

Return of the Prodigal Son

A most happy and surprise reunion took place in York County, during August 1912, when Isaac Kelly, long believed dead, stepped off the train in Blacksburg into the arms of his waiting brother he had not seen in thirty-two years. In spite of their long separation, Isaac had little trouble identifying himself to his brother, John. Both recalled numerous incidents of their childhood, and the scar on Isaac's leg was the final certification.

The saga of Isaac Kelly began in 1880 when the Kelly family and members of Isaac's maternal family decided to leave Texas and seek their fortune in South Carolina. The emigrants had not left Texas when ten-year-old Isaac fell from a tree resulting in a compound fracture of the leg and a twisted arm. Unable to travel, his parents had little choice but to leave their son behind until he was able to travel. He was left in charge of a Mr. Shinal of Cedar Hill in Dallas County.

Several weeks after he was left behind, a letter came to Shinal from Isaac's mother inquiring about his safety and health. The black-hearted Shinal took advantage of the boy's inability to read and lied about the content. He told Isaac that his mother wrote that their team had been stolen, but not to worry for she would make other arrangements to get him. Sometime later another letter came; this time Shinal made it say that their team had been recovered and she would send money later for him to join his family in York County.

Shinal never replied to Mrs. Kelly's inquiries about Isaac's health or whereabouts. Shinal was an evil, ruthless and heartless man who physically abused his ward until the boy left in his teens to make it on his own. In filling in the missing years, Isaac told his brother he had a "hard time of it." Isaac was able to recover and by the time he visited with his brothers and mother he was a successful farmer, had a wife and three children and one grandchild.