

NANCY JANE AND WILLIAM HENRY RODGERS

The next depositions in the timeline are truly very close to my heart as they come from my great-great grandfather and his sister while they lived in Scotland County, Missouri. The details they give about our family filled in so many holes and gaps of what we didn't know and sent me in several different directions in my research. The first interview was with Nancy Jane Rodgers Garrison. I think it is interesting to note that it would take nearly six months from the time of the Plum Valley interviews to the ones in Scotland County. Time sure did move a lot slower in those days!

Special Examiner L. H. Paxton interviewed Nancy Jane on January 7th, 1896 at her home near Bible Grove in Scotland County. She starts her testimony by stating her age and that James HC Rodgers was her father and that Mary Ann Moore was her mother. She confirms they were married in Jennings County, Indiana and states all the children by James HC and Mary Ann including their dates of birth of herself and her brother Robert. It is interesting to note that she didn't know the dates of birth of her brother William Henry and her sister Sally Ann. However, she did state that Sally Ann married a man by the name of Rath, had no children with him, and that she died about 1880 or so.

Nancy Jane also confirms the story she was told about John Harlan killing a man in Kentucky and that Harriet left and came to Scotland County and called her a "gross widow." (A gross widow is an old term meaning an unmarried woman who has had a child.¹) Nancy Jane then describes Harriet's relationship with Hiram Colvin and that Harriet lived with Hiram for awhile before they were married in Illinois after they left together. Nancy Jane further states that when her parents divorced the "old family record was torn out of the bible and no one seems to know what happens to it." Nancy Jane

¹ Oxford Journal: 210-b.pdf

provided the only clue about her mother's situation to date in her deposition saying that her grandmother was married twice, once to a Moore and once to a Roscoe, and she also confirms all the children for the special examiner.

Nancy Jane concludes her testimony by confirming James HC Rodgers' death of May 6th, 1865 and says the family moved back to Scotland County shortly thereafter and the following fall Harriet left with Hiram to go back to the farm owned by James HC. She alludes to the fact she didn't go with them. Nancy Jane was the first member of the family in the timeline of examinations to actually sign her own name on the form as well. I was surprised that she signed her last name "Garison" and not "Garrison" as our family has always spelled it.² Mr. Paxton would next interview my great great grandfather William Henry Rodgers (Pa Bill.)

On January 17th, 1896, Pa Bill was questioned in his home about the situation. For all intent and purposes, Pa Bill would only confirm all the information his sister Nancy Jane would give, but just as each succeeding interview would do he would provide a few more details to the picture. Pa Bill refers to his siblings by Harriet as brothers and sisters of the "half blood" and states that he thought Harriet's name at the time of her marriage to James HC was Harriet Ridge. The special examiner made a note to remember this item of information as he would later interview some of the Ridge family members. Pa Bill states that he got the date of his birth from his father's sister Sallie Ann Ray and presented the special examiner with James HC land grant³ he received from his service in the Mexican War that also had the dates of his siblings birth on them.⁴ (This document has been passed down through the generations and the original is in the possession of my cousins Kevin and Becky Rodgers.) Pa Bill also signed the deposition

² [Nancy Jane Rodgers Garrison 1/7/1896](#)

³ [James HC Mexican War Land Grant](#)

⁴ [James Handwritten Document #1](#)

in his own hand.⁵ The special examiner lastly would interview a John Ridge on January 24th, 1896 who was Harriet Colvin's half brother. John Ridge had no new information for the special examiner as he said he left Harriet in Kentucky when he was a very small child and wasn't there when all the alleged incidents with Harlan and Pittman happened.⁶ Mr. Paxton would then file his report to his superiors.

Mr. Paxton's report of January 30th, 1896 is unremarkable in most ways except one: He makes the statement for the first time that James HC's children Nancy Jane, Robert, and William are probably entitled to pension money as the law stood then. The disposition of this will be explained later, but the important part is that Pa Bill and his siblings birth dates are authenticated and entered into the official record and it is the opinion of the special examiner that James HC Rodgers wrote the dates himself and are accurate. For the pension claim to proceed this is essential because the dollar amounts are based solely on the dates of birth since they can only receive money up to age sixteen under the original laws. Mr. Paxton concludes his report by stating an examiner needs to be sent to Boyle County, Kentucky to discover the truth behind Harriet's relationship with John Harlan.⁷ These interviews would not be very flattering to Harriet.

⁵ [William Henry Rodgers 1/17/1896](#)

⁶ [John Ridge 1/24/1896](#)

⁷ [Special Examiner L.H. Paxton 1/30/1896](#)