

THE INVESTIGATION: HARRIET'S CLAIM

The first document in the timeline is dated June 11th, 1875, and is from the probate court of Texas County, Missouri. It is a simple document that gives power of attorney to one Thomas White who would do the legal work of the Colvins at both the state and federal level. John and Demira Rodgers are the only children of James HC listed in this document.¹

The beginnings of the investigation seemed to be triggered by the fact that the government had all previous documents related to the death of James HC and the new information seemed to be in conflict with the old information. Mr. White went out of his way to prove to the government that Harriet was married to James HC Rodgers. He first sent a form letter to former Captain Aalsey B. Lee back in Moultrie County who was James HC's last commanding officer just before he died. This affidavit by Captain Lee explains that he knew James HC Rodgers and was with him when he died in Little Rock, Arkansas. Captain Lee further states that James HC was the same Corporal Rodgers involved in the case.² Mr. White then sent a new application for a pension naming only Demira and John Rodgers as James HC's children. It should be noted that this "Declaration for Minor Children in Order to Obtain Army Pension" would have been sent in just after a more liberal pension law was passed by Congress.³

At approximately the same time Mr. White sent a form letter back to Jennings County, Indiana in an attempt to help prove that Harriet and James HC had indeed been married and that John Rodgers was their child. This affidavit was completed by a Wilkerson H. Rodgers (James HC's brother), and a Lourine Davis. (How Lourine is

¹ [Texas County, Missouri Probate Court order](#)

² [Captain Aalsey B. Lee Affidavit](#)

³ [Declaration for Minor Children 1875](#)

related or involved in the family is unknown). They state they knew both Harriet and James HC well and that they were present on July 7th, 1860 when John Rodgers was born. (It is now confirmed this document was in error and the actual birth date was July 7th, 1861.) Never-the-less, Mr. White is trying to create proof that James HC and Harriet were the parents of John Rodgers.⁴ Time passed and again Harriet was denied any part of the pension. On December 29th, 1882, Harriet would hire another lawyer to continue to prosecute the claim. It is important to note that each time Harriet would re-file a claim, the pension laws relating to Civil War veterans was changed and expanded. I would argue Harriet was aware of this.

Attorney M.V. Tierney would continue to pursue Harriet's claim and from late 1882⁵ until 1886 it would seem that Mr. Tierney would submit affidavits and James HC's original family record to the pension department. Harriet again would file an affidavit claiming Demira, John, and Louis were her only children and she had no idea where the others were living.⁶ Very clearly a falsehood based upon later affidavits but that didn't matter too much because it would seem there was no action on the part of the government. On August 30th, 1886, Harriet wrote to the pension office in her own hand.⁷ It is a remarkable letter written by a barely literate person, pleading for reconsideration of her case. She must have gotten some response, but as the pension laws changed, her son John R. Rodgers would also start to see dollar signs and the investigation would really take off.

⁴ [Wilkerson Rodgers Affidavit](#)

⁵ [Power of Attorney: M.V. Tierney](#)

⁶ [Harriet Affidavit 4/19/1883](#)

⁷ [Harriet Handwritten Note 8/30/1886](#)