



TARRANT COUNTY TXGENWEB

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Civil War Veterans of Northeast Tarrant County

James Monroe Blanks

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James Monroe Blanks was a member of a Tennessee Confederate infantry regiment. He spent the last years of his life living with a married daughter and her family in present-day Euless, Tarrant County, Texas. At present he lies buried in a misidentified grave in Watson Cemetery in Arlington.

When Mr. Blanks joined the R. E. Lee Camp of United Confederate veterans in Fort Worth he wrote that he was born in 1840 in Warren County, Tennessee. Census records and family genealogists say he was the son of William and Lucinda Blanks who appear in the 1840 census of Warren County.

Mr. Blanks appears as James M. Blanks in the 1850 census of Warren County, Tennessee in the 8th Civil District. He was an eleven-year-old boy in the family of William and Lucinda Blanks. His father was a farmer.

When the 1860 census was taken of Warren County, he appears as "Monrow" Blanks, age twenty-two, in his father's family. His father was working as a laborer and owned no real estate; he did own personal property worth three hundred dollars. The names and ages of the Blanks siblings in this family confirm that this is the same family which appears in the 1850 census.

James M. Blanks was a soldier in the Confederate Army. He enlisted for a term of twelve months at Camp Harris, Tennessee on May 21, 1861. He told his comrades in the R. E. Lee Camp of the United Confederate Veterans in Fort Worth that he enlisted at McMinnville, Tennessee. Camp Harris was actually at Estill Springs in Franklin County, Tennessee. McMinnville and Estill Springs are about sixty miles apart. He became a private in Co. D, 16th Tennessee Infantry. He was elected to the rank of 3rd corporal on March 31, 1862.

He appears on a company muster roll dated near Chattanooga, Tennessee on July 15, 1863, at which time he stated he was twenty-five years old. He told his UCV comrades that he was wounded during the Battle of Chickamauga in September, 1863.

His name appears as a 2nd Sergeant in Co. F, 1st Consolidated Regiment of Tennessee Volunteers on a roll dated near High Point, North Carolina on April 18, 1865. The 16th Tennessee Infantry and other regiments were consolidated to form the newer regiment about the time of General Lee's surrender. Blanks was with General Joseph E. Johnston's Army when it was surrendered to General W. T. Sherman's Army. The surrender document says he enlisted on May 20, 1861 at "Alisona," Tennessee for the duration of the War. Allisonia, Tennessee was the name by which Estill Springs was often known before the War.

James M. Blanks and Mary Chisholm got their marriage license on December 15, 1868 in Warren County, Tennessee. They were married two days later by James W. Dulany, a minister of the gospel. She was born about 1847 in Tennessee. She died at some time between the taking of the censuses in 1880 and 1900. We have found nothing to indicate whether she died in Tennessee or Texas. The death certificate of one of her daughters gives her surname as Chism.

The census taker in 1870 found Mr. Blanks and his family living in Civil District 2 in Warren County, Tennessee in an area served by the post office at McMinnville. His age is shown was thirty one; Mary's was twenty-three. They had two children with them: Lavinia who was three, and Martha who was five months old, born in February 1870. James was working as a farm laborer in that year. The fact that James and Mary Blanks were not married until late 1868 might indicate that this was a second marriage for Mr. Blanks.

When the 1880 census was taken, Mr. Blanks and his family were living in the 4th Civil District of White County, Tennessee. White County and Warren County are adjacent counties. He and Mary had four children living with them in that year: Caledonia (age fourteen), Martha (age ten), Louvenia (age six), and Adella C. (age two).

We are fortunate to be able to get one small insight into the life of James M. Blanks. He appears in the 1880 agricultural census of White County, Tennessee. The statistics recorded cover the year ended June 1, 1880. When the census was taken he was sharecropping on a farm of thirty acres. The farm, including the buildings and fences, was worth one hundred fifty dollars. He had farming implements worth five dollars and livestock worth either ninety or seventy dollars...the microfilm is unclear. He estimated that all his farm productions in the past year had been valued at one hundred forty dollars.

In that year he owned one milk cow and one other cow of an unnamed class, probably that cow's calf. One calf had been dropped on his farm in the past year. He estimated that they had churned thirty pounds of butter. He owned two sheep on the day the census taker came. One was ready to be shorn, and he estimated the fleece would weigh one pound. He owned a number of hogs, but the numeral is not readable in the microfilm. He also owned a number of chickens, but the specific information about them is not readable. The production for the entire farm on which he worked is not broken down by individual sharecropper, but he worked with others to put in crops of Indian corn, wheat, oats, and cotton.

He had, apparently in a plot of his own, produced three bushels of cow peas and one bushel of dry beans. He also had plots of his own sweet potatoes and tobacco, but the production numbers are not

readable. He kept honey bees which had produced ten pounds of honey and one pound of beeswax. He had cut fifteen cords of wood, worth one dollar per cord.

The 1900 census and the 1910 census both say that Martha Blanks' son, Henry Clay Snodgrass, was born about 1892 in Tennessee. If this is correct then she and Mr. Blanks may have come to Texas between about 1892 and about 1896 when she married Mr. Trigg here in Texas. A statement in Martha's obituary suggests she came to Texas about 1894.

When the 1900 census was taken James M. Blanks was living with the family of his married daughter, Martha A. (Blanks) Snodgrass Trigg, in present-day Euless, Tarrant County, Texas. This census records his birth as October 1839, and the birth of Martha as January 1872. He was not with them when the 1910 census was taken.

No record of the death of James Monroe Blanks has been located. There is no death certificate on file for him, in spite of a Texas law which was passed in 1903 requiring them. For many rural areas in Texas it was nearly World War II before anything like universal coverage in birth and death certificates was attained. There is no readable headstone standing for him in any Tarrant County cemetery under the name James M. Blanks. No obituary appeared for him in the Dallas, Grapevine or Fort Worth newspapers, and no issues of the Arlington paper from 1909 have survived.

There is a flat marker in Watson Cemetery which must belong to James M. Blanks. It is directly adjacent to the grave of one of his grandchildren, Eddie McMillan, who died in 1913 and is listed in the 1910 census with Thomas J. McMillan and May (Blanks) McMillan, his wife. Watson cemetery was used by at least two and possibly more of James M. Blanks' children. This headstone's inscription says "John M. Blanks, September 10, 1847-July 15, 1909." No one appearing to be this John M. Blanks is found in the 1900 census of Tarrant County. The fact that James M. Blanks disappeared from the census records between 1900 and 1910, the fact that this stone is directly beside one of James M. Blanks' grandchildren, and the fact that the stone was made more than fifty years after his death...all seem to indicate the stone was simply made in error.

This John M. Blanks headstone in Watson Cemetery is of fairly-recent vintage. It is gray granite and was cut using the sandblasting/engraving process which was not available until the late 1920's. In addition, the stone was not present when the DAR canvassed the cemetery in 1963.

To add to the confusion, there is also a Texas death certificate on file for one John M. Blanks, born about 1832, who died at 110 West Hattie Street in Fort Worth on March 2, 1909. This was a mistake made at the time the death certificate was filed. The person who actually died on that date was Christopher Columbus Blanks, who was born in 1832 and who died on March 2, 1909, confirmed by his obituary in the Fort Worth newspaper; It also confirms that he died at 110 West Hattie Street. John M. Blanks (1862-1955) was Christopher's son. Apparently the registrar mistakenly recorded the informant as the deceased person.

Only two census records, 1870 and 1880, show Mr. Blanks as the head of a household in which children are living. In 1870 he is shown with a daughter named Lavinia who was born about 1867 and a five-month-old daughter named Martha.

In 1880 the daughter shown as Lavinia appears in the census with the name Caledonia (born about 1866); there was also Martha (born about 1870), Louvenia (born about 1874) and Adella C. (born about 1878). Had the 1890 U. S. census survived it would have told us more about his wife and children.

Lavinia Caledonia Blanks was born, according to her death certificate, on August 10, 1866. Descendants at ancestry.com say she married David Nicholson Dalton (1856-1941) on October 7, 1880 in White County, Tennessee. In 1910 they lived on the Grand Prairie Road in Precinct 2 of Tarrant County. She died at 5 a.m. on October 27, 1945 at her home in Precinct 2 along Route 1, Arlington, Texas. She was buried the next day in Watson Cemetery. She shares a double marker there with her husband.

Martha Ann Elizabeth Blanks was born in February of 1870 according to the census of that year. Her death certificate shows the date as January 10, 1870. She was shown as five months old when the census was taken on July 15, 1870. This date must be more correct than any of the later ones shown in other records. Her headstone records her birth as January 10, 1872. In the 1900 census Martha A. Trigg and her husband, James Hayden "Bud" Trigg (1847-1919), are shown as having been married four years, and she told the census taker she had given birth to two children. One of these children was in her earlier marriage to Mr. Snodgrass and the younger was with Mr. Trigg. Both were with her in the 1900 census. This compiler was acquainted with the younger son, Adam Euleless Trigg.

When the 1920 census was taken, Martha Blanks Trigg and her two sons were living in the household of Thomas McMillan. McMillan had no living wife at that time, but Mrs. Trigg is listed in the census as his sister-in-law. One of Thomas McMillan's sons in his first marriage, Raymond McMillan, has a death certificate which lists his mother as Cindy Blanks. Thus Cindy Blanks may be one of the daughters shown in the 1880 census with another name, or she may have been born after 1880. When the 1930 census was taken Martha Trigg was living in the household of her son, Clay Snodgrass. Thomas McMillan was not with the family, but his son, T. J. McWilliams, was with them and was shown as Clay Snodgrass' cousin.

At some time after 1920 Martha Blanks Snodgrass Trigg married this same Thomas J. McMillan. She died at 1 p.m. on March 23, 1936 (according to her death certificate) and shares a double headstone with her first husband in Calloway Cemetery in Euless, Tarrant County, Texas. The headstone gives her date of death as March 21. Her obituary and death certificate say she was buried in Calloway Cemetery.

The Arlington Journal, of Friday, March 27, 1936 carried the following obituary: *"Funeral Services of Mrs. McMillan. Mrs. Mattie Trigg McMillan, 65?, died at her home in Bedford, at one p.m. Monday after an illness of several months. Funeral services were conducted at the home at 3:30 p.m. Tuesday, with Rev. Elmer Lake officiating. Burial was in Calloway Cemetery. Mrs. McMillan is survived by her husband, J. J. McMillan, three sons, H. C. Snodgrass, Arlington; A. E. Trigg, Gladewater; D. O. Trigg, Weatherford; one stepson, E. J. McMillan, Arlington; one sister, Mrs. Callie Dalton, Arlington and 13 grand children. She was a pioneer Tarrant County citizen, having*

lived in the county 42 years and in Birdville 32 years. She was beloved by all who knew her, and her many friends extend their deepest sympathy to her husband and children."

One of the daughters was Adella C. Blanks who was born about 1878. She married William Arthur Willis. The Willis family lived in Precinct 1 of Fort Worth in 1910. Mrs. Willis died at Newark, Tarrant County, Texas at 7:30 p.m. on May 15, 1925. She was buried in Watson Cemetery in Arlington, Texas. The informant for her death certificate did not know the names of either of her parents. Neither of the Willises has a readable marker in Watson Cemetery.

May Blanks, another of James M. Blanks' daughters, was born about 1880. About 1900 she married Thomas Jefferson McMillan, who was born about 1872 and died in Tarrant County on July 11, 1945; he was buried in the Watson Cemetery in Arlington. In the 1910 census her name appears as May Blanks and her age is shown as thirty, thus she must have been born soon after the taking of the 1880 census. A resident of Bedford who remembers Thomas McMillan remembers that after his first wife died Thomas married one of his first wife's sisters. The McMillan's oldest daughter's death certificate record's her mother's name as May Blanks. One of the McMillan children, Luther Bond McMillan, has a death certificate which records his mother's name as Cindy Blanks. *Knowing this family's penchant for giving daughters names beginning with some variant of "Lou, " it would seem possible they may have named this daughter Lucinda May Blanks, thus Cindy would have been a reasonable nickname. James M. Blanks' mother was named Lucinda.*