

News, Updates, & More

Varner Family Genealogy

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THE BUSHWHACKING

What really happened to George and Harriet

One of the biggest mysteries concerning the George Varner of Missouri story is how George and his wife Harriet died. No one really knows! This is the sort of family history tradition that stirs up emotion.

People become invested in family lore. It is very tempting to continue to pass along such stories as facts even when no evidence is known to exist that support the assumption.

On the other side of the ledger is the long standing oral family history that the event did occur. Let's see if we can look at the evidence. This is not an attempt to convince people whether the events actually occurred or not. This is a rich family story and should not be lost. It is however good to reevaluate evidence in hopes that someone who might read this article has additional evidence others are not aware of or a new generation of family history buffs might try to find additional evidence.

The evidence supporting George and Harriet being “bushwhacked” to my knowledge is only based upon oral family history. I am not aware of any other independent evidence suggesting this event occurred during the timeframe indicated.

No written account of this event has been located. Such “bushwhacking’s” did occur in the area and did result in references in newspapers or reference books. This did not. Why? With no evidence what-so-ever that this event happened to George and Harriet, it certainly would not be something that could be proved legally.

The other side of the argument is also compelling. This has been passed down through the generations since. Such an event would certainly have been memorable and felt important to relay to descendants.

It also appears that this oral family history has been passed down through descendants of George and Harriet’s children who are not known to have been in close contact with each other. This would indicate that all the siblings know what is generally the same story.

The mystery might gain new evidence if the grave sites for George and Harriet were located. I have tried to narrow the burial location using 1860 census data without success. The census taker did not seem to follow any logical pattern in collecting the 1860 data. Families listed in order of the census often were miles apart, and not the nearest neighbor.

We know that George and Harriet did not own land in Miller County. Logic would indicate that they then lived on someone

else’s property. Part of the oral family history is that George and Harriet lived “On the old Riggs place” or “Behind the Wells place”. “Behind the Jenkins place”. Unfortunately those families had multiple properties, making a location more convoluted still.

This same oral family history in some cases also states “George and Harriet were buried where they fell.” If true then it is likely the remains might never be located this some 153 years later. Or could they have been buried in one of the many local family cemeteries, gravestones lost to time? Or a cemetery that belonged to the family whose property on which they were killed?

New effort in this area to go through the archives might result in a location. Knowing the location of the graves could shed new light on the story?

There might be other possibilities that were discovered by Dee Bremer (Thanks Dee).

I will relate here what I wrote in the George Varner (c1789-c1861) of Oglethorpe Co., Georgia, Boone, Pettis, and Miller Counties, Missouri:

“Another bizarre occurrence however involves the family of cousins by marriage, the Newton’s. It is addressed in a book named Judge Jenkins’ History of Miller County, Missouri, Volume 2, by Clyde Lee Jenkins, 1971., that on February 21, 1866 shortly after the war was over, Union vigilantes attacked the Berry/Newton farm in Miller County. The Newton’s had been Confederates during the war, and the women and children at home had sustained themselves by sometimes rustling pigs or sheep for food. On that night the armed

riders entered the cabin, shot a woman, and a boy to death and set fire to the building. Two smaller children who had been outside ran into the woods and were found later unharmed. The distance between the George Varner and Newton/Berry residences was only a few census families away from each other. One glaring issue with this and other occurrences is that Clyde Jenkins did not provide a single documented reference for any of the entries in either volumes of his books. It therefore leads to skepticism as to the incidents proven validity. Newton's and Varner's are related by marriages. Could this be another comingling or a corruption of incidents?"

From the book reference, Killed in the incident were Nancy A. Stepp and Edmund Berry. I also have a pdf file of page 20 from the Judge Jenkins' History of Miller County, Missouri, Volume 2, by Clyde Lee Jenkins, 1971. This is the page that discusses the "bushwhacking at the Berry/Newton place. Very interesting reading and remarkable similar to the Varner story.

Could these incidents be one in the same? Could George and Harriet also been killed during this incident? Could the story as to when this occurred have changed from the start of the Civil War to the end of the Civil war?

In the 1860 Federal Census the following families were listed on the census. Families numbered in the order visited:

Jim Henry Township, Miller Co. Missouri

#1044 – R. J. Jinkins family.

#1046 – Nancy Ann Varner living with the John J. Denton family.

#1049 – Rachel Berry family
 #1050 – Israel Newton family
 #1053 – David Fancher family
 #1055 – George Varner family

Osage Township, Miller Co. Missouri

#137 – Sterling Berry family
 #138 – James Wells family
 #139 – Joseph Wells family
 #147 – Edmund Riggs

I stated earlier that many of the families enumerated in this census were not visited in any particular order, however it is interesting that the locations of George Varner family and the Newton/Berry families are so close together....

By 1870 census the Newton's had moved into Camden County. Sometime after 1880 Nancy Ann Varner also moved to Camden County. In 1893 Nancy's daughter Eurelda Varner (1871-1959) married William Andrew Newton (1867-1944). Therefore Eurelda would have certainly known about the Newton/Berry killings.

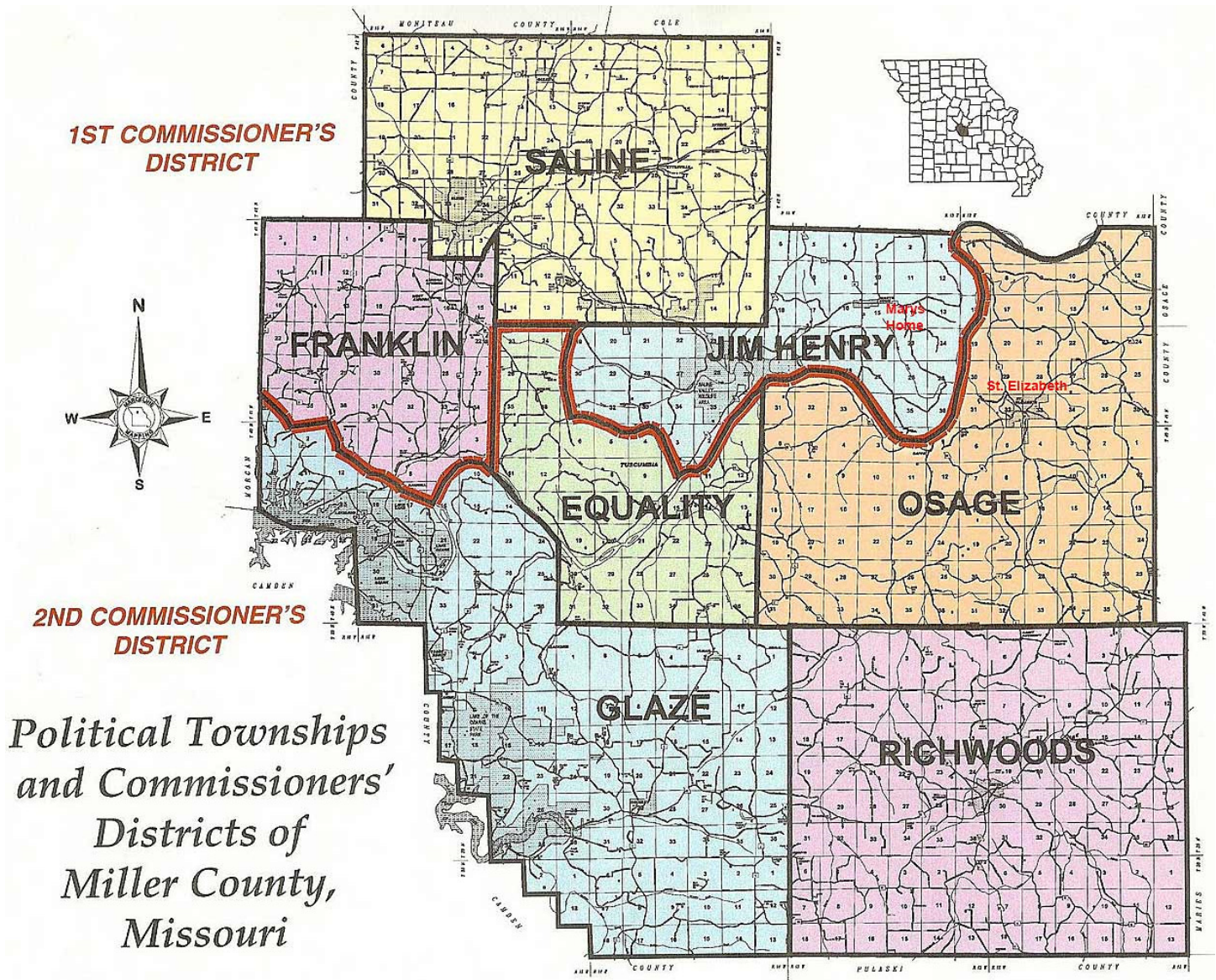
Why was that incident never passed down, but the story of George and Harriet killings were? Are they one in the same? Were George and Harriet also killed at this same time? Is this telling wrong and is was the Varner's instead of the Newton's and Berry's?

It would be helpful to know where those killed in the Newton/Berry incident are buried. Might George and Harriet be buried right beside them?

Clyde Lee Jenkins book does not contain one single footnote or references of any kind. The text does not even indicate where Mr. Jenkins came by any of the

information he relates. Therefore, his account also must be looked at with skepticism. I feel there is certainly truth in all these stories. At the moment we just do not know which parts of these stories are

valid. Until something definitive is known, when discussing this story we must always note that this is oral family history which has yet to be validated.



On the Varner Genealogy Family website I have placed a very interesting township and range maps document that contain original names of patent owners for that area. This is within the political townships of Jim Henry and Osage. A study of the names of the land patent holders will show you all the players and the relationship between their pieces of land.

Please remember not to confuse the two kinds of townships. Political and Land ownership townships.

Do you own investigating and let me know your theories on what really happened.

FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

Additional Varner Related Family Members

As always, if you know of any others who might be interested in receiving this newsletter please let me know. Anyone who is connected to the Varner's is welcome. Please provide me with their email information or have them contact me directly. I would rather you not sent this update to them offline. By interacting with them directly, I can be assured I have the email address correct and know who is on the list. Thanks!

The password for files requiring such on the Varner Genealogy website is: **VarnerFamily**. Please do not provide this password to anyone else. Send them to me so I can keep track of who might access the information. A password is required to prevent changes to those documents.

Emails Kicking Back

The below email addresses seem to kick back every time I send out anything to the group. Do not know if they are bad addresses and the intended people are not receiving the updates, or if it is just some anomaly. Please look at these and if one is yours please let me know if you are receiving the updates through this address so I will know of if I need to use another email address. If you know who the below email addresses belong to, please contact them and obtain a new address. Thanks!

barbjbyrd@yahoo.com
shelly044@centurytel.net
djvarner@peoplepc.com
m-p-jones@pocketmail.com
Heathi9@aol.com
MARLENEFLEEMAN@aol.com
wandtmoore1@comcast.net

QUESTIONS

In the last newsletter you show Glen Varner (son of George) as being born in 1852 and died in 1929. Are you sure about this year of death?

No. This was a copying error on my part. I do not know of Glen Varner's year of death. In fact Glen Varner, born 1852 and son of George and Harriet Varner has not been located at all as an adult to my knowledge.

If anyone has additional information about the Glen Varner line, please let us know. Thanks!

NEWS

Varner /Riggs Connection Update

I second direct male to male descendant of Nancy Varner has submitted DNA for testing. Warren Varner, grandson of William Owen Varner is this new source. This should answer the question whether more than one child of Nancy Ann Varner was fathered by a Riggs. Hope to have more news by the next update, but I have been made aware that FamilyTree DNA is very backed up right now and giving some indication that it may be September before samples complete testing.

Still working to engage direct descendants of Edmund Riggs.

George Varner of Missouri Direct Line DNA

Also moving forward with obtaining George Varner DNA candidates from male to male descendants.

We now have three possible male to male descendants from George. As stated in the last update, two through Samuel Philip Varner: Henry L. Varner (1959-) and Raymond W. Varner (1944-). Plus a new candidate through Samuel Philip Varner: Norman Fredrick Varner (1946-).

As always if you are aware of others or know these individuals personally, please let me know.

A George Varner Line of Descent

As stated in the last issue, I am starting the practice of picking a line of descendants from George Varner of Missouri, down through the most current available descendant. I will rotate through all of George and Harriet's children and their descendants in the coming issues, one line at a time.

I thought it appropriate this month to start with my own family line. The line of Nancy Ann Varner, one of George's daughters.

George⁴ Varner (Fredrick³, John², Hans¹)
b. abt. 1789 – d. abt. 1861

Married *Harriet Owen* (b. abt. 1817 – d. abt. 1861)

Nancy⁵ Ann Varner (George⁴, Fredrick³, John², Hans¹)

Not Married. DNA indicates at least one child with *Edmund Riggs* (b. 1819 – d. 1877)

b. 1841 – d. 1934

John⁶ Lawrence Varner (Nancy⁵, George⁴, Fredrick³, John², Hans¹)

b. 1866 – d. 1951

Married *Millie Jane Horton* (b. 1878 – d. 1977)

Bert⁷ Leon Varner (John⁶, Nancy⁵, George⁴, Fredrick³, John², Hans¹)

b. 1902 – d. 1991

Married *Ella Floral Vance* (b. 1904 – d. 1983)

Edwin⁸ Dale Varner (Bert⁷, John⁶, Nancy⁵, George⁴, Fredrick³, John², Hans¹)

b. 1926 – d. 2008

Married *Ruth Leon Harrington* (b. 1926)

Bruce⁹ Thomas Varner (Edwin⁸, Bert⁷, John⁶, Nancy⁵, George⁴, Fredrick³, John², Hans¹)

b. 1951 –

Married 1 *Mary Jo Irvin* (b. 1954)

Married 2 *Charlene Marie Webb*

Makowski (b. 1947)

If you know of facts that pertain to any of the persons listed please let me know so such details can be added. This can be either a detail of established evidence or a memory or story about that person. I believe that our ancestors should be remembered for their

personality traits and experiences as much as their pedigree.

Please let me know of topics that interest you, family history details that you may have, or questions about Varner and related genealogy. I will attempt to include any received in future issues.

Bruce Varner

[Varner Family Genealogy Website](#)