

## Collins-Hatchett Trek from Kentucky to Louisiana and back, 1861-66

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After the start of hostilities in the Civil War in the summer of 1861, a group of families left Henderson County, Kentucky, traveling south to find a safer haven for their way of life. The group, led by Dr. John Dillard Collins, a physician from Madisonville, and his father-in-law John Archard Hatchett, a rich farmer, traveled mostly together for about five years. John Dillard Collins became a surgeon in the Confederate Army in charge of hospitals in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, and Keachie, Louisiana. Knowledge about the trek comes from three written accounts that you are encouraged to read [1,2,3].

### Families:

Joining the trek were families of John Archer Hatchett and five of his six children. Individuals listed below are explicitly referenced in [1,2,3] except for Elvira Hatchett and two Lester children born en route. Leila Collins is mentioned by inference as an older sister in [2]. Further information about all individuals can be found in my ancestry file at <http://worldconnect.rootsweb.com/~garyscottcollins/>. Any others joining the trek are unknown.

- John Archard Hatchett (1791-1861), father of three Hatchett sisters and a son and accompanied by his wife Narcissa Jeffress. He had been a slaveholder in Henderson, KY. He died near Pleasant Hill, LA in 1864, just after the Battle of Pleasant Hill, at the age of 66.
- John Dillard Collins (1823-1881), wife Elvira Hatchett and three teen-age daughters Leila, Jessie and Rosalie Collins. John was known as "Pa D" and Rosalie as "Rossie" or "Dossie".
- Marianna Hatchett (1832-abt 1879) and husband Maurice Kirby. They were known as "Aunt Anna" and "Uncle Maurice". Maurice had been a teacher. They had no children.
- Cornelia Hatchett (1841-aft 1929), unmarried, known as "Aunt Sweet".
- Virginia Hatchett (1835-abt 1870) and husband James B. Lester and daughter Allie born in Kentucky in 1858. James enlisted with the CSA cavalry, was detailed as a hospital steward at Little Rock since Aug 1862, and released from service in Shreveport in June 1865. Two sons were born during the trek, Edwin B. in Arkansas in 1862 and Archer Dillard in Louisiana in 1865.
- Edwin A. Hatchett (1839-aft 1910), unmarried. Volunteered for CSA cavalry in Arkansas, was captured and held prisoner from Dec 1862 until July 1864, after which he was freed in a prisoner exchange, and released from service in Shreveport in June 1865.

### Motivations for the trek:

It is remarkable that affluent families would pull up roots in Kentucky and head into the Deep South. Henderson, Kentucky, on the Ohio River, was on the fault-line between free and slave states. In 1860, John Archard Hatchett owned 18 slaves and his son Edwin was an overseer [6]. According to his daughter Cornelia, they treated their slaves well, but had a very strong fear of Abolitionists and of the chaos that might ensue [1]: "You cannot imagine the excitement the Abolitionists created to free the negroes. We did not know when we would have an insurrection." [1] In response to Lincoln's position that the nation could not exist half slave and half free, John Hatchett reportedly said emphatically "That is a declaration of war." [1] Thus, there was a fear of radical social change and an intensely negative reaction to the idea that the sovereignty of slave states could be trampled on by the free states. After the secession of eleven southern states by June 1861 (not including Kentucky) and the beginning of hostilities in the summer of 1861, the Hatchett family voted with its feet and moved to Arkansas.

### Chronology:

- 1861 The families leave Henderson, Kentucky in the fall of 1861 for the South, following the secession of eleven southern states [1] that, however, do not include Kentucky.
- 1861-3 They live in Arkansas for two years, where John Dillard Collins has a hospital in Pine Bluff [1]. James Lester enters military service in 1862 [1]. Maurice opens a small backwoods school that Rosalie Collins

- attends [3]. A son Edwin B. Lester is born to Virginia Hatchett and James Lester in 1862 [4]. Edwin Hatchett volunteers for an Arkansas cavalry regiment, is captured in Mississippi in December 1862 [8].
- 1863-4 Federal troops make inroads into Arkansas. John Collins moves the hospital to Keachie, Louisiana in late 1863 [1]. (Pine Bluff was occupied by Federal troops in October 1863 [5], so presumably the entire group moved to Keachie before then.) Maurice Kirby and wife Marianna continue west from Keachie into Texas, where he teaches in a school. Minnie Eells, teenage daughter of a preacher in Keachie, befriends Jessie and Rosalie Collins [2]. She describes John Collins as being a surgeon in charge of the hospital in Keachie [2]. Rosalie Collins goes to the school of Minnie's mother, Hettie, and Jessie takes special studies from Minnie's father Edward [2].
- 1864-6 In March 1864, John, Narcissa, and Cornelia move further on to Pleasant Hill, about 40 miles closer to New Orleans than Keachie. In April 1864, CSA General Taylor retreats toward Texas, passing through Pleasant Hill, followed the next day by Union General Banks, whose troops wreck the area [7]. Days later on April 8 is the Battle of Mansfield, close to Keachie, and a pivotal battle at Battle of Pleasant Hill on the next day that ended the Union's Red River Campaign [5]. Areas around Keachie, Mansfield and Pleasant Hill are devastated [1,2,6], with all school buildings turned into field hospitals [7]. John Hatchett dies soon after the Battle of Pleasant Hill [1]. According to Minnie Eells, the year after the "dreadful" war was a "fearsome time." [2] Archer Dillard Lester is born to Virginia and James in Louisiana in May 1865. Edwin Hatchett is released from prison in a prisoner exchange in July 1864. Both Edwin and James are released from military service at Shreveport, near Keachie, in June 1865. Sometime later in 1865 or in 1866, the families return to Kentucky, possibly on riverboats going up the Mississippi River as does the Eells family on the steamboat *Great Republic* [2].

#### After returning to Kentucky:

The families were much poorer after their return to Kentucky. For example, the 1860 and 1870 censuses put John Collins's wealth at \$20,000 and \$2000, respectively. John Hatchett's wealth was \$23,800 in 1860 but in 1870 his widow Narcissa and daughter Cornelia were boarding with John Collins. James Lester's wealth in 1860 and 1870 were \$12,000 and \$4,335, respectively. Direct comparisons understate the impoverishment since an 1870 dollar was only worth 2/3 of an 1860 dollar [9].

#### References

- [1] A 1929 letter by Cornelia Hatchett to Furman Lester, grandson of her sister Virginia about the Civil War: <http://freepages.history.rootsweb.com/~garyscottcollins/CH-to-FL-1929.pdf>
- [2] An account by Minnie Eells, who befriended daughters Jessie and Rosalie in Keachie, Louisiana: <http://freepages.history.rootsweb.com/~garyscottcollins/Minnie-Eells-Keachie.pdf>
- [3] Biographical notes about "Uncle Maurice" (Maurice Kirby) written by Rosalie A. Collins: <http://freepages.history.rootsweb.com/~garyscottcollins/Uncle-Maurice.pdf>
- [4] Ancestry file Richard Henderson, Apr 2004: <http://worldconnect.rootsweb.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=richard66&id=I08652>
- [5] National Park Service, Civil War Battle Summaries: <http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/abpp/civil.htm>
- [6] Ancestry file of Gary Collins: <http://worldconnect.rootsweb.com/~garyscottcollins/>
- [7] For a compelling account of devastation of the countryside by looting troops and carnage in battles, cf. Vicki Betts's "Civilian reaction to the Red River Campaign, 1864": <http://www.rootsweb.com/~ladesoto/civreac.htm>
- [8] From Bill Couch's Original Arkansas Genealogy Page: <http://www.couchgenweb.com/civilwar/2batcavb.html>.
- [9] Compare relative dollar values on Samuel Williamson's page at <http://www.eh.net/hmit/compare/>.

Minnie Eells and her family left Louisiana for the North on the paddle-wheel boat Great Republic, as indicated by her title *“Account of a trip up the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers on the Great Republic, the finest ever like a palace after the war”* [2]



Photo of the Great Republic

How the Trek led to Marriages of Jessie Paralee Collins (1849-1876) with Williams Barnard Furman (1845-1884), and of their daughter Rosalie Allan Furman (1874-1955) with D.C. Newman Collins (1865-1953)

Gary S. Collins, 26 June 2005

## I. How Jessie Paralee Collins met Williams Barnard Furman.

Jessie was the middle of three teenage daughters of John Dillard Collins. In spring of 1865 she found herself in Keachie, Louisiana, where her father was directing a hospital as surgeon in the Army of the Confederate States of America. Her two uncles in the CSA, Edwin Hatchett, 2<sup>nd</sup> Arkansas Cavalry, and James Lester, 6<sup>th</sup> Arkansas Cavalry, were "paroled" (i.e., released from service) at Shreveport, Louisiana, about 40 miles from Keachie, on June 20 and June 8, 1865, respectively. Williams Barnard Furman, member of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Louisiana Cavalry, whose father Samuel Kirkwhite Furman was a rich physician in Shreveport, also was paroled at Shreveport on the same date as James Lester. Quite probably, Williams met Jessie at about that time while visiting families of Trek members in Keachie, when she was about 16 and he was about 20.

They married two years later in Henderson, Kentucky in June, 1867, after the trekkers had returned home. Such a marriage was favored both because the Collins and Furman families were strong supporters of the War of Secession and because, from a class perspective, a physician and son of a physician was marrying the daughter of a physician. Jessie and Williams settled in Henderson.

So that's how my great-grandfather and great-grandmother probably met.

## II. How Rosalie Allan Furman met Daniel Charles Newman Collins

Rosalie Allan Furman, daughter of Jessie Collins and Williams Furman, had been named after her aunt Rosalie Allan Collins. Rosalie Collins, a trek member, never married. She was a school teacher in Evansville, Indiana, and helped diligently to raise her nieces Lucy and Rosalie Furman after her sister Jessie died and Jessie's spouse Williams left home.

Minnie Eells, writer of an interesting narrative of life in Keachie, Louisiana, that recounts fond memories of meeting the Collins family and daughters, was daughter of Reverend Edward Eells, a Presbyterian preacher in Keachie during the time that John Dillard Collins directed his hospital there. Interestingly, ten years earlier, in about 1850, Edward had been pastor in Absecon, on the coast of New Jersey and only a few miles from Port Republic, where D.C. Newman Collins summered and sailed for many years on the farm of his grandfather John Collins (1806-1900). In the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Absecon became a popular summer resort for people from Philadelphia because of the cool ocean breezes, swimming, and boating on Great Bay. Minnie herself was born in New Jersey.

In all probability, favorable descriptions of the New Jersey shore area were passed on to the Collins family in Louisiana by Eells family members that Rosalie Collins, later on, passed on to her nieces Lucy and Rosalie. It is even possible that Reverence Eells might have met with members of the family of John Collins of NJ, although there is no record of any such contact. What is know is the following. (1) Rosalie Collins graduated from the State Normal School in NJ in 1870 with her aunt, Cornelia Hatchett, both trek members. (2) Lucy and Rosalie were counted in the 1900 census in Absecon, NJ, probably on vacation. They are recorded as staying in the boarding house of D.C.N. Collins's widowed aunt Anna Collins (Fleming). Since D.C.N. Collins summered almost yearly on the coast, it is quite likely that Rosalie Furman met DCN Collins then or in some other summer in Absecon, NJ.

D.C.N. Collins's first wife died in Mar 1899. He married Rosalie Furman in Sep 1911 after his two children by the first marriage were grown, and had a son in 1912 also named John Dillard Collins, in honor of Rosalie's grandfather. Also named after Dr. John Dillard Collins was the son born in 1867 of Dr. Collins's brother Orville Collins.

So, that's how my grandfather and grandmother probably met.

*For references, see the description of the Collins-Hatchett-Trek:--  
<http://freepages.history.rootsweb.com/~garyscottcollins/Collins-Hatchett-Trek.pdf>*