
News, Updates, & More

Varner Family Genealogy

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FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

Prior newsletters and other family genealogy information is found on the Varner Family website.

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

QUESTIONS / NEWS

Q: Dee Bremer wrote she came across a Martin Varner of Texas. Do we know of this person?

A: See this month's main article.

George Varner of Missouri Direct Line DNA

No updates

Riggs/Varner Connection

No updates

Martin Varner of Texas

If you have worked through much Varner genealogy, especially concerning Edward, John, and Cynthia ending up in

Texas, then you have likely come across the Texan, Martin Varner. The question is whether his line is related to ours? It does not appear to be the case, but the story is good, and no one is able to say for sure at the moment.....

The first interesting fact on the subject is that Martin Varner is quite famous in Texas. There is even a Varner-Hogg Plantation State Historic Site in West Columbia, Texas that has a wonderful history. The historical plantation can be found online:

<http://www.thc.texas.gov/historic-sites/varner-hogg-plantation-state-historic-site>

Before I recount the story, or you read many details about Martin Varner, note that I have spoken with the curator of that state historic site. Her name is Angelia Pfeiffer. Angelia was very nice to spend some time with me on the phone. One of the things she said was that while Martin Varner's life in Texas is backed up by much historical detail, many of the claims about Martin Varner's ancestry appear to be unproven. Evidence is conflicting. There were several Martin Varner's, and she is not aware of any corroborated link between their Martin Varner of Texas, and ancestors, even if such links appear in several places.

I also spoke with Foy Varner, the longtime lead administrator of the FamilyTree DNA Varner Surname Project. Foy stated no one currently in

our surname project claims ancestry to Martin Varner of Texas. Foy further stated that he believes no male descendants from Martin Varner.

Sadly, there is no chance that Y-DNA can be used to determine lineage because there are no living male descendants of Martin Varner.

For those not familiar with Texas and Texans, they take their history seriously. Don't mess with Texas, and all that! So while there are several "Texas" phrases and references in this article about Martin and Texas, I have not attempted to provide a definition of those phrases. I have however underlined these phrases for convenience. Not to fear however, just Google such references and you will find plenty on the internet. Makes for interesting reading.

The plantation synopsis is paraphrased here:

In 1824 Virginia native Martin Varner (b. 1785- d. 1844) became one of the "Old Three Hundred"), being granted land from Stephen F. Austin & establishing the original colony in present-day Brazoria County. He received 4,428 acres & raised livestock & establish a rum distillery. Martin Varner sold the property in 1834 to a Columbus Patton whose family owned the property until 1869.

Between 1869 and 1901, the site changed ownership several times. The

plantation sustained major damage in the 1900 hurricane. Many original buildings were destroyed.

When the Governor of Texas (1891-1895), "James Stephen Hogg" was a very young man, he visited the property while it was owned by the Varner family and always liked it. When he purchased the land in 1901, he was convinced large amounts of oil lay beneath the surface. Ex-Gov. Hogg died in 1906 & his will recommended his children not sell mineral rights for at least 15 years. Within that time period the Hogg heirs struck oil, making them all very wealthy. In 1958 Ima, the governor's only surviving child, donated the plantation to the state of Texas. Gov. Hogg always called the property the Varner-Hogg plantation, and the name stuck.

A synopsis of Martin Varner, found on the Texas State Historical Website: <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fva20> is paraphrased next:

While history surrounding Martin Varner from the time he arrived in Texas is well document, his life before arriving in Texas is not. Nor has his ancestry been validated to historical satisfaction.

Martin Varner participated in the "Battle of Velasco" on June 26, 1832. Later he volunteered in the Texas army and served in the Columbia Company from April 19, 1836, until his discharge on July 19, 1836. He was awarded 320 acres of

bounty land in Wood County for his three months of service in the army.

To escape Antonio López de Santa Anna's advancing army, Varner and his family fled in April 1836 during the Runaway Scrape. When his family was safely across the Trinity River, Varner turned back to join the Texas Army. On April 21, 1836, he was stationed at the camp opposite Harrisburg during the "Battle of San Jacinto". Mexican Gen. Santa Anna was held prisoner on the plantation for a short while after the Battle of San Jacinto. For his service there, Varner was awarded 640 acres of donation land in Wood County.

After his discharge from the army, Varner joined his family in Lamar County where he purchased a 1,700-acre ranch near "Fort Lyday". He became the first permanent settler in Wood County in 1841, when he moved there to avoid hostile Indians. He used the cash from the sale of the Varner Plantation to purchase land certificates from San Jacinto veterans and patented over 6,000 acres in Wood County.

In a dispute with a neighbor, Simon Gonzales, Martin was shot in the back. When his only son, eighteen-year-old Stephen F Varner attempted to rescue his father, he was also shot and killed. Their loyal slave, Joe, subdued the killer, who later died from knife wounds inflicted by Varner. Martin Varner died three days later, on February 14, 1844. He was survived by his wife and six

daughters. A marker has been placed by the Texas Historical Commission at the site of the home and cemetery of Wood County's first family.....

As you can see from this synopsis, no male descendants of Martin Varner lived to produce off-spring.

Descendants of Martin Varner have over the years attempted to prove ancestry beyond Martin. Resulting information has been conflicting from those attempts.

The curator even told me that there is some indication that Martin Varner had lived in Missouri before moving to Texas. She was unable however, to provide any detail as to where this suggestion originated?

Angelia Pfeiffer also stated that occasionally some descendants of Martin Varner visit the plantation. She provide me with old addresses for two of those descendants. One lives in El Paso & the other in Victoria, TX. I hope to follow up with them after the holidays.

One other descendant has written a book. Don Raney published: Martin Varner: Texas Pioneer, 1785-1844, His Life Story & His Descendants.

<https://www.amazon.com/gp/offer-listing/0945949707>

I obtained a copy of this book just before Christmas. Initial reading indicates that Martin is likely NOT related to our Varner family.

Martin Varner family history and available records seem to validate that he had moved to Texas from Ohio and his family had move to Ohio from German Township, Fayette Co. Pennsylvania. Speculation is that the family may have earlier lived in Maryland where our Varner ancestors may have lived.

The father of Martin Varner of Texas, is apparently also named Martin Varner, who died in Ohio. And that Martin Varner is the son of another Martin Varner who died in Pennsylvania. There is evidence for these three Martin Varner's.

As with any family many details are not fully corroborated. So maybe our lines do cross in the early 1700's in Maryland, but who knows.

It is odd that there are no Y-DNA Varner's in the surname database that are known to be related to these Martin Varner's..... Sounds like our line.

Happy New Year!
Bruce Varner