

HARRIET: ROUND TWO

On June 16th, 1896, Special Examiner R.H. Jones interviewed Harriet J. Colvin at her home where she would give the most detailed testimony to date about her situation in Kentucky and her supposed marriage to John Harlan, which she still emphatically claims happened.

Harriet states in her deposition that she was married near Perryville at John Harlan's uncle's home by a Justice of the Peace named "Hollans." Harriet says that there was no one present at the ceremony except John Harlan's uncle, his aunt, and some "negro slaves," one of which was named "Tilda." She can't remember the month or the year, but that it was in the "winter time." Harriet says that she and John lived with his uncle for several weeks and then John went to Louisville to attend medical college and that after he returned he had a "falling out" with the Pittmans and killed Tom. John was put in jail for the crime and was there for the summer. Harriet tried to go visit him in jail but was told she couldn't see him as "no women were allowed" in the jail. After this Harriet went to her grandmother's in Lincoln County, Kentucky and then to Scotland County, Missouri to live with her mother. Harriet says she has no proof of the marriage beyond her word as she didn't keep the license she was supposedly given.

Harriet then states that she did indeed have a male child with Harlan and that the boy drowned in a well when he was about two years old. At long last, Harriet finally explains the name situation that has for so long been a confusion to me. Harriet's mother married (her mother's) cousin whose name was Will Camlin and was Harriet's father. Will died when Harriet was very young and her mother married a man named James Ridge who also had died. Harriet concluded by saying her mother is still alive and lives with Harriet's half brother James Ridge at Crawford Station, Scotland County, Missouri. It is very clear from her testimony that Harriet truly believes she was legally married to

John Harlan.¹ Just as the other special examiners had, Mr. Jones files his report to his superiors in Washington, DC.

Mr. Jones summarizes Harriet's testimony in his report and puts forth the theory that John Harlan concocted the wedding ceremony in an attempt to keep Harriet to himself and to perhaps legitimize the child they had together. Mr. Jones further argues that Harriet is emphatic that she was married and if no one else, at least Harriet's mother would know of the correct situation. It is Mr. Jones recommendation that a special examiner be dispatched to Scotland County, Missouri to interview Harriet's mother.²

It is kind of amazing to me that the first time I saw the name Lucinda Ridge was many years before I knew much about James HC Rodgers or his life and times. The first time I saw that name was when I made a copy of James HC and Mary Ann Rodgers divorce decree that stated Mary Ann accusing James HC of having "criminal intercourse with Mrs. Lucinda Ridge!" I never gave it much thought until after I found out that Lucinda was Harriet's mother. If you take the literal interpretation and believe the accusation, James HC Rodgers was having an affair at some point in time with his second wife's mother.

¹ [Harriet Colvin 6/16/1896](#)

² [Special Examiner R.H. Jones 6/20/1896](#)