



KNOW YOUR ROOTS

A Family That Doesn't Know Its Past Doesn't Understand Itself

VOLUME IX Issue 3

FREE/ELSON

JULY 2004

MORE ON THE SIBLINGS OF

REBECCA FREE



AND HER MOTHER



**MARY
ELIZABETH ELSON**

REBECCA FREE'S SIBLINGS

(This is in addition to the VII Free/Elson issue story. There is some repetition)

RUTH Ruth Free was the eldest child of William and Mary Elizabeth Free nee Elson. She was born in 1825 in Ohio where William had a farm. This is an ambrotype, which I still believe to be her picture. She appears as the eldest in the 1850 census in Ohio and in the Jersey County, Illinois census in 1860 and also is in the 1865 state census in Jersey County, Illinois. However, neither Ruth nor her mother appears on the 1870 census in Clay County, Illinois. Jersey County has no record of her death nor does Clay County. I believe Ruth received her name from an aunt of her father named Ruth. The name is definitely only on the Free side and does not appear on the Elson side.



JOHN is the oldest of the males and follows in the tradition of past Free families of naming the oldest son John. William also had a brother John who was the first born of William's siblings. I am not sure that this photo is John because it looks so much like the ambrotype of his father. However, ambrotypes were no longer being made when tintypes started, and the photo below is a tintype. John was born in 1826, also in Ohio. He farmed with his father in Ohio in 1850. Sometime between that census and the one in 1860 we find John with his own farm in Jersey County, Illinois. At that time he is married to Elizabeth Hooper whose family was from Christian County, Illinois.



His father also was farming in Jersey County and we can only surmise that John moved there with his father. There is no way of knowing in those ten years when the move took place or how he met Elizabeth Hooper who was from a different county. They were married March 1, 1860 in Jersey County. When we pick up John again in 1870 he is head of the household in Clay County, his mother had died, and from his marriage with Elizabeth he had four children, William, Mary, Alwilda, and Alma. I could not find John after 1870 until researching another brother. I found him with his wife's family in Christian County, Illinois. The story of Christian County will follow.

WILLIAM HENSON is the next sibling after John. He was born in 1829 in Ohio. The only record of William Henson is that of April 22 when he married Sarah McCulley in Ohio. When the Free family moved to Jersey County, William Henson must have stayed in Ohio because he is no longer on the family lists. Perhaps by this time he had his own farm as so many of William's children continued farming with farms of their own. I call your attention to his name. The first name is after his father and the second after his uncle Henson Elson, a sibling of his mother.

ELSON who follows William Henson is entirely lost. The only record is of his birth in 1830 in Ohio. In 1850, when he would have been 20 years old, he was living with Samuel

and Mary Perry in Carroll, Ohio. Since that was a farm, the assumption is that he was a farm hand. Notice that Elson was his mother's maiden name

ELIZABETH was born in 1835 also in Ohio. She stayed with the family throughout their moves in Illinois. In the Clay County 1870 census she is listed as a dressmaker. After her father died and her sisters Alwilda and Rebecca married, she stayed with her brothers and finally ended up in Oklahoma with Milton. There is a time before Oklahoma when she was in Christian County, Illinois. That time will be in the following story about John.

MILTON is perhaps the most colorful of the family as he is the only one in the Civil War. These are the details from the Fourteenth Infantry of the Regiment of Illinois Volunteers in the Muster and Descriptive Rolls of Company F. Milton enlisted at age 23 in the army on May 25, 1861. He had two sisters Alwilda and Rebecca. His eyes were blue and he was 5 ft. 7 inches tall. (*More about Milton was in the Free/Elson issue in 1998*). It was his obituary in Flora that gave me the clue about Christian County, which let me trace his sisters Elizabeth and Mary, and his brother John.



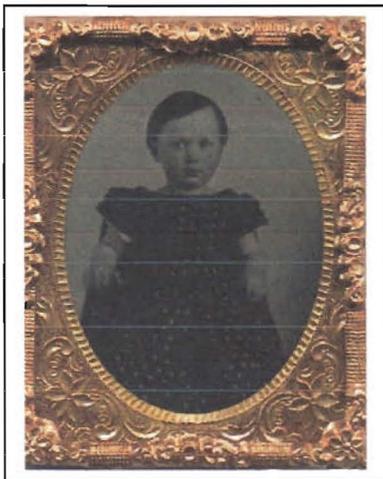
MARY S. What the S stands for in her name still eludes me. All through the census she is recorded as simply Mary S. This may be to distinguish herself from her mother who was Mary Elizabeth. On the 1870 census of Flora she was listed as a schoolteacher. Sometime between the years of 1860 in Jersey County and 1870 in Flora she must have started teaching, which continued through 1880 when she still appeared as a schoolteacher in the home of George Deal in Christian County. Mary was still teaching school when I found her with Milton in the Oklahoma Territory in 1900.

ALWILDA was born in 1844 and from the photos seems to be the most attractive of the Free girls. The year of 1872 seems to have been a very banner year for the William Free family. First Rebecca, Alwilda's sister, married James Durland on the 2nd of January. Then Alwilda was married on the 4th of June to Isaac Clark. In November of 1872 William, father of all, died. The family, with the exception of Rebecca, all left Flora. With Alwilda, it was a surprise to find that Isaac had been married before and was divorced in 1869. Divorce in those days could not have been very common. Isaac had participated in the military so after he died Alwilda was able to collect a pension. One of their four children, Cora, lived for a time with James and Rebecca Durland and their family in Flora. Through Cora I became acquainted with our cousins in Santa Barbara. Alwilda died in 1935 so she outlived all of her siblings.

MORE ON SIBLING JOHN FREE

After 1872 Rebecca was the only one left in Flora. Her father had died and the farm was sold, but I was curious to know what happened to the rest of her siblings who were on the census of 1870.

That census showed that Milton had returned from the Civil War and that the sisters Elizabeth and Mary S. still lived with John, as did Alwilda and Rebecca. I knew that both Alwilda and Rebecca had married in 1872. John, who was head of the household, had a wife named Elizabeth who had been born in England. On the same census, John and Elizabeth had four children, William, Mary, Alwilda and Alma. Where were they?



In the tintypes I have there is one of Little Willie identified by the following scrap of paper.



I believe the next tintype is Mary, the second child of John and Elizabeth.



Poor child. She looks like she must have been in pain!

I didn't have any idea where this family went until I found a copy of the obituary of Milton from the Southern Illinois Record. Finally a clue! The obituary said Milton had married Susanne Peake in October of 1870 and had had three children. His life was fraught with tragedy. His wife died in 1877 and his eldest child, a son, had died in the St. Louis cyclone of 1896. It also said that he moved to Christian County, Illinois before going to Oklahoma.

So I decided to write to Christian County for more information. It is there that I struck pay dirt! There was no Milton but there was John Free and the family of Elizabeth Hooper, John's wife who was from Christian County. When I contacted the County for information the reply came back, asking, "What connection do you have to John Free?"

When I answered that he was a grand uncle of mine, the dam broke. The respondent not only knew a lot about John Free but also about his youngest child Charles whose farm was adjacent to his. Not only that, he knew

Charles before he died. I told him I would be very happy to pay for whatever he could tell me. One day a large package arrived with the complete history of John plus his wife's family, the Hoopers.

I was flooded with information, census forms, farm maps, newspaper articles, probate records, funeral papers, and cemetery records with pictures of headstones. I must confess I haven't straightened it all out yet.

The 1880 census shows John had had two more children in Christian County, a daughter Cressy, age 8, and a son Charles, age 3, making six altogether. John, the farmer, lived on a farm owned by the Hooper family, his wife's family. His son William, who was eighteen, worked on this farm.

John Free died 29 October 1890 at the age of 62. His probate records show that he didn't own any real estate, which brings to mind a question. What happened to the real estate he owned in Jersey County and in Flora? When he died he left his wife, Elizabeth, and six children. Only Mary of the girls had married. Elizabeth received \$1165 and personal property amounting to \$345.50.

Mr. Sloman, the kind man who gave me all this information, wrote that the Free family, the Hooper family, and his family, the Slomans, all had ties to one another.

He remembers Charles "Charley" Free and his sisters, Cressie, Alma, and Wilda very well. Neither of these girls married. He said the sisters did not go out from the home very often but he remembers them from when he often went to visit Charley.

It was very strange for me to correspond with a man living who actually knew Rebecca's nieces and nephew. Charley attended the Baptist

Church where Mr. Sloman was a member. He said he can still hear Charley singing with the men.

During the depression of the 1930's the church did not have money to pay the preacher or the bills. Charley was church treasurer at the time and would pay the bills from his own funds rather than see the church close.

After several years the church did reimburse him but he would take no interest on the money. "This is probably the best example of what kind of man he was," Mr. Sloman said. All the Frees were loved and highly respected.

Charles, along with Wilda, Alma, and Cressie lived with a Hooper uncle who had never married. William (little Willie) moved to Texas where some of his children still live. Mary married Louis Hardin.

Wilda, Alma, and Cressie, all unmarried, remained on the farm that Charley inherited from his uncle Hooper throughout their lives.

Charles died in 1950. Alma died in 1966, Cressie in 1958 and Wilda in 1940 in Christian County. I have pictures of all their tombstones on the Hooper cemetery plot.

Needless to say, I am eternally grateful to Mr. Nevil Sloman who sent me this myriad of information. Much of it I have not included in this story but all the records will go into the Free file for posterity.

My quest for Rebecca's siblings is not over. I still have to find out what happened to William Henson Free. And also Elson Free in Ohio, and to solve what happened to Elizabeth and Mary S. in Oklahoma.

(Little Willy's picture appears in the new book "More Dating Old Photographs" just published.)

MARY ELIZABETH ELSON'S SIBLINGS

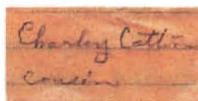
(Mother of Rebecca)

MARY ELIZBETH (picture on cover) was born in 1805 in Virginia. Her parents were William Elson and Hannah Stewart. She was the eldest of the eleven children and from all the records married at age sixteen which was not uncommon at that time for girls. Many of the tintypes I have, I believe to be her siblings. See the other stories in the past issues of the newsletters.

HENSON is the brother who was probably closest to Mary Elizabeth. He was born 1806. I have this tintype, which is unidentified but I think it is Uncle Henson. I know that he moved to Parke County, Indiana. If it is Uncle Henson I also have his wife. This piece of paper was apart from the tintype.



CHARLES was the third of the family. He married Ann Catlin and therein lies another one of the identified photos. Charles was born in 1809 in Virginia. This is an ambrotype, which is on glass and is a much earlier photo than a tintype. I'm not sure that Charles had a son Charles who would be the cousin to Rebecca but this is the only one that fits into the time frame. Charles, the father, eventually went to Parke County, Indiana also where Henson was located. I do know a Charles descendant and will ask if it looks like any Catlin. He died in Parke County, Indiana.



RICHARD who was born in 1811 died in infancy.

ISABEL was born in 1812 in Virginia and until just recently she was just another unidentified photo. However, one of our distant cousins on the Elson side with whom I had been in contact surprised me one day saying she had found a picture of Isabel when she was older. She sent it to me and, lo and behold, my picture was Isabel. The likeness was unmistakable. This must have been taken about the same time as the Uncle Henson tintype for it too is a tintype. On the back of the new picture was the information that in 1846 Isabel went to Indiana to keep house for her brother Henson. Then in 1848 she married James Webster so the man in the picture is her husband James. She had two children by James, Hannah Mary and William Stewart. James died in 1882 and Isabel died in 1899. According to the notation on the back of the picture she was a deeply religious person, a Methodist, and took care of the children of four brothers and sisters.



JOHN was born in 1815 in Virginia. He was also a farmer. He married a much younger woman, Margaret, and they had a child, William. It may have been his second marriage.

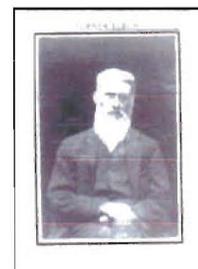
WILLIAM JR. who was born in 1817 is another sibling on whom I have no information except on the census in Parke County, Indiana; he was living with his brother Stewart. His wife, Rebecca Brown, must have died and there evidently weren't any children.

STEWART who was born in 1819 was the administrator of his father's estate when William died in Ohio in 1849. Then he became the head of the household and after his mother died I find him in 1860 in Parke County, Indiana. It seems many brothers moved to Parke County, Indiana from Ohio.

THOMAS was born in 1822. My dilemma that I wrote about in the 2002 issue still exists. Thomas is the father of William Harris Elson, the renowned Ohio educator. Check that issue for all the details. His picture appears on the right. The picture below is the picture which I believed to be one of Thomas and Turner his brother. It is on leather and is extremely rare. At the time I did not know it was a pannotype. An authority I showed it to with my belief says it is not the two brothers but could have been a copy of an earlier one, namely an ambrotype. This is the explanation I am willing to accept because look at the brother on the right. Doesn't William Harrison resemble his father, the young man on the right?



TURNER was born in 1824 and I believe to be the one on the left. I know that the picture below is of Turner when he was an old man. It was sent to me by one of our distant cousins, a descendant, who lives in Illinois. Note the hands. Be sure and read all the details in the 2002 Free Issue. There is also another descendant of Turner in Illinois. And I have been in contact with the two of them. The former one, Rowena Drennan, has put all her Elson history on several websites, which you can find under her name and the Elson name. Rowena is the one who told me about the Elson Readers. Marianne Morgan, the latter, is the one who has sent me many photos of the Elsons in the 1800s and one that I can't identify at this time.



HANNAH was the last child born to William and Hannah Stewart in 1827. I think she had two husbands, Hiram and William, both Catlins and both from Parke County, Indiana. Hannah's mother was 42 when she was born. That means from the time our Mary Elizabeth was born in 1806, to the time Hannah daughter was born, her mother had given birth to eleven children in 22 years. There is no doubt that our family has many more Elson distant cousins. Hannah Sr. died in 1856 when she was 61 years old.

(Ed. Note: I still have some photos which I cannot identify but they must be either Frees or Elsons)

MARY'S MESSAGES



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There is no way I can thank Jerry Larkin enough for his help with the HED booklet which all of you should have by now. Although there were many obstacles, he came through for me with flying colors. I could not have done the booklet without him. Please when you see him thank him for his contribution to the family. I have a few extras so if you should want some for your children it will be on a first come, first serve basis.

Those of you who received the slipcases can thank Gini Caudill for the lettering, which she underwrote. I would like to have been able to order one for each one of my subscribers but they cost \$30.00 each and the bank account would not sustain it. Therefore, for those of you who didn't get one, and would like to have it, I will be glad to order it for you. Just let me know.

There are two more newsletters after this one for this year. I'm not sure when I will start the next booklet but I'm planning on two more in the future.

By the time you have received this issue, you may have learned that Harry Durland Griffith either will receive or did receive the "Citizen of the Year," from the Symphony of Lake Forest, Illinois.

Jerry Larkin sent me this photo of his daughter Emily who was in the Prom Court at the high school prom. She is truly a beauty. All the family is very proud of her.



I discovered that in Magnolia, Ohio there is a Bed and Breakfast Inn run by a descendant of John Harris Elson. It is in the same county that our William settled in and where our Mary Elizabeth met William Free. However, this John Harris is a brother to our William not a son. The both of them are the sons of Richard our Revolutionary ancestor.

I have tried and tried to clear up Richard's wife Mary Turner whose father was Thomas but there are so many Marys and Thomas' that the records are very difficult to sort out. Everyone seems to have a different answer, so for now, there is no solution. I personally believe that our Mary is not in the famous Taliaferro clan that I had written about before.

Also, there are two family names that I cannot trace, Harris and Henson. They must belong to some ancestor but at this time I can't find why these names are so important and who they represent in the families..