

*"Uncle Maurice" is a biographical narrative by Rosalie A. Collins ("Dossie"), daughter of John Dillard Collins. Transcribed from an old typed manuscript by Gary S. Collins, 2002; revised June 2005.*

*Maurice was Maurice Kirby, a distinguished educator in Kentucky, with photo at [http://freepages.family.rootsweb.com/~garyscottcollins/ProfMauriceKirby\(Evansville,IL\).jpg](http://freepages.family.rootsweb.com/~garyscottcollins/ProfMauriceKirby(Evansville,IL).jpg) and ancestry file entry at <http://worldconnect.rootsweb.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=garyscottcollins&id=I604908321>. He traveled together with John Dillard Collins and four families on a trek of a few years during the Civil War from Henderson, KY south through Arkansas to Louisiana and Texas, ahead of the Union Army, returning to Henderson at the end of the war. After the war, as described in the narrative, he founded a female teaching academy in Henderson, was Professor at the State College in Lexington, and was Principal of the Louisville Male High School, which functioned as a college at the time. Census reports and other information are appended after the narrative.*

## Uncle Maurice

Hardships of early life, loss of parents, adoption by Dr. Keller, Hagerstown, MD; later college at Springfield, Ohio, Wittenberg College. Then Dr. K dies when uncle M. is seventeen. He teaches at a country school, where he gets his board and 75 cents a week. Later studied, or read, law, was admitted to the bar, but did not like it. Tried newspaper work, too, but hated it, so returned to teaching. Came to Madisonville to teach there and met Collins family. He taught an Academy there. The older girls went to him; he soon became a great friend. His visits enjoyed by all the family, especially Dossie, who as a small child would sit at his feet, and whether she could understand what he said or not, would call out "Go on, Uncle Maurice!" and would refuse to go to bed, being taken off crying and kicking by Jane, the nurse. This, however, was later, after he had fallen in love with Aunt Anna, a beautiful young widow, and become a member of the household. Aunt Anna had been living with them when they met him. I have the letters in which he proposed, and she at first rejected his suit (on account of some tenets of her religion, which made her believe she should not marry one who did not believe as she did) (Christadelphian's rather strange sect which had broken off from the Christian Church about that time). But she had soon relenting, finding that she could not live without him, and they were married in 1858 or 59 and lived still with the Collins family for years afterward, accompanying them to the wilds of Arkansas when the war broke out. There Uncle Maurice had a small school and Dossie was old enough to be his pupil. It was a real backwoods school. Then they went with them to Louisiana, but left for a while when Uncle Maurice taught a school in Texas. Then, after the War, all returned to KY together, and Uncle Maurice began his Female Academy at Henderson. Later (he) became Superintendent of Schools there, but after Aunt Anna's death in 1879, he could not bear to remain, and went as a Professor to State College, Lexington, and still later, Principal of Male High School at Louisville. He lived there until his death in 1896.

His talk was the most enthralling I ever listened to. He was a captivating teacher. In classical literature, especially English classics, in history and biography, psychology and political economy, he was wonderfully well informed. His lectures on these subjects were great treats to genuine thinkers. Boswell's Life of Johnson was his greatest favorite, perhaps. He also loved and knew Walton's Complete Angler, Goldsmith's Deserted Village, Thackeray's Vanity Fair, Mrs. Gaskell's Cranford, Lamb's Essays, DeQuincey's Confessions of an Opium Eater, but above all Shakspeare was his great love, and I am inclined to think that he believed Kind Lear his greatest play, and the greatest thing in literature, with Macbeth a close second. He considered Julius Caesar the greatest man who ever lived. In his religion there was nothing contracted, nothing sinister in his views, dogmas had little attraction for him. Religion was matter of right living, steadfast character, and he thought that a man might safely "be just and fear not". He indulged in many speculations about the future state, and seemed at times a little disquieted. Just before his death, he was received back into the Catholic Church, in which as an infant he had been baptized. I am glad if this gave him satisfaction. His long friendship for Father Dunn in Louisville...

*[End. The remainder of the narrative is missing.]*

*Notes: Dr. Keller was Ezra Keller, founder of Wittenberg College in Springfield, Ohio.  
"Aunt Anna" was Marianna Hatchett, first married to a William A. Lester.*

## URL's citing Maurice Kirby

Henderson County, Kentucky History: <http://www.rootsweb.com/~kyhende2/When.htm>  
Biography of famous student John Lockett: <http://www.rootsweb.com/~kyhende2/JFLockettBio.htm>  
Louisville Male High School History: <http://www.jefferson.k12.ky.us/Schools/High/Male/SchoolHistory.html>

## Census entries for Maurice Kirby

1850 US census, Ohio, Clark Co., Springfield, 16 July 1850:

Caroline Keller, 35, \$1500, b:MD  
Martin Keller, 8, b:MD  
Sarah Keller, 5, b:Ohio  
Morris Kirby, 21, student, b:Ireland  
Wm. Cutter(?), 25, student, b:Germany  
J. P?. Brickley?, 23, student, b:Germany

[Note: Morris Kirby was orphaned at the age of 14, then adopted by Dr. Ezra Keller of Hagerstown, MD, and later attended Wittenberg College in Springfield, Ohio, according to an account of his life entitled "Uncle Maurice", written by Rosalie A. Furman. Dr. Ezra Keller was founder and first president of Wittenberg College ca. 1845 (now Wittenberg University). Dr. Keller died in about 1847 and in the 1850 census, Kirby is living with Dr. Keller's widowed wife Caroline. According to Deb Stooksberry of the Registrar's Office at Wittenberg, Kirby was enrolled as a student from 1849-54. See <http://www4.wittenberg.edu/about/history.html> for an early history of Wittenberg College and photo of Ezra Keller.]

1860 US census, no record found for Maurice or his wife of one year, Marianna Hatchett.

1870 US census, Kentucky, Henderson Co., Henderson City, Ward 1, 15 Jul 1870:

Morris Kirby, 40, schoolteacher, \$3000, \$500, b:DC, father and mother foreign born  
Mariana Kirby, 38, b:KY  
[The couple is living in a boarding house].

1880 US census, no record found of Maurice Kirby. His wife Anna died in about 1879.

1890 census substitute (ancestry.com), Louisville, Kentucky Directories, 1890:

Maurice Kirby, 108 E. Jacob Street, Principal, Male High School.

Maurice died in January 1897 according to an obituary.