

The Road Taken

Biographical & Genealogical Information On Lizzie Ray Parker Oxley & her Family

6. The Oxley's

Shortly after finishing school, Grandma became interested in our Grandpa, Jacob Edward (Ed) Oxley. Grandma had enjoyed most of the good things available growing up in Almartha. Grandpa had not. Because of circumstances that happen shortly before his birth, Grandpa Oxley had known much poverty and almost nothing about his Oxley roots. In the 1920 census, Grandpa and his brothers John and Fred could only say their father was born in the United States. They had no idea which state, yet their father had been dead less than two years. Most of what is here came from research and information various individuals provided me.

The Oxley family records for our branch purportedly go back to 17th century England. One German ancestor, Erick Oechsley [1580] so the unverified story goes, made his way to England to avoid the army and changed his last name to the English "Oxley". Some relatives have it that his son Thomas Oxley Sr was born in 1609 in York, England and became a minister of the "Book of Sermons" in London. His son Thomas Jr. was also born in England in 1685 but migrated to Canada. His son Jenkins was born in Canada in 1715 and then migrated to the United States. The British had taken over Nova Scotia and the Hudson Bay region in 1713 and there was a 30 year peace. By 1750 when Archibald was born, they had settled at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Franklin County, Virginia. While colonization that started with the Jamestown Settlement was already 150 years old, Franklin County was still forested frontier. Archibald Oxley's son Wilson (7/1/1799-4/10/1878) was born there.

Franklin County was similar in many ways to South Missouri. In the southwest part of the state, it's remote from the more cultured eastern Tidewater and Central areas we associate with George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Robert E. Lee. Much of the county encom passes the Blue Ridge Mountains: 4,000-5,000 foot mountains, valleys, deep ravines, and the hardy Roanoke River. Hardwoods like ash, maple, chestnut, oak, and walnut grow plentifully in the heavy clay soil. And the flowering dogwood blooms in early spring. No major roads or rails penetrated the mountain hollows. Settlers walked into the area and built log cabins along the many natural springs and creeks. Because of its remoteness, Elizabethan ballads and medieval style tournaments were common up to the 20th century.

Wilson Oxley married Elizabeth Carter (4/12/1804-5/22/1889) in Franklin County on November 17, 1823. Virginia required prospective grooms put up a \$150 bond with the state as a prerequisite to securing a marriage license. Because it was such a large sum, a family member of the bride or groom or a close friend often acted as surety. John Oxley was a surety for Wilson. Twenty-two years later Wilson was surety for his own son Elkanah and bride Susan Crawford. Besides Wilson and Elkanah, 12 Oxley men put up marriage bonds in Franklin County between 1786 and 1858. Wilson and Elizabeth had nine children:

Elkanah or Elcany (11/4/1824-4/10/1876) John
Jacob (10/1/1829-11/20/1868)
Locky Frances (Beck) (12/25/1831-8/9/1918) Wiley
Wilson (1833-1899)
James Preston (1836)

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Elizabeth (10/8/1838) died as infant
William T. (7/10/1841-4/19/1906)
Jesse or Joseph Hopkins (1844-1863?)
Lucinda (Greenwood) (12/21/1854-1915)

The 1860 US Census lists 60 year old Wilson as a farmer in Boone Mill Township with real property valued at \$1000 and personal property at \$750. Besides Wilson and Elizabeth, four of their children: Locky Frances, James, William, and Joseph were still on the farm along with two small children: Harry (5 years) and Mary (4 years) Oxley and a woman named Leah Beckner (35 years). The children may have been James's as he is shown as the head of a household living on the same farm.

We don't know what the relatives did during the Civil War. Virginia of course was Confederate. In fact, not one person in Franklin County voted for Lincoln for president. Official Virginia Confederate records show four Oxleys serving, but none directly link to the Wilson clan. They still could have fought as irregular volunteers. Another possibility, however, is they opposed the violence. Elkanah and his wife Elizabeth and Lucinda and her husband Conrad were active in the Church of the Brethren. Most Virginia Church of the Brethren members opposed the war and refused to participate. In fact, one church leader was murdered for his outspoken views against the war.

In May 1868, Wilson and his extended family set out in covered wagons headed for Kansas. The Civil War had been over for three years; but Virginia was still in shambles. While no major battles were waged in Franklin County, nine of 23 major Civil War battles had been fought in Virginia. Certainly extraordinary events must have motivated him at age 68 to leave behind all he knew for an unknown land. As in the case of Grandma and Grandpa three generations later, Wilson and Elizabeth went to keep the family together. Available farming land was scarce in Franklin County. Their grown children were looking longingly at Kansas as the land of opportunity. Kansas was developing rapidly with thousands of settlers coming into the state by wagon and the new railroads.

They sold the land and auctioned off some of the bigger items. The women cooked hard tack and canned for the long journey. At last they were packed and ready to go. It must have been quite a convoy. The horse-drawn wagons mostly just carried their scuff. Lucinda's daughter Sarah Frances who was eight years old at the time said the families walked most of the way. The morning they left John Jacob's father-in-law William Beard kissed his daughter, son-in-law, and each grandchild and then sat down on a stump and cried as they slowly moved out. Until they were over the hill, they could see him sitting there crying.

Based on death dates and burial sites, the group consisted of at least 16 adults plus children. After six months of walking, they had traveled about 600 miles into southern Missouri. By November, they were camped near what is now Greenwood Church in Clinton Township Texas County, Missouri. John Jacob had an accident, developed complications of blood poisoning and pneumonia, and died. Most of the family gave up their plans for Kansas and homesteaded near where John Jacob died. It's no wonder there was some sort of accident. John Jacob and his wife Dorothea Beard (4/26/1832-4/28/1904) were traveling with seven children and their wagon. The eldest child was 13 years old:

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John William (10/11/1855-1948) Wiley W. (6/2/1856-12/5/1918)
Joel Preston (2/29/1860 or 61-1941) Mary M. (Overfelt) (2/4/1862-)
Sarah Ann (Mellon) (1/2/1864-8/27/1936) Delia (Fox) (5/27/1866-)
 Daniel Lewis (5/24/1868-)

Dorothea raised the children, acting as both "keeping house" and fanner according to the 1870 and 1880 census information. They settled into the land, forming an enduring friendship with the Neighbors family and others in the area.

Grandma recalled stories of an older Oxley who spoke German and had flaming red hair. Dorothea's parents William and Dorothea Beard were both born in Germany. Historical records also show Lucinda's husband J. Conrad Greenwood spoke with a heavy German accent his entire life. In Missouri, Conrad and his brother-in-law, Elkanah Oxley, both served as deacons in the Church of the Brethren. Church of the Brethren members were commonly called Dunkards since they practiced immersion baptism. Conrad even donated the land to build the Greenwood Church and Cemetery. Many of the Oxleys are buried in that cemetery as well as the Neighbors, Cabool City (Burdine Township), and Stubbs (Clinton Township) Cemeteries.

Young Wiley W. Oxley who walked from Virginia is the Oxley of interest to me: he was the father of my Grandpa Oxley. An undated picture shows him as a young man in hat, top coat, and cane looking very handsome. That's so different from the last picture we have of him where he's staring wildly in front of him.

Wiley worked on his mother's farm and helped his brothers and sisters on their farms. Into this routine pace a teenager named John Whitt Amos showed up looking for work. The Neighbors and Oxley families befriended the young man, putting him to work on their farms. Whitt soon had his eye on Della F. Neighbors whom he eventually married. Whitt was from a large, poor family in Tennessee. As soon as he and Della were settled, he sent for his sister Ella and brother Fletcher to take some of the financial burden off his father. Ella was a teenager with dark hair and eyes and small nose and ears. Thirty year old Wiley had never seen a lovelier lady.

Wiley W. Oxley and Ella Rachel Amos married August 7, 1887. Ella was the daughter of John Marshall Amos (2/11/1844 or 1845-12/12/1910) and Virginia (Jenny or Jani) Scarce or Scearce Amos [about 1835 - before 1880]. We don't know anything about the Amos's, but the Scarce family was part of colonial America. William and Catherine Scarce had four sons Nathan, David, James, and Shadrack. Shadrack (1748-1824) was born in Prince Georges County, Maryland just east of Washington D. C. Of course, there was no Washington D. C. when Shadrack was born. In the mostly low, marshy clay, the colonists grew cash tobacco crops. Maryland was one of the first colonies to support the First Continental Congress. They had their own "tea party" in 1774 when they burned the *Peggy Stewart* and its tea cargo to protest the English tea tax. That was the same year that Shadrack and his wife Eleanor had their first child James Norton Scarce (9/16/1774). Shadrack apparently supported independence from Great Britain as he sworn an oath of fealty (allegiance) to Maryland in 1776.

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Much of the farm, house, and childcare work fell to Whitt and Ella. John Amos began looking for another wife and married Martha Francis Noe (3[26/1854-11/5/1901) around 1879. At 25 years old, Martha was considered an old maid and lucky to get a husband even if he already had six kids. Together they had another 10 children. The eighth was a stillborn boy who was not named; the others were:

Lizzie Maranda (10/2/1882)	Lummie Vina & Vitie Anna (12/17/1883)
Mark Wilson (2/13/1885)	Porter Noe (8/19/1889)
Joseph Laffayette (9/10/1891)	Eva Katy (4/4/1893)
Frank Nelson (2/27/1894 or 95)	Nettie May (2/13/1896 or 97-2/5/1982)

Ella and Fletcher left the family shortly after Mark was born to join Whitt in Missouri. Martha died when her youngest Nettie May was five; John died when Nettie May was 14 years old.

There was plenty of food on the Oxley table and Ella bloomed in the new found security and prosperity of her marriage. A year and a half after their marriage Wiley and Ella were blessed with a son John C. Oxley. Things were more complicated, but still so much more tranquil than the Amos household. Then about May 1891, Ella began waking up feeling poorly and there were other signs that another baby was on the way. Ella was "showing" right away and wondered about this baby. Wiley kept on with the farm work as summer crops began ripening.

Disaster hit in July. Wiley became confused and dysfunctional after working in the heat. Grandma said he was trapped for a time in a hot barn during haying. Louise Murr, granddaughter of Joel Preston Oxley recalled her grandfather saying Wiley was helping plant potatoes in the hot sun when he became blind with a severe headache and acting irrational. Whatever the circumstances, his eye sight returned; but his mind didn't. Day after day as Ella's belly seemed to enlarge before their eyes, Wiley sat passive and confused in the farm house.

My Grandpa Jacob Edward and his identical twin Thomas Frederick (Fred) were born to on October 17, 1891 on the family farm between Dunn and Mountain Grove. That presented a dilemma for Grandpa as far as where he was born. On Allie's birth certificate, he showed him self as born in Mountain Grove. But when he secured his own "Delayed or Special Certificate of Birth" in 1943 based on family Bible and school records, he listed his birth place as Dunn. Wherever they were born, they were more than a month premature. They were so tiny that Grandpa's head fit into a teacup and Ella could slip her wedding ring over his wrist. Fred and Ed as they were always known survived because of their spirit, not any wonders of medicine, to grow into strong men over six feet tall. The children of Wiley and Ella Oxley were:

John C. Oxley (4/17/1889-8/2/1964)
Jacob Edward (Ed) Oxley (10/17/1891-12/4/1975)
Thomas Frederick (Fred) Oxley (10/17/1891-11/4/1983)

Thus at 20 years old, Ella had three babies and a husband whose physical health was failing and who seemed to have lost his mind. They admitted Wiley W. Oxley, age 35, to a

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state mental institution at Nevada, Missouri on December 31, 1891. His older brother John William Oxley acted as his official correspondent. Their stationery leaves no doubt as to their business: "State Lunatic Asylum No. 3 - Address all Correspondence Concerning Patients to Dr. J. F. Robinson, Superintendent." Ella periodically wrote to Dr. Robinson and a clerk's response dated November 27, 1897 survives:

Mrs. Ella Oxley,
Mountain Grove, Mo.

Dea. Madam:-

Mr Oxley's general health remains good. He is very quiet and well behaved, but there has been no mental change in his condition since we last wrote to you. He has nothing to say to any one unless spoken to.

Very Respectfully,
J. F. Robinson, Supt.

Ella would also go up to Nevada when she could to visit Wiley. She took the stage to Mansfield and then the rail. It was a long, hard, sad trip. Wiley had some relatives living in Nevada so Ella would spend the night with them.

Wiley lived in the large stone building with the high fence around it for 27 years and his bones are still there. The body was taken on December 5, 1918 to Milster Funeral Home in Nevada for embalming and then returned to Asylum No. 3. For convenience, the patients were often buried on hospital grounds. There are over 1000 graves. Small stones with the names, but no dates, were placed at the head of the grave. Over time, the natural grasses formed a heavy turf over the stones and the graveyards disappeared and were largely forgotten.

We don't know any more details about those years in Nevada nor how Ella provided for the sons. But a marriage in the eyes of the law was automatically considered annulled when someone was committed in such a way for such a long time so she was free to remarry.

Seven years after Wiley was committed Ella did remarry. Terry Burch was 23 years older than Ella and had three children: Grace Mable (Burch) Roberts (6/1890), Harvey (8/11/1892), and John (Johnnie) (6/1/1894) and a step-daughter Berlie Ramond (12/1885) from a prior marriage. Terry liked calling her Ellie. Interestingly, Terry was also an identical twin. He and Perry Burch were born August 4, 1847(8) in Illinois to Enoch and Elizabeth (Scoggins) Burch. Perry and Terry had a reputation for their fiddling abilities, which is where Grandpa Oxley may have picked up his skills. The family immigrated to Kansas after the war and Terry married. When his wife died, he took the four children up to Texas County. Brother Perry, his family, and several other Burch families had previously moved to Cabool. Terry was in need of a mother for his children and Ella was in need of a father for her sons. The marriage seemed in their mutual best interest.

The church family didn't look at the re-marriage as the law did. They considered Ella as still having a husband living and disfellowshipped her. Terry and Ella moved to the Almartha area of Barren Fork Township. Fred and Ed attended the Almartha School in

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1903 and stood as usual side by side in the class picture for that year. From Terry and Ella's union four additional children were born:

Ella Mae (Burch) Naugle (9/5/1900-5/30/1984)
Edith (Burch) Richey (7/17/1902)
Williard (10/5/1903-?)
Josie (Burch) Stamp (3/22/1909-3/1991)

The second crop of children didn't look much like the Oxley boys. In a picture taken around 1913, Mae, Edith, and Williard are standing tall and thin, with their large eyes and serious expressions behind a chubby little Josie. Josie's holding a spread of wildflowers.

Grandpa said they were very poor and as a boy he was put to work long days picking up rocks out of the field so crops could be planted. They moved around a lot and just "never seemed to get ahead". They were moving around because they were renting land. Only the poorest fields were let out and typically the owner took a percentage of whatever the meager harvest was. Grandpa got a pocket knife once for Christmas which he traded for a toy that soon broke. Grandpa remembered his stepfather as a hard man. With so many children and meager resources, he probably had to be hard. Grandpa's school attendance was spotty and he completed work only through third grade because he was needed to work on the farm.

Terry died December 10, 1911, but it was July 3, 1913 before Ella could arrange with Boone & Holland of Hilo, Missouri for the double headstone. They advertised as having the lowest prices and most liberal terms on "Marble, Granite and All Kinds of Cemetery Work." A few months later on September 8 she made a \$5 payment on it which W. M. Boone receipted her for. Two years later, Ella was not yet 45 years old when she died and her name was added. Grandpa said Ella was just plain old and worn out. Perhaps she just finally gave up. Continual hardship, poverty, and tragedy marked her life. Granddaughter Elaine Watson recalls that Ella succumbed to diabetes and kidney failure.

As an adult Grandpa remained close to his brothers John and Fred and half-sister Mae. The brothers got their picture made together before they started marrying off. The three of them in suits and ties sitting in three identical chairs in identical poses: legs crossed at the ankles and hands easy in their laps. John's in the middle flanked by the twins. John seemed to favor Wiley's looks more and Ed and Fred favored Ella. Grandpa and Grandma both had a long, warm kinship with Mae, corresponding regularly from California.

John married Emma Ora Welch (12/4/1892-10/30/1971). Ora's (pronounced Orie) father Sherman Welch was one of the elders at the Almartha Church of Christ. The Welch family settled in Almartha before 1883 as J. A. Welch is listed as a blacksmith in 1883 advertisements. John and Ora had six children:

Moline Oxley (2/17/1913-11/1/1918)
Roy Bernice Oxley (10/8/1914-8/26/1984)
Elaine (Oxley) Watson (1920)
Ray Oxley (3/19/1922)
Jay Oxley (12/31/1930)
Fay Burnell Oxley (11/13/1931)

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John and Ora farmed near Grandpa and Grandma just across the lane from the Fry Farm . John was always happiest when he was working. Little else interested him other than long hours working the land. After John quit farming, they moved to a little house off the main dirt road into Almartha. Since the road was on higher ground than their house, you went through a big picket gate and flower garden down into the house. Like Grandma, Ora liked flowers better than housework. Ora was a very short lady. In her later years when I knew her, she seemed as round as she was tall. They were quite a pair. John was very tall (compared to her) and thin. He was the first person I knew who wore a hearing aid. A cord connected the ear piece to the battery power source which he carried in his shirt pocket. It squeaked much of the time and seemed very awkward. When they became very old, they moved to a little house on the same street Nigel lives on in Ava. Nigel and Golda were very helpful to them those last years. After John died, Ora remarried but continued to draw on Nigel and Golda for help. John, Ora, and little Moline are buried at the Herndon Cemetery.

Fred married Alta (Gardner) Oxley (9/1/1896-10/30/1983). Alta was a very small lady who managed to have one very large (13 pounds) baby. Eldred Byron Oxley (8/12/1914-3/29/1978) was their only child. On May 6, 1974, just two months after Grandpa had his stroke, Fred also suffered a stroke that caused him the same problems. Fred outlived Grandpa, but it was remarkable how much they remained alike even when they were half a continent apart. My sister Connie visited Uncle Fred in 1977 while she was at the Ozark Two Week Bible Study. She said she had to keep reminding herself that he wasn't Grandpa. They did look remarkably alike. I remember when we visited Fred and Alta on one of our Missouri trips. The only way you could tell them apart was Grandpa had a deep tan from sunny California which Fred did not have.

August 1, 1977 Nixa, Mo.

Dear Grandma, Hello, we went here (*reference to postcard picture*) while we were at Silver Dollar City Saturday. I enjoyed it, especially some of the Bluegrass music. It's really neat being able to know Eldred and Doris and Aunt Alta too. Yesterday Nigel and Golda were at church in the Ozarks so I got to talk to them quite a bit. Fred is okay, but Alta says he gets lonely. She's down to 89 lbs. now. Love ya, Connie (Crown)

It was so sad for Fred and Alta when Eldred died. Eldred had been feeling bad for a long time with lower back pain that wouldn't go away despite regular visits to a chiropractor. Alta commented to him in the fall of 1977 how poorly he looked and he replied that pushing a pencil instead of really working must be bad for a man. Eldred's true problem was a cancerous tumor in his lower back that was finally diagnosed at Christmas time. It was too late for much treatment. Although his wife Doris did what she could for Fred and Alta after that, they ended up in two different convalescent homes, dying alone.

Mae as Ella Mae Burch was known to everyone married Logan Naugle (6/20/1890-5/11/1946). They made their home in the two storied house that Logan's grandparents had built near Romance. Their youngest daughter, Wilma Fish, describes the joys and scares of growing up in the Ozarks in her book, Wilma's Apple Dolls and Romance. Besides working hard to raise a family and continue the farm after Logan died, Mae wrote articles and poems for the local paper. Wilma has wallpapered one of her upstairs bedrooms with ...