

Madurai to Madura:
A Missionary Family's Lasting Legacy in Kansas 1857-1874

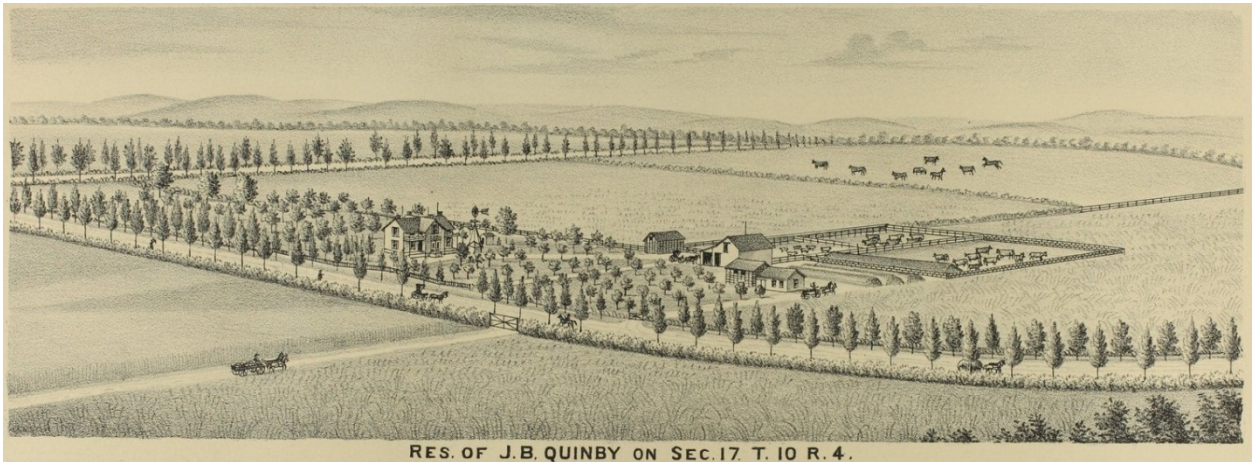


Figure 1. Sketch of the Quinby Farm circa 1881. Sketch from 1881 Plat Book.
The Quinby Farm served as the geographical center of the Madura Community.

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The story of one missionary's journey around the world, eventually ending in Kansas and the founding of a town, incorporates biographies, census data, genealogical research, photographs, plat maps, and personal interviews.

In the late 1850's, the Republican River Valley was alive with fresh settlements and pioneering spirits. Settlers, as diverse as the lands they came from, broke ground along the banks of the Republican River. The early leadership of two brothers-in-law William Payne and Joseph Quinby brought to life the community that would become Madura, Republic Township, Clay County, Kansas.¹ The brothers were soon joined by other homesteaders and their father in law, the Reverend William Todd. A former missionary in Madurai, India, Todd formed and led the Union Church in 1860, marking the formation of the Madura Community.² The Civil War brought on a period of stagnation but, after the war, Madura was full of a newfound vigor. Under the family's leadership, Madura Congregational Church was built in 1868 and doubled as a school house³. Despite the Madura community's success, the nearby town of Wakefield's sudden growth in 1869 caused it to become the new area center.⁴ Madura citizens slowly became absorbed into the Wakefield community, but their original values were never lost. Reverend Todd, along with his sons-in-law, were essential in Madura's founding; the town and its values will forever be the family's legacy.

Joseph. B. Quinby, 29, and his brother in law, William E. Payne, 24, were instrumental in founding the community of Madura. The clan emigrated from New England in 1857 in search of a better life. Quinby came to Kansas with his wife Annette, age 27, born in India, and their son F. B., age 5.⁵ Quinby claimed his homestead along a creek in the southern half of section 17, Range 4 east, Town 10 south. Records from the time consistently confuse the spelling of "Quinby" with

¹ Todd Britt, in-person interview by author, November 28, 2012.

² Frances Normandin, *The Story of Wakefield Community*, (Wakefield: Wakefield Public Library, 1964), 7.

³ Normandin, 8.

⁴ William Chapman, *The Wakefield Colony*, (Topeka: State Printing Office, 1908), 8.

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, *1860 Clay County Kansas Territorial Census*, 1.

"Quimby", but Joseph and Annette's shared gravestone reads "Quinby."⁶ This confusion led to the creek he settled on to become known as Quimby Creek, a name that still persists today.

Mary, 17, and William Payne settled the northern half of section 17. The early settlers' building supplies were hauled from Fort Leavenworth, a 130 mile trek, which took two months round trip.⁷

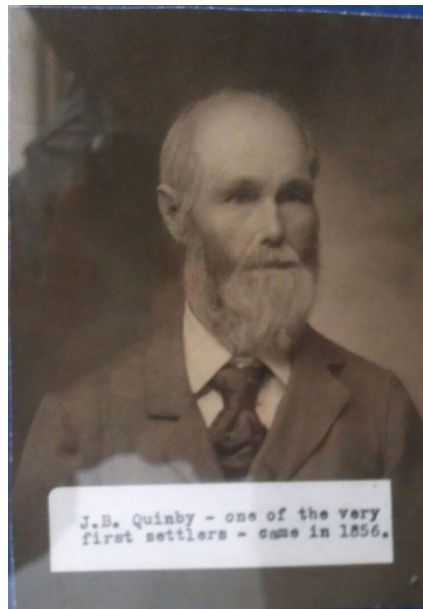


Figure 2. A photograph of Joseph Quinby circa 1890. Copy available at Madura Church, Wakefield, KS. Quinby is well dressed in the photograph, implying he was relatively successful. The brothers' primary income was farming, but they also set up a small general store. They traded with Native Americans, probably from the Kansa or Pawnee tribes.⁸ Payne and Quinby developed a reputation of being fair and honest men, and there were no serious conflicts with the Native Americans during the establishment of Madura.⁹ The rolling prairie and fertile river valley yielded a bountiful harvest the first year, and the Quinby clan prospered. Other settlers,

⁶ *Quinby Grave Stone*, (Madura Cemetery, Clay County, Kansas).

⁷ Normandin, 1-2.

⁸ Homer Socolfsky and Huber Self, *Historical Atlas of Kansas*, 2nd ed., (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), 11, 13.

⁹ Britt.

mostly from New England soon came to the area, and Annette and Mary were soon joined by their father.

Reverend William Todd was an accomplished scholar, missionary, and preacher. Born in New York in 1801,¹⁰ to a poor farmer from New Hampshire, William was educated by the local preacher.¹¹ In 1824, he went on to be part of Auburn Theological Seminary's first graduating class.¹² After preaching in America for 10 years, Todd and his wife, Lucy Brownell, became missionaries. They travelled to Madurai; a highly populated city in British owned South West India and helped found a Christian mission.¹³ Shortly after their arrival in India in 1834, Mrs. Todd fell ill and died in 1835.¹⁴ Despite his loss, Todd successfully continued his work at the mission. A year later he married Mrs. Woodward, the widow of an American missionary.¹⁵ She died a year later, but William Todd adopted her children, one of whom, Annette, would go on to marry Quinby.¹⁶ India proved detrimental to William's health and, in 1839, he and his children sailed back to Boston.¹⁷ By the time of his death, the small mission started by Reverend Todd in Madurai had grown to over 1600 members, over 7,000 converts, and an estimated 50,000 Indians preached too.¹⁸ In America, Todd spent the next twenty eight years preaching across the North East. During that time, he adopted his daughter Mary and married his third wife, Ruth.¹⁹ In 1858,

¹⁰ Todd Ruth, *Memorial of the Rev. William Todd*, (Junction City: Union Office, 1874), 5.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ American Madura Mission, *American Madura Mission Jubilee Volume: 1834-1884*, (Madras: S.P.C.K. Press, 1886), 22, Google eBook, http://books.google.com/books/about/American_Madura_mission_jubilee_volume.html?id=RwMTAAAAYAAJ (accessed December 3, 2012).

¹⁴ American Madura Mission, 26.

¹⁵ American Madura Mission, 92.

¹⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, 1.

¹⁷ Ruth, 10.

¹⁸ Ruth, 8.

¹⁹ Ruth, 10-28.

William, age 57, and Ruth, age 51, came to Madura from New York and became the leader of the developing Madura community.²⁰



Figure 3. Photograph of Todd Farm. Photograph by author, November 27th, 2012.
The circular ruins appear to be the remnants of a silo.

The Todd family was part of the first wave settlers that poured into the area following Payne and Quinby's original settlement. The Todd's built their homestead on the northeastern half of section 17, on land previously owned by their son-in-law William Payne. The Reverend Todd only brought a few belongings with him but, more importantly, he brought his passion for spreading the word of Christ. True to his missionary spirit, the Reverend began giving frontier sermons in his home. The sermons drew settlers from all over the area, and in 1860 the Union Church was organized.²¹ The community was prospering, a church had been established, and a steady flow of settlers continued to further populate the region. Madura was poised to develop

²⁰ Ruth, 28.

²¹ Normandin, 7.

into a populated economic and cultural center for the area, but Madura's fate changed in the year 1861.

On April 12, 1861, the first shots were fired at Fort Sumter, South Carolina, and the American Civil War began. The Civil War stifled the progression of Madura for a variety of reasons. Many of the men in the area felt it was their patriotic duty to leave their homestead and join the military. The stable stream of settlers trickling into Madura immediately stopped after the outbreak of war. People in the east were preoccupied with the war effort, and the idea of western expansion was at the back of their mind. The nearby frontier military instillation of Fort Riley's militia garrison swelled because of the war. These soldiers caused the small settlement of Junction City; in early-named Davis County, to rapidly grow.²² Located at the intersection of the Republican and Smokey Hill rivers and fueled by rowdy soldiers, Junction City became a regional hub of gambling, prostitution, and immorality.²³ In the fall of 1861, Reverend Todd and his wife, compelled by their faith to save Junction City, left their homestead in Madura to travel 15 miles downriver.²⁴ When Todd arrived he was the only preacher in the city at the time.²⁵ By 1863, the only men left in the "Quinby Neighborhood" were J. B. Quinby and Ed Kerby.²⁶ The American Civil War caused Madura to temporarily lose much of its population, leadership, and hopes for the future, but on April 9th, 1865 a treaty signed at Appomattox Court House gave Madura new life.

The end of the American Civil War marked the beginning of the "Golden Age" of Madura, and Reverend Todd provided crucial leadership. Todd returned to Madura and began

²² William Pollard, "Kansas Forts During the Civil War," *United States Historical Index*, http://www.vlib.us/old_west/forts1865.html (accessed December 1, 2012).

²³ Pollard.

²⁴ Ruth, 24.

²⁵ Britt.

²⁶ Chapman, 7.

preaching to the Union Congregation in his home again.²⁷ Many veterans looked west for new beginnings. The Kansas Pacific Railroad came to Junction City in 1866, making travel west easily accessible.²⁸ Madura, with its fertile land, quickly became populated with Union veterans.²⁹ With a swelling community, William Payne, returned from war, and Joseph Quinby organized the building of the Clay County District No. 8 Schoolhouse.³⁰ The district was formed in 1867, and the one room school house was completed in 1868 on Quinby's land.³¹ Quinby served as the first school district clerk.³² The schoolhouse doubled as a community center and the new home of the Union Church. The new church was called Madura Congregational Church, after the city of Madurai where Reverend Todd served as a missionary.³³ The Madura Schoolhouse and Church was the first of either in the area, and students and worshippers came from the Wakefield area, which was two miles north. The Madura community's commitment to construct a school and a church speaks to the strong values of religion and education the homesteaders brought with them from New England and the Ohio River Valley. In April 1869, Madura was selected as the regional post office, and Reverend Todd served as the post master.³⁴ The Todd family was instrumental in securing a school, church, and post office for Madura. The town looked as if it was going to make it, but in August of 1869, Madura's fate changed again.

²⁷ Britt.

²⁸ Socolfsky and Self, 31.

²⁹ Normandin, 2-8.

³⁰ Chapman, 8.

³¹ *Historical Plat Book of Clay County, Kansas*, (Chicago: The Bird and Mickle Map Company, 1881), 74.

³² *Kansas History and Heritage Project: Clay County History*. "Clay County Schools 1886 School District Clerks." <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ksclay/1886schoolclerks.html> (accessed December 3, 2012).

³³ Britt.

³⁴ *Kansas Historical Society*, "Kansas Post Offices, 1828-1961," http://www.kshs.org/geog/geog_search/search/placename:Madura/county:/submit:SEARCH (accessed December 3, 2012)



Figure 4. 1881 Map of Madura and surrounding area. 1881 Plat Book.
Notice cemetery and school house surrounded by Quinby, Todd, and Payne's property.

The English colony town of Wakefield caused Madura to fade away into the countryside. The Reverend Wake was in contact with a group in England about settling in Kansas. In August of 1869, the settlers arrived in Junction City and came up the Republican River, settling two miles north of Madura in Wakefield.³⁵ The English settlers effectively doubled the population of Clay County.³⁶ A church and school soon opened in Wakefield, and businesses followed shortly afterwards.³⁷ The English got along well with the people of Madura and many of the English who lived closer to Madura than to Wakefield attended church and school at Madura. Madura lost its post office in 1871, a sign of Wakefield's dominance of the area.³⁸ In August of 1874, Madura lost much of its leadership with the passing of Reverend William Todd.³⁹ Todd's legacy,

³⁵ Chapman, 11.

³⁶ Chapman, 15.

³⁷ Britt.

³⁸ *Kansas Historical Society*.

³⁹ Ruth, 1.

Madura Congregational Church, continued to grow, and in 1881, the decision to build a larger church was made. The congregation voted to build the church in Wakefield for convenience.⁴⁰

The Madura schoolhouse lived on until 1951 when it consolidated with Wakefield. Madura Cemetery is still located at the original site, and aside from a few foundations, it is all that is left south of Wakefield. The town of Madura did not make it, but the legacy of the community built by the Todd family has permanently marked the area.

The actions and leadership of Payne, Quinby, and Todd live in the memory of Madura and the community of Wakefield. Quinby and Payne, the first settlers to the area, developed a peaceful reputation with the Native Americans in the area which allowed for future peaceful settlement. Reverend Todd, by holding sermons in his residence, established a strong sense of Christianity in the frontier settlement. The family's crucial role in building the Madura Congregational Church and Schoolhouse helped establish a formal place of worship and learning, further developing the community. Reverend Todd's faith and experience added virtue to his early sermons and had an immense effect on the community for years to come. The current pastor of the Madura Congregational Church in Wakefield, Todd Britt, said, "The seeds of faith that Reverend Todd planted in the Madura Church took root in the hearts of the congregation. They have strengthened throughout the years and continue to sprout today."⁴¹ Whether it be the original settlement, the first vestiges of community, or the construction of a place of worship and education, the Todd Family was a critical part of the Madura Community, and their legacy of faith and neighborly spirit continues to live on today in the Republican River Valley.

⁴⁰ Normandin, 7.

⁴¹ Britt.

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