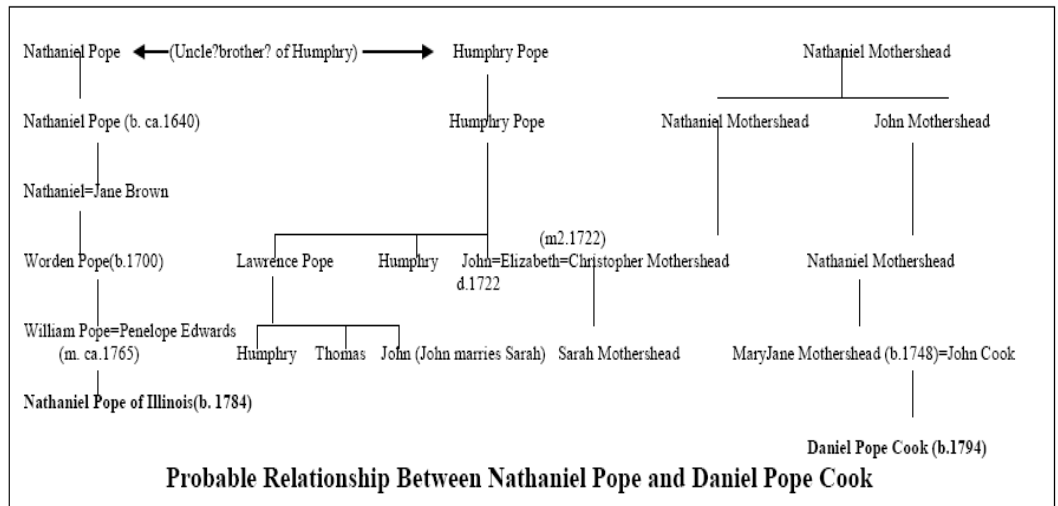


## The 1820 Col. Benjamin Stephenson House



# The Volunteer

### *Friends, Foes and Acquaintances: The Social Network of Benjamin Stephenson*



By Sid Denny

### Daniel Pope Cook

Daniel Pope Cook was one of the youngest friends who played a significant role in the life of Benjamin Stephenson. While they were well acquainted, they probably really knew each other for only the last six years before Stephenson's death. During that six year period, they became close friends and political allies despite the significant difference in their ages.

Daniel Pope Cook enjoyed a meteoric rise from near obscurity to political power and influence. From his modest beginnings, he became a newspaper owner and editor, a lawyer, a judge, a member of the United States House of

Representatives, and the influential chairman of the powerful House Ways and Means Committee. Given his importance to Illinois history and his particular importance in the development of Chicago, there should be a great deal of historical information available about his life. However, there is very little written about him and almost no published information at all about his early life. The few written accounts of Cook's life and career gloss over his early life and provide vague statements about his poverty and his physical frailty. He is described as "small and frail of stature" (Johnson 1960). Johnson also states that "although he was related to the influential Pope family of Kentucky, young Daniels's parents were too poor to send him to college after he had



finished with the grades" (Johnson 1960). Cook's entry in the *Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois* says nothing at all about his early life aside from the opening statement that he "was born in Scott County, Ken-

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**THE FRIENDS OF COL. BENJAMIN STEPHENSON HOUSE PRESENT**



**\$120/8 PERSON TABLE  
OR  
\$15 PER PERSON**



**Event Venue**

Edwardsville American Legion Post 199  
58 South Route 157, Edwardsville, IL

**FOR MORE INFORMATION  
OR TO RESERVE YOUR  
TABLE CALL  
618-692-1818**

*Upcoming Dates*

- March 12-14, MOMCC Conference
- March 21, Playing the Past (Girl Scout Badge Program)
- March 26, Classical Conversations Home school tour, 10 a.m.-12p.m.
- April 11, Trivia through the Decades
- April 15, SIUE Life Long Learning, adult tour, 1:15-3:15 p.m.
- April 17, Trunk Delivery Trinity Lutheran, 10 am
- April 22, Trunk Delivery Columbus School, 9:15-9:25 a.m.
- May 1, Trinity Lutheran School Tour, 12:30-2:30 p.m.
- May 2, Junior Gardener (Girl Scout Badge Program)
- May 6, Columbus School Tour, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
- May 6, Columbus School Tour, 12:30-2:30 p.m.

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tucky” (Newton and Selby 1918: 192). A third reference states that Daniel was the nephew of Nathaniel Pope (see article about Nathaniel Pope, *Volunteer*, Vol.6 No.3, June 2012), a member of the influential Pope family of Kentucky and an influential Illinois politician (Howard 1972:98). In a footnote to Howard’s discussion of Daniel Pope Cook’s role in the statehood campaign, Howard states that “no good biography of Cook has ever been written.” That statement was published in 1972 and, unfortunately, is still accurate. About the only thing that most of the references agree upon is that Daniel Pope Cook was born in Scott County, Kentucky. A search of genealogical records for Scott County shows four Cook families in Kentucky in 1810. Included are the families of Coleman Cook, Isaac Cook, and two John Cooks. The last of these, John Dillard Cook, turns out to be Daniel Pope Cook’s father.

John Dillard Cook was born in 1753 in Lincoln, Lincolnshire, England. He apparently immigrated to America as an indentured servant as a groom at the age of 21. He sailed on the *Russia Merchant* in July 1774 to Petersburg, Virginia. He married Mary Jane Mothershead (b.1748) sometime before 1781. In 1781 John Cook and his wife, Mary Jane, were members of the Upper Spottsylvania, VA, Baptist Church. Apparently, according to the history of the Baptist Church at Stamping Ground Kentucky, the entire congregation of the Spottsylvania Baptist Church gathered together and moved to Kentucky. In 1800 the Scott County tax list listed John Cook as a farmer with 160 acres on McConnell’s Run.

John and Mary Jane Cook had seven children. The first three children, Nathaniel, Sarah, and Elizabeth were born between 1774 and 1784 in Virginia. The last four children, including Nancy, John D, Eleanor, and Daniel Pope Cook, were all born in Kentucky. Daniel, the youngest child, was born in Scott County in 1794.

Although the date and place of Daniel’s birth and a number of details about his family can be pieced together, some information from the published sources is hard to substantiate. For example, Howard (1972) says that Daniel was the nephew of Nathaniel Pope, while other sources say that Daniel was a relative of “the important Pope family of Kentucky.” The extent of the relationship is uncertain. The Pope family had been in Virginia since 1650 and there is a direct line of descent through four generations to Nathaniel Pope, the Illinois

politician who Howard states was the uncle of Daniel Pope. The available genealogical records do not exactly support this contention. It is clear that there is a long standing relationship between the Pope family and the family of Daniel’s mother, Mary Jane Mothershead. The relationship between the two families is tangled and hard to follow. As early as 1749, Westmorland County, Virginia, records show that the first Humphry Pope (a lineal ancestor of Nathaniel Pope) purchased land from Nathaniel Mothershead. There is also evidence that there was some intermarriage between the Pope and Mothershead families (See attached chart).

Based on the chart it appears that there is some kind of relationship through marriage between the Pope and Mothershead families. However, it is also clear that the relationship between Daniel Pope Cook and Nathaniel Pope is fairly distant. Today, such a relationship would likely be written off as “a shirttail relationship.” A shirttail relative is defined as someone related through marriage, someone as distant as a fourth cousin, or someone not related at all, but called by a kinship term. For example, one’s mother’s best friend might be called “aunt” even though she is clearly not a part of the kinship group.

In modern American culture, kinship is far less important than it was in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Today Americans can recruit individuals into working groups, or interest groups, based upon a large variety of exclusive relationships. A group must be exclusive because its members have to distinguish themselves from other people on some basis. If a group lacks exclusivity, it becomes an amorphous mob. Today we have exclusive religious groups (Christian, Muslim, and Buddhist etc.), political groups (Democratic, Republican, Libertarian, Tea Party, etc.), sports groups (Rams fans, Packer fans, Edwardsville High School Tiger club etc.), and dozens of other types of groups. We can mobilize the members of these groups, such as “The Friends of the Stephenson House,” to do a variety of tasks. In early America there were very few groups which had exclusive membership. For example, there was only one political party during much of Stephenson’s life. Likewise, there was religious homogeneity. There were very few sports groups and very few ways of organizing groups for large projects. The one exclusive group available to everyone was their kinship group. Because it was so important to organize groups and kinship was a major way of organizing groups, kinship was extraordinarily important for early Americans. In modern American culture, many of us are acquainted with a very limited number

of our kin. Most of us can talk about the generation above us and several generations below us, but when we get to a generation earlier than our grandparents, we frequently don’t know much about any of the individuals. Kinship is simply not as important to us as it used to be for our ancestors. It is a measure of this difference between American culture in 1820 and American culture in 2012 that two people, as distantly related to each other as Daniel Pope Cook and Nathaniel Pope, clearly considered each other as significant relatives.

Daniel Pope Cook was born in 1794 and received a limited education since private schools and tutors were expensive. He probably attended a one room school with students of several ages. One author of a history of Kentucky education refers to these schools as “blab schools” where students repeated lessons in a singsong manner. Given the fact that Daniel Pope Cook clearly was fairly well educated, it is likely that much of his schooling was received at home. Daniel left Kentucky for Illinois sometime in the early 1800s. One author indicates that when Cook moved to the Illinois Territory he started work as a clerk in a store, but he became disenchanted with the bartering in “salt and calico for “Dominecker” chickens, hand churned butter, and fresh possum pelts” (Johnson 1960). (Author Johnson was a Chicago politician, probably ignorant of “downstate” Illinois, so maybe he can be excused for not knowing that “fresh possum pelts” were never traded for anything. Nevertheless, I found his statement a little insulting!) Cook then turned to the study of law in the law office of his relative, Nathaniel Pope, who had recently moved from St. Genevieve to Kaskaskia. Records of the First District Circuit Court for the May 1815 session show that Daniel Pope Cook was admitted to the bar in the Illinois Territory. He was 21 and a young man on the move. In January of 1816, he was appointed to the position of auditor of public accounts for the Illinois Territory by governor Ninian Edwards. He also purchased the local Kaskaskia newspaper which he published throughout most of that year using the initial name of *The Illinois Herald*. He changed the name to *The Western Intelligencer* in late 1816 and served as the editor of the newspaper for several years. However, Cook had more ambitious plans in mind. In February of 1817, he traveled to Washington City in search of an appointment to a prestigious government position. He thought he might become secretary of the Alabama Territory. Despite the fact that Nathaniel Pope was serving as territorial representative in

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the United States House of Representatives, Cook found little opportunity to gain the kind of position he desired. He was offered a job as a clerk in the State Department, but he turned it down. With no other federal position available, he accepted an appointment as a diplomatic courier. He was sent to England with dispatches for the American ambassador to England, John Quincy Adams. The dispatches which he delivered to Adams asked that Adams return to America to become the Secretary of State in the administration of President James Madison. Adams immediately sailed to America and Daniel Pope Cook sailed on the same ship. In 1817 even a quick trip from England to America on a sailing ship took more than three weeks (Laakso 2006:3). Consequently, Cook and Adams became well acquainted. In addition to their diminutive stature, both men had large political aspirations and they found that they had much in common. The voyage seems to have cemented Cook's political ambitions. In November of 1817, Cook resigned his position as courier and returned to Kaskaskia and the editorship of *The Western Intelligencer*. He immediately broached the subject of Illinois statehood in his first editorial. He was the driving force for the statehood movement which moved with amazing speed culminating with the admission of Illinois to the Union as the 18<sup>th</sup> state in April, 1818 (see the article in the *Spectator*, Fall 2011). In the Constitutional Convention of 1818, Cook was much in evidence as a reporter of *The Western Intelligencer* but also as the clerk of the house of representatives, a position to which he had been appointed by Governor Edwards. The resolution of the convention asking the U.S. Congress to admit Illinois as a state was almost word by word a copy of Cook's earlier articles in the newspaper.

Throughout much of 1818, Cook was incredibly active. In addition to editing the newspaper and agitating for statehood, he also continued to practice law. Early in the year, he was appointed judge of the western district of the circuit court (Johnson 1960). During the March term of the circuit court in Edwardsville, Cook acted as the presiding judge (Brink 1881:126). When Illinois became a state, the first state elections were scheduled for the fall of 1818. Cook ran for the office of the Illinois delegate to the United States House of Representatives against John McLean of Shawneetown. Cook carried Madison county handily by a vote of 446 to McLean's 94 (Hair 1866:269). McLean carried most of the southern counties and ended up winning the election by 14 votes.

Despite his defeat, Cook's political connections and obvious competence were not forgotten. He had been appointed to the post of clerk of the territorial House of Representatives by Ninian Edwards. He was, therefore, well known by the members of the newly elected state House of Representatives and in December of 1818, following his resignation as a judge, he was appointed by the House to the position of Attorney General of the State of Illinois. Since Illinois had come into the Union half way through a federal election cycle, the 1818 election for the House of Representatives carried a shortened term. In August 1819, the next election was held. Cook again ran against John McLean. Cook's campaigns against McLean foreshadowed the later and more famous elections pitting Abraham Lincoln against Stephen Douglas. During the 1819 election, Cook and McLean traveled around the state giving "stump speeches." Cook was anti-slavery and McLean, from deep southern Illinois just across the Ohio River from Kentucky, supported slavery. This time Cook defeated McLean fairly easily, winning by a vote of 2,192 to 1,559. Cook was subsequently reelected to Congress in 1820, 1822, and 1824.

On May 6, 1821, during his second term in Congress, Cook married Julia Catherine Edwards, the daughter of the new United States Senator, Ninian Edwards.

In 1858, Reverend Thomas Lippincott wrote a series of articles about the early days of Illinois for the *Alton Courier*. These were later edited and reprinted several times. His comments about early Edwardsville appear in Norton's 1912 Centennial History of Madison County. In his discussion of Edwardsville, Lippincott writes: "...we had evidence that Edwardsville, in the person of Miss Julia Edwards, afterwards Mrs. Daniel P. Cook, and Miss Hamtramck (the daughter in law of the other Illinois Senator, Jesse Thomas) furnished society in Washington with some of the most perfect specimens, in one case of charming, modest beauty and grace, and in the other of dashing elegant manner and splendid appearance, that it could boast during a session of congress within the presidential term of John Quincy Adams. With these and others fully competent to associate with them, and the strangers heretofore mentioned, it may not be too much to say that there was an intelligent and refined, if not a fashionable society in Edwardsville as early as 1819 and 1820 (Norton 1912:139).

During his four terms in the U.S. House of Representatives, Cook served on a number of committees the most significant of

these being the House Ways and Means Committee. Until 1865, the jurisdiction of the committee, referred to as the Committee of Ways and Means before 1880, included the critically important areas of revenue, appropriations, and banking. The Constitution provides that all revenue bills must originate in the house. Given the fact that such bills originated in the Committee of Ways and Means, a member of the committee was in a powerful position. When Cook rose to the chairmanship of the Committee of Ways and Means, he became one of the most powerful members of the Congress. Throughout this period, Cook was responsible for bringing substantial sums of money and significant federal projects and resources to Illinois. His most important contribution during this period was his work on behalf of the Illinois and Michigan Canal.

Ever since Marquette and Joliet entered Illinois in 1673, there had been the dream of connecting the Great Lakes to the Illinois River. Joliet was probably the first to envision this connection, but countless people over the next century had entertained the same dream. The construction of the Erie Canal in 1817 rekindled the dream in Illinois. The Erie Canal project proved that such a large scale project was technologically possible and that the economic impact of such a project was huge. Since in the era before railroads almost all commerce was waterborne, connecting areas of the country by canals and rivers led to immediate economic development. With the model of the construction of the Erie Canal available, people in Illinois began to work toward a canal connecting the Great Lakes to the Illinois River and thus to the Mississippi all the way to New Orleans.

"At the Illinois delegation's urging [the Illinois delegation at the time consisted of Senators Jesse Thomas, Ninian Edwards, and Congressman Daniel Pope Cook] the U.S. Congress in 1822 authorized the state to construct a canal running from the mouth of the Chicago River to a point on the Illinois River. For this purpose the state was to receive the canal path itself and ninety feet of land extending out from each side of it where timber and other resources could be harvested. This grant of federal land was to be void if the route had not been surveyed in three years or if the contemplated canal had not been completed in twelve. In response the Illinois General Assembly approved an act appointing five canal commissioners to lay out the route and estimate costs. Civil engineers were hired to survey the path-

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way. Total construction costs were estimated to be \$713,000. The state legislature then enacted a law which chartered a private corporation to undertake the project. Unable to raise the required capital, this entity surrendered its charter on January 12, 1826.

In 1827 at the behest of Daniel P. Cook, the lone Illinois delegate in the U.S. House of Representatives, Congress made a better offer. An act offered the state alternate sections of land extending five miles out from each side of the proposed canal. In all this amounted to some 284,000 acres of federal land. In Illinois the General Assembly passed an act in January of 1827 which provided for a board of canal commissioners who were to lay out the route, select the alternate sections donated, and commence land sales to raise the funds required to finance the undertaking (Illinois StateArchives: [www.cyberdriveillinois.com](http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com)).”

Oddly, one of Cook’s major contributions to Illinois history, The Illinois-Michigan Canal, was one of his last acts in Congress. He had been defeated for reelection in the 1826 election and he was serving as a lame-duck congressman at the time the bill was passed. His defeat in 1826 was politics in its most virulent form. Cook’s downfall started in the aftermath of the presidential election of 1824. There was only one political party at the time: the Democratic - Republican Party. However, in 1824 the party split and four candidates ran for president. The candidates included Andrew Jackson, the hero of New Orleans, John Quincy Adams, the son of President John Adams, William H. Crawford, the Secretary of the Treasury, and Henry Clay, the influential long-time speaker of the House of Representatives. All of these men had been political allies at one time, but old alliances came apart like Humpty Dumpty during the election. At the end of the election, no candidate received a majority of the electoral votes. Jackson had 99, Adams had 84, Crawford had 41, and Clay had 37.

Consequently, the election was turned over to the House of Representatives to decide the outcome. Despite the fact that Jackson had received the most popular votes as well as the most electoral votes, the house voted to award the presidency to John Quincy Adams. Illinois had three electoral votes and two of them went to Jackson. Daniel Pope Cook cast his vote

for John Quincy Adams. While Cook said that his vote was a result of his adherence to the voice of the Illinois voters, his long time friendship with Adams, kindled many years before in their voyage from England to America, might well have influenced his vote. The vote led to a split of the Democratic - Republican Party into the Democratic Party, led by the followers of Jackson, and the Whig Party, led by Clay and Adams, which eventually evolved into the Republican party of Abraham Lincoln. For Daniel Pope Cook, the election was a disaster. Andrew Jackson never forgot an enemy for he was not a forgiving man. Cook had voted for Adams and, therefore, Jackson considered him the enemy. Enemies were to be destroyed and Jackson and his followers destroyed Cook. In the election of 1826, Cook was defeated by a Jackson supporter, Joseph Duncan of Jackson County, who almost no one had ever heard of. Out of Congress, Cook was sent on a diplomatic mission to Cuba by President Adams in 1827. In June of 1827, Cook returned to Edwardsville, but he was critically ill with consumption (tuberculosis). Cook had always been small, frail, and troubled by illness. Washington City had always had a reputation as an unhealthy place. It was hot, muggy, swampy, and infested with flies and mosquitos and his condition had worsened during his time in Washington. He believed that a trip to Cuba would help alleviate his problems with consumption, but his health continued to decline. “In the fall of 1827 he expressed a desire to visit once again his birth place in Scott county Kentucky, and it was there that he died on October 16, 1827 (Johnson 1960).” He was only 33. He was buried in Hutchison Cemetery in Scott County, but in 1866 his body was moved to Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield Illinois.

The Illinois Michigan Canal, which was the result of one of Cook’s last official acts as a congressman, finally was finished in 1848 and remained in use until 1933. It proved a huge impetus to the development of Chicago. In 1831 Cook County was established and named after Daniel Pope Cook.

After the Ninian Edwards house in Edwardsville burned, Edwards and his family moved to Belleville in 1825. Cook’s widow, Julia Edwards Cook, and their only child, John Cook, also moved to Belleville at the same time. Julia died in 1828 and was also buried at Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield. Their son, John, was elected mayor of Springfield Illinois in 1855 and became a Union General during the Civil War.

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## *News & Needs*

### *Thank you....*

- Sid & Jane Denny for the paper towels, swiffer dusters and Kleenex

### *Needs....*

- 13-gallon trash bags
- volunteers to help with school tours, house tours, gift shop, garden &

grounds, grant writing & research, special events.

- cleaning supplies such as Windex, toilet bowl cleaner, hand soap, disinfecting wipes, bleach, toilet paper,
- seamstresses to sew clothing for the volunteer

wardrobe

- bolt of 100% cotton batiste

### *Welcome....*

Lenny Mejia Mendez, Julie Mangoff, Joyce Lamping.

