

## **A BIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM DENNIS AND HIS FAMILY**

This biography is about William Dennis and his wife, who were the parents of Samuel, William, Jacob, Sarah, Joseph, John, Achsah (or Axey), Hugh, Cary, and Peter. In this first section, I will just tell the events of their lives as I believe they took place. In the second section, I will get more technical and explain how I came to the conclusions that I reached and I will address what I consider to be errors that are found in many family trees as well as conflicts I encountered.

William Dennis, whose middle name may have been “Thomas,” was born between 1776 and 1780. Though it is probable that his father was also called William, we will call him William Sr to avoid confusion with his son, whom we will call William Jr. William Sr was possibly the son of William Dennis (born in 1730 Westminster, London England and died in about 1792 in Woodstock, Shenandoah Co, VA) and Elizabeth Jane Stoner (born in 1744 in Ashland, Virginia, and died in 1811 in Woodstock, Shenandoah Co, Virginia). If William from England is our William Sr’s father then our William had a younger brother named Josiah (1787-1850). In the 1810 census, our William had a nearby neighbor named Josiah Dennis, so I think it is likely that William and Josiah were neighbors and brothers and that William and Elizabeth are indeed their parents. (Also, I have a DNA match to descendants of Josiah Dennis, so that also seems to confirm the story.)

According to many genealogies, William’s wife was named “Milley.” I have not found strong evidence to confirm that, but for consistency we will call her Milley for the rest of this biography. (I will discuss her name in great detail in the section about how I came to my conclusions.) We know for sure that her name started with an “M.”

### **Moving to Kentucky**

Sometime before 1809, William and Milley moved to Grayson County, Kentucky. We cannot be sure of why they moved, but many others made the same move for several reasons:

In the eastern states most of the land was owned, and there was no opportunity for young men from large families to farm. Also, many who had fought in the revolutionary war received land warrants in Kentucky as payment for their services. These warrants could be bought and sold, so they could be purchased even if you did not fight in the war.

Soil exhaustion was taking place in the eastern states after many years of farming. Moving west promised fresh fertile soil.

The improvement of the Wilderness road made travel to the west much easier.

Still, land in Grayson County was rugged. The first few years would be spent in clearing woods of trees and rocks, living in crude log cabins, and scratching out a living anyway possible. Initially, it was not an easy life.

# Grayson County Kentucky



In 1809, William and Milley's son Samuel was born.

William Dennis is first clearly seen in public records in the 1810 census from Grayson County, Kentucky:

Head of family: William Dennis; Males under 10 1 [Samuel]; Males 10-15 2 [unknown]; Males 26-44 1 [William]; Females under 10 1 [unknown]; Females 26-44 1 [Milley], 4 kids 2 adults

I am not bothered by the "unknowns" listed here. William was in his 30's when his first known son was born, so he may have had others that we don't know about who died or who did not follow him to Tennessee. There may have been children from a previous marriage. Or they could have been taken into the family from relatives or from outside the family.

1810 United States Federal Census for William Dennis

← Kentucky > Grayson > Not Stated

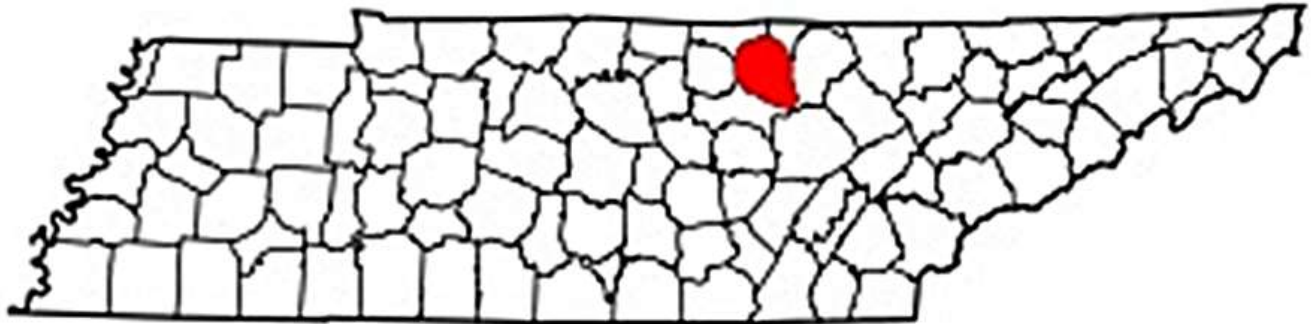
Same	Abraham Dennis	3	1	"	1	"	1	"	1	"	"	"	"	"
Same	John Reedy	1	"	"	1	"	1	"	1	"	1	"	"	"
Same	Christie Parsley	5	1	"	1	1	1	"	1	"	1	"	"	"
Same	William Dennis	1	2	"	1	"	1	"	1	"	1	"	"	"
Same	Devin Turner	3	3	"	1	"	2	"	1	"	1	"	"	"
Same	Christopher Brunk	2	"	1	"	1	2	3	"	1	"	"	"	"
Same	James Riley	2	"	"	1	"	2	"	"	1	"	"	"	"
Same	Josiah Dennis	2	"	"	1	"	"	"	"	1	"	"	"	"
Same	William Dennis	1	"	"	1	"	"	"	"	1	"	"	"	"

The same census also has Josiah Dennis listed four names later. We have already speculated that William may have had a brother named Josiah.

- In 1810, William and Milley's son William is born in Kentucky.
- In 1813, William and Milley's son Jacob Elias is born in Kentucky.
- In 1815, William and Milley's daughter Sarah is born in Kentucky.

## Moving to Tennessee

Sometime between 1815 and 1817, the family moved to Overton County, Tennessee



## Overton County

Why they made this move is only conjecture. Parts of Grayson County were very rugged. Overton County, on the Cumberland Plateau was a new land with fertile soil. The end of the War of 1812 made it safer for travel in the wilderness, and many settlers moved to Tennessee from Kentucky.

In 1817, William and Milley's son Joseph was born in Tennessee.

In 1819, William and Milley's son John was born in Tennessee.

From the 1820 Overton County, Tennessee census, we find the following:

Head of family: William Denis; Males under 10 4 [William, Jacob, Joseph, John]; Males 10-15 1 [Samuel]; Males 16-25 1 [unknown but maybe the same person from the 1810 census]; Males 26-44 1 [William]; Females under 10 1 [Sarah]; Females 26-44 1 [Milley]

1823 William and Milley's daughter Aschah (who is called "Axey" in nearly every record) is born in Tennessee.

1824 William and Milley's son Hugh is born in Tennessee.

1828 William and Milley's son Cary is born in Tennessee.

## Moving to Central Missouri

Wanderlust took hold again, and in 1828 or 1829, William moved his family to Crawford County, Missouri. Events that took place in the next few years happened in Crawford (where they are found in the 1830 census) as well as nearby Cooper, Camden, and Morgan Counties.

On this map, I have highlighted Crawford County, along with Camden, Morgan and Cooper. Camden and Morgan were both the same county until 1833, when Morgan County was carved out of the north of Camden.



On July 20, 1829, Sarah married Elias Barker in Cooper Co, Missouri.

From the 1830 census of Crawford, Missouri we find:

Head of family: William Dennis; Males under 5 1 [Carey]; Males 5-9 1 [Hugh], Males 10-15 2 [Joseph and John], Males 15-20 2 [William and Jacob], Males 20-30 1 [Samuel], Males 50-60 1 [William], Female 5-10 [Axe], Female 60-50 [Milley]

The next household listed after Williams's is that of Elias Barker and his wife Sarah (Dennis).

While the census was taken from Crawford County, there is considerable evidence that the family moved on to Camden County, as all of the following events happened there or nearby.

In 1830, Elias and Sarah Barker's daughter Mary Ann (Polly) Barker is born.

1831 Feb 28 Samuel married Elizabeth Arhart in Cooper Co, Missouri.

1831 Birth of Peter in Camden Co, Missouri. This took place in the area that would later be Morgan County, but was part of Camden at the time.

1835 Samuel married Forlee Green in Morgan Co, Missouri.

1835 Samuel's son Jasper is born.

In 1836, Elias and Sarah Barker's son James K Barker is born.

At least one account seems to indicate that the Dennis's did not prosper there. Frank Hill, a grandson of John Dennis wrote "They lived in Camden County, Missouri, near old Linn Creek when they first moved to Missouri. They lived in a lean-to shed building and the children went barefoot all winter. In the spring they went to Stone County, Missouri."

We can be certain that they spent longer in this area than just a year, because of all the events that happened to the Dennis family from 1829 to 1835. But by 1837, they had made the move to Taney County.

And just a short note here: The Dennis clan collectively moved to Taney County by 1837. In 1851 Taney County, Missouri was divided into two counties: Taney and Stone. The Dennis family settled into the area that would later be Stone County. Any references to Stone County before 1851 were probably entered into the record after Stone was a county, but the events probably took place in Taney County. (More on this later.)

In 1837, Jacob married Susan Henson In Taney Co, Missouri. Susan and her family had moved to Taney County in 1835. In December of 1837, Jacob and Susan Dennis' son Isam Dennis was born in Taney Co, Missouri. (This is the first record of any of the Dennis family being in Taney/Stone/Barry Counties. Since all of the next records took place in Taney/Stone/Barry, we can imply that the entire Dennis clan moved between 1835 and 1837.

1837 Elias and Sarah (Dennis) Barker's son John Barker, was born in Taney Co, Missouri.

In 1838, Jacob and Susan's son William Isom Dennis was born.

On October 18, 1838 Joseph Dennis married Lucinda Vermillion in Barry County, which was the next county west of Taney. Joseph and Lucinda moved to Taney County near the rest of the Dennis family. Lucinda was the daughter of Reuben and Rebecca Vermillion. The Dennis's and the Vermillions would have many other close connections in the years to come.

1840 Axey Dennis married Eusebius (or Eusebus) Stone in Taney Co, Missouri (Eusebius was the son of Judge William Stone, after whom Stone County would later be named.) They settled into land adjacent to where the other Dennis's were living.

1840 William Jr married Mary Packwood in Taney Co, Missouri.

In 1840 Jacob and Susan's son James is born.

### **The 1840 Census in Flat Creek Township, Taney Co, WY**

From the 1840 census of Flat Creek Township, Taney County, Missouri we find:

The household of William Dennis Sr. was enumerated with:  
Males 5-10 1 (Peter); Males 10-14 (Hugh & Carey); males 15-19 (John); males 60-70 1 (William); females 40-50 1 (Milley); Number of white persons over 20 who cannot read and write: 1 (Either William or Milley could not read or write.)

The three households preceding William's are those of his sons William and Jacob and son-in-law Elias Barker (who married Sarah Dennis). The fourth name after William is "Usibius Stone" which almost certainly is the household of Eusebius and Axey (Dennis) Stone. At the bottom of the page is found the household of his sons Samuel and Joseph. This accounts for all of Williams and Milley's known children. Every one of them moved to Taney County.

William Dennis [Jr] 1840 Census in Flat Creek, Taney shows 1 M 20-29 (William) and one Female 20-20 (Mary)

Jacob 1840 census from Flat Creek, Taney, Missouri: Males under 5 2 (Isam and James), Males 20 – 30 1 (Jacob Dennis), Females 5-10 1 (unknown) Females 20-30 Susan

Samuel 1840 census from Flat Creek, Taney, Missouri: Males under 5 1 (unknown), Males 5-9 1 (Jasper), Males 30-39 1 (Samuel Dennis), Females under 5 2 (unknown), Females 5-9 1 (unknown), Females 20-29 1 (Elizabeth)

Joseph 1840 census from Flat Creek, Taney Co, Missouri, Male 20-29 1 (Joseph), Female 15-20 1 (Lucinda) Female under 5 1 (unknown)

### Life in Taney County

In 1841, Eusibus and Axey Stone's son John Weaver Stone was born.

In 1842, Jacob and Susan's daughter Angeline Mary Dennis was born.

In 1842, Elias and Sarah Barker's daughter Matilda is born.

Before 1843 John Dennis married Mary Catherine Melton in Taney Co, Missouri.

In 1843, John and Mary Dennis's daughter Louisa (or Eliza) is born.

1843 William (Jr) and Mary Dennis' daughter Mary "Melissa" is born in Taney Co, Missouri.

1843 William (Jr) and Mary Dennis' daughter Elizabeth Evelyn is born in Taney Co, Missouri.

Between 1843 and 1845, William Dennis Jr died. His wife remarried three more times, but lived the rest of her life in Taney County (except for a brief move to Arkansas during the civil war). On January 17, 1883, Mary Ann Packwood Wade, the wife of William Dennis Jr, died in Taney County, Missouri.

1844 Elias and Sarah (Dennis) Barker's daughter Sarah Barker is born. Accounts conflict as to whether she was born in Stone County or in Laclede Co Missouri.

In 1844, Jacob and Susan's daughter Martha Jane Dennis was born.

In 1844, Eusibus and Axey Stone's son Elijah was born.

Around 1845 Samuel died in Flat Creek Township, Stone Co, Missouri. I can find no record of what happened to Samuel's wife after he died. Samuel's son Jasper is probably the Jasper Dennis from Missouri who took the Oregon trail and settled in Medford, Jackson Co, Oregon. (I found a DNA match among his descendants.)

In 1845, John and Mary Dennis's son Henry is born.

1846 Eusibus and Axey (Dennis) Stone's daughter Sarah is born in Taney Co, Missouri

1846 Joseph and Lucinda Dennis's son Reuben is born.

1847 Hugh married Nancy Bassett in Taney Co, Missouri.

In 1847, Jacob and Susan's son Jacob Barker Jr was born.

By 1847, there can be no doubt that Elias and Sarah (Dennis) Barker have moved to Laclede County, Missouri. *Goodspeed's 1889 "History of Laclede, Camden, Dallas, Webster, Wright, Texas, Pulaski, Phelps and Dent Counties, Missouri"* tells that they made a public land entry in 1847. This is the first clear record of any of the Dennis family in Laclede County. Eventually, Sarah's surviving siblings would all move to Laclede.

In 1847 Elias and Sarah (Dennis) Barker's son Jacob Barker is born in Laclede Co Missouri

In 1847, John and Mary Dennis's daughter Emaline is born in Taney County.

On November 1, 1848, Elias Barker (Sarah's husband) purchases the first of three land patents for 40 acres in Union Township, Laclede County, Missouri.

In 1848 Hugh and Nancy Dennis's daughter Julia Ann Dennis is born.

In 1848, Joseph and Lucinda's son Carey is born Taney Co, Missouri.

In 1848, John and Mary Dennis also had a son named Cary.

On November 20, 1848 Joseph and Lucinda's daughter Axey Dennis is born in Taney Co, Missouri.

Some time before 1849 Peter married Clarinda Vermillion. Clarinda is from Indiana according to all census records. She does not seem to be related to Lucinda Vermillion, who married Joseph. Lucinda's father was Reuben Vermillion, who did indeed have a daughter named Clarinda, but she was not born until 1849. Clarinda is also not related to Peter's second wife, Elizabeth Vermillion Watson (who was Lucinda's sister.) I have search extensively for parents for Clarinda without any success. I have wondered if her last name is really Vermillion, though tons of traditions say so (including our family's oral tradition). She is listed that way in hundreds of family trees, so I will continue to refer to her as Clarinda Vermillion.

1849 Elias and Sarah (Dennis) Barker's daughter Nancy Barker is born in Laclede Co Missouri.

In 1849, Eusibus and Axey Stone's son Woodson T Stone was born in Taney County.

In about 1849 Cary marries Mary Watson in Taney County, Missouri.

1849 Cary and Mary Dennis' son Riley is born in Taney County, Missouri.

William Dennis Sr probably died before 1849 in Taney County. He is not found on the 1850 Census nor the Mortality Schedules for that year. I have found no grave site for him, and am supposing that he was buried at the Dennis family farm.

1850 Peter and Clarinda's son John G Dennis is born in Taney Co, Missouri.

In 1850, Jacob and Susan's son Elias Barker Dennis was born.

In 1850 Hugh and Nancy Dennis's daughter Mary Catherine Dennis was born.

On December 16, 1850, Jacob Dennis purchased a land patent for 40 acres of land in Taney (soon to become Stone) County along the James River southwest of Galena as seen in purple on this map. According The Land Act of 1820 (3 Stat. 566), passed on April 24, 1820 (which is referred to in the document, land was \$1.25 an acre, so a 40 acre purchase would have cost \$50.



On the same day, Eusibius Stone, the husband of Axey, purchased 120 acres directly to the south and southwest of it. At the same rate, his purchase would have cost \$150.

In 1851, Elias and Sarah Barker's daughter Amanda J Barker is born.

On November 1, 1852, Jacob purchased an addition 40 acres just to the west of his.

There is no record of any of the other family members owning land here. I believe that Jacob purchased the land that all the Dennis families lived on and farmed.



This is the James River today, just south of the land that Jacob purchased. The waters today are greatly swollen compared to what they were then, as Table Rock Dam was built, transforming the river into Table Rock Lake.

### **1850 Census**

By 1850, William Dennis Sr had passed way along with two of his ten children: Samuel and William Jr.

The 1850 census in Flat Township (which was an error and should have been called Flat Creek Township), Taney County, Missouri has a lot to say, as the Dennis family now has several households. The following listings are all in order: Jacob Dennis 37 from Kentucky (with Millie Dennis 64 listed in household of Jacob), Levi Isaac Vermillion (son of Reuben Vermillion and brother of Joseph's wife Lucinda) 27 from Ohio, Hugh Dennis 26 from Tennessee, John Dennis 30 from Tennessee, Peter Dennis (from Tennessee), and M Dennis F 26 from Indiana

Jacob 1850 census from Flat Taney Missouri: J Dennis 37 (Jacob from Kentucky), S Dennis 29 (Sarah), I Dennis 11 (Isam), J Dennis 10 (James), M Dennis 8 (Mary), M J Dennis 6 (Martha Jane), N Dennis 3 (Nancy), E Dennis 0 (Elias Barker Dennis), W Dennis 18 (unk Peter's age), M Dennis 64 (Milly from Georgia) (All children from Missouri).

Levi Vermillion 1850 census from Flat Taney Missouri: L Vermillion 27 [Levi from Ohio], M Vermillion 23 [Martha], CM Vermillion 3 [Cynthia], SJ Vermillion 2 [unknown female], T Vermillion 0, [Thomas], R Vermillion 0 [Reuben]

Hugh 1850 census in Flat, Taney Co, Missouri H (Hugh) Dennis 26 (from Tennessee), N (Nancy) Dennis 26 (from Kentucky), JA (Julia Ann) Dennis 1, MC (Mary Catherine) Dennis 1 month

John 1850 census from Flat, Taney Co, Missouri: J (John) Dennis 30 (from Tennessee), MC (Mary Catherine) Dennis 23 (from Tennessee), L (Louisa) Dennis 7, H (Henry) Dennis 5, E (Emaline) Dennis 3, C (Cary) Dennis 1, J Dennis 15 (from Missouri, this is probably Samuel's son, Jasper)

Peter Dennis 20 from Tennessee, Clarinda Dennis 19 from Indiana, John Dennis 1 from Missouri, C Dennis 22 (Cary) from Tennessee

M Dennis (a 26 year old female from Indiana with a 3 month old infant.) I think this is Mary Watson Dennis, the wife of Cary, who was indeed from Indiana. She was a newly minted member of the Dennis family, and she did have an infant son about this time. One can only speculate as to why Cary is living next door with Peter while his wife is here alone. Maybe there was only a one room cabin at the time, and the baby was keeping Cary from getting enough sleep, so he moved next door.

Axe -1850 census in Flat, Taney Co, Missouri: E (Eusebius) Stone 29 (from Tennessee), A Stone (Axie) 26 from (Tennessee), J (John) Stone 9, E (Elijah) Stone 6, S (Sarah) Stone 4, W (Woodson) Stone 1

Sarah 1850 Census in Laclede County: Elias Barker from Kentucky 47, Sarah Barker 35 from Kentucky, children: James 14, John 12, Maltida 8, Sarah 6, Jacob 4, Nancy 1 (All children listed from Missouri)

Of note, Joseph and Lucinda Dennis do not seem to be listed in the census, neither in Stone County, nor in Laclede County (where we know they were going to move). I would speculate that either their house was accidentally overlooked in the census, or that they were visiting Elias and Sarah (Dennis) Barker in Laclede County to explore the possibility of moving there.

### **A New County, A New Sheriff and New Judges**

In 1851, Stone County was carved out of Taney County. On February 10<sup>th</sup>, Missouri Governor Austin A King appointed Hugh Dennis to be the county's first sheriff. Later that month, William Goff, Jacob

Dennis and Joseph Philbert were appointed as judges of the 13<sup>th</sup> Judicial circuit. The Dennis family must have been held in high esteem for two such appointments to come from one family.

To read about the early history of Stone County (and the appointment of the Dennis brothers, please visit the following link from the library in Springfield, Missouri:  
<https://sgcld.thelibrary.org/lochist/periodicals/wrv/V2/N1/f64b.htm>

### **In the 1850's**

1851 Peter and Clarinda's daughter Amanda Jane is born in in Flat Township, Stone Co, Missouri.

In 1851, Jacob and Susan's daughter Malinda is born in Stone County, Missouri.

1851 Elias and Sarah (Dennis) Barker's daughter Aurena Barker, is born in Laclede Co Missouri.

1852 Hugh and Nancy's son John Granville Dennis is born in Stone Co, Missouri.

In 1852, Joseph and Lucinda Dennis's daughter Malinda was born.

1852 Samuel's son Jasper takes the Oregon Trail to Oregon..

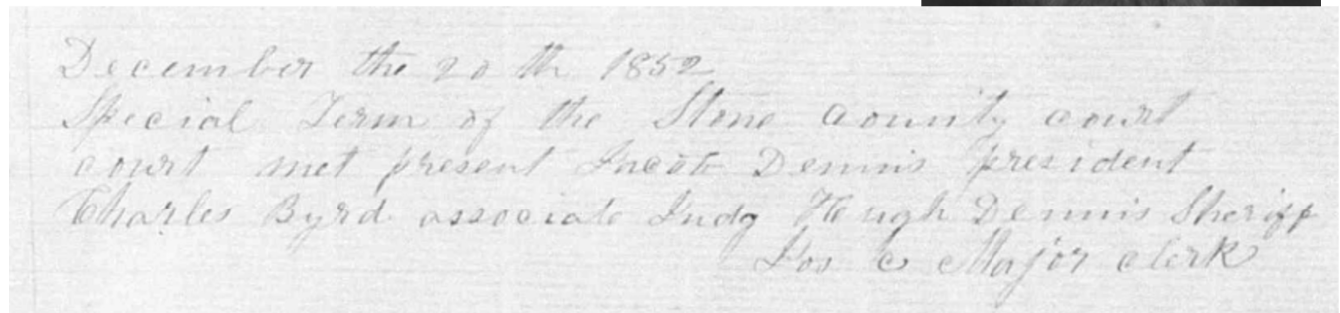
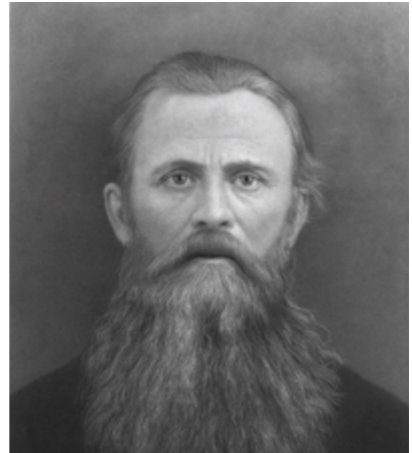
1852 Cary and Mary Dennis' son Joseph was born in Flat Creek Township, Stone County, Missouri.

In 1853, John and Mary Dennis's daughter Sarah J Dennis is born in Stone County.

In 1853 Eusibius Stone, the husband of Axey Dennis died. She remarried in 1854 to Joseph Vance Reagan. They moved to moved to Newton, Taney County, Missouri.

### **Hugh Dennis**

In early 1853, Hugh Dennis died. In court records on December 20, 1853, he attends court as sheriff, and on the other side of the page on February 14, 1853, he is dead and Judge Jacob Dennis appoints brother John Dennis as administrator of his estate. Those records appear below.



February the 14<sup>th</sup> 1853  
February Term of the Stone county court  
court met Jacob Dennis president Judge Charles-  
Byrd associate Judge Lacey & Major clerk  
This day comes Nathaniel Kimberling and presents  
his account amounting to twelve dollars five and  
a half cents against the Estate of Hugh Dennis  
Deceased which was allowed by the court  
Ordered by the court that the Letters of administration  
of John Dennis on the Estate of Hugh Dennis  
Deceased granted by the clerk in vacation be approved

Hugh and his wife Nancy had 3 children. In 1854, his wife Nancy remarried Wiley McDowell, and had five more children. The couple remained in Stone County all of their lives. Nancy died in 1872.

### **Jacob Dennis**

Jacob's last recorded ruling as a judge took place in February 1853. On November 14, 1853, John Dennis is appointed as the administrator of Jacob's estate. Some time in between, Jacob Elias Dennis died in Flat Creek Township, Stone Co, Missouri. His widow Susan married Paschal Smith on July 18, 1855 and moved to nearby Barry County where they lived and raised their children. Paschal Smith died in the civil war in 1863. Susan continued to live in Barry County until the 1860's. She followed some of her children to Holt County, Missouri, where she died in 1870.

### **The Effect of the Three Deaths**

There were three deaths among the family in one year, Eusibius Stone (Axey's husband), Hugh, and Jacob. It is very likely that Milley died about this time as well. What caused this?

One can imagine a western adventure: The Dennis family had entered this area early, and settled on the best, most fertile, land (along the James River). They painstakingly removed rocks and tress and cultivated large tracts of land, but they never formally took legal possession of it. Then in the early 1850's, many more settlers flooded the area, and some found the lands that the Dennis's had prepared to be an ideal place to settle. They argued over the land until Jacob and Eusibius gathered together enough money to go to the land office in Springfield and purchase land patents proving once and for all that the land belonged to them. The squatters were evicted, but violence broke out.

However, it is more likely that the deaths were from natural causes. In 1853, there was a cholera outbreak in Missouri. There was also a yellow fever epidemic. And sometimes smallpox and "blood flux" epidemics broke out and killed many people in one community. Whatever the cause, the deaths set circumstances in motion that would result in all of the remaining Dennis siblings and their families leaving Flat Creek Township.

## **The Move to Laclede County**

Probably when Jacob Dennis bought that land patent, he was buying the land that all the Dennis's lived on and were farming. It is also quite likely (and normal in that area at that time) that they did not have a lot of money, and so he borrowed money to make the purchase. The tragedy of this is that the land was in Jacob's name, and there were many claims against his estate. John Dennis, the administrator of the estate, asked the court for ten months before having to sell everything to pay the claims. When all was said and done, the Dennis's had lost the farm.

In about 1854, Peter moved further north to Washington Township in Stone County. John Dennis seems to have remained in Stone County for a while, as he appears in court as administrator of Jacob's estate well into 1856. (However John purchases land in Laclede County in 1858.) Axey moved with her new husband to Taney County. Joseph and Cary moved to Laclede County, Missouri, where sibling Sarah (with husband Elias Barker) already lived. John and Axey later made the move, and when the civil war hit, so did Peter last of all. So all of William's living children made it to Laclede County by about 1861. It is of note that the Dennis clan had lived in Flat Creek Township for at least 15 years. Jacob and Eusibius had just invested quite a bit of money in the purchase of land patents for the area. Suddenly, they all just walk away.

In 1854, Cary and Mary Dennis's son William was born in Phillipsburg, Laclede Co, Missouri.

In 1854, Joseph and Axey Reagan's daughter Lucinda was born.

In 1854, John and Mary Dennis's daughter Adeline is born in Stone County.

1855 Peter and Clarinda's daughter Gillie A Dennis is born in Washington Township, Stone Co, Missouri.

In 1855 Amanda J Barker, daughter of Sarah E Dennis and Elias Barker was born in Laclede Co Missouri.

On August 13, 1856, John Dennis is discharged as administrator of the estate of Hugh Dennis. I have not found a record of his discharge from the estate of Jacob Dennis, but Jacob's children were still involved in his estate disputes as late as 1860. It is likely that John moved to Laclede about this time.

In 1857 Peter and Clarinda's son Abner was born in Washington Township, Stone Co, Missouri.

In 1857 Joseph and Lucinda's son Leonard was born in Laclede Co, Missouri.

In 1858 William R Barker, son of Elias and Sarah Barker was born in Laclede Co Missouri.

On July 1, 1858, John Dennis bought 40 acres of land in Laclede County from his father-in-law, Austin Melton. This is our first proof that John Dennis had made the move to Laclede.

In 1845, John and Mary Dennis's daughter Martha A Dennis was born.

In 1858 Samuel W Reagan son of Axey Dennis and Joseph Reagan was born in in Newton, Forsyth, Taney, County, Missouri.

In 1859 Peter and Clarinda's daughter Elzera is born in Washington Township, Stone Co, Missouri.

In 1859, Carey obtains a land patent for 40 acres of land in Union Township, Laclede County, Missouri.

In 1860 Joseph and Lucinda Dennis's daughter Leticia was born in Laclede County, Missouri.

On July 7, 1860, Joseph Dennis bought 40 acres of land in Laclede County from Reuben Vermillion.

### **The 1860 Census**

Sarah - Laclede County Missouri: Elias Barker from Kentucky 57, Sarah Barker 45 from Kentucky children: Matilda 18, Sarah 16, Jacob 14, Nancy 12, Braena 9, Amanda 7, William 3 (All from Missouri)

Joseph - Union Townshp, Laclede Co Missouri: Joseph Dennis from Tenn, Lucinda Dennis 39 from Ohio, Reuben Dennis 14, Axey Dennis 12, Cary Dennis 11 Melinda Dennis 6, Leonard Dennis 3, Leticia Dennis ½

John – Union Township, LaClede Co, Missouri: Joseph 39 (from Tennessee), Catharine 33 (from Tennessee) Eliza 17 (Louisa?), Emeline 13, Henry 14, Carey 12, Sarah 7, Adaline 5, Martha 2

Axey - Newton, Taney Co, Missouri: Joseph Reagn 49 (from Tennessee), Axey Reagan 35 (from Tennessee), five children of Joseph Reagan, John Stone 20, Elijah Stone 18, Sara Stone 14, Woodson Stone 11, Lucinda Reagan 5, Samuel Reagan 1 month

Cary - Union, Laclede Co, Missouri: Cary Dennis 32 (from Tennessee), Mary (Watson) Dennis 36 (from Indiana) , Riley Dennis 10, Joseph Dennis 8, William H Dennis 6

Peter – Washington Township, Stone County, Missouri: Peter Dennis 29 Farmer from Missouri, Clarinda Dennis 29 from Indiana, John Dennis 10 from Missouri, Amanda Dennis 8 from Missouri Gilla A Dennis 5 from Missouri, Abner Dennis 3 from Missouri, Elzera Dennis 6 months from Missouri

The agricultural census for Stone County says that in 1860, Peter had 3 milk cows (valued at \$30), and grew 4 bushels of peas or beans (which could be grown in a 30x20 ft garden), produced 50 lbs of butter and slaughtered \$40 worth of animals (probably pigs).

### **Life in the 1860's**

1860 Joseph and Lucinda's daughter Leticia is born in Phillipsburg, Laclede Co Missouri

1860 Joseph obtains a land patent for 40 acres of land in Union Township, Laclede County, Missouri.

1861 John obtains a land patent for 40 acres of land in Union Township, Laclede County, Missouri.

In 1861, John and Mary Dennis's daughter Mary A Dennis is born.

## The Civil War

A very short history lesson is in order here. In the civil war, of all the states, Missouri was the number 3 war theater behind Virginia and Tennessee. There were two causes for this:

Kansas was a free state, but Missouri was a slave state. Only one family in ten owned slaves in Missouri, so the most of its citizens were against slavery, but slavery was still legal. As early as the mid 1850's, the border war became violent, as abolitionists from Kansas and pro-slavery guerrillas from Missouri terrorized eastern Kansas and western Missouri. Most Missourians wanted to remain neutral, but it became hard to stay that way. As the years passed, the border was no longer a dividing line in this struggle. Men from both sides in both states committed murder and burned down houses and fields, usually sparing the women and children, but killing the men. Terrorists called "bushwhackers" (who supported the south) and "Jayhawkers" (who supported the north) were relentless in their attacks against each other, and anyone they thought sympathetic to the other side.

On top of that Claiborne Fox Jackson was elected governor of Missouri in 1860, and took office on January 3, 1861. Governor Jackson was closely allied to the secessionist movement. Shortly after his election, he called for a state convention to decide Missouri's future. On March 21, 1861, the convention voted 98 to 1 against secession.

But that didn't stop Governor Jackson's efforts to aid the confederacy. On May 10<sup>th</sup> 1861, he raised up an army called the Missouri State Guard, with the intent to seize the U.S. Arsenal in St. Louis. His plan failed as his forces were attacked and scattered by Captain Nathaniel Lyon. He and his forces fled to Neosho in the far west of Missouri, where he attempted to set up a government in exile. Later victories by Union forces sent Governor Jackson and his forces south into Arkansas, a state which had joined the confederacy. War between the Missouri State Guard, embellished by confederate forces, and Union troops continued in southwest Missouri and northwest Arkansas throughout most of the war.

Captain Lyon was promoted to general and given command of all the Union forces in Missouri. He instituted the Missouri Home Guard, which was a volunteer part time militia formed to protect local communities. They were armed by the union, but they received no pay. Whenever there was a threat, the members of the Missouri Home Guard could be called upon. Statewide, there were 241 companies and 15,000 men. They were often called upon to fight against Bushwhackers. And some of them were present in the Wilson Creek Battle mentioned below. They were disbanded by the end of 1861.

The state was racked with conflict.

On August 10, 1861, a large Union force commanded by General Nathaniel Lyon and an even larger confederate force commanded by General Benjamin McCulloch along with Missouri State Guard forces command by Major General Sterling Price met at Wilson Creek, about 10 miles southwest of Springfield. In the end, the south won a bloody battle, as General Lyon was killed and the Union forces fled the battlefield. But the confederate army could not take advantage of their victory, as they depleted their supplies and their ammunition. More on that battle later.

When the Missouri Home Guard was disbanded, there was still a need for protection, especially from Bushwhackers. On July 22, 1862, the Enrolled Missouri Militia was instituted. This is described by Wikipedia as follows:

As [pro-slavery] guerrilla warfare and [confederate] recruiting increased, and as the state had been stripped of nearly all but the volunteer Missouri State Militia Cavalry regiments, General Schofield took a more drastic measure. With the aid of Missouri's provisional Governor Hamilton Rowan Gamble, a compulsory militia enrollment was declared on July 22, 1862, the Enrolled Missouri Militia. Schofield issued General Orders No. 19 requiring loyal men to enroll in the militia, required registration of all who had previously taken up arms against the United States, and for them to surrender their weapons. The disloyal and Confederate sympathizers would not be required to enroll in the militia, but would have to declare their sympathies, which many were unwilling to do and instead enrolled.

The Enrolled Missouri Militia could be called up in time of emergency to garrison key points in their locale or even to disrupt guerrilla encampments nearby. Many were not provided with uniforms and soon after their formation would wear white hatbands as a form of identification.

It is in this atmosphere of war that the children of William Dennis raised their families. Many of the Dennis family who were of age, signed up for the Missouri Home Guard. All were required by law to sign up the the Enrolled Missouri Militia. (I know of no one associated with William Sr's direct family who supported the south.

### **Sarah Dennis Barker**

In 1863 Sarah E Dennis Barker (the wife of Elias Barker) died in Phillipsburg Township, Laclede Co, Missouri.

It is well documented that John Dennis founded a cemetery (now known as Old Pisgah Cemetery) as a family burial ground on his own land in Laclede County. He first purchased land in Laclede County in 1858. Just exactly when he started the burial ground is unknown. I believe it was in 1863, at the death of his sister Sarah. There are many unmarked graves in this cemetery. The oldest clearly marked grave is that of Sarah's husband Elias, who died in 1874. It makes sense that John would choose to have Sarah buried on his property, and then later to have her husband buried by her side. Many Dennis's and relations to Dennis's will be buried here in the years to come, including John, by his wife's side, in 1907.

In 1868 was the death of James K Barker, son of Elias Barker and Sarah Dennis in Laclede Co, Missouri.

### **The Tragic Life of Axey Dennis Stone Reagan**

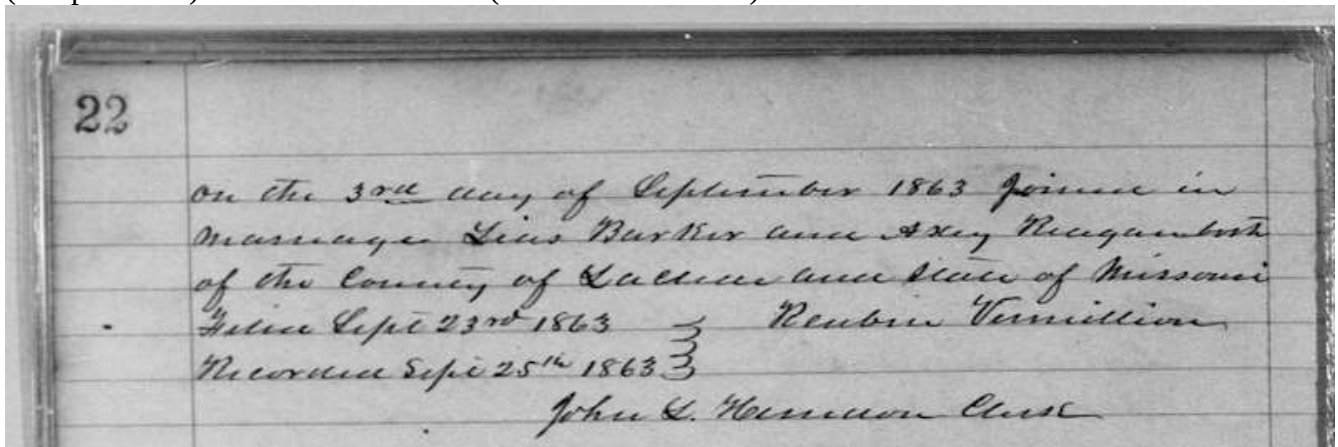
It has already been told that Axey Dennis married Eusibus (or Eusibius) Stone, and how he died in 1852. Axey and Eusibus had four children together: John, Elijah, Sarah and Woodson In 1852, Axey married Joseph Vance Reagan, and they had two children together: Lucinda and Samuel

On Jun 10, 1861, Axey's husband Joseph Reagan enlisted in the Missouri Home Guard. Then in 1862, he was required to join the Enrolled Missouri Militia. Joseph Reagan died on April 10, 1863. I do not

believe that he died in military service, but I think that it is very possible that he died in a bushwhacker attack.

On February 20, 1863, Elijah Stone died in the civil war. He had enlisted in the 14th Regiment of Missouri State Militia Cavalry on April 13, 1862. He died from disease on February 20, 1863 in Rolla, Phelps Co, Missouri. Gemini AI states: "Disease was the primary cause of death for the 14th MSM Cavalry, often outnumbering battle deaths significantly. In early 1862, large concentrations of new recruits in Rolla faced outbreaks of measles, pneumonia, and typhoid, as their immune systems were not yet adapted to crowded camp life."

On September 3, 1863 Axey Dennis Stone Reagan married Elias Barker, Sarah's husband in Laclede Co, Missouri. The wedding was officiated by Reuben Vermillion, the father of Lucinda Dennis (Joseph's wife) and Elizabeth Dennis (Peter's second wife).



This marriage may have been annulled, as Elias married Elizabeth Doty in 1868, and Axey is listed in the 1870 census under the name of Axia Reagan.

On April 10, 1864, John Stone died from wounds suffered in battle in Pleasant Hill, Sabine Parish, Louisiana. He was buried in the Alexandria National Cemetery in Louisiana. He had enlisted in the 24th Regiment Missouri Volunteers, Company I on March 24, 1863 at Rolla, Missouri. He served as a 2nd Lieutenant from March 24, 1863 until his death at Pleasant Hill on April 10, from wounds received there on April 9.

In 1864, Woodson Stone enlisted in the 46th Regiment, Missouri Infantry. He died of disease on January 14, 1865.

On July 10, 1865, Sarah Stone married Joseph Manning. On January 14, 1866, she gave birth to a daughter, Sarah Manning. The mother did not survive the year, possibly dying during childbirth.

After losing her first husband in 1852, Axey lost her second husband, three sons and a daughter between 1863 and 1866. She would go on to lose another daughter, Lucinda Reagan at age 16 in 1870.

How can one even imagine the suffering of this brave woman? But she did carry on to raise her only remaining son, Samuel.

In the 1870 census Union, Laclede Co, Missouri: she is listed as Axia Reagan 45 (from Tennessee), with Samuel W Reagan 11.

Axey's only lasting legacies were through her son Samuel and her granddaughter Sarah Manning.

On April 28, 1906 Axey Dennis Reagan died in Washington Township, Laclede Co, Missouri. Family tree records say she was buried in Pisgah Cemetery, which seems very likely. I could find no census records of her after 1870.

### **Elias Barker**

On January 8, 1874, Elias Barker died. He had been as close as a brother to the Dennis family for years. He lived next to them in Crawford County. In 1839, he married Sarah Dennis in Cooper County. The couple again lived next to them in Flat Creek County. He and Sarah were first to make the move to Union Township, Laclede County, paving the way for the rest of the family to follow. According to Findagrave, he died when he fell from a horse. He was buried in Pisgah cemetery (where we speculate that his first wife Sarah had been buried). John Dennis was appointed the administrator of his estate.

### **Cary Dennis**

In about 1863 Cary and Mary Dennis and their children moved to Grant Co, Wisconsin. It seems likely that they were fleeing the violence of the area, and maybe also the mandatory induction into the Enrolled Missouri Militia. No civil war battles were fought in Wisconsin, and land was cheaper there, so it seems like it might have been an ideal sanctuary from the blood and death in Missouri. There can be no doubt of the move. The names and ages in the 1870 census match up exactly. An obituary that is included on his Findagrave site lists 1863 as the date of their move.

The 1870 census in Clifton, Grant Co, Wisconsin shows: Cary Dennis 43 (from Tennessee), Mary [Watson] 46 (from Indiana) Riley, 20, William 15, Joseph 18, Jesse 2mos (from Wisconsin), Addie 14 (someone's servant from Wisconsin). I could find no other reference to Jesse anywhere. It had been 15 years since Mary Watson gave birth to William, so it is unlikely that Jesse was her son He was not included on the 1880 census.

On July 16, 1875, Cary's wife Mary Watson died in Grant Co, Wisconsin.

In 1876 was the birth of Ellis, who is often identified as Cary's son. I believe he is the son of Mary Elizabeth Tracy, Cary's second wife and her first husband, Eli Nimmo (or Nemo). Ellis appears in the 1880 census in Cary's household, but he was born after Cary's first wife died and before he married his second wife.

1879 Cary married Mary Elizabeth Tracy in Wisconsin. Cary and Peter both married women named Mary Tracy, but they were not the same woman and they were not likely related.

In 1880, Cary Dennis and Mary Elizabeth Tracy's twin daughters are born with the adorable names of Cora Belle and Dora Dell in Grant Co, Wisconsin. Unfortunately, Cora Belle died only a few years later in 1884.



In the 1880 census from Ellenborough, Grant Co, Wisconsin we find: Cary Dennis 52 from Tennessee, Mary Dennis 38, William Dennis 25, Cora and Dora Dennis 2 months

In 1883, Cary Dennis and Mary Elizabeth Tracy's daughter Rhoda May Dennis is born in Grant Co, Wisconsin.

In the 1900 census from Clifton, Grant Co, Wisconsin we find: Cary Dennis 72 (from Overton Co, Tennessee), Mary E Dennis 59, Rhoda M Dennis 15, James E Nemoor 24 [James is the son of Mary and her previous husband Eli.]

On October 3, 1905, Cary Dennis died and was buried in Clifton Township, Grant Co, Wisconsin.

On August 31, 1921, Mary Elizabeth Tracy Dennis, Cary's 2<sup>nd</sup> wife, died in Grant County Wisconsin. She was buried beside her husband Cary.

### **Joseph Dennis**

On September 1, 1861, during the civil war, Joseph enlisted as a private in the Phelps Missouri Infantry. He was discharged on April 9, 1862, but still required to sign up for the Enrolled Missouri Militia.

In 1868 Joseph died in Phillipsburg Township, Laclede Co, Missouri. Joseph had fought in the civil war, but we have no way of knowing if his death was war related. I have found no record of his burial, but it is logical to assume that he was buried in Pisgah Cemetery on John's land.

On February 15, 1908, Lucinda Vermillion Dennis died. She was the wife of Joseph Dennis, and had never remarried after his death in 1868. Joseph had probably been buried in Pisgah Cemetery on John Dennis's property, but after the death of John in 1907, the family probably no longer had access to Pisgah. Lucinda was buried in Lebanon Cemetery in Laclede County, but not by her husband's side.

### **Peter Dennis**

On June 11, 1861, Peter is mustered in as a private in the 1st Regiment of the Missouri State Militia Infantry. This was a six month commitment. It is my opinion that Peter must have fled the violence at his home in Stone County, and sent his family to live with relatives in Laclede County. Bushwhackers were attacking union sympathizers in Stone County, and armies foraging for food often took whatever they could find from local farms. It is unlikely that Peter would have left his family in that environment when he enlisted. Laclede County had a much stronger union presence, and Peter had family there.

On August 10 the famous Wilson Creek Battle took place southwest of Springfield, Missouri. Peter's regiment was deployed on a ridge that was later called "Bloody Hill," very near to the place where General Lyon was killed. Peter may have seen it happen. More than 500 men were killed on Bloody Hill that day. The union army retreated to Springfield after the death of the general. Peter had fought in the bloodiest part of the battle, but he survived.



Bloody Hill at Wilson Creek National Battlefield.

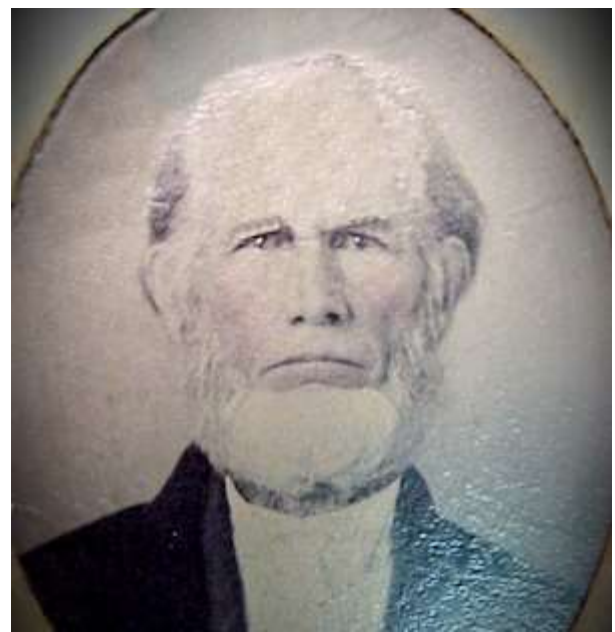
While Cary seems to have fled the violence in Missouri, Peter embraced it. On July 23, 1862, Peter was mustered in a second time, this time in the Arkansas 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry. Arkansas was a Confederate state. Thousands of union sympathizers in Arkansas fled the state to Missouri. It was mostly from these refugees that the Arkansas 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry was formed, near Springfield, Missouri. On his enlistment, Peter's rank is listed as "Wagoner." For most of his service, he drove an ambulance to rescue wounded soldiers.

Peter was mustered out on 20 Aug 1865.

In 1867, in Laclede Co, Peter Dennis is named as executor and assign of the will of Charles Dennis (son of Isham and Rebecca Dennis from McMinn, Tennessee). This proves that Peter was living in Laclede by 1867. It is very likely, though, that Peter moved his family up here earlier to be safe with relatives while he fought in the civil war.

The 1870 census for Lebanon Township, Laclede Co, Missouri shows: Peter 39 farmer from Missouri, Clarinda 39 from Indiana, Amanda J 18 from Missouri, Gilla A 15 from Missouri, Abner 13 from Missouri

On June 10, 1871, James W Dennis the son of Peter and Clarinda Dennis was born. His gravestone says he was born in 1874, but all the census records and the Veterans Administration Master index all say he was born in 1871. (Also, his mother died before 1874.)



About 1872, Peter's wife Clarinda died. I have found no record of the death or of her burial. My family's oral tradition says that she died in a tornado. It's possible she died in the tornado that hit Union Township in Laclede County around 1871. Maybe there was confusion in the oral tradition with other members of the family involved in the tornado.

On September 26, 1873, Peter married Elizabeth Vermillion in Laclede County. Elizabeth is the daughter of Reuben Vermillion, and the sister of Joseph's wife Lucinda. (Reuben had been killed in the Union Township tornado. Elizabeth had been injured. For more information about the tornado, see <http://www.latterdaytruth.org/pdf/100185.pdf> and look for volume 8, pp. 252-254.)

On January 6, 1875 Peter's son Carey Lafayette Dennis is born by Elizabeth Vermillion in Laclede County. Elizabeth died the same year. I have not discovered when or why, though she may have died in childbirth. I have written a very short biography on Elizabeth entitled *The Tragic and Beautiful Life of Elizabeth Vermillion Watson Dennis*. It can be found on my ancestry page (user name DGDennis) under Elizabeth's profile, and on my website at <https://genealogy.saltandlight.site> (And just a note from the author of this biography, Peter and Elizabeth's son Carey is my great grandfather.)

On February 3, 1878 Peter married Mary Tracy Wommack, in Greene Co, Missouri. I believe that Mary's previous husband had left farmland to her. Peter and his sons moved to Jackson, Greene Co, Missouri to Mary's residence.

In 1879 is recorded the birth of Peter's son Harvey Tinsley Dennis by Mary Tracy.

The 1880 census in Jackson, Greene Co, Missouri states follows: Peter 47 farmer from Missouri, Mary [Tracy Wommack] Dennis 30, John W [Wommack] 12, William J [Wommack] 10, Allen H [Wommack] 8, Lillie Lee [Wommack] 6, [Harvey] Tinsley Dennis 9 months, James Dennis 9, [Carey] Lafaett Dennis 6 [All children in this census are listed with last name Dennis.]

1881 Birth of Peter and Mary's son Vace Edward Dennis

1883 Birth of Peter and Mary's son Charles E "Mack" Dennis

The 1900 Census for Jackson, Greene Co, Missouri lists: Peter Dennis 68 farmer from Missouri, Mary L Dennis 50, Vacy E Dennis 19, Charley E Dennis 17, John W Wommack 32 teacher from Missouri



On Aug 19, 1906, Peter died in Jackson Township, Greene Co, Missouri.

Some time before the 1910 census, records show that Mary Tracy Dennis and some of her adult children (including her stepson Carey) had moved to Madison County, Montana.

The 1910 census for Pony, Madison Co, Montana lists Mary Dennis 59 with son Alvin Wommack 38.

On November 12, 1919, Mary Tracy Dennis, the wife of Peter, died in Cliff Lake, Madison Co, Montana. Though she died in Montana, the gravestone at Peter's grave says that she died in 1919 and was buried beside him in Fair Grove, Greene County, Missouri.

### **John Dennis**

John had been the one to look after the family's interests ever since Jacob died. He was the administrator of the estates of Hugh, Jacob and Elias Barker. He is the one who set up the family burial place, and continued to look after his siblings long after his father was gone.

In 1864, John and Mary Dennis's son James E Dennis is born.

The 1870 census from Union, Laclede Co, Missouri lists: John 50 (from Tennessee), Mary C 43 (from Tennessee) Emaline 23, Sarah J 17, Adaline 14, Martha A 12, Mary A 9, James E 6

Earlier I mention a tornado in about 1871, that hit Union Township in Laclede County. A Mr. Dennis (probably John) had his house totally demolished. For more information about the tornado, see

<http://www.latterdaytruth.org/pdf/100185.pdf> and look for volume 8, pp. 252-254.

In April 15, 1871, John purchased a land patent for 40 more acres of land in Laclede County. (He previously had 40 acres that he had purchased from his wife's father in 1858 and a 40 acre land patent that he had purchased in 1860.)

On October 30, 1873, John and Mary Dennis's daughter Martha married John Benton Vermillion. (He is the nephew of Joseph Dennis's wife Lucinda.)

The 1880 census shows them living in Washington Township, Laclede County. Listed are: John Dennis 60, Mary C Dennis 54, Sarah J Dennis 25, Mary A Dennis 19, and James E Dennis 16

On September 13, 1887, John and Mary Dennis's daughter Martha Vermillion died and was buried in Pisgah Cemetery.

On July 30, 1895, Mary Catherine Melton Dennis died. She was John's wife. She was buried in Pisgah Cemetery.

The 1990 census is again from Washington Township, Laclede County. John Dennis 80 is still listed as a farmer. His daughter Sarah Dennis 46 is listed as a house keeper.





On February 27, 2907 John died in Laclede County, Missouri. He was the last surviving child of William Dennis Sr. He was buried in Pisgah Cemetery, next to his wife, her parents, and many other members of the Dennis family. There are a large number of unmarked graves in Pisgah, so it is impossible to know who all is buried there.

# Conclusions I Have Reached, and Why

## The Age of William Dennis

The only records we have concerning the age of William Dennis are early census records. The early records did not list the age of the head of the household, rather it put each member of the household in broad categories like “ages 26-44.”

In the 1810 census he was listed at age 26-44. This means he was born between 1766 and 1784

In the 1820 census he was again listed as 26-44. This means he was born between 1776 and 1794.

In the 1830 census, he was listed at age 50-60, which means he was born between 1770 and 1780

In the 1840 census, he was listed at age 60-70, which again means he was born between 1770 and 1780

By 1850 he had passed away.

Conclusion: He had to be born after 1776 according to the 1820 census, but before 1780 according to the 1830 and 1840 census.

## What We Know about William’s Wife

By 1850, William Sr. had passed away. His wife had gone to live with her son Jacob. She is listed on his census record as being 64 years old, and being from Georgia. This means that she was born about 1786, six to ten years younger than her husband. Being the retired mother she was, she was likely to have been there while the census taker asked questions. Even if she was not, the family had first hand knowledge of where she was from.

1850 United States Federal Census for J Dennis

← Missouri > Taney > Flat

	Dwelling No.	Family No.	Name	enumerated by me, on the	Age	Sex	Race	Year of age	day of	Real Estate in the Cour of 1850.	County Birthplace	
	1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10
1	275	275	J Dennis		37	Mo					Kentucky	
2			J Dennis		24	B					Missouri	
3			J Dennis		11	Mo					Missouri	
4			J Dennis		18	Mo					Missouri	
5			M Dennis		8	Mo					Missouri	
6			M Dennis		6	B					Missouri	
7			J Dennis		3	B					Missouri	
8			E Dennis		1/2	Mo					Missouri	
9			J Dennis		18	Mo					Missouri	
10			M Dennis		64	B					Georgia	
11	276	276	J Dennis		20	B					Missouri	

In later census records, her children were asked to state the birthplace of their mother. The answer vary greatly:

John's 1880 census says she is from Georgia  
John's 1900 census says she is from Tennessee  
Cary's 1890 census says she is from South Carolina  
Cary's 1900 census says she is from South Carolina  
Peter's 1880 census says she is from Tennessee  
Peter's 1890 census says she is from Virginia

The inconsistency in the later records, and that fact that she was living in the home of Jacob when the 1850 record was made, I think it is most likely that she was born in Georgia.

### What was William's Wife's First Name?

Her name, as we have shown, started with an "M." She was almost certainly from Georgia. There is a fragmented marriage record from Lincoln County, Georgia that might or might not refer to our couple. It states that "...liam Dennis and Milley Agoo... ..ried the 25<sup>th</sup> of March, 1809." It is signed by William Harper. Surnames starting with "Agoo" are extremely rare, so it is impossible to know the meaning of the words. Why William would be in Georgia at that time is a mystery.



I am not convinced that the Milley Aggoo marriage record refers to our William and his wife. However, as I have already stated, I believe that William was married to someone from Georgia with a first initial of "M."

There was a couple in Lincoln County, Georgia (William Hollenshead (1766-1806) and (Martha Edgar) (1775-1805) who had a daughter named Milley Edgar Hollenshead. In genealogies, she is quite often identified as William's wife and the woman mentioned in the Lincoln County marriage record. I have found none of the other Hollenshead children have descendants who are DNA matches to me, so I have serious doubts that William's wife was Milley Edgar Hollenshead.

Some have suggested that her last name was Barker, but I have no idea where that name came from.

But here is a little speculation of mine built on traditional customs at the time: In those days, in large families like William's, many people named daughters after their mothers and grandmothers. Jacob Dennis, Sarah Dennis Barker, and John Dennis all had large families, and all had daughters named after their mothers. (Axey had a daughter named after Joseph's wife, Lucinda.)

Among William's family, the only name starting with "M" that is used among his granddaughters is "Malinda" or "Melinda." Both Jacob and Joseph used that name. I would conjecture that William's wife's name was "Malinda/Melinda" (The two spellings are both used for both granddaughters.) "Milley" might have been a nickname for Melinda.

And so, based on this and because so many of the genealogies that mention William's wife refer to her as Milley, I am willing to do so here also, although the name is uncertain.

### **Where did William Dennis and family live?**

Census records tell us that Samuel Dennis was born in 1809, William Jr in 1810, Jacob Elias in 1813 and Sarah in 1815. All four were born in Kentucky. Using that as a guide we searched the 1810 Kentucky census records and found one William Dennis and family in Granger County, Kentucky.

In 1817, Joseph Dennis was born, John in 1819, Aschah (Axey) in 1823, Hugh in 1824, and Carey in 1828. According to census records, all were born in Tennessee.

A search of William Dennis in 1820 Tennessee census records brings up two possibilities: one in Jackson County, and one in Overton County. This is how William Dennis's family would fit into each:

William Jr. was born in 1810, so he could fit into "under 10" or "10-15" depending on when the census was taken compared to his birthday.

1820 Jackson, Tennessee

3 white males under 10 Jacob, Joseph, John

2 white males 10-15 William Jr, Samuel

1 white male 26-44 William

0 white females under 10 (but Sarah is this age and should be found here)

1 white female 10-15 – Unknown

1 white female 26-44 William's wife

1820 Overton County.

4 white males under 10 William Jr, Jacob, Joseph, John

1 white male 10-15 Samuel

1 white male 16-25 unknown

1 white male 26-44 William

1 white female under 10 Sarah

1 white female 26-44 William's wife

So both census records are close. Both have 1 unknown person, which does not bother me much, because there might be children that we don't know about that died or moved on.

The Jackson census leaves out Sarah, which is a bigger problem for me.

One other consideration: Joseph, John, Axey, Hugh and Carey were all born in Tennessee. A majority of family tree records for them say that they were from Overton Co, Tennessee, even the trees that do not have a parent listed for them. While this is not definitive, I think it is solid evidence.

So for that reason I tend to believe William lived in Overton County, Tennessee. It is not definitive, but it is my best guess.

There were several other Dennis households in Overton County in 1820: John Dennis 26-44, Ezineah 16-25, James 26-44, Levi Dennis 26-44, Andrew 26-44, and Scham 16-25 (with female 26-44) Rebecca. Most of these names appear on 1840 census as well. At this time, I have no way of knowing if these families are related.

One last small record we have that may be in error concerns Cary's birthplace. Cary moved to Wisconsin. On his Findagrave page, an obituary is posted which says "Cary Dennis, who died at his home near Livingston Oct. 3 was born in Mac Main Co., Tennessee, Nov. 16<sup>th</sup>, 1829." We know this is not completely accurate, because all records (and his gravestone) say he was born in 1828. But is Mac Main Tennessee (there is no such place) a misspelling of McMinn, Tennessee? Is it possible Cary was born there, and not Overton County as we have supposed? More on that in a minute.

Peter Dennis was born in Missouri according to all his census records (except 1) and according to his military records. So we follow William and the Dennis family all the way to Missouri.

But now let's talk a little bit about McMinn, Tennessee.

### **The McMinn, Tennessee Dennis Clan**

A man named John Dennis (not William's son) lived in Newberry County, South Carolina. He was a private in the revolutionary war. He married Anne Creighton, the daughter of Hugh Creighton. They had several children, maybe as many as 12, all born in South Carolina. Some time between 1800 and 1820, he moved along with most of his children to McMinn, Tennessee and settle there. This is the group of people that I am calling the McMinn Dennis clan. They come into this dialogue in a couple of ways.

Some family trees show William Dennis Sr as having been a son of this John Dennis. But I have found no evidence that John Dennis had a son named William. William never appears on any census in Newberry County, South Carolina, or in McMinn County, Tennessee. (There is also this: John Dennis and his family took a strong stand for the confederacy in the civil war. William's family wholeheartedly supported the union.)

There are also some family trees which indicate that John Dennis (1819-1907), the husband of Mary Catherine Melton) was the son of John Dennis from McMinn, rather than William. But we have already demonstrated how John was born in Overton County, Tennessee, where William was living, and how he followed William and his children on their ventures through Missouri. He was the administrator of the estates of William's sons, Hugh and Jacob, as well William's daughter Sarah's husband, Elias. All of that is solid evidence the John is the son of William Dennis, and not the son of John from McMinn.

Familysearch.org's family tree shows Peter Dennis as the son of John Dennis's son Allen. After moving from South Carolina, Allen spent the rest of his life living in McMinn Tennessee. His Findagrave page shows that he is buried there. Peter, according to his civil war records and all of his census records

(except 1) was born in Missouri (where William Dennis lived at the same time. Also, Allen and all his sons fought for the confederacy during the civil war. Peter spent almost the entire war as a volunteer union soldier.

So there does not seem to be a direct relationship between William's family and the McMinn Dennis clan. But:

After 1850 and before 1860, Isam Dennis, one of John (from McMinn)'s sons, moved to Laclede County, Missouri along with some of his sons. Whether by chance or design, they settled in Union Township, the same place where William's sons settled. The two groups bonded at once. Peter was appointed as administrator of the estate of Charles Dennis, one of Isam's sons. Isam, his wife Rebecca, and several of their sons were buried in Pisgah Cemetery, the family burying plot that William's son, John had set up on his land.

And here is one other astonishing piece of evidence. I have a DNA match to nearly all of William's children's descendants, but I also have DNA matches to the descendants of seven of John Dennis's children.

So my conclusion is that William and his offspring were not direct descendants of John Dennis, but William and John did have a common ancestor. And I suspect that the two Dennis clans in Laclede County knew what that connection was, and so they moved into the same area, interacted together, and buried their dead together.

And all that makes me wonder if William moved to McMinn briefly, and that Cary might actually have been born there in 1828, instead of in Overton. My best guess is that the obituary is in error, but I have no way of knowing.

## An Account of John Dennis's Life, but not Necessarily Accurate

### The John Dennis Family

Because I did not have the privilege of knowing my great-grandfather, John Dennis, and his wife, Mary Catherine Melton Dennis, my great-grandmother, I write this Dennis history with loving thoughts of them and their family.

I have learned a few things about my great-grandparents from Frank Hill, grandson of John Dennis. I quote from his letters:

"John Dennis and his wife, Mary Catherine (Melton) Dennis, came to Stone County from Bedford

County, Tennessee. They lived in Camden County, Missouri, near old Linn Creek when they first moved to Missouri. They lived in a lean-to shed building and the children went barefoot all winter. In the spring they went to Stone County, Missouri.

"It is said that grandfather always ate with his hat on as was sometimes the custom in those days. It was thought to show authority. Grandmother, Mary Catherine, usually wore black clothing. She smoked a clay pipe. I can remember lighting her pipe for her. I probably took a puff from the pipe myself.

"The farm John Dennis owned before the Civil War was west of Galena, across a river. Louisa Dennis, first born of the John Dennis family, went to school five days a week. From Monday morning until Friday evening she stayed at Grandpa Melton's house. The Austin Melton family lived across the river from the Dennis farm. Friday afternoon found Grandpa Dennis by the river with his skiff ready to bring Louisa across the river to her home."

On July 1, 1885, John Dennis bought land in Laclede County, Missouri; he wanted his family to live with him in this county. He wanted to be near his other brothers who now lived in Laclede County, Missouri. Eight children had been born to John and Mary Catherine in Stone County, Missouri. Two other children were born in Laclede County, Missouri.

John and Mary Catherine, when it became necessary, started a family cemetery on their new farm in Missouri; it is called "Pisgah Cemetery." I visited this cemetery in May, 1986, and saw the gravestone of John and Mary Catherine Dennis. Austin Melton, my great-grandfather, even though his grave is not marked, is buried there, too. It is a quaint little cemetery surrounded by chain link fence. A tall tree in the middle provides a nice shade. It is located in a small wooded area away from the farm home where there are lots of memories. Several of John's brothers are buried there with their families, also a sister, Axey Dennis, Stone, Reagan.

My husband and I had never been in Galena, Missouri, until May 20, 1986. I had been in correspondence with Ruth Asher for some time regarding the Dennis family. We were to meet Ruth, a Galena, Missouri, resident, at her home and then continue on to the Dennis farm.

The trip down the winding road to the Dennis farm was so exciting! Ruth would point out places of interest to us, and once she leaned over and said, "Sometimes you can see a wild turkey fly across the road in the turn ahead." Sure enough, it was as if she had it all arranged, for suddenly a wild turkey spread its wings in wild flight across the road. Just as quickly it was lost in the thicket of trees.

I am sure my great-grandfather had seen this hap-

pen many times, maybe as he and his family came home from church, or maybe they would be coming home from the country store with the wagon piled high with staples and feed for the stock.

We soon came to a bend in the road where the Dennis farm was located. The gate to the lane leading down to the house was locked so we sneaked through the barb wire fence.

Walking slowly down the lane to the farm, I soon saw the beautiful old farm land stretched out ahead. The green pasture went all the way to the famous James River which flowed in and around the farm. The bluffs along the river were heavy with fern and green brush. I also thought of this lane as being traveled often by the many friends and relatives of the Dennis family, and, of course, the faithful old family doctor.

So it was to this farm that John Dennis brought his bride, Mary Catherine Melton Dennis, in 1843.

I just wanted to touch something my grandmother had touched, so I touched the old root cellar door handle, thinking that Mary Catherine had opened this door so many, many times to store her fruit and vegetables in this safe place.

Walking back up the lane to the car, I left with the memory that John and Mary Catherine had been blessed with happiness and good fortune, so I leave these thoughts with you who read this family history of John and Mary Catherine Dennis.

by Kathleen Manning Calton

This article is taken from the  
History of Stone County Missouri,  
Stone County Missouri  
Historical Society

This concerns William's son, John Dennis and his wife Mary Catherine. I am not one to ignore evidence just because it contradicts what I believe. And I find this account fascinating, and very believable in the pictures that it paints. I am certain, though, that not all the facts are accurate. I scanned this article with a hand scanner from a book called "The History of Stone County Missouri" that I found at the Stone county Missouri Historical Society. There is also a copy at the public library in Springfield, Missouri.

It starts by saying that John moved to Missouri from Bedford County, Missouri. I found no evidence of any Dennis families living in Bedford at that time (though there are quite a few now). It says they moved to Camden County, and lived there in poverty. I believe that to be true. When the Dennis's first came to Missouri, they lived in Crawford County. They might not have stayed there long. Most of the events of their lives in Missouri (before they moved to Taney County) took place in a part of Crawford County that would later become Morgan County.

It says the lived near old Linn Creek, which was a town in those days, but has been completely submerged when the Bagnell Dam was completed in 1931, and the Lake of the Ozarks was created.

There was a William Dennis who purchased a land patent from the government in that area in 1841. But our William Dennis is clearly found in Taney County in the 1840 census. Listed in order on that census are William Jr, Jacob, Elias Barker (Sarah's husband), William Sr, and few names later Usibius Stone (Eusibius Stone, Axey's husband), Samuel Dennis and Joseph Dennis. The same families (with a few changes) are found in the same place in 1850.

This article says they lived there briefly but moved in the Spring. We know from the weddings and births that took place that the Dennis's were there for quite a few years.

This article says the John moved to be with his other brothers and sisters in 1881. It is true that John bought a land patent from the government in 1881, but he had purchased land there as early as 1858 as can be seen in this land purchase agreement:

This 25<sup>th</sup> day of September 1858.  
Stephen M. Wood, Attorney Public

Filed November 30<sup>th</sup> 1858  
Recorded December 30<sup>th</sup> 1858

John L. Herndon Buyer  
By Joseph M. Herndon S.C.

Know all men by these presents that I Austin Melton of the County of Laclede in the State of Missouri have this day for and in consideration of the sum of one hundred dollars to the said Austin Melton in hand paid by John Dennis of the County of Laclede in the State of Missouri granted bargained and sold and by these presents do grant bargain and sell unto the said John Dennis the following described tract or parcels of land situated in the County of Laclede in the State of Missouri that is to say the South West of the North West quarter of Section No. 27, Town 26 N. Range 16 W. containing forty acres to have and to hold the premises here by conveyed with all the rights and privileges and appurtenances thereto belonging or in any wise appertaining unto the said John Dennis his heirs and assigns forever I the said Austin Melton covenanting to and with the said John Dennis his heirs and assigns for himself his heirs Executors and Administrators to warrant and defend the title to the premises hereby conveyed against the claim of every person whatever. In witness whereof I have hereunto subscribed my name and affixed my seal this the first day of July A.D. 1858.

Austin Melton [Seal]

The 1860 census proves that he lived in Laclede County that year.

1860 Union, LaClede, Missouri: Joseph Dennes 39 (from Tennessee), Catharine 33 (from Tennessee) Eliza 17 [Louisa?], Emeline 13, Henry 14, Carey 12, Sarah 7, Adaline 5, Martha 2

And he did start Pisgah Cemetery on his land, as has already been mentioned, but it was an active cemetery all through the 1870's and maybe longer.

I believe that when this was written, the authors looked up land patent requests and when they found some with the correct names on them, they wrote their story, filling in with the information they had with them at the time. (I suppose I am doing that as well, and maybe some day new facts will come to light which will shine light on my errors.)

In any case, I believe most of the personal things included in the story: The picture of kids going barefoot, of John with his pipe, of taking his daughter to school in a skiff, and of the old farm that Kathleen Manning Calton got to see, but I did not. (I did take a drive down that road to see what I could see, but most of the area is fenced in with large modern estates now.) I treasure this record, even though I know some of the facts are incorrect.

### The Appointments of Jacob and Hugh

This is another article I scanned from "The History of Stone County Missouri" regarding the appointment of Jacob Dennis as a Stone County judge and Hugh Dennis as sheriff in 1851.

time when the first term of the county court was held and the regular terms thereafter.

Evidently the Legislature discovered that this Act of creating Stone County was insufficient, for sixteen days later on February 26, 1851,<sup>12</sup> a supplementary Act was passed which fixed the times for circuit courts to meet; designated that the county should be in the 13th Judicial Circuit; and provided that the County Court fill vacancies, if any, in the Commission to select the permanent seat of justice but appointees to be from other counties. The record of the first meeting (April 7, 1851) of the County Court recites that the "legislature" appointed William Goff, Jacob Dennis, and Joseph Philibert as such judges, although the Act provided that the Governor should so appoint. A commission signed by Governor Austin A. King on February 10, 1851, appointing Hugh Dennis to be Sheriff is recorded in a day book in the Clerk's office. The County Court appointed John B. Williams as Clerk of the County Court and Andre Railey to be Assessor. At this first meeting of a County Court, John L. C. Huddleston was appointed a Commissioner for the permanent seat of justice "with Anderson H. Payne and John B. Williams to assist in locating the permanent seat of justice." The report of this Commission reelected Jamestown as the permanent seat, and it was signed by Anderson H. Payne and John L. C. Huddleston only. John B. Williams did not sign the report, and since he lived in the new county of Stone it may well be doubted if he was lawfully justified and qualified to serve on this Commission.

At the second terms of the County Court, John H. Stone (son of William Stone) was appointed Treasurer. All sessions of the County Court in 1851 were held at the house of John B. Williams, but at the September term, 1851, the Court ordered that the site of Jamestown be laid off in lots with a public square of one acre, and that Commissioner Samuel D. Nelson sell lots, front lots at no less than \$10.00 and back lots at no less

