
News, Updates, & More

Varner Family Genealogy

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FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

Prior newsletters and other Varner genealogy information can be found on the Varner Family website.

<http://brucevarner.com/VarnerGenealogy.htm>

QUESTIONS / NEWS

No questions again this month...

George Varner of Missouri Direct Line DNA

See this month's main article for more updates.

Riggs/Varner Connection

We might be moving towards an idea where Edmund Riggs is buried? This and other Riggs information is coming in the near future.

Do We Now Know Where George & Harriet Varner Are Buried?

Maybe so. Maybe not. Or maybe this is as close as we will ever come to an answer.

This is a rather long effort that started for me in earnest in 1993, at that year's family reunion in Macks Creek. I sat down and had a conversation with Norman Walter Varner (2/26/1912-3/12/1997). Norman was 81 at the time, and a person who seemed to know about the area where George & Harriet are said to be buried.

I took notes of that conversation. He relayed much family lore about George Varner. Some information appeared to be conjecture, Some had been told to him when he was much younger.

Below is a copy of a portion of those notes from that conversation, concerning the George & Harriet bushwhacking:

"George moved to Miller Co., behind old Wells farm, they were attacked by Indians & massacred. (Indians were white men dressed up – bushwhackers) who stole horses. They laid for several days before anyone found them. They were buried where they fell. Cynthia (6) was taken but posse found her cold and wondering."

Cynthia Varner (2/10/1856-3/3/1929), youngest daughter of George & Harriet,

would have been 6 years old in the year 1862.

I had heard before and have since, about George & Harriet living at the time of their deaths behind or on either the Well, Jenkins, or Riggs place. All three of these families had several properties, so that reference by Norman did not seem to narrow it down significantly. Some of the other pieces that Norman told me in that overall conversation I believe may not to be valid. There are conflicting details. For that reason, and other personal life events going on at the time, I did not follow up at the time on the other portions of information.

The following year at the next reunion, I again spoke with Norman. This time I asked if he had any additional details about the exact location of George & Harriet's graves. I unfortunately cannot locate any written notes from this second conversation. I remember that Norman said he has never been to the spot, but was told the story many years before when his dad was still alive. His dad had in turn received the story from his father, Norman's grandfather, Samuel Varner.

Norman Varner's father was Francis Logan Varner (12/3/1874-5/6/1939). Francis Logan's father was Samuel Philip Varner (1846-1896). Samuel was a son of George & Harriet, and Norman says was the person who buried his parents.

These details do remain vivid in my memory. Dad and I left the reunion early that same day and drove to Miller County in an attempt to find the burial location that Norman provided.

Dad and I followed the directions Norman had provided: Take Highway 17 northeast out of Tuscumbia about 1 ½ miles. On the left (west) side of the highway was an entrance into the Saline Valley Conservation Area. A short distance up that gravel road, on the left (south) side of the gravel road going up a hill, and some distance off the road, was the spot where George & Harriet had been buried.

Dad and I spent time searching the area but were unable to locate anything. Since we did not know what in fact to search for, our primary focus had been to see if we could locate a foundation or remains of where an old cabin might have sat.

When I later compared this location with the Federal Census of 1860 for George & Harriet, this area on 17 seemed too far southwest by 5 or 6 miles to be accurate. I therefore did not again pursue this lead as a possible location for their graves until recently.

Earlier this year I spent time identifying exact patented parcels of land in the area owned by people associated with our Varner family. Specifically to try and identify where they had been located in the 1860 timeframe. I discovered that

Charles V. Wells had Patented land in 1857 that crosses Highway 17 in the same location where dad and I had been directed by Norman in 1994. This rekindled my interest.

To help plot the location of Wells properties, I used an add-on to Google Earth Pro called "EarthPoint Townships"¹. I highly recommend it for viewing an area overlaid onto Google Earth's real images. It lays the locations of section, township, and range information. EarthPoint Townships does require a usage purchase, but the amount is small and well worth it.

Over the last 23 years, much has changed in and around the Saline Valley Conservation Area. At that time in 1994 one could still drive all the way through the state property. Now you must park and hike, most of the roads have been bulldozed under. Even the location for the park entrance has somewhat changed. I decided that I would try again to see what could be located in this area, only this time I would not randomly search without guidance. Instead, I thought it best to knock on doors and ask the help of locals in possibly finding the site.

Much of this find is the result of others who I accompanied on October the 24th. Dee Hunt Bremer, Linda Newton Cushman, Gary Cushman and I met in

¹ Township & Range-Public Land Survey on Google Earth <http://www.earthpoint.us/Townships.aspx>

Miller County to primarily visit the Berry Family Cemetery. While there we also looked George & Harriet's burial site.

There appears to be only 3 homes cutout of the now Saline Valley Conservation Area land on the west side of Highway 17. One owner is in the house that had been originally owned by the Wells family. They were not at home. The owner of one of the other properties was as at home and knew exactly where to point us.

Don Abbett is 59 years old and lived in this immediate area all his life. He spent his youth hiking these surrounding hills. He said that he know of no old cabins nearby on state property. The Wells property has some old places around it near Saline Creek to the north.

He also said that he only knows of one place in the area where people are buried, and that is right at the entrance just up the road into the Saline Valley Conservation Area. At the current park entrance, you drive only a few yards off Highway 17. On you left a few yards into the woods is a small cemetery.

We followed the instructions and immediately found the small cemetery. This seems to be exactly where Norman, all those years ago told me about the spot where he says George & Harriet are buried!

The entrance is marked as Saline Valley Conservation Area and is a graveled

road that goes about 350 yards to a parking area. About 75 yards from 17 there is a small wooden traverse of the ditch on the south side of the gravel road. 20 yards further into the woods is a small cemetery of a size that could hold about 30 or so graves.

There were 11 marked headstones for the following individuals:

Edwards, William T.

b. 4/11/1869 d. 11/13/1870 (Son of George & Virginia)

Fancher, Catherine (Hurly)

b.5/1/1819 d. 9/26/1865

Fendorf, Caroline Sophia (Brammern)

b. 1/10/1811 d. 2/25/1863

Hawken, David

b. 1/22/1812 d. 5/1/1891

June, W. H.

b. 12/29/1870 d. 1/25/1871

Richardson, Infant Son

b. 8/9/1890 d. 8/9/1890 (Son of James B. & Syotha

Smith, Ada

b. 9/10/1866 d.3/25/1871

Smith, Charles b. 10/1/1760 d. 10/20/1850 (Am Rev. Virginia)

Smith, Martha W.

b. 6/1814 d. 4/26/1871

Weitz, Hannah

b. 11/12/1834 d. 9/27/1865 (Wife of John)

Weitz, John

b. ???? d. ???? (Co. B, 6 MO. SM Cav.)

A later search of this cemetery in Find-A-Grave² lists 21 individuals known to be buried in this cemetery. Find-A-Grave calls the place "Smiths Cemetery". Those names listed below have un-engraved or no headstone at all:

² <https://www.findagrave.com/>

Ashley, Clara

b. May 17, 1822 d. Nov. 19, 1866

Ashley, John

b. Sep. 4, 1825 d. Apr. 30, 1866

Brown, Joseph

b. 1835 d. Aug. 3, 1883

Edwards, Cordel O.

b. Mar. 21, 1874 d. Apr. 18, 1874

Edwards, Robert

b. Aug. 23, 1878 d. Aug. 31, 1878

Edwards, Vienna (Sellover)

b. 1844 d. Feb. 6, 1880

Fendorf, Henry C.

b. Apr. 8, 1807 d. May 13, 1894

Hawken, Elizabeth (Carson)

b. 1824 d. unknown

Hawken, Susannah (Weiker)

b. Sep. 19, 1811 d. Sep. 17, 1879

Workman, Isaac

b. 1851 d. Oct. 6, 1883

Initial checking of records provided some interesting facts.

**A note of caution about the individuals buried here. For some reason (Maybe because 3 people named Hawken are buried here), but many references online name the cemetery as Hawkins Cemetery. This is not correct! The Hawkins Cemetery is located south of Ulman. I believe that the confusion comes from the Hawken name in this cemetery and the Hawkins name in the cemetery south of Ulman.*

I located the Application for Headstone, for military service requested 3/11/1941 for Charles Smith. In that document it lists the cemetery as "Smith Family Burying Ground".

I also located the Application for Headstone, for military service requested 5/25/1932 for John Weitz. In that document it lists the cemetery as "Tuscumbia". These definitively 2 of the people buried here at what I will not refer to as "Smith Family Burying Ground".

It should be noted that the surnames for some of those known buried in this cemetery are associated with the Varner family.

Fancher: A William Malachi Fancher (1878-????) married Laura Belle Varner (1889-1955). Laura is a daughter of Samuel Varner (1846-1896) & Charlotte Francis Barnhart (1855-1933).

Edwards: A Louis Edwards (1900-1942) married Flossie Belle Varner (1905-1993). Flossie is a daughter of Francis Logan Varner (1874-1939) & Missouri Elsie Allen (1877-1942).

Hawken: A John Hawken (5/20/1839-5/23/1923) married Lottie Christina Varner (1883-1971). Lottie is another daughter of Samuel Varner (1846-1896) & Charlotte Francis Barnhart (1855-1933). The John David Hawken here is a son of David Hawken who is the David Hawken buried in this cemetery. John & Lottie, along with 25 other Hawken individuals are buried in the nearby Tuscumbia Cemetery.

Did we find the graves of George & Harriet? No. We found no headstones with their names. What we found was a cemetery with 11 graves marked with readable headstones. Plus a half dozen more stones that look to be un-engraved markers. In addition, the swells in the soil would indicate that there are likely several more people buried here, maybe in addition to those already known.

There was 3 manmade, large round depressions in the ground, by and just up the hill from the cemetery. Possibly there was some form of buildings around many years ago.

I am excited. Maybe more than I should be, as we found no evidence that this is in fact the correct spot. But it does make sense. More work needs to be done. Since at the time Wells owned much more of the surrounding land (2,100 acres?)

The probate records for Wells family members need to be researched to see if there is any mention of Varner's, or other associated families.

I am sure there are also several other avenues that can be followed, in a attempt to obtain more details that might shed light on the matter. We can hope.

Below are some images & maps concerning the "Smith Family Burying Ground". If you are interest in this

subject, please go visit the cemetery. Maybe someone can think of additional ideas to find more evidence....

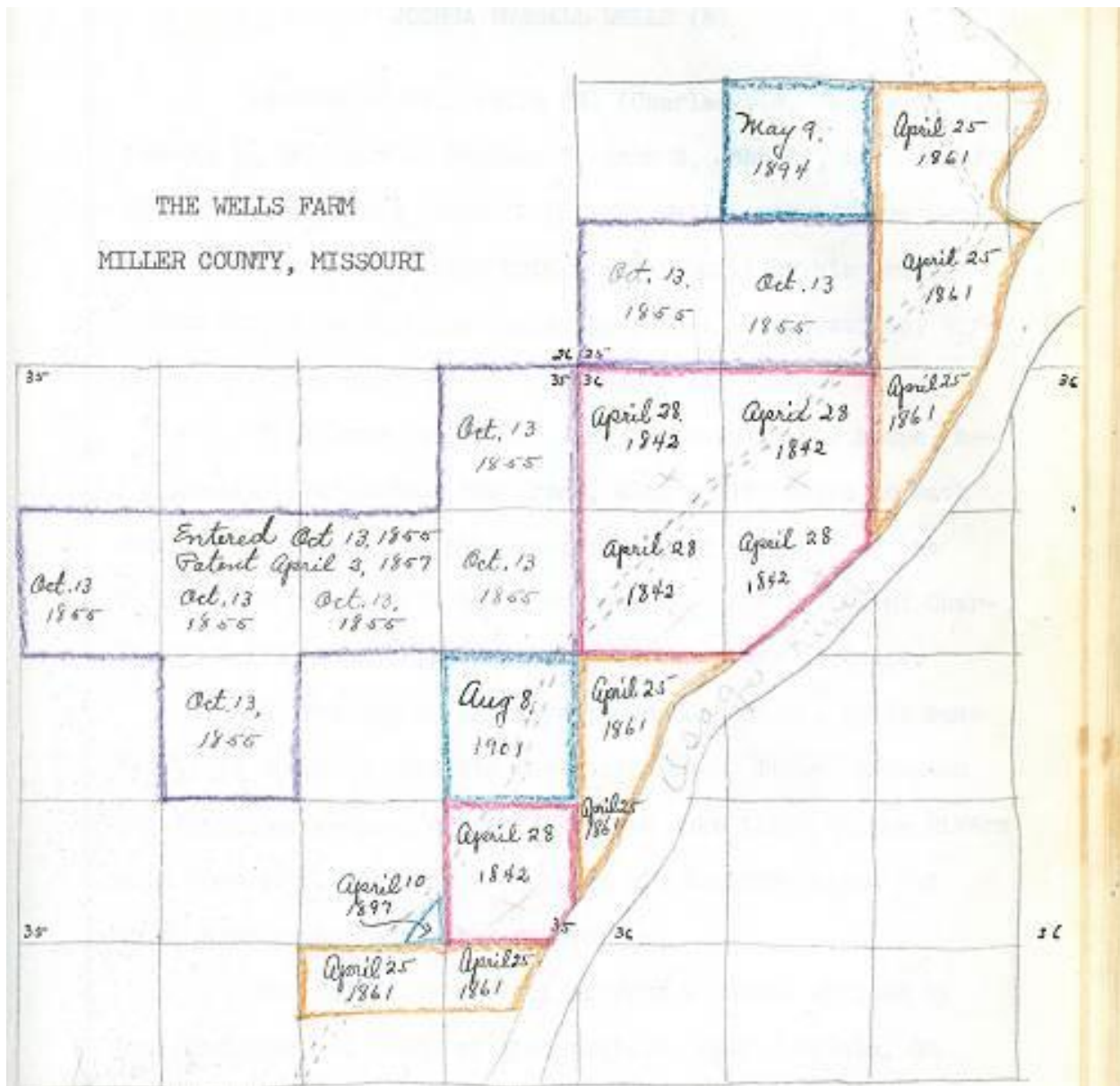
Have a Happy Thanksgiving!!

Bruce Varner

This is the sign located at the entrance to the area. The cemetery is located on the left just after you enter the property.

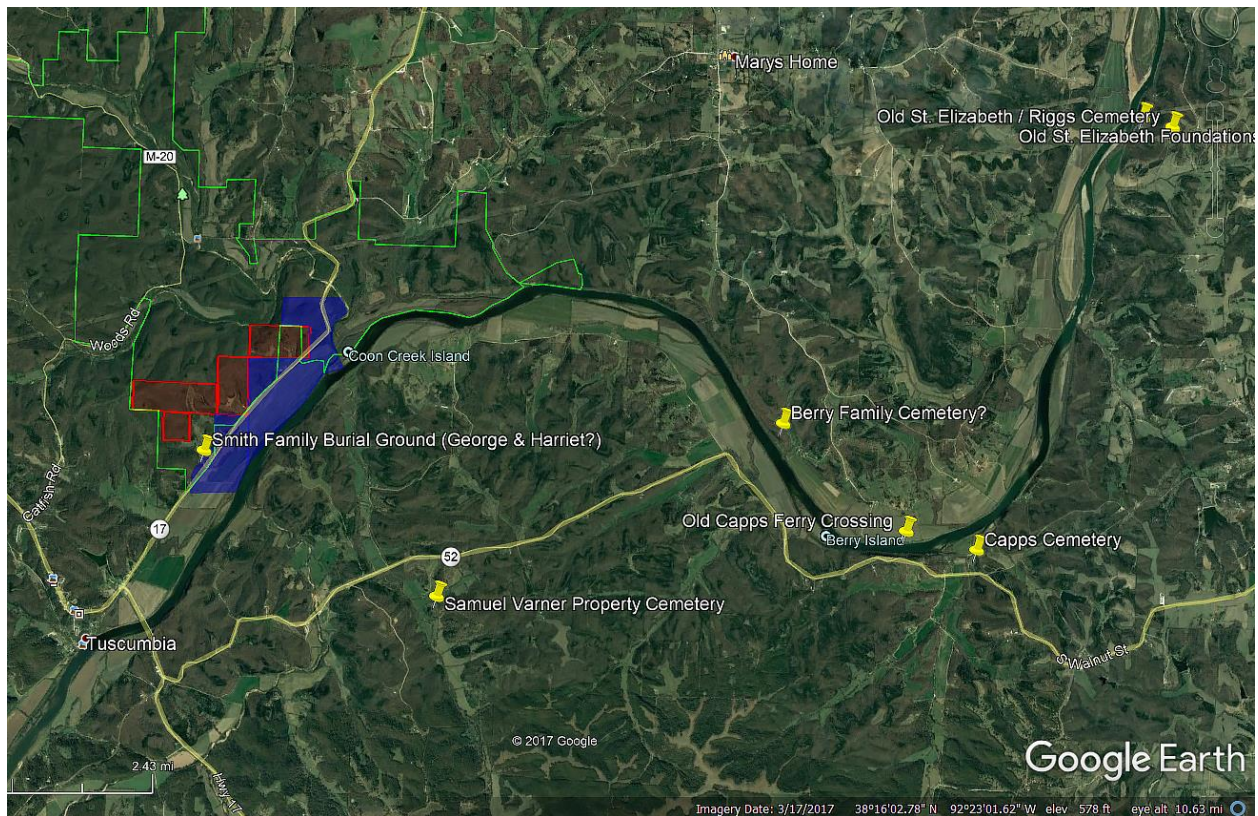


This image is courtesy of a Miller County Museum website story on the Charles V. Wells properties in Miller County³. You will see when observing the subsequent image, how this description of land would lay over the Google Earth image. Note that what looks like a road, is in fact the Osage River, not Highway 17.....

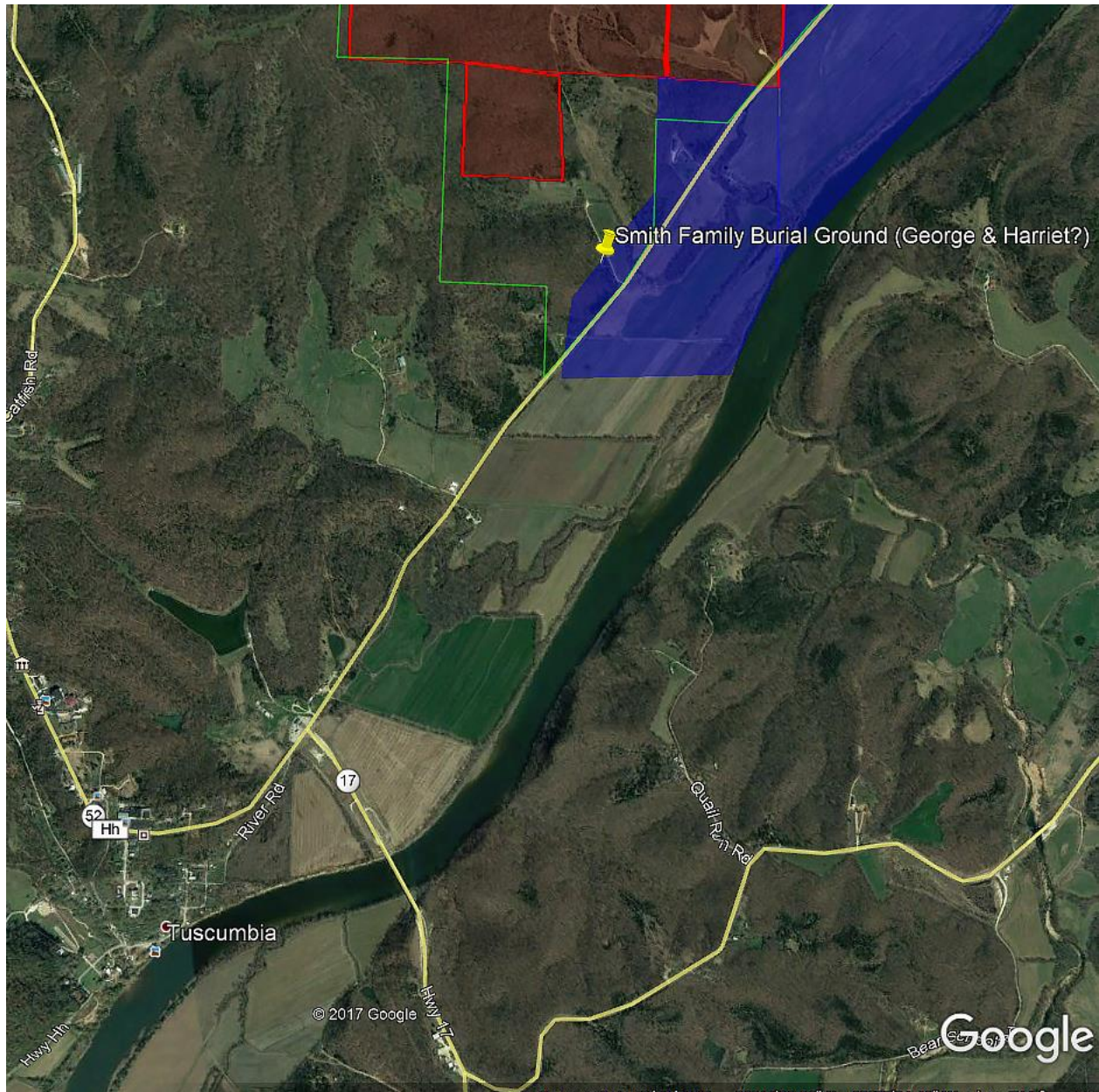


³ <http://www.millercountymuseum.org/archives/101122.html>

Here is an overview Google Earth image of the Wells property as shown in the above drawing. Land in Red is Patent property. Wells land in blue is private purchase property. Shown in relation to the surrounding area.



And here is a closer overview of the area.



And finally a closer view yet of where the cemetery is to be found. Notice the odd “cut” of the boundary that the cemetery, and the cemetery appears to be just on the edge of where Wells property would have adjoined another owners land. My markings are approximate and more research is required to determine exactly where the boundary falls.....

