

IS THIS PORTRAIT OF EDMUND OSBURN ??

(BACK)

Many years ago, not long after I began serious research into my Osburn family, I made a visit to the home of Earl Whited on Wolf Creek.

Edmund Osburn was my third great-grandfather, and I was told that Earl could help me with my research. Earl was a farmer and raised cattle. I believe his farm had at one time been part of some land previously owned by the Osburn family.

Earl and his father had in earlier days kept people for the Welfare Department, and among them were some of the last remnants of one of the branches of the Osburn family.

We had a long discussion which ended with Earl taking me to a small building near his home, which he called the Osburn Museum. In this building were many artifact which he had come into possession of when the Osburn family died out, and he received the remainder of their belongings. Among the articles displayed was a very large loom. In discussing it, Earl informed me that Edmund had been a weaver and that he had in his possession several coverlets reportedly made by Edmund.

After some time spent in looking around and listening to Earl's reports on the various articles, I spotted a large portrait hanging on the wall near the front door. When I asked him about it, Earl replied that it had Edmund Osburn's name on the back and that he had been told by the family that it was Edmund Osburn's picture. Earl then explained that he was not certain if they meant it was a picture of Edmund or simply that Edmund had owned it.

During our busy conversation I did not inspect it very closely, but it was well framed and had the appearance of an original oil painting. I wish now that I had looked closer at it.

Earl allowed me to photograph it. That photograph is shown as the top picture on the right of this page. Through the years, many others have photographed the painting as well. It would be no surprise if most who have this picture or have seen it have been led to believe it is of Edmund Osburn.



As my research continued over the years, I became more of a doubter of the fact that it was indeed of Edmund.

Considering the fact that Edmund was never a man of any wealth, it was simply hard to assume he had ever been such a regal person. The picture depicts a rather young man, but with the cloak and gold chain it certainly impresses one as a person of high dignity and wealth.

I later discovered documents in the Cabell County Courthouse showing that in the years 1830 through 1833 that Edmund received \$25 dollars annually for the upkeep of his mother. In 1830 she was described as being about ninety years old and blind. Unfortunately, they never gave her first name. It quoted her death in 1833, simply saying that Mother Osburn had died. Edmund also had a young daughter who is not documented anywhere else, for which he received \$5 per year for her upkeep, until she died in 1838. Edmund died in 1842.

Many people have accepted the upper picture as that of Edmund Osburn, and you can find it on many family tree pages on the internet. There was never any reason to argue about it because there was no proof, one way or the other.

That is until recently, when I became acquainted with Scott W. Stewart of Kenova. Scott is the son of Jimmie Lee Stewart and Constance Frazier. Through his father, Jimmie Lee Stewart, he connects to the Workman family, and then back a few generations to Edmund Osburn. Scott has a lot of valuable information. Soon after we became acquainted, and discovered we were cousins, the subject of this photograph became a topic.

Scott informed me that the portrait which Earl had was in all probability a reproduction, as it was on a cardboard type material. That is when I wished I had paid closer attention when Earl showed it to me. Seems when two guys get to talking, they miss a lot of details!

Scott further informed me that on a research trip to England, he showed his copy of Earl's picture to a gentleman who recognized it and told Scott it was a very popular painting, but did not know the identity of the subject.

With these two pieces of information, Scott and I were both convinced it was not an original and surely not of Edmund Osburn. That is when my inborn curiosity kicked in. I tried to go back to the farm of Earl, now occupied by his daughter, but found no one there. In the meantime, during a discussion with my good friend Herb Dawson, I related this story to him. Herb is a fantastic researcher and spends much of his time, sometimes until early morning, doing research and a good bit of it on the internet.

I had begun searching the internet, trying to locate this picture. Over several days I spent many

hours without success. Then Herb emailed me with a copy he had found on the internet, along with a link. What excitement - was the truth about to be unveiled?

Using herb's information, I found the picture. In fact, I found many web sites dealing with rare paintings which displayed copies of the original painting.

The information found shows that this painting, the lower one on this page, was painted about 1540-1545 by an Italian Artist by the name of Tiziano Vecellio. Many will recognize him by his English name of Titan. This portrait today hangs in the Galleria Palatina in Florence, Italy.



Vecellio, or Titan, became one of the most famous portrait artist in Europe. He painted portraits of Kings and many other of the Royalty. This particular portrait was given the name "Portrait Of A Young Man With Grey Eyes." However, many of the English thought the subject was an Englishman and they called it "Portrait Of A Young Englishman."

Much more can be learned about the paintings of Titan on the internet. Many of his portraits are reproduced, including this one, and are for sale on various web sites dealing in art.

It is a bit depressing not to have an ancestor with the royalty displayed in this portrait. The only gleam of hope I ever had was the fact that this subject certainly does have a lot of Osburn features.

Another mystery solved!!

Howard Osburn