



KNOW YOUR ROOTS

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MORE ABOUT BECKY'S SIBLINGS

Two years ago exactly this month, I told you about our ancestral grandmother, Rebecca Jane Free (Becky), and her siblings. There were two sisters only identified as Mary and Elizabeth. That was because I didn't know which was which. Now through

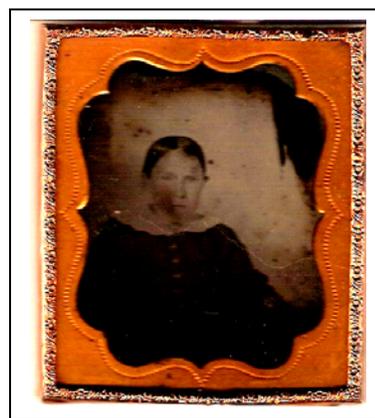


the help of a descendant of her brother Milton, I'm able to identify the two. This is a tintype of Becky's siblings as I believe it to be about the time she married in 1872. The couple on the left is her sister Alwilda born in 1844 and her husband. The couple on the right is her brother Milton born in 1877 and his wife. Seated on the left is James Youngs Durland, husband of Becky, and seated on the right is Becky herself, born in 1848.

As you can see, there are two sisters in the middle identified only as Elizabeth and Mary. Now I know that the one in the back is Elizabeth born in 1835 and the one in front is Mary born in 1841. While this story will chiefly be about Mary because I am able to separate the sisters, this is the year of families so I want to first mention the other siblings of

Becky. She was the youngest of nine and I do have some information on most of them. They are all the children of William Free and Mary Elizabeth Elson, and the parents themselves have stories to tell at a future time.

The first child of William and Mary Elizabeth was Ruth, born in 1825, and while this name is an anomaly in the Free family, she will remain virtually unknown until I can find more information about her. I think I know where the name came from and why, but I need more history. John, the first son, was born in 1826, and follows the German naming pattern of the first son always named after the father's father. John stayed with the family until the father died in Flora, Illinois and then

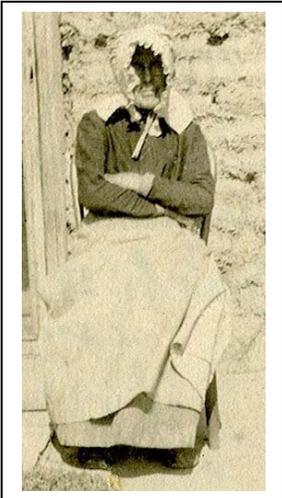
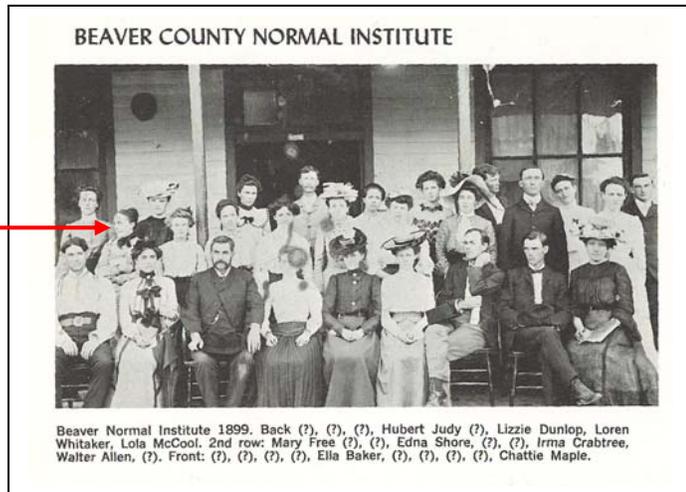


he took his family to his wife's town. His story is also one for the future as I have pictures of his two babies and what happened as they grew.

Following were William Henson born in 1829 and Elson born in 1830 but they did not move to Illinois with the family. My information on them is very sparse. All I know is that William Henson married Sarah McCulley in 1853 in Ohio when William Free, his father, farmed there and Elson in 1850 was farming then but with the Samuel Perry family. Only John was farming with his father in 1850. Elizabeth was always listed as a housekeeper except on one census where I found her listed as a dressmaker. She is the one in the middle on top in the group picture. She went with Milton and his family as he journeyed to the Oklahoma territory.

That leads me to Milton, and his story is by far the most adventurous of the group. I told you a little about his Civil War experience but this story is more about Mary S., the sister under Elizabeth in the tintype.

Mary, always using "S" in her name, was the teacher of the family. She went with Milton wherever he went and we always find her teaching. This Beaver County picture sent to me by Milton's descendant, Jennifer Jungling, helped me identify her in the tintype group photo. In this photo she was



attending a meeting of teachers and was well into her fifties. The other photo is hard to see but it is also of Mary. I have to add that her influence must have affected a daughter of Milton's because she became a teacher too and probably had her training at this very Normal Institute which at that time trained primary school teachers. I find this ironic that her profession has continued in the family through the generations.

Finally after Mary S. is Alwilda, the daughter who married Isaac Clark six months after Rebecca's marriage. It was his second marriage. This marriage lasted through four children and then Alwilda and he were divorced. I don't know what happened to three of the children. Through one of them, Cora Bell, I became acquainted with her daughter, Geraldine, who was a tremendous help with Milton's military history. Alwilda was 91 when she died at the home of a granddaughter in California.

So this is the story of Rebecca Free's siblings. How sad for her, they all left Flora although I think she was closest to Milton. At least when he died, his family must have brought him back to Flora, Illinois, for the funeral service was held at Rebecca's home and he was buried in the Elmwood cemetery. It is very strange. I cannot find a record of the Free burials in Elmwood and yet I know that Rebecca's father is buried there also.

(Webmaster & Technical Advisor: Jerry Larkin)