

Aug. 20, 1955

Route 4,

Sevierville, Tenn.

Mr. R.L. Maples  
Gatlinburg, Tennessee

Dear Bel,

I was glad to see the recent press notices of the proposed drama for Gatlinburg. I was in Cherokee the other day and talked to Jarret Blythe, the former chief. He is in favor of cooperation in joint advertising of the two plays as you have proposed. He had received a letter from Kermit Hunter in regard to this matter.

Any drama on the early settlement of Tennessee based on John Sevier and the white settlers versus the Indians should portray Isaac Thomas, Sevierville's first settler. Thomas was a Virginia trader to the Cherokee on the Little Tennessee River—perhaps as early as 1760. He was there in 1776 at the outbreak of the Revolution when the Cherokee planned their attacks on the first Tennessee settlers on the Watauga and Holston. Nancy Ward, beloved Cherokee woman and faithful friend of the white settlers, told Thomas of the Indian plans. Isaac Thomas at the risk of his life managed to escape from the Indian towns and succeeded in notifying John Sevier and James Robertson of the impending attacks. So the forsts on the Watauga and Holston were made ready for defense, and the Indians were repulsed.

Because of his hasty departure from the Indian towns Thomas was forced to leave behind considerable property, and the Virginia Assembly a short time later voted to pay him 100 pounds sterling for these losses. I have a photostatic copy of this vote.

Later in 1776 a force of 1800 men under Colonel William Christian was raised in Virginia to march into the Cherokee country on the Little Tennessee to punish the Indians. Isaac Thomas as the white man most familiar with the route of march over the Indian War Path from Virginia was chosen to guide Colonel Christian's army; as a trader he had travelled this same route many times. They crossed the French Broad River just below Ben Brabson's house—this ford is known as Christian's Ford or the War Ford. At the Big Island just above the Brabson place about 1000 Cherokee were camped and they swore that no white men would ever be allowed to cross the French Broad and go south of the Big Island. However, white traders with the Indians persuaded them to retreat, and this first white invasion of the Cherokee country continued until they reached the Cherokee towns.

Four years later, in 1780, Isaac Thomas again guided an invasion into the Cherokee country. This time, John Sevier, just returned from victory over the British at King's Mountain, led the white forces. They crossed the French Broad where Christian had crossed, and met the Indians and defeated them on Boyd's Creek. This was the beginning of Sevier's illustrious career as an Indian fighter—Ramsey, early Tennessee historian, states that Sevier met the Indians in battle thirty-six times and defeated them thirty-six times.

I do not know the exact date when Isaac Thomas settled at Sevierville, but believe it was soon after 1783—the date Ramsey says the first white settlers came south of the French Broad. I have some proof that his eldest son, Isaac Thomas Jr., was born here in 1784. The Thomas home was where

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the railroad station is located. His house served as a fort, tavern and the first Sevier County court met there in 1794 and the site in the forks of Little Pigeon for the town of Sevierville was selected there in 1795. Isaac Thomas owned over 900 acres in the Sevierville vicinity- this was over twice the amount of land owned by other early Sevierville settlers. I have photostatic copies of the Tennessee grants and plats for this land issued to Thomas in 1808. He operated a mill on the West Fork near the railroad bridge.

Isaac Thomas died in 1813, but his burial place is unknown. He left a will which was destroyed when the Sevier County court house burned in 1856, but a Texas descendant preserved a copy of this will which I have in my possession. He had four sons and four daughters- I have family data on all of these. Descendants still live here. The Wynn brothers are g.g. grandsons.

Ramsey states that Thomas was a "near-giant" in size. Phil Wynn and I have about decided that he was illiterate, because he made his X in signing his name. I have a recommendation made by Tennessee congressmen in 1803 to President Jefferson asking that Isaac Thomas, as the most expert woodsmen of these parts, be selected to mark out a road through the wilderness into Georgia.

I would not attempt to advise a dramatist of Kennit Hunter's stature in the techniques of writing a play, but I know of no more romantic and picturesque character on our Tennessee frontier than Isaac Thomas and I do not think a Tennessee drama of this period would be complete without him.

Sincerely yours,

J.A. Sharp

D.A.R. Application for Membership

Texas, Dallas- Jane Douglas Chapter

Mrs. Martha Knight Adams, Wife of Charles Davis Adams, 723 Skillman St.,  
Dallas, Texas

Descendant of Isaac Thomas

Application received by National Society- Feb. 3, 1928  
" approved " " June 21, 1928

Isaac Thomas born in Va. on day of 1735  
died at Sevierville, Tennessee on the 30 day of Oct. 1818  
Place of residence during Revolution was Tennessee and North Carolina.

Mrs. Adams born in Dallas County of Dallas State of Texas  
She dau. of Gabriel Andrew Knight- b. July 10, 1842 d. Feb. 6, 1914 and wife  
Hannah Eliza Jenkins b. Apr. 20, 1848 d. Oct. 13, 1920 m. 9/8/1869.

Said Hannah Eliza Jenkins was child of William Jenkins, b. Jan. 16, 1813  
d. Nov. 6, 1871 and his wife, Cnythia Adaline Thomas b. July 20, 1817,  
d. Sept. 26, 1904 m. 10/8/1839.

Said Cnythia Adaline Thomas was child of John Thomas, b. Jan. 24, 1794,  
d. Apr. 11, 1875 and his wife, Hannah Andes b. Oct. 7, 1795, d. June 20,  
1872, m. 12/22/1815.

Said John Thomas was child of Isaac Thomas b. 1735 d. Oct. 30, 1818 and  
wife Elizabeth Massengale b. d.

References: Biographical History of Dallas County, Texas, p. 995  
Rear Guard of Revolution, J.R. Gilmore (Edmund Kirke) p. 82  
Copy of Isaac Thomas' Will filed with memorial address in  
Genealogy Room Contirental Memorial Hall, Washington, D.C.  
Record of death of Isaac Thomas found in John Thomas' family Bible now  
in possession of William M. Cochran, a descendant.  
All records of births marriages and deaths found in family Bibles.

Said Isaac Thomas assisted in Revolution in capacity of soldier, Indian  
trader and scout.

ISAAC THOMAS, fur trader and friend of Indians, was first settler of Sevier  
County, Tenn. With Capt. John Stuart, was sole survivor of Ft. Loudoun  
massacre; their lives saved because of Indian's friendship. His early  
services to infant settlement in Wautauga Valley were: Saved life of James  
Robertson, their leader, in Cherokee Uprising; carried warning (July 1776) f  
from Indian Princess, Nancy Ward, to Capt. Robertson and garrison at Wautauga;  
assisted in defense during twenty day siege-- saved lives of many women  
and children; acted as guide to Col. Christain a in attack on Cherokees led  
by Oconostata head man of tribe on the Tellico, Aug. 1776; guided Col. Sevier  
to top of Klingman's Dome to spy out Indian Villages; also said to have  
guided Col. Sevier at King's Mountain. During the Revolution Isaac Thomas  
served in both Va. and N.C. His services to white settlers, by apprising  
them of Indian depredations, appreciated by State and contemporaries is seen  
by a perusal of the minutes of Virginia Assembly given in Journal of House  
of Delegates. In General Assembly held at Williamsburg Dec. 18, 1776,  
resolutions relative to services rendered his country read and placed on  
table, commending his courage and bravery and recommending reward and satis-

factory settlement of his losses.

Entry, Journal of House of Delegates, dated June 2, 1777, shows petition of Isaac Thomas praying for reparation of losses endured in Cherokee Indian War: ordered referred to Committee of Propriety and Grievances, and report made with opinion to the House. Records at Nashville show land granted for Revolutionary services received by Isaac Thomas. In reference to photograph enclosed- The D.A.R. of Chattanooga, Tennessee, Nancy Ward Chapter has erected a monument to his memory near the site of his original home, Sevierville, Tenn. On front of marker the inscription hereon photographed is placed. The address given at the dedication of this monument on Nov. 21, 1926, is placed in the Genealogy Room of Continental Hall, Washington, D.C. At organization of Sevier Co., 1794, first court was held at Isaac Thomas' home.

Rear Guard of the Revolution by J.R. Gilmore (Edmund Kirke)- Vol. 1, p. 80, 108, 125, 126.

Restward Movement by Justin Winsor, Vol. 1, p. 92.

Old Tales Retold by Octavia Z. Bond. p. 58, 63. Ramseys Annals.

Journal of House of Delegates, Virginia Assembly Entries dated Dec. 18, 1776 June 2, 1777.

Records at Nashville, Tenn., showing land grant for Revolutionary Services. All this information recorded in Genealogy Room Continental Memorial Hall

#### Children of Revolutionary Ancestor

Ellis Thomas		
Isaac Thomas Jr.	b. 3/2/1790	m. Elizabeth Ann West
John Thomas	b. 1/24/1794	m. Hannah Andes
Henry Thomas		m. Sarah Perclee (Porter)
Dennis Thomas		Robert
Lucretia Thomas		m. Mr. Ware
Elsie Thomas	b. 4/15/1788	m. Jonathan Eppler
Betsy Thomas		m. Mr. Porter
Polly Timothy		
(Adopted Step Daughter)		m. Mr. Samuel Dauthil
Dove		m. - Ellis

Massangale Gen. 174-178-242-247-248-249-250-264-253-254-268