

THE BREAK UP OF A FAMILY

By the fall of 1865, Harriet, Nancy Jane, Robert, William, Sally Ann, Demira, John, and Louisa had returned to Scotland County, Missouri after the death of James HC. James HC's sister Sallie Ann Ray and her husband John Kestler Ray still lived near Memphis and had by now quite a large family themselves ultimately with a total of ten children. It is not entirely clear where the family lived in the short term, but by 1866 Harriet was once again living with another man whose name was Hiram Colvin.

Just how Hiram Colvin entered the picture is a bit of a mystery, but knowing Harriet's shady past, one can only imagine. Several of the depositions from James HC's pension file allude to the fact that Harriet started seeing Hiram almost immediately upon her return to Scotland County. Hiram had divorced his wife Sarah in Scotland County by August 26th, 1865¹⁰ and he apparently lived in the county for quite some time. Harriet and Hiram would apparently leave Missouri to go back to the forty acres of land in Illinois James HC had purchased by the mid 1860's. They had been living together and according to several of the depositions were "compelled" to marry by the local Moultrie County, Illinois authorities because in those days it was against the law to live with someone of the opposite sex you weren't married to. According to Robert W. Rodgers (deposition), only Harriet's children Demira, John, and Louisa and my great-great grandfather William Henry would return with Harriet and Hiram Colvin to Illinois to the forty acre farm left by James HC. Nancy Jane, Robert, and Sally Ann would remain in Scotland County, Missouri. William would not stay with his step mother and her "husband" for long, though.

¹⁰ [Hiram and Sarah Colvin Divorce Decree](#)

It appears as if Nancy Jane, Robert, and Sally Ann would move in with their Aunt Sallie Ann Ray (James HC's sister) when Harriet left Missouri. Harriet Rodgers and Hiram Colvin were officially married on May 9th, 1868¹¹ after living together as man and wife for three years. William Henry (Pa Bill), by 1870, being only sixteen years old is listed at the residence of Samuel Anderson just north of Moultrie County.¹² It would seem that he would have no further contact with his step mother and her children for the rest of his life. He would apparently take over the 40 acres of land his father purchased after his step mother, half siblings, and step siblings would leave Illinois. The Colvins had settled in Texas County, Missouri by 1880¹³ and Pa Bill was on his father's land in the same census.¹⁴

The legacy of James HC Rodgers would continue for nearly forty years after his death and would lay the foundation for the material success of at least one of his sons, William Henry Rodgers, affectionately known as Pa Bill to his family. To adequately understand this part of the story a brief discussion needs to be initiated on the pension system of the United States government enacted during the Civil War. Quite frankly, it was because of the pensions acts of the United States Congress during the later half of the 1800's that all of the information you are reading was discovered.

¹¹ [Hiram and Harriet Colvin Marriage license](#)

¹² [Pa Bill 1870 Census Moultrie County, IL](#)

¹³ [Hiram Colvin 1880 Census Texas County, MO](#)

¹⁴ [Pa Bill 1880 Census Moultrie County, IL](#)