

Who Was John Andrew Rudick?

Late in 2009, I received a message from John Dunkin, out of the blue, telling me "John Rudick left his wife and eight kids in Big Flatt AR about 1897 and never came back." John Dunkin turned out to be my second cousin, once removed. I'll try to call him "cousin" from here on in an effort to simplify this account a bit: at least this way there will be one fewer guy named John in this story, and believe me, there are more than a few of them. My cousin's grandfather was Floyd Erasmus Rudick, a brother of my own great-grandfather, Cecil Edward Rudick. Floyd and Cecil were two of those eight abandoned children.

Here's all I had known about John A. Rudick before that message: He was born about 1855. He married Catherine Crews in 1878, in Mountain View, Stone County, Arkansas. The 1880 U. S. census listed John, Catherine, and their young daughter Ollie M. Rudick, along with Catherine's parents and siblings, all living in Locust Grove, Stone County, Arkansas. Twenty years later, in the 1900 census, Catherine was listed as widowed, living with six children and her mother Sarah, in Big Flat, Baxter County, Arkansas. That was all. I had listed John Rudick on my website as "died before 1900," but my cousin set me straight: At the turn of the century John Rudick was not dead and gone, he was just gone.

Who was this man, where did he come from and where did he run off to? My cousin remembered conversations with his grandfather Floyd which gave us hints to follow. For instance, Floyd had named one of his sons after John, and for years that was our only solid evidence of the middle name Andrew, other than a lot of letter "A"s.

Floyd also said that his grandfather was named Benjamin, and thus John Rudick would probably have been a grandson of the locally well-known Captain William Ruddick of Sugar Creek, Arkansas. My cousin believed John was born there, in Benton County. The birthplace turned out to be correct, but the idea of John Rudick as a son of Benjamin Ruddick, and thus a grandson of Captain William Ruddick, turned out to have no facts to support it. I had thought it would be a piece of cake, and that connecting John Rudick to the known family of Captain William Ruddick would add a few generations to my lineage. I set out to show that relationship but ended up disproving it. And that was only the beginning.

Ruddicks, Reddicks, and More...

To simplify things a bit, I've had to adopt a few naming conventions. Sorting out the Ruddocks, Ruddicks, Reddicks, Riddicks, Rudicks and other variants of the name is daunting, but I will mostly use the name "Ruddick" in association with Captain William Ruddick and the Sugar Creek/Elkhorn Tavern line, "Reddick" in association with Ebenezer, Stephen and the North Carolina or Tennessee contingent, and "Rudick" (one D) in association with my own family connection: John Andrew and his descendants.

People in these families might have had their surname spelled several ways during their lifetimes, by their own telling or that of others. The names Riddick and Reddick were sometimes mistakenly interchanged in North Carolina, while in Arkansas it was either Reddick or Ruddick. Sometimes the letter "K" at the end was missing. Many of these folks could not read or write, preciseness in spelling was less important than it is now, and further spelling inconsistencies in the U. S. census and army documents complicate these matters. A good example is Stephen, John A. Rudick's actual father, who I have seen called Stephen Riddick, Reddick, and Ruddick, all in print within a short time frame.

Some people were analyzing DNA to sort it all out, and genetic lines were being studied back into Ireland and Scotland. This was fascinating in its own way, but my goal was only to find out who the recent ancestors of John Andrew Rudick were and to learn more about their lives.

The Ruddick Family in America

In 1993, John W. Hanneman published a major source for us, *The Ruddick Family in America*, and if Floyd Rudick's grandfather was actually Benjamin Ruddick of Benton County, Arkansas (and if Mr. Hanneman's research was accurate) then I would be able to easily trace the line back four more generations, possibly across the Atlantic Ocean.

According to the book, it started with a man named William Ruddock (~1689 to ~1752), a citizen of Pennsylvania. Much is uncertain. He was born in Ireland. He married a woman named Alice. There are land and other records for him and his sons, yet he left no estate. His wife and others moved to North Carolina after his death. Hanneman records six children, with the notation "probably others." The two children we are concerned with are Benjamin Rudduck (not Floyd's supposed grandfather, but a different Benjamin) and William E. Rudduck.

William E. Rudduck (~1723 to ~1796) had a son named John H. Ruddick (~1755 to 1829), who had a son named William Ruddick (1785 to 1852). Hanneman lists this William's children and stops there. But no worry, since Captain William Ruddick's descendants can be easily found in U. S. Census documents from then on, and one was named Benjamin.

Captain William Ruddick, Benton County, Arkansas, and the Civil War

In 1826, a treaty was signed with the Indians forcing them westward and opening up vast areas for settlers. The names of the earliest settlers in far northwestern Arkansas included Jacob Roller, Enoch Trott, the Reverend Jasper Reddick, George W. Miser, and Captain William Ruddick. Unlike most of those pioneers who came from North Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee, William Ruddick (1785-1852) brought his family to Benton County, Arkansas, from Vermillion County, Illinois. The family had originally moved from Kentucky and before that from Pennsylvania, while many other relatives had relocated south toward North Carolina.

William was a Captain in the Illinois Militia, and after the death of his father, he sold the farm he had inherited and moved his family southwest. With his son-in-law Samuel Burks, he built the Ruddick Inn, later famous as Elkhorn Tavern. The tavern was situated on the "Trail of Tears," and the Ruddicks must have watched many Indians on their sad march westward, as well as many pioneers passing through on a main route from St. Louis to the Southwest.

Captain Ruddick founded the settlement of Sugar Creek, Arkansas, and became an influential man in the area. He served as postmaster, among other things, and Elkhorn Tavern was also used as a religious meeting house.

William Ruddick never knew of the most notorious role of his tavern, because ten years after his death the building was used as a headquarters for the Union Army during a key battle of the Civil War. The Battle of Pea Ridge (March 6-8, 1862) swarmed all around the building and across the Ruddick farm. Perhaps twenty-five thousand men waged a series of engagements which left thousands dead. Ruddicks fought on both sides of the war, and some, seeing it coming, fled to other states to wait it out. William's son Benjamin, for instance, returned to Illinois where three of his children were born before he returned. Son Samuel got his family down to Texas. A third son, Joseph, stayed in the area and it looks like he wound up fighting for the Confederates, deserting, and then joining the Union army.

In the end, despite their superiority in numbers, the Confederates were routed. The battle sealed Union control of Missouri. Elkhorn Tavern survived the battle only to be burned down years later and then rebuilt. The structure and the surrounding lands now make up the Pea Ridge National Military Park.

Benjamin Ruddick, and Four John Ruddicks

Let's get back to the search for our John Andrew Rudick. Since he was born about 1855, according to the 1880 census, I checked out the families of each of Captain Ruddick's sons, looking for a John of appropriate age.

William's oldest son was named John Ruddick (1812-1853). He had no son named John and died before John A. was born.

William's second son was also named William Ruddick, born in 1814, and died young in 1820.

William Ruddock (b. ~1689 d. ~1752) and **Alice** (b. 1707 d. 1759) are the ancestors. William Ruddock is shaded.

William Ruddock and Alice have two sons: **Benjamin Rudduck** (b. ~1721 d. ~1787) and **William E. Rudduck** (b. ~1723 d. ~1796). Benjamin Rudduck is shaded.

Benjamin Rudduck and an unknown woman (??) have a son: **Joseph Reddick** (d. 1827). Joseph Reddick is shaded.

Joseph Reddick and an unknown woman (?) have a son: **Ebenezer B. Reddick** (b. ~1791 d. ~1866). Ebenezer B. Reddick is shaded.

Ebenezer B. Reddick and an unknown woman have a son: **Stephen Decatur Reddick** (b. 1831). Stephen Decatur Reddick is shaded.

Stephen Decatur Reddick and **Margaret Mizer** (b. ~1834) have a son: **John Andrew Rudick** (b. 1855 d. 1921). John Andrew Rudick is shaded.

William E. Rudduck and **Anna Cox** (b. 1727 d. 1821) have a son: **John H. Ruddick** (b. ~1755 d. 1829). John H. Ruddick is shaded.

John H. Ruddick and **Catherine Cox** have a son: **Captain William Ruddick** (b. 1785 d. 1852). Captain William Ruddick is shaded.

Captain William Ruddick and **Elizabeth Wilson** (b. 1787 d. 1850) have a son: **Benjamin Ruddick** (b. 1827 d. 1904). Benjamin Ruddick is shaded.

Benjamin Ruddick and **Nancy Adeline Pruitt** (b. 1830 d. 1910) have a son: **John Andrew Rudick** (b. 1855 d. 1921). John Andrew Rudick is shaded.

William Ruddick's fifth son, Joseph Ruddick (1829-1915), was married twice, the first time about 1850 to Mary Louisa Reynolds, and then in 1861 to Sarah Clarissa Taylor. Among Joseph's eleven children, there is a John Tilford Ruddick (3-17-1856 to 12-10-1930). This John married a woman named Vina. They had four known children and he is also in all of the census documents through 1910. He is also buried in Benton County, Arkansas.

There were no facts supporting any direct relation of John Andrew Rudick to Captain William Ruddick or to his son Benjamin, except for the statement of John's son, Floyd. John himself never claimed in any census that his father was born in Illinois (four times Tennessee and once North Carolina, for the record) a fact he might have been aware of if he was Benjamin's son. If our John was Benjamin's son, he would have probably lived in Illinois during the war.

I was at a loss and concluded that Floyd, Cecil, and the others were not grandchildren of Benjamin Ruddick, whether they liked it or not. I would have loved to fit our John Rudick neatly into that family, but the mystery deepened.

Ebenezer B. Reddick

In the 1850 U. S. census, in Sugar Creek Township, Benton County, Arkansas, I found an interesting family: Ebenezer Redic (census spelling), his wife Lucy, five children ages eighteen down to four years old, and a Stephen D. Redic at the end of the list, nineteen years old. Ebenezer, Stephen, and Lucy were all listed as born in North Carolina.

Ten years later, in the 1860 U. S. census, in Roller Ridge Township, Benton County, Arkansas, were Stephen Redick (again, census spelling), his wife Margaret, and their two sons John, five years old, and James F., three years old. They lived right next door to Ebenezer, his wife Luvicia, and their five children.

William Ruddock—Captain Ruddick's great-grandfather—had six children, and Ebenezer is *possibly* descended from his son, Benjamin Rudduck (1721 to about 1787—again, not the Captain's son, but a different Benjamin). The information down this line is not substantiated like the other line down to Captain Ruddick. The Captain's line came through Kentucky and Illinois, the other line through North Carolina. Hanneman's book cannot help us here; he looked more at one branch and very little at the other. He names Benjamin Rudduck, but stops there.

Some say that Benjamin Rudduck had a son named Joseph, who had a son named Ebenezer. This would make Ebenezer Reddick a second cousin to Captain William Ruddick. Indeed, some seem content to give it as an established fact: Benjamin, father of Joseph, father of Ebenezer, father of Stephen. It could conceivably be true, but I wish that there was any evidence. It seems to me more likely that Joseph Reddick descends from a line of Riddicks or Reddicks in North Carolina than that he is a son of Benjamin Rudduck and grandson of William Ruddock, or that perhaps Joseph came straight from Ireland. Any connections between the Ruddick, Riddick, and Reddick lines might be many generations back, possibly on the other side of the ocean. Stephen Reddick, questioned while he was a prisoner of war, stated that none of his relatives were involved in the rebellion, showing that he didn't consider the nearby Ruddicks, two of which he had enlisted with, to be related to him.

As for the parents of Joseph Reddick, it has proven to be a complicated puzzle, with dozens of Reddicks and Riddicks known during that period in North Carolina, but a severe lack of corroborating dates and family relationships. There seem to be as many ideas as there are people doing the research, so for now, I end my research with Joseph Reddick.

For quite a while I thought that Ebenezer was not even one of Joseph's sons. In his will Joseph gave his land, slaves, and other possessions to his wife Celia, his daughter Nancy Penny, and to his "four sons," Benjamin Franklin Reddick, John W. Reddick, Joseph L. Reddick, and what looks to be Jno. W. Reddick. Toward the end of the will, Joseph appointed Joseph Reddick and Ebenezer Reddick executors of his estate. It seemed odd that Ebenezer was not called a son, along with getting no part of the estate, while the others did. I now see that Jno. W. and John W. must have been the same man, but I only conceded the fact after another researcher, Pat Richard, found a document in which Joseph Reddick gave 150 acres of his land to Ebenezer, actually calling him "my son."

Here's what we know about Ebenezer B. Reddick: He was born about 1791 in North Carolina, according to census documents. In 1814, while enlisting in the army, he was described as being five foot eight inches tall with black eyes, dark hair, and a fair complexion. Ebenezer's middle initial "B" is found on his son George W. Reddick's 1922 death certificate, and I've not seen it anywhere else.

So in 1821 Ebenezer was given 150 acres of land by his father, which he turned around and sold in 1825. Joseph died in 1827, with Ebenezer and Joseph Jr. as co-executors of the estate. The 1840 census found Ebenezer in Benton County, Tennessee, with his family. There was a woman in the same age bracket as him, probably a wife, and five others between five and thirty years old. Ebenezer was forty-nine at the time, leaving room for this to be a second marriage. The youngest boy was presumably Stephen. The next youngest would be Stephen's brother, William H. J. Reddick.

Ebenezer Reddick married Luvicia Trott in 1841, in Benton County, Tennessee. (Many people record Luvicia's name as Lou Vicie, and indeed a granddaughter or two *are* named Lou Vicie, but in the 1860 census it is clearly written as Luvicia. I find it much prettier, and I will stick with it. Back in the 1850 census, and on her marriage certificate, she was called Lucy.) Luvicia had three young children from a previous marriage to William McNeil, who had died in 1840. This combination of the Reddick and McNeil families relocated to Benton County, Arkansas, probably just before 1850. What became of Ebenezer's earlier children, other than sons Stephen and William? For now, we can only guess.

In 1850, Ebenezer and his family lived in Sugar Creek Township, Arkansas, where Ebenezer was a wagon maker. In 1860, he was a farmer in nearby Roller Ridge Township, where he had purchased 120 acres of land: forty acres in 1854, and forty additional acres on each side in 1860. One Roller Ridge neighbor was named Enoch Trott. Was he Luvicia's brother? After his death, Ebenezer's land stayed in the family, at least for a while, owned and expanded to the south by Luvicia's son, Neal McNeil. Another parcel just to the south of that was later owned by G. W. Reddick, Ebenezer and Luvicia's son. Lucy is said to have died in 1865, and Ebenezer in 1866.

At least two other men were named Ebenezer Reddick. The first, a Confederate soldier from North Carolina, was captured on July 16, 1864, in Silver Spring, Maryland, and died of pneumonia while in custody. A younger man than our Ebenezer, and perhaps using the name Epinetus Reddick, he likely was from another branch of the Reddicks or Riddicks. The second man was Ebenezer's son (called Joseph Reddick in the 1860 census) who lived most of his life as Ebenezer N. Reddick.

Stories about Ebenezer Reddick passed down by his descendants vary widely, but all center around his probable Native American pedigree. Sometimes he was 100% Cherokee, sometimes 50% or 75%. One descendant said that "he jumped the reservation and was on the run. He came to Arkansas and adopted the name of Reddick." Another said he fought in the Black Hawk War. In yet another version, Ebenezer was given some family money, and forced to migrate west after abusing a slave. My favorite tale had Ebenezer as a nephew of John Ross, the famous (and mostly Scottish!) Cherokee Chief.

In 1926, over a dozen of Ebenezer's descendants applied for membership in the Cherokee Nation. Son Ebenezer N. Reddick claimed his father was $\frac{1}{2}$ Cherokee, and the others took it from there. Affidavits from some old timers were attached to most, if not all, of the applications. Here's one:

I, Hiram C. Rogers, 73 years old, P O address R#2 Garfield Benton County Ark hereby testify that I was personally acquainted with Ebenezer Reddick, who was the father of George W. Reddick, who was the father of John W. Reddick, Thos. L. Reddick, Homer Reddick, H. A. Reddick + Dave Reddick the claimants; I got acquainted with Ebenezer Reddick about 1860; he died a few years after the close of the Civil War; During this time I lived with my father who lived on a farm that joined with Ebenezer Reddick farm and was well acquainted with him and all his family; George W. Reddick told me that Ebenezer Reddick his father came from North Carolina and that he was a half breed Cherokee Indian.

Another affidavit, from A. J. Ford:

I have been acquainted with Ebinezer [sic] Reddick since before the Civil War. I lived neighbors to him for a long number of years. I helped lay him out when he died, it was known all over the country that he was Cherokee blood, claimed to be, looked like it and acted like it.

In another document, a ninety-year-old woman named Lucinda Edwards, who lived in North Carolina between 1836 and 1881, claimed to know of a Cherokee woman named Sallie Reddick who also lived in North Carolina during that period. If Ebenezer was $\frac{1}{2}$ Cherokee, then was Sallie Reddick his mother? Sadly for us, in son Ebenezer N. Reddick's own words:

I am unable to state the names of any of my ancestors back of my father. It has been so many years ago since my father died and I was so young at the time of his death that I can't remember of ever having heard anything talked about my ancestors.

The Enrolling Commission of the Cherokee Indian Agency denied the applications. In the case of Ebenezer's grandson Harry A. Reddick, a commission member named James E. Henderson wrote:

The application of Mr. Reddick has been investigated very thoroughly. It seems that for many years neither he nor his ancestors has been identified with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians of North Carolina, whose affairs we are endeavoring to settle under the Act of Congress June 4, 1924. It would appear from the records in this case that his ancestors migrated to Arkansas before the time of the removal in 1838-39.

For your information I will say that there is a great misconception on the part of many applicants as to really what the Eastern Band of Cherokees is. After the removal in 1838-39, the ancestors of the little Band whose affairs we are now endeavoring to settle purchased the lands they now hold and took deeds for the same. The various rolls made of this Band between 1835 and the present give us a very good proof as to who contributed toward the purchase of these lands and who did not. The ancestors of Mr. Reddick do not seem to appear on any of these rolls. Furthermore, to become a member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians it is necessary to prove that the applicant or his ancestors were living in North Carolina in 1874; that they contributed toward the purchase of the Qually Boundary; that they have been recognized by and been affiliated with with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians of North Carolina since 1868. Keeping the above in mind, it is very easy to see that a large number of people of Indian blood living in the south country do not have the right to enrollment with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

Each application contained a statement like "I am sure my grandfather Ebenezer Reddick contributed toward the purchase of these lands," but there was nothing to back it up. Ebenezer and his kin were not on the rolls after 1835, and it seems they had nothing to do with the tribe during the years critical to this case. The decision in no way denied Ebenezer an Indian heritage, it only denied his heirs a part of something it seems he didn't contribute to in the first place.

In the end, I can't make solid conclusions about Ebenezer's parentage. Perhaps he was half Cherokee or lived among the Cherokees for a period. Some descendants of John A. Rudick have had DNA testing done with positive results, but there are stories of Indian blood in the ancestors of John's wife Catherine Crews as well, so it only gets more complicated. Researcher George W. Reddick, another descendant of Ebenezer, notes that several of his relations have had DNA testing done, with little or no evidence of Indian blood turning up, and since Ebenezer was described as fair-skinned, George has serious doubts. In his opinion, "I think that Ebenezer developed a story that he enjoyed repeating to entertain others."

Stephen Decatur Reddick

Stephen Reddick, born in 1831 in Sampson County, North Carolina, was my great-great-great-grandfather, and the father of John Andrew Rudick. I believe he was a son of Ebenezer Reddick (1791-1866) but I've never been entirely comfortable with the way Stephen appears in the 1850 census. The children are listed oldest to youngest, the three McNeal children first, followed by the two children of Ebenezer and Luvicia, and last, Stephen, who was actually the oldest. It could be innocent, but it's also the way boarders and nephews and farmhands were often listed in the census. Testing currently shows that I share DNA with over two dozen known descendants of Joseph Reddick, both through Ebenezer or through Ebenezer's sister and brothers (half-sister and half-brothers?) I believe it's only a matter of time and careful work before more family relationships are confirmed.

Ebenezer Reddick	59	m
Lucy	38	f
Sally	18	f
Neal M ^r	16	m
Reggy J ^r	14	f
Charlotte	8	f
Angelina	4	f
Stephen J ^r	19	m

Stephen, Ebenezer, and the rest of the family migrated from North Carolina to Benton County, Tennessee, where they lived in 1840. After Ebenezer married Luvicia Trott, and then after two daughters were born, they all headed west again, this time to Benton County, Arkansas, probably just before 1850.

Around 1854, likely in Benton County, Arkansas, Stephen Reddick married Margaret Mizer, born about 1834 in Blount County, Tennessee. In the 1860 census, there were two sons, John and James. John was born a few months after Ebenezer purchased his first 40 acres, so maybe Ebenezer, over sixty years old, was planning for Stephen's new family.

The 1850 and 1860 censuses, along with a few army documents, listed Stephen as a farmer. He was in the Arkansas State Guard. When the Civil War broke out, Stephen and Ebenezer's families up near Roller Ridge were only three or four miles from Sugar Creek, where William Ruddick had built Elkhorn Tavern. The Battle of Pea Ridge was fought in March of 1862, and any role Stephen or Ebenezer played in the battle is unknown.

That summer the 35th Infantry Regiment of the Confederate Army was formed, sometimes called the 1st Regiment. On August 15, three Ruddick men enlisted into Colonel James P. King's Regiment, Benton County's Company F, which was commanded by Captain John Miser: Joseph Ruddick, William Ruddick, and S. D. C. Ruddick. The first, Joseph Ruddick, was a son of Captain William Ruddick, mentioned earlier, and the William who enlisted would be the Captain's grandson through his son Samuel. (Although an army document stated that William deserted, he later died in a prison in Springfield, Missouri at about eighteen years old.) The third man, S. D. C. Ruddick, turned out to be our Stephen Reddick.

Stephen had been recruited on August 2, 1862, by his father-in-law, Captain Miser, and his early participation in the war seems to have been minimal. According to paperwork from the following spring, Stephen claimed that he had taken up arms twice, but also that he was never in any battles. A muster roll from April 1863, reported him absent and said he had been sick since the previous October. In early December 1862, his fellow enlistee Joseph was injured during the Battle of Prairie Grove and hospitalized. On January 1, Captain Miser deserted, along with his brother, 2nd Lieutenant Elijah H. Miser.

On March 26, 1863, while home on furlough, Stephen was captured and taken north to Cassville, Missouri, where he spent several weeks in a prisoner of war camp, followed by a week in Springfield, Missouri, which included a doctor's examination. On May 13 he was sent to Gratiot Street Prison in St. Louis, Missouri. June 8 found him in City Point, Virginia, where he was exchanged back to the Confederate Army. On June 10 he picked up \$49.86 in back pay at Camp Lee, near Richmond, Virginia.

Arkansas Confederate Army records say that Stephen deserted on August 25, 1863 and that Joseph and William Ruddick both deserted on September 10, 1863, coinciding with the regiment's participation in the Battle of Bayou Fourche.

By my estimate of Company F, Arkansas 35th Infantry, about forty of its ninety-five soldiers deserted. During the Civil War over 10,000 Confederate soldiers deserted in Arkansas alone. From the Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture:

Myriad reasons exist for desertion during the Civil War. Early in the war, some Confederate units in Arkansas deserted when rumors spread about local Native Americans raiding towns and scalping citizens; the soldiers left their units feeling that their place was at home protecting their families. Troops sometimes left the ranks because of disagreements with their leaders or due to lack of pay. After 1864, some Confederate soldiers probably saw that the war was likely to end in defeat. Other Confederates may have deserted simply because they thought the war would continue year after bloody year, with or without them.

During the Prairie Grove Campaign in December 1862, the Confederates experienced serious desertion of conscripts. Several hundred of these deserters, mostly northern Arkansans who opposed secession, changed sides after the battle and enrolled in Arkansas Union regiments.

In his 1997 book *The Confederate War*, [Gary W.] Gallagher called attention to a factor unique to desertion in the Confederate ranks: "The presence of Union armies on southern soil generated a type of Confederate desertion unknown among Union soldiers—and one that did not necessarily indicate weak will or unhappiness with the Confederacy." The desire to protect land and loved ones from Union troops drove up the Confederate desertion rate late in the war, as men chose their duty to their families over their duty to the Confederacy.

The birth dates of Stephen's third and fourth sons, Stephen Sherman and Weston J., are not pinned down, but between 1861 and 1864 are good guesses based upon contradictory documents. During his 1863 imprisonment in St. Louis, Stephen stated that he had four children, so there could be a child we know nothing about.

Stephen used more versions of his name than any other man I know of. His Arkansas military records listed him as S. D. C. Ruddick. In census documents, he was Stephen Redick and Stephen D. Redic. Some of the Gratiot Street Prison papers called him Stephen D. C. Riddick, and picking up his paycheck in Virginia, he went as C. D. Riddick. In one document we find a magnificent full version: Stephen Commodore Decatur Riddick. And that's all. After 1863, history has nothing more to say about Stephen Decatur Reddick.

After the War: A Broken Family in the 1870 Census

Here's what we know about the four sons of Stephen and Margaret Reddick, from youngest to oldest, with special attention given to 1870, the first census year without Stephen.

Weston J. Reddick:

In 1870, he was listed as six years old, living with his mother Margaret and her second husband, in White Rock, McDonald County, Missouri. There was a W. J. Reddick in the 1880 census, eighteen years old, living with the John B. Due (Dew) family of Maury County, Tennessee, and listed as a nephew. John Due's sister, Sarah Elizabeth Due, had married William H. J. Reddick, who I believe is another son of Ebenezer Reddick with his first wife. They relocated to Arkansas, where William, like his brother Stephen D., seems to have died in the Civil War. There's a marriage recorded between a Weston Reddick and Priscilla Jennings on February 2, 1892, in Lowndes County, Mississippi, but this has led to no further information.

Stephen Sherman Rudick: About nine years old in 1870, he lived on the farm of James and Nancy Bayless in Sugar Creek, Benton County, Arkansas. There's no sign of any relation between his mother and the Bayless couple, reportedly childless and relatively well off. Ten years later there was a Stephen Redick, eighteen years old, living with John and Mary Devers in Newton City, Missouri. A Steven S. Rudick was listed in the 1900, 1910, 1920, and 1930 censuses, married to Nancy H. Rudick at various Missouri addresses. Years later, Stephen was mentioned in the obituary of James, his older brother. Stephen S. Rudick died on April 3, 1942.

James Franklin Rudick: Born on June 19, 1858, in 1870 James was twelve years old and living on the farm of Isaac and Sarah Stapleton in Sugar Creek Township, Missouri (yes, there's a Sugar Creek Township on each side of the border, and the Missouri one is the location of Seligman). James was listed in the census as a nephew, so Sarah Stapleton was Margaret Mizer's sister. James was still with the Stapletons ten years later. In 1900 and 1910 he was married to a woman named Martha and lived in Flat Creek Township, Barry County, Missouri. He died on March 21, 1918.

John Andrew Rudick: Born on March 31, 1855, in 1870 John worked on the Michael Buttram farm in Sugar Creek, Arkansas. The census listing was confusing at first: the relation to the family looked to me like "barrel boy," and one account on the internet interpreted it as "barnyard boy." That's sensible, but obviously not what was written, and now as I see it John was a "bound boy." It's not known whether the contract was for a typical seven years or until he turned twenty-one, or whether he was treated like a son or like a farmhand. Hopefully, it was more like a son, since it appears that Michael Buttram's wife Sarah Buttram was originally Sarah Mizer, a first cousin to John's mother. (If you think that there seem to be nearly as many Mizers in this account—whatever spelling—as there are Reddicks—whatever spelling—you are correct and more Mizer connections will be revealed shortly.)

Buttram Michael	26	in	in	farmer
Sarah	16	in	in	House Keeping
John H	5	in	in	
William H	1	in	in	
Reddick John	16	in	in	Bound Boy

During their younger years, the boys were never far from each other, or from their mother. Other than Weston, they stayed in the southwest Missouri area for the rest of their lives.

On April 29, 1868, Margaret married William Richard Buxton, a broom maker and blind from birth, who in 1879 became a Methodist Preacher. The census lists them both, and then a one-year-old girl named Maria E. Buxton, followed by Weston J. Reddick. Margaret died sometime before the 1900 census

Maria Esther Buxton was John's half-sister (not his sister, as was later reported in a newspaper item), and she married John B. Richardson about 1888. They lived in Benton County, Arkansas in 1900, Caverna, Missouri in 1904, and in Long Township, Sequoyah County, Oklahoma in 1910, near Fort Smith, Arkansas.

Did Stephen and Margaret have any children other than the four boys we know of? Children John, Stephen Jr., and James were easily located in the 1870 census, but no other unclaimed Rudick boy or girl has been found. Such a child, born in the early 1860s, would likely have stayed with their mother, like Weston had.

Who Was John Andrew Rudick, and Where Did He Go?

John Andrew Rudick was born March 31, 1855, likely in Sugar Creek or in Roller Ridge Township, in Benton County, Arkansas, the son of Stephen Decatur Reddick of North Carolina, and Margaret E. Mizer of Tennessee. John's grandparents on his mother's side would thus be John and Mary Miser of Tennessee, and his grandfather on his father's side was Ebenezer Reddick, of North Carolina.

John's father Stephen probably died during the Civil War, or shortly thereafter, and then John spent time indentured on the Michael Buttram farm. Years later, he referred to himself as "Wandering John," and related that in 1876, he worked for the Fort Worth Daily newspaper in Fort Worth, Texas, learning printing and more from editor Capt. B. B. Paddock.

In 1878, in Stone County, Arkansas, John married fourteen-year-old Jemima Catherine Crews. Their first child, Ollie Mae Rudick, was born there. John and Catherine lived with her family in Locust Grove, Stone County, Arkansas, until moving to Big Flat. On August 4, 1882, John was elected Justice of the Peace in Big Flat, so the next four children, Josephine, Edna, Rosa, and Floyd were likely born there, since the following two, Cecil and Macon, both claimed to be born in Big Flat in their WW1 draft documents. The last child, Homer, was born in 1891, in Seligman, Missouri.

About five months later, on January 28, 1892, a Seligman newspaper reported "John A. Rudick has accepted a position as book keeper, etc. in McClure's Store." Cousin John Dunkin was told that Catherine had insisted that the entire family move back to Big Flat after learning that John was being unfaithful.

Through John's son, Floyd comes this story: John Rudick was a school teacher, and two weeks before the school year began (must have been in 1897) he rode his horse into town, supposedly on an errand to purchase some shoes. He was spotted crossing the river by ferry near Big Flat, and heading west. He never came back.

The children of John Andrew Rudick and Jemima Catherine Crews were:

- Ollie May Rudick (1880-1971)
- Josephine E. (Josie) Rudick (~1881-1911)
- Edna Aldene Rudick (1883-1964)
- Rosa Rudick (1885-1946)
- Floyd Erasmus Rudick (1886-1967)
- Cecil Edward Rudick (1888-1952)
- Macon Cornelius Rudick (1889-1934)
- Winfred Homer Rudick (1891-1947)

In 1909, Catherine married a man named John Rose, a miller by profession, and more than twenty years her senior. John Rose died four years later. In 1918, Catherine married a man named Sam Sutterfield, and they lived in Searcy County, Arkansas, just west of Big Flat. By 1940, the census lists Catherine as a widow, living in Gore, Oklahoma. She died twelve years later and is buried in Luther, Oklahoma, near her son Homer and his wife. Her tombstone reads "Our mother Catherine Sutterfield 1863-1952."

I'll stop pretending here that John vanished into thin air, and admit that we knew a little more all along. He was in the 1900 census as John A. Rudick, married to Theodosia S. Rudick. He was listed as a farmer, living in Quapaw Indian Territory, just across the border in what would in a few years be Oklahoma. In 1910, he was also listed as a farmer, in Peoria Township, Ottawa County, Oklahoma (same place, but ten years later, and after statehood) with his wife Sarah Rudick.

Sarah Rudick and Theodosia S. Rudick were the same woman, of course. A fellow researcher exploring the convoluted Mizer clan found her for me in 2012. She was born Sarah Theodosia Burrows, a daughter of Josiah Henninger Burrows and Elizabeth Mizer. Josiah Burrows had over twenty children with at least three wives. Elizabeth Mizer was his first wife, and she died a year after Sarah was born. Elizabeth was a first cousin to John's mother, Margaret Mizer, so for the record, John Rudick left his wife and eight children to run off with his second cousin. (Also for the record, Josiah's third wife was John's aunt, Mahala Mizer!)

"Doshia" Burrows grew up in Sugar Creek, Arkansas, and it's more than likely that she knew John Rudick (Reddick) when they were children, perhaps even attending school together. When John's first wife made their family return to Big Flat from Seligman, Missouri, Sarah Theodosia Burrows was likely the reason, as Sugar Creek and Seligman were only about ten miles from each other.

Sarah had an earlier marriage to a man named Daniel Cox (and a son named William Cox), so on a marriage certificate dated September 2, 1897, in Cherokee County, Kansas, the bride and groom are John Andrew Rudick and Dollie [!] Cox.

A Letter from John

In September of 2013, I got a package from my cousin Kevin Bourdon, another descendant of John Rudick. (John's son Cecil, my great-grandfather, married Mary Alice Cessna in Oklahoma in 1911, and Cecil was the only one of John's children to leave the Arkansas/Missouri/Oklahoma area, eventually living in Detroit, Michigan with a career as a streetcar motorman.) The package contained dozens of letters that Mary Cessna-Rudick had saved: letters from her son, her father, and many courtship letters from Cecil Rudick. One letter stood out, dated June 5, 1915. For one thing, it was typed, on stationery from the Joplin Scale Repair Works, Joplin, Missouri. I only knew of one relative of Cecil Rudick who had ever lived in Joplin, and that was his father. The text confirms it, given here in its entirety:

Dear son, wife and babies :-

Have delayed answering your letter on account of sickness of my wife and other matters. I have been trying to line up something for you, but you know that one must be on the ground to catch what is in the wind. The different Bakeries here in Joplin are doing an immense business. All want to see the party who desires work and try them to see they can do the work, or such is offered as an excuse. If you are up on the Con. business, you would stand a good chance to get work on the street car line. There is a demand in all cities for those who are efficient—for those who can do their work rightly and willingly.

I only wish you was here to get a job when the opportunity came. It would be a pleasure to see you, wife and the "little ones". You know that your dear old dad is getting up in years and it would be a pleasure to be with you. I am 60 years old, but I don't look it and I don't feel it. It is true that I have done no manual labor for over one year—been in the newspaper business most of the time—was associate editor of The Galena Weekly Republican for a long time—did the writing for the weekly and the daily until the 22nd of last June when I had a nervous breakdown and had to quit. I do some writing for publication yet—sent an article to the Republican this morning—wrote a few articles for the Joplin papers and received some favorable comment. I bear the name of being one who can say more mean things with the fewest words and in the shortest space. I have nearly lost the name of Rudick and go by the name of "CRAWDAD." I am considered the monumental liar of this country—the best "yarn spinner" who ever spun a spin. But I look for some guy to come in and in the space of six months, rob me of all my "glory." Listen: a traveler down in Ark. (as the story runs) rode up to a house and asked a great big, strapping gal where her

It's page one, typed to the very bottom. Page two is forever lost to us. I couldn't help but think that ending midway through a possibly bawdy joke seemed somehow fitting. It was hard to reconcile this man's letter with that of the family-deserting sonofabitch I had been researching.

After more than three years of chasing him, John had become less and less a scoundrel to me. That letter to his son Cecil was the last straw, making it impossible for me to paint John as a two-dimensional mustache-twirling villain. The Battle of Pea Ridge had been fought only weeks before his sixth birthday, and only a few miles from his home. John Rudick and his family were possibly right in the middle of it. Later on, he might have watched as his father was hauled away as a prisoner of war. Who knows what terrible things John saw or remembered?

I couldn't find John in the 1920 census, and I had joked that at over sixty years old, the guy had taken off yet again. Floyd hinted that they couldn't find his father because they were looking in the wrong places. On the surface, that sounded more than a bit silly, but no more so than the fact that a century later some of us were still looking for him! But his sons Floyd and Cecil knew his whereabouts, and it seems many others did too.

A Second Life

Very little turned up about John over the next two years, but then there was an explosion of information: the Galena Weekly Republican, and many other Joplin area newspapers, became available online. Suddenly the life of J. A. Rudick after his flight to Oklahoma became more detailed to me than his first life ever had been, and, amazingly, some of it was told in his own words. There was enough to piece together the final decades of John's life, ending with multiple obituaries.

On September 6, 1901, four years after John "disappeared," a legal notice appeared in the Galena Evening Times reporting that John Rudick was suing "Gemima Rudick" for divorce "alleging abandonment from him by the defendant for more than one year before the commencement of this suit," and giving her until October 18th to respond, or John would get the divorce he wanted. The notice ran often over the next weeks, and the outcome can be inferred by the fact that on April 30, 1902, over four and a half years after the marriage certificate had been issued, the Galena Evening Times reported:

[J.] A. Rudick and Sarah Cox, of Galena, Kansas, were married at the court house here today by Judge Marion Brown. They started out right on their matrimonial journey by subscribing for the weekly Press immediately after the wedding ceremony.

J. A. Rudick and Mrs. Rudick (women's first names were rarely mentioned in any newspaper articles) lived on several Oklahoma farms over the years, southwest of Galena, Kansas. The first farm was described as being two miles south of Five Mile, referring to the creek that snakes its way across that Oklahoma township.

John's brother James visited him in 1903, and his brother Stephen visited in 1904. Also in 1904, John visited with his sister in Caverna, Missouri. Lots of folks knew where John was, and since he was now officially divorced and re-married, I suppose there was little reason to lie low anymore, if indeed he had done much lying low up to that point anyway.

In the July 20, 1901, Baxter Springs News, J. A. Rudick is mentioned as a superintendent for the Quapaw Reserve school board, and in 1911 and beyond, J. A. Rudick, Justice of the Peace, performed many marriages in Peoria township, Ottawa County, Oklahoma. It's the same position he held back in Arkansas, thirty years earlier.

In 1900, John's daughter Josephine married Thomas Benjamin Hutchinson, half Ottawa Indian, born in Indian Territory (later to become Oklahoma) near where John Rudick lived. It's likely that Josie also knew early on exactly where her father had run off to. Josie's second daughter was born in Montana, so there's more to that story, but when she died in 1911, Josie lived with her daughters in a boarding house in Baxter Springs, Kansas, a few miles from John. She's listed as widowed in the 1910 census, and it seems her husband lived on for years. Maybe we have another missing father.

The first record I have with John as "Crawdad" is from 1907. In February 1909, he began working at the Galena Weekly Republican, but his reporting graced their pages as early as 1901. Under the headline "Has Made Good" the paper reports:

Hereafter, J. A. Rudick "Crawdad" will be found at the Republican office, as he has accepted a position with us. Mr. Rudick will attend to the outside work at present.

We have in this paper some of best correspondents, that the writer and reader have ever enjoyed. The news comes in regularly for twenty miles in all directions, Oklahoma with two correspondents is a source of much pleasure and interest. Bro. Crawdad we need you in our business and we hope you will succeed in the work you are so adapted. You ought to be one of the leading reporters of the foremost daily papers of our county.

As an occasional writer I want to say to all correspondents: Get in the collar "like Crawdad" he will have the Republican all over Oklahoma and Missouri.



The Rudicks relocated to "Lick Prairie," not far from Five Mile, and Crawdad reported for years from this farm. His writings mixed political and social ramblings with matter-of-fact listings of the "who visited who this week" type common to local newspapers from coast to coast. It's amusing to sometimes read Crawdad reporting on the comings and goings of J. A. Rudick and Mrs. J. A. Rudick.

On April 25, 1913, an advertisement appeared in the Galena Weekly Republican highlighting an endorsement by J. A. Rudick, after successful treatment of his prostate problems. The same ad ran on May 9, and possibly other times. A bonus: a tiny photograph of John Rudick! Along with J. A. Rudick's actual letter came some high praise indeed:

Mr. J. A. Rudick, better known in his community as "Crawdad," a very genial gentleman, holding the office of Justice of the Peace in Peoria township, Ottawa County Ok., is one among many who have found relief at the hands of the United Doctors.

Those who are personally acquainted with Crawdad know that he is a careful, conservative man, whose word is his bond, and his articles written for publication are read by many, though they be serious or humorous in character.

Here's a little news item which appeared in the Galena paper on August 15, 1913:

The genial countenance of our loyal friend, J. A. Rudick (Crawdad) approached the Republican office last Saturday morning, and without giving us one minute of warning, placed upon the floor of this sanctum a luscious, big watermelon which was some of the excellent product grown by him at his farm on Five Mile and which he desired the Republican "force" to sample. It was sampled and remembered the Republican office indeed a delightful treat.

The year 1914 proved to be a tumultuous one for John and Sarah. In February, he publicly excused himself from any debts that his wife would incur, as she entered a long period of sickness. A month later, J. A. Rudick resigned as Justice of the Peace, and in June he quit his newspaper job due to a nervous breakdown. He got away to visit his brother James for a week at the end of August. In December he was sued in court for the sum of \$13.05.

The Rudicks moved to Joplin as Sarah's health declined. Her obituary in the Galena Daily Republican, February 11, 1916:

MRS. RUDDICK SUCCUMBED

Galena friends received a telephone message Monday stating the sad news of the death of Mrs. J. A. Ruddick, at her home in Joplin at 11:15 o'clock Sunday morning after an illness of four weeks. Death was due to a complication of diseases.

Deceased was 50 years old. She resided at Five Mile, southwest of this city about twenty years, and was widely and favorably known in that vicinity and in Galena. She is the wife of J. A. Ruddick (better known as Crawdad), who formerly was connected with this paper in furnishing notes from the Five Mile district. About two years ago she with her husband moved to Joplin where they have since resided.

To her the struggle and burden bearing of earth are ended, and we confidently trust that like one who awakes from a troubled dream she has awakened to see life's endless morning break and know herself home with the vast throng of loved ones, missed here on earth, safe about her.

The funeral cortege left the Cunningham Undertaking parlors in Joplin at 1 o'clock Tuesday and went to Hornett, Mo., where funeral services were held and burial was in the Hornett cemetery.

The many friends of this friend extend their sympathy to Mr. Ruddick in his sad bereavement.

Her death certificate shows that Sarah "Doshia" Rudick died of interstitial nephritis on February 6, 1916, and was buried in Hornet Cemetery, Newton County, Missouri. The informant was John A. Rudick, 915 Joplin Street, Joplin, Missouri.

A month later, John visited his brother James in Cassville, Missouri. By the summer of 1916, the "Crawdad" column had returned to the Republican, along with notices of the comings and goings of a new Mrs. Rudick!

Crawdad seemed to be on a mission to increase the newspaper's circulation. Perhaps the paper was having financial troubles, and by the new year, John had left again. In the spring of 1917, the Galena Echo reported:

Well, we saw "Crawdad" last week, says he has "Quit the Galena Republican and is now working for the Baxter News."

That spring, a few of John's reports appeared in The Baxter Springs News, but by late July, Crawdad was living across the state line, in or near to Neosho, Missouri, and writing columns for the Neosho Times. He quickly dove into the local issues of the day, and his comments read like he had lived there all his life. Later he traveled to Iowa, and he spent half a year on a farm near Topeka, Kansas.

After two and a half years "on the road," J. A. Rudick returned to the Joplin area and took up residence in Galena, Kansas, where he spent much of his remaining time. In Crawdad's own words of June 1919:

Coming back to good old Galena we find the same kind of faces as in days past and gone. Having been in many towns, cities and where many souls dwell we find no place we like so well as Galena and the surrounding country.

Now that I knew where to look, I found John in the 1920 census in Galena, Kansas, married to a woman named Mary, six years younger than him, and born in Illinois to German-born parents. I've been unable to learn any more about her.

In 1921, John Rudick's health declined. In spring he was hospitalized for six weeks at Joplin's St. John's hospital, and by the end of June, John was reported to be convalescing at his old rural haunts in Oklahoma. On November 25, 1921, readers of the Galena Daily Republican got this sad news:

J. A. RUDICK (CRAWDAD) PASSES AWAY

J. A. Rudick, better known as "Crawdad" passed away Wednesday morning at 2 o'clock in the home of his niece and husband, Mr. And Mrs. John Atkins on Five Mile, about eight miles southwest of Galena.

Mr. Rudick resided on a farm on Five Mile near the Ralph Standley farm, twenty-five years and is well known throughout the southern part of the county.

During the last twenty years, he has been a contributor to the Galena Republican, his articles being of great interest to his many friends in the rural districts. The signature to all of his writings he used the name "Crawdad" entirely.

About three years ago he came to Galena to reside having a position at the Galena Smelter as weighman. The last year he has been in ill health and has spent the greater part of the time on the farm on Five Mile.

Three years ago he united with St. Patrick's Catholic Church.

At the time of going to press no funeral arrangements have been made.

From the Galena Weekly Republican:

The passing of "Crawdad" causes many a heart to grieve, when they think of the kindly genial nature of Mr. Rudick. His friends were many and the Galena Times and Republican were in his best thoughts, a writer of peculiar character and a genius, in his odd way he reached readers other writers could not interest. He bubbled over with good nature and when displeased could wield a caustic pen, but always a vein of human ran through his writings. He tried according to his own words to walk on the sunny side of the road.

Ruddicks and Reddicks and Rudicks

Wherever the idea of connecting John Rudick to the Ruddicks of Sugar Creek came from, somewhere along the line his father, Stephen Reddick, seems to have faded from family memory. Why? Because he died young, I suppose. Then his family was dispersed, so it wasn't more than a decade or two before few people remembered him well.

Maybe I'm reading too much into this, and "Grandfather Benjamin" was simply what a kid named Floyd had called an old family friend. Cousin John Duncan says that Floyd wasn't the type to hide from the facts, so Floyd probably believed it, with John Rudick himself the source of any deception. And why might a man have misled his children about who his father or grandfather was? A likely reason was the Civil War itself. In some families, decades later, the war was still not talked about for fear of somehow starting the whole thing up again. George W. Reddick wrote to me:

We can speculate about what was going on in the 1860's and 1870's around there. But it was probably much worse. My parents had relatives talking about the war and which family members were on which side in the 1920's and 1930's. I had lots of relatives on both sides—and most didn't volunteer (except maybe the younger ones)...Your John may not have been old enough to remember who his grandfather was. The Reddick's and Ruddick's may have fallen on different sides during the war. Hard to tell what stories the adults were telling the children during and after the war...Chaos with a capital K with the war right in the middle of their community for several years.

Might John have thought that his father was on the wrong side of things? Did that other family, the Ruddicks of Sugar Creek, who came to Arkansas from Illinois, seem somehow more worthy than the Reddicks of North Carolina, with their plantations and slaves? Or did it have something to do with Stephen or Ebenezer's choices during the war?

A great-granddaughter of Floyd Rudick told me that she had been confused when her mother and aunts would refer to their grandparents using the Reddick name. Cousin John Dunkin told me that once, when his grandfather Floyd claimed that his grandfather was named Benjamin, Floyd's wife began to say something, but he shot her a hard look, and nothing more was said. I'm always open to any new evidence. I was born in Missouri, so show me!

In my time, a century after John Rudick's death, a man could not flee only a hundred or so miles away to start a new life, all the while still using his own name. And that's only part of why I find John's life so interesting. There's also John's father Stephen who probably died in the Civil War, or shortly thereafter, also leaving behind a wife and kids. And on top of that, there's his grandfather Ebenezer, who claimed to be half Indian, a migrant from North Carolina through Tennessee and to Arkansas, with two families along the way. It had revealed itself to be quite an American story. Will investigating Ebenezer's father Joseph Reddick lead to another chapter? Time will tell.

What would my grandmother Dorothy Bonita Rudick (a one "D" Rudick!) have thought about all these Ruddicks and Reddicks? She was the source of the Indian bloodline rumors in my immediate family, and I wish I could show her what we know about it now. I might never have looked into it all if not for her.

And who was John Andrew Rudick? He was my great-great-grandfather, and he led two lives.

Mike Spieth
2025

Many Thanks to:

John Dunkin, for getting this whole thing rolling with his own research, photos, insights into the Civil War, and the personal memories of his grandfather, Floyd Rudick.

Shirley Andrews, Master of Mizers, whose untangling and cataloging of the Mizer clan led to the finding of Sarah Theodosia Burrows-Cox-Rudick, along with her place of burial and death certificate. "Pretzel Marriages" and "Breeding Within One Degree of Insanity" indeed!

Kevin Bourdon, first cousin once removed, who gave me an actual typed letter from J. A. Rudick, sent to his son Cecil. I would have the thing DNA tested, but it has been contaminated with my own drool.

Pat Richard, who located Stephen Reddick's records from the Civil War, along with the document showing that Joseph Reddick was indeed Ebenezer's father.

George Washington Reddick, descendant of Ebenezer Reddick, for his insights into the aftermath of the Civil War.

Sandra Cain, Floyd's granddaughter, who recalled hearing the name "Reddick" during her childhood. Details mean a lot.

Crawdad, by his own account "the monumental liar of this country," for leaving a "paper" trail.

Post Script: Thoughts on the Reddicks

I could never have attempted to untangle the North Carolina Reddicks without developing a few "gut feelings," so here I'll go out on a few limbs, separate from the more fact-based account this is attached to.

If I could spend an hour or two in conversation with any one of my more distant ancestors, I'd likely choose Ebenezer Reddick, who could clear the air about the relatives of his father Joseph, as well as track his son Stephen during or after the Civil War. Of all the people in my family tree research, Eb could probably tell me the most.

My big question to ask Ebenezer would be, "Who was your mother?" As I've told already, distant cousin George Reddick reminds us that Ebenezer was described as "fair-skinned." George thinks that maybe Ebenezer just liked to kid around about his heritage. Well, George, I'll call you "fair-skinned," and raise you A. J. Ford's comment that it was known all over the country that Ebenezer "was Cherokee blood, claimed to be, looked like it and acted like it." It's notable that if we assume that Ebenezer actually was half Cherokee, the other facts we know about him relating to his father Joseph support an interesting narrative: I've been told that it would be improbable or impossible that Joseph could legally leave anything at all to a son who was either half Indian, illegitimate, or both. To skirt the issue, what if Joseph gave Ebenezer his share of the estate a few years early? (Remember that Ebenezer was Joseph's only child to get nothing in the will.) Joseph gave Ebenezer 150 acres of land in 1821, and Ebenezer sold it in 1825. When Joseph Reddick died in 1827, Ebenezer was co-executor of his father's estate, and soon after, in the 1830s, the sons of Joseph Reddick headed west.

That's the old family story: In 1838, the four sons of Joseph Reddick crossed the mountains into Tennessee, and two of them eventually continued onward to Arkansas. The brothers migrated not as pioneers, but later in life with their families.

Ebenezer first settled in Benton County, Tennessee. Almost on the same 1840 census page is the family of Kenneth Reddick. Kenneth was nearly ten years younger than Ebenezer, but he had migrated to Tennessee before him, sometime in the 1820s. I'd bet that Kenneth and Ebenezer knew each other back in North Carolina, and if they were from the same generation, might they have been first cousins?

Kenneth Reddick's father was also named Kenneth and seems to have also migrated to Tennessee. This older man would be of Joseph's generation, going by my "cousins" theory. In Joseph Reddick's will, he refers to "which land I bought of Ken Reddick." My "gut feeling" is that Kenneth Reddick Sr. and Joseph Reddick might well be brothers. Yes, the four sons of Joseph Reddick crossed the mountains, but Ken Jr., their possible cousin, had led the way, especially as far as Ebenezer was concerned.

That's as far as I'll wade into the morass of Reddicks in North Carolina. I've been waist-deep there three times, two of them with people more skilled at this guessing game than I am. Each time, the solution always seemed just out of reach. I've become convinced that, as in a complex mathematical problem, there might just be too many variables with not enough data for any real resolution.

As for those Reddicks whom I do happen to know a little about but can't attach names to, almost all of them are from Ebenezer's first family. So listen here, Ebenezer: who was your mother? And while I've got you here, who was your first wife? And while we're at it....

The World of J. A. Rudick



