

John W. Morris: “Have Family--Will Travel”

by descendants Nancy (Morris) Boyd and Ken Brown

The central character of this family history is John W. Morris. He was born in 1847 to an early Taney County settler by the name of Thomas Morris. John W. Morris fathered 15 children - five by his first wife, Martha Embry, and ten by his second wife, Caroline Honeycutt. Before he finally settled down in Sequoyah County in eastern Oklahoma, John and his family left footprints in present day Douglas, Ozark, Taney and Webster Counties in southern Missouri, and Boone County in northern Arkansas. John died in 1912 in Sequoyah County, Oklahoma.

John W.'s older children stayed in Douglas County, MO. and raised their families there, while John W. and Caroline left the area with the younger children around 1900. A son, William F. “Bill” Morris, was a successful Ava merchant from around 1915 until the late 1930s. W. F. “Uncle Bill” Morris was co-author Nancy (Morris) Boyd’s great grandfather. His son, William “Earl” Morris, was her grandfather, and Charles Ray Morris was her father.

John W. Morris’s daughter, Amanda Melvina “Aunt Mel” Morris, married James Lihu “Jim” Brown, a grandson of Lyhue and Betsy (Hall) Brown, some of Douglas County’s very earliest settlers. Uncle Jim and Aunt Mel raised 12 children on their farm south of Ava, and they have many descendants in the county today. J. L. “Jim” Brown was Ken Brown’s grandfather, and Orville “Jake” and Kiree (Hartley) Brown were Ken’s parents.

Watch for the words “probable” and “probably” in this article. While most of the findings have been proven in a manner that would suit most trained genealogists, there are instances where the authors have reached a reasonable conclusion worthy of mention.

Morris Migration Through Douglas County

In the 1970’s, before computers and the internet, Jessie (Morris) Croslin and Kiree (Hartley) Brown would talk about how to trace back the Morris family tree. Jessie was the wife of Lawrence “Wink” Croslin’s Ava’s long-time dairyman.

These two family historians knew that a man named John W. Morris was the father to Jessie’s dad, Uncle Bill Morris, and Kiree’s mother-in-law, Aunt “Mel” (Morris) Brown. They knew that John’s first wife, Martha Embry, had died at some point, and then John W. had married a second time to Caroline Honeycutt. Some of John W. and Caroline’s younger children were still alive in the 1970s but seemingly

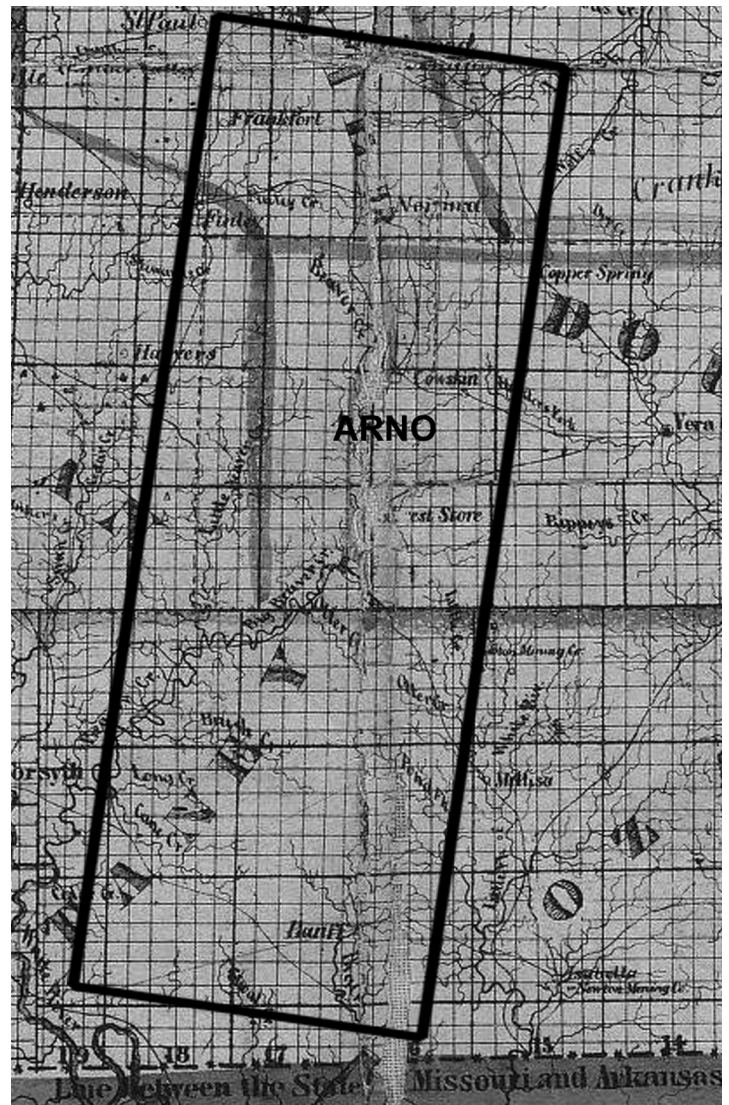


Exhibit 1: Pre-Civil War map of the Webster, Douglas, Ozark, and Taney County areas in which the Morris Families tended to reside from the 1830s until the rest of the 19th Century. An old road generally followed Beaver Creek on which families would have traveled. The historic village of Arno has been noted for reference. Ava, not established until the early 1870s, would be situated northeast of the “Cowskin” post office on the map.

they didn’t know much about their father’s past either.

Now, in 2010, we’re in the internet age. A massive amount of family history materials is now available to anyone who has a personal computer and an internet connection. But it takes skill and patience to sort through the information and begin to connect the dots.

Co-author Nancy (Morris) Boyd mastered the online search techniques, but she found that old John W. was not going to give up his past easily. Still, Jessie Croslin and Kiree Brown (now both deceased) would be amazed at some of the blanks that have been filled in and yet others that will be filled in before long as more records become available.

As the saying goes, old John W. "never let moss grown under his feet." Unlike many, he didn't plant himself and his family at one place for decades on end as many in Douglas County tended to do. For example, his two marriages both occurred in Webster County, and his children by each wife were born in various Missouri Counties -- Webster, Douglas, Taney and Ozark Counties.

Complicating the story is that some of the Morris family's early movements in were in western Douglas County townships along Beaver Creek that, prior to 1864, was part of Taney County. (See Exhibit 1 on this page). All these changes occurred after old Tom Morris, Sr. came to the area.

1830s Westward Migration of Morris

John W.'s Grandfather Born in Georgia -- Thomas Morris Sr. was born in 1786 in Georgia and died in 1858 in Taney County, MO. His wife's name was Dora (Dorothy or Dollie). The two were married in Georgia before moving west. Then they were in Tennessee, Kentucky and Illinois before coming to the south central Missouri area in the 1830s. Thus Thomas and Dollie were some of the early white settlers in the area.

Dollie (John W.'s grandmother) was born in 1788 in Georgia and died after 1850 in Taney County, MO. Both Thomas Sr. and Dollie are buried in the Rhodes Cemetery, Big Creek Township, in Taney County.

Buried in adjacent unmarked graves at Rhodes are James and Celia (Hall) Taber. Two of the Taber sons had married daughters of Thomas and Dollie Morris: (1) Archibald married Elizabeth, and (2) Isaac married Matilda.

Thomas and Dollie had a third daughter, Louisa. Louisa was born in Georgia in 1809 and married Charles Lair while her Morris family was in Macoupin County, Illinois. Louisa and Charles are shown as living next to her parents in the 1830 census for Macoupin County.

In addition to Thomas and Dollie's three daughters just listed (our John W.'s Aunt Elizabeth, Aunt Matilda, and Aunt Louisa), they are believed to have had these three sons and possibly more:

- John (our John W.'s namesake). He was born in 1822 in Tennessee. Uncle John's first wife Nancy (who was married first to a Brown) was born circa 1815 in Tennessee.
- Thomas Jr. (our John W.'s father). He was born in 1826 in Illinois. Our John W.'s mother, Sally (Brown) was born circa 1830 in Arkansas.
- Russell was born in 1828 in Illinois. John W.'s

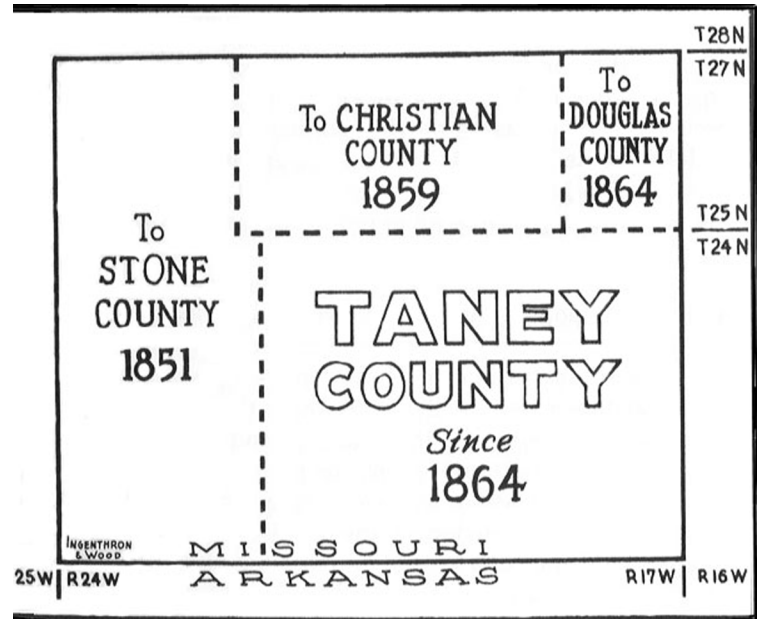


Exhibit 1: Source--Taney County site on Rootsweb.com

Uncle Russell and his family were enumerated in the 1860 Census for Swan Township in Taney County. His wife, Amanda (maiden name unknown), was born in Tennessee.

1840 -- Morris Families in Taney County, MO.

Louisa and Charles Lair migrated into Missouri with the original Morris family in the 1830s. The couple is shown in the 1840 census for Taney County, Missouri, next door to Louisa's parents, Thomas and Dollie Morris.

1850 -- Morris Families in Taney County MO.

The households of (1) John W.'s grandfather, Thomas Sr., (2) Uncle Russell Morris, and (3) John W.'s father, Thomas Jr., were next to each other when the Taney County Census was taken in 1850.

Included in Uncle John and Aunt Nancy Morris's household were three children with the Brown surname:

- J. Brown, born 1826 in Arkansas
- G. Brown, born 1832 in Arkansas
- W. (William A.), born 1835 in Arkansas.

These Brown children are believed to be Nancy Morris's children by an earlier marriage. In this earlier marriage, Aunt Nancy may have had another child, Sarah "Sally" Brown who married Thomas Morris Jr., and became John W.'s mother.

When William A. Brown's first wife died, he re-married to Susan/Susanna (Smith) Taber. She was the widow of Hartwell Taber, a son of our John W.'s Aunt Elizabeth (Morris) and Uncle Archibald Taber.

With Nancy (Brown) Morris and William Brown as probable mother and son, it seems Sarah (Sally) Brown who married Thomas Morris Jr. is also Nancy's child.

1860 – Morris Families in Ozark County

By 1860, our John W.'s grandparents, Thomas Sr. and Dollie Morris, had passed away and were buried in the Rhodes Cemetery, Big Creek Twp, Taney County, MO.

The Thomas and Sally Morris Jr. family (including John W. as a youth) were listed in the 1860 Ozark County Census. The 1860 Census records for the household of Thomas Morris Jr. included:

- John W. Morris, born 1848 (should be 1847).
- Amanda C. Morris, born 1853.
- Nancy Morris, born 1857. (Nancy probably died young as she is not found on the 1870 census for the family).

Missing from the 1860 census, however, was another daughter named P.J. Morris. She was born about 1850 and must have died young.

Whether John W.'s father actually moved or the county lines changed due to the formation of Douglas County is unknown to this researcher. In any case Thomas Morris had purchased the land so land records may someday answer this question.

Civil War Affects the Morris Family--During the Civil War, John W.'s father, Thomas Morris Jr. enlisted early on with the Union Army's 4th Regiment of the Phelps Volunteers. His commander was Capt. George W. Evans whose descendants still live in the Toledo area of northwest Ozark County.

Like many soldiers in the Civil War, Thomas Jr. died of disease, not in combat. His death occurred in February 1862 in Rolla, Mo. where his unit was assembled. The reason for death was listed as bronchitis (or winter disease).

In 1863, the widow (John W.'s mother), initiated a pension application for herself and that of her two surviving minor children--John W. and Amanda. The final file compiled over the next 23 years grew to over 100 pages - this file however provided valuable history about the family both before and after the Civil War.

Civil War File Provides Valuable Clues--In several affidavits in the civil war file of Thomas Morris, Jr., William A. Brown, Uncle John Morris's stepson, stated that he knew Thomas and Sarah (Brown) Morris Jr., and that he was present along with Nancy Morris when the couple were married February 11, 1844 in Taney Co. Missouri, and that he could testify to the state of the health of Thomas Morris Jr. before he enlisted in the Civil War. (Evidence was needed that Thomas Jr. had not died from a pre-existing condition).

Elsewhere in the file is a statement that both William A. Brown and his wife Susan (Taber) knew of the

family and remembered when a son, our John W. Morris, and a daughter, Amanda Morris, were born.

Civil War Conflict Reason Family Area?--The area in which the Morris family lived in south central Missouri was a hotbed of conflict during the Civil War. We know that not long after Thomas Jr. enlisted or died, his wife and two surviving children, John W. and Amanda C. Morris, left Ozark County and moved north to Miller County in central Missouri. Many other families left the area during the war to avoid not only the battles but also bushwhackers. Once the war was over in 1865, Sally and her two children apparently did not return to Ozark County but moved first to Laclede County (next to Miller County).

1870 -- John W. in Webster, Uncle John in Taney

By 1870, Thomas Jr.'s widow, Sally Morris was in Webster County along with her two children, John W. and Amanda. By then both the children were adults and had each married. In 1866, John W. had married Martha Embry, and around 1868, Amanda had married Joseph Canifax.

(Note: Amanda died about 1883 leaving one daughter Sarah

Table 1--Morris Migrations and Travels

1780s	John's Grandparents (Thomas Sr. & Dora) born in Georgia.
1825	John's father, Thomas Jr. born in Macoupin Co. Illinois.
1844	Thomas Jr. married Sarah (Sally) Brown
1847	John W. Morris was born in Taney Co., Big Creek Township.
1862	John W. resided in Taney Co. (or western Douglas).
1862	(March) John W. moved to Webster County near Marshfield.
1863	John W. moved to Miller Co. Missouri.
1866	John W. moved back to Webster County.
1872	John W. moved to Ozark County. His post office was Pilands Store.
1873	John W. and Martha's son, William Franklin Morris, was born in Taney County.
1876	Martha's death most likely after the birth of daughter, Lucinda.
1876	John W. married Caroline Honeycutt.
1877	John W. and Caroline's daughter, Amanda Melvina Morris, was born.
1878	John W. moved to Douglas County -- his post office was Rome.
1885	John W. moved from the Rome area to near Ava, MO
1900	John W., Caroline, and the younger children move to Harrison (Boone Co.), Arkansas.
1910	John W. and family are in Sallisaw, Prices Chapel Township, Sequoyah Co. OK.
1912	John W. died in Sequoyah Co., OK and was buried at the Akins Cemetery there.

Canifax who married Enoch Garrison. Sadly Sarah Garrison and her baby died as well before 1900).

The 1870 Webster County Mo. Census showed Amanda and Joseph Canifax living a couple of households away from John W. and Martha.

John W. and Martha's household was quite full. The 1870 census takers enumerated the following occupants:

1. John, age 23,
2. Martha, his wife, age 24
3. Daughter Mary Jane, age 3
4. Daughter Sarah, age 1

In addition the household included:

- Nancy Morris, age 59, who was born in Tennessee. This is John W.'s Aunt Nancy who married his Uncle John Morris.
- Sarah Conner, age 39, born in Arkansas. This is John W.'s widowed mother who later married a Connor. (The Civil War file of Thomas Morris Jr. stated that Sarah Brown Morris, the widow, remarried in 1865 to Joseph H. O. Conner in Miller County Missouri).

Before 1880--Our John W. Morris Family Near Rome in Douglas County

While our attempt to tie down all of John W.'s residences is incomplete, we got a big break once co-author, Nancy Morris Boyd, obtained the 103-page pension file of John W.'s father, Thomas Morris Jr.

The pension file contains numerous affidavits signed by family members and prominent citizens in Douglas, Ozark and Taney Counties dating from 1863 (not long after Thomas Morris' death) all the way up to 1886.

In one key affidavit dated May 13, 1885, John W. listed his residences from 1862 as follows:

- In early 1862, his post office address was Forsyth in Taney County.
- In March 1862 (one month after his father's death, John W. moved to Webster County with a post office address of Marshfield. (Note: at only 15 years of age, John W. would have been accompanied by his widowed mother and younger sister plus perhaps some other families leaving Taney County because of the Civil War).
- In March 1863 John W. moved further north to Miller County with a post office address of Pleasant Mound. (Note: Some of the affidavits suggest that Ozark County's Haskins family was with the Morris family in Miller County at that time).
- In 1866 (with the Civil War ended) John W. moved back to Webster County, post office ad-

Uncle John and Aunt Nancy in the 1870s

As described in the narrative in the opposite column, Aunt Nancy Morris, age 59, was living with her nephew, John W. Morris in Webster County in 1870. We offer no speculation as to why her husband, 49-year old Uncle John Morris was enumerated in the 1870 Taney County census with 30-year old Susan Permelia Hampton. The 1870 household also included the following:

- Elizabeth Hampton, b. 1863
- Russell Hampton, b. 1866
- Mary F., b. 1868

Uncle John's Civil War Pension File--Uncle John Morris served in the Ozark County Home guards under Captain Thomas Stones. His pension file contains affidavits dated from 1891 through 1921 signed by Permelia, her son, Russell, and other individuals. They are summarized as follows:

1. Permelia states that John Morris's first wife, Nancy, died in 1873 or 1874.
2. L.D. Haskins states that he married John Morris and Permelia Hampton in 1875, and Permelia states she had not been married before that time.
3. Permelia's son Russell uses the name Morris in an affidavit to state that he is Permelia's son but does not mention his relationship to Uncle John.
4. Both Isaac Taber and Permelia state that John Morris died in 1877.
5. Russell states that his mother, Permelia, died in his home in 1921.

Besides Permelia's three children (Elizabeth, Russell, and Mary F.) born before 1870, she had three other children in the 1870s, and they are listed on the 1880 Taney County Census: (1) Susan Morris, b. 1873; (2) Jimpsey Morris, b. 1875; and (3) William R. Morris, b. 1876. In her household in the 1880 Census is another child, John Morris, born that year.

dress again Marshfield. (As outlined earlier, the family enumerated in the 1870 census for Webster County).

- In 1872 John W. moved to Ozark County, post office address of Pilands Store.
- In 1878 John W. moved to Douglas County with a post office address of Rome (this is in Campbell Township)
- Finally as of May 1885, the date of the affidavit, John W. had moved to Benton Township of Douglas County, post office address of Ava.

The above movements generally agree with the accepted birth places of John W. and Martha's children although William F. stated he was born in Taney rather than Ozark County. Martha's 1876 death may have been related to the birth of Lucinda in March of that year.

John W. and Caroline Honeycutt must have been married almost immediately as their first child, Amanda Melvina, was born on February 9, 1877. Caroline Honeycutt was the daughter of Webster County, MO pioneers, Austin and Anna (Deckard) Honeycutt.

From 1878 until 1885, John W. had his family in Campbell Township (Rome area). During that period, his oldest daughters became teenagers.

In 1885, John W.'s oldest daughter, Jane, at 17 years of age, became the bride of William Deckard. The Deckards were a long-time Campbell Township family, and a little valley south of Rome is recalled by today's old-timers as Deckard Town.

Consistent with his May 1885 affidavit, John W. would leave Jane and William Deckard there in Campbell Township and move his family near the county seat, Ava, in Benton Township. Jane remained near Rome until her death in 1923.

John W. Morris appears in the 1885 listing of tax assessment for Benton Township and owning 2 horses, 3 milk cows, 13 sheep and no hogs.

In 1886, 14 year old Rebecca Morris married 17-year old William M. Marler while her parents were in Benton Township.

Moves to Isabella by 1891--Exactly when John W. moved his family back into Ozark County has not yet been discovered. Of course no 1890 census records exist. But John W. and Caroline's first child, Amanda Melvina Morris, married James Lihu Brown on December 1, 1891.

At 14 years of age, Amanda listed Isabella, Ozark County, as her postal address. At that time, Amanda was still in the Morris family home helping with four younger sisters and two younger brothers. Years later "Aunt Mel", as Amanda was often called around Ava, reportedly said about her young age of marriage: "Well, I was already taking care of babies; I just figured I might as well be taking care of my own." Amanda returned to Benton Township in Douglas County with her new husband in 1891 where she and "Uncle Jim" Brown would raise a family of 12 on a farm about five miles south of Ava now owned by the Ross family.

Moves to Gainesville by 1896?--Another child, Matilda Francis Morris, listed Gainesville post office when, at age 15, she married Isaac Jackson Hall of Silverton in Douglas County. Holding to the theory that these young girls stayed at the Morris home until married, we believe that John W. had moved again within Ozark County by 1896.

Although 23 at the time, John W.'s only son by Martha, William F. Morris, married Martha Spurlock

Manning in 1897. Both listed Gainesville as their postal address.

However, in her 1898 marriage to J.J. "Babe" Walker, John W.'s daughter, Sarah E. Morris, listed Squires in Douglas County as her postal address. Being almost 30 years of age at the time, Sarah E. may have been living near there with another family. For example, the area was close to her sister Amanda "Mel" and her Brown in-laws. The store owner at Squires (John Squires) was married to Frankie Brown, an older sister of Aunt Mel's husband, James Lihu Brown.

1900 Census Puts John W. In Boone County, Arkansas

John W. and Caroline's youngest child was Dovie Morris born in 1897 in Ozark County. With most of their older children married and established in southern Missouri counties, John W. and Caroline crossed the state line into Arkansas before the census taker came around in 1900.

According to the 1900 census of Harrison Township of Boone County, the Morris household included John W. (age 53), Caroline Morris (age 44), and their six minor children plus their son, Thomas W., age 22.

Table 2: John W. Morris's Family Tree

John W. Morris (b. July 6, 1847 - d. May 7, 1912)

Married in 1866 **Martha E. EMBRY** (b. 1846 - d. ca 1876)

Children:

- Mary Jane MORRIS (b. ca 1868 - d. 1923) Married William DECKARD
- Sarah E. MORRIS (b. 1869 - d. 1940) Married James Joseph "Babe" WALKER.
- Rebecca E. MORRIS (b. 1872 - d.) Married William M. MARLER
- William Franklin MORRIS (b. 1873 - d. 1947) Married Martha Malissa SPURLOCK.
- Lucinda Alice (Allie) MORRIS (b. 1876 - d. 1910) Married Clark Williams

Married in 1876 **Caroline HONEYCUTT** (b. 1856 - d. 1935)

Children:

- Amanda Melvina MORRIS (b. 1877 - 1959) Married James Lihu BROWN
- Thomas W. MORRIS (b. 1878 - d. 1948) Married Mary Sevetta Potts
- Nancy Jane MORRIS (b. 1880 - d. 1880)
- Matilda Francis "Fannie" MORRIS (b. 1881 - 1919) Married Isaac Jackson HALL
- Laura A. MORRIS (b. 1882 - d. before 1920) Married Clyde Gooding
- Nora MORRIS (b. 1886 - d. ?) Married (1) George Meadows, (2) Blue Rigsby, (3) Kincade.
- Ollie MORRIS (b. 1886 - d. 1923) Married Samuel Berton Wingate
- Daniel H. MORRIS (b. 1890 - d. 1926) Married Hattie Potts
- Dora D. MORRIS (b. 1894 - d. 1981) Married William Covington
- Dovie Mae MORRIS (b. 1897 - d. 1976) Married Edward Covington

The photo at right is the only one the authors have of John W. Morris. It came from a granddaughter, Daisy Hall Sherman, who said she was born in this Boone County Arkansas house in 1901. Her parents were Isaac Jackson & Matilda Francis “Fannie” (Morris) Hall. In Daisy’s own handwriting, she wrote the identities of everyone listed below the photo.

Everyone listed in the 1900 census were in this picture except for Thomas W. Morris (age 22) and Ollie J. Morris (age 13).

Isaac J. and “Fannie” Hall were still in Ozark County in 1900 but having lost their first child at infancy in 1897, they may have joined the Morris family in Arkansas for assistance in the birth of Daisy which occurred on Dec. 29, 1901.

John W. and Caroline Morris Family around 1900 near Harrison Arkansas



“Left to Right -- my grandfather, John Morris, Aunt Laura in doorway with guitar; (Aunts) Dovie & Dora; Grandmother Caroline Morris; then Uncle Dan and Aunt Nora.” Signed by Daisy (Hall) Sherman

John W.’s Final Years in Eastern Oklahoma

Where does John W. Morris appear on his final census record in 1910? Well, it was in Prices Chapel Township, Sequoyah County, Oklahoma. This county is the area across the Arkansas River west of Fort Smith.

Based on his tombstone and his mother’s 1863 affidavit, John was born on July 6, 1847. He would die in Sequoyah County in May 1912 at the age of 65. He is buried at Akins Cemetery just a few miles northeast of Sallisaw, the county seat. Also buried at the Akins cemetery are Caroline, who died in 1935, plus four of their children--Ollie Wingate, Daniel H. Morris, Dora Covington and Dovie Covington.

Where Are John W.’s Descendants Today?

Of John W.’s 15 children listed on Table 2, only three were boys and the rest were girls. Thus many of John W.’s living descendants today carry a surname other than Morris.

For the most part, John’s older children by Martha Embry stayed in the midwest and particularly southern Missouri. Except his first child, Amanda Melvina, by Caroline Honeycutt, virtually all of these children started their families in eastern Oklahoma, and many of these descendants still reside there.

Descendants in Southern Missouri--Within Douglas and Ozark Counties, John W.’s descendants might have surnames of Brown, Davis, Deckard, Hall,

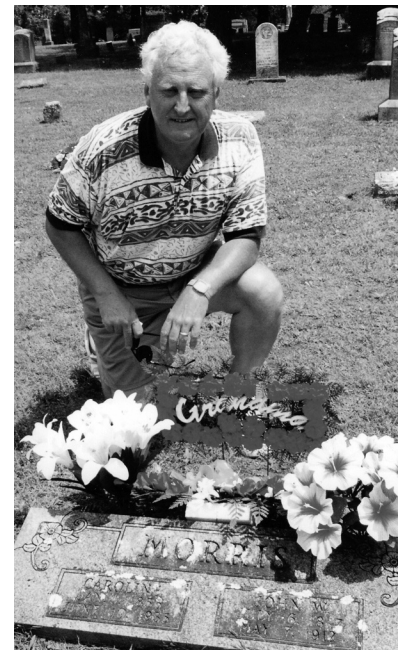
Marler or Walker. (Note: some of the Hall children may have moved to Arkansas and then Oklahoma where descendants still live there).

Two of Amanda “Aunt Mel” (Morris) Brown’s daughters, Rosa and Bertha, married Davis brothers, Elmer and Neal, in Douglas County, and a very large number of descendants came out of their marriages.

Honeycutt is a related surname in that John W.’s second wife, Caroline, was a sister to the Honeycutt old-timers in Ozark County.

Descendants Within Oklahoma--Within Oklahoma, descendants of Thomas W. and Daniel H. Morris may still carry the Morris surname. Some of the family tree information was provided by a grandson of Thomas W. Morris, Dennis Earl Wilson.

Two of the youngest girls



Co-Author Ken Brown at the grave of his Great-Grandparents, John W. & Caroline (Honeycutt) Morris, Akins Cemetery, Sequoyah County, OK

married Covington brothers creating many descendants for John W. and Caroline but mostly in Oklahoma. Other surnames within Oklahoma could be Wingate and Kincade, and no doubt there are more.

Conclusion and Contact Information

The article being published here will be distributed to all known descendants of John W. Morris and his two wives. Both authors want to reach out to our Morris cousins as well the Honeycutt family.

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James Lihu and Amanda (Morris) Brown -- ca 1899-1900
Children (left to right)

- Rosa -- married Elmer Davis of Ava. Their children were Cecil, Herman, Earnie, Fern Wood, Gene, and Christine Irby.
- Jesse (in a dress) married Lena Spurlock of Squires. They had no children. Both are buried in Arizona.
- Bertha -- married Neal Davis of Ava. Their children were Wilma Flynn, Lloyd, Jessie, Gerry Hailey and Barbara Mitchell.
- Sherman -- married Frankie Harrison of Gainesville. Their children were Bill Brown, former 1950s Congressman Charlie Brown, and Dr. Jim Brown all of Springfield.

Photo provided by another child, Lulu (Brown) Shrum.

The images on this page are part of Ken's collection scanned from albums of three daughters of Amanda Melvina (Morris) Brown: (1) Lulu Shrum, (2) Rosie Davis and (3) Bertha Davis. More are available at Ken's family history site at www.ozark-uncle.com.



L-R: Amanda (Morris) Brown, her mother, Caroline (Honeycutt) Morris, her sisters, Nora (Morris) Meadows and Dora (Morris) Covington). The picture was taken at the Brown farm south of Ava in the late 1920s. The image was scanned from an original held by Rosa (Brown) Davis and handed down to her daughter-in-law, Loa Davis.



Early 1950s -- five generations: (1) Amanda (Morris) Brown, (2) Bertha (Brown) Davis [both seated], (3) Wilma (Davis) Flynn (4) Norma (Flynn) Denney [both standing], and (5) Charles Denney in front