

Stephen Eldridge was listed in his father's house in the 1820 Overton County Tennessee census. It shows that he was born about the year 1802 or after. We've put his age at 18 or 19 in this census and therefore have his birth year of about 1801.ⁱ The next record we have of Stephen is from a transcribed copy of a White County Tennessee circuit court case, where on October 11th 1820 a Mr. Charles Hickox (most likely Hickok) dropped a charge of trespassing against Stephen. He is listed in the 1830 Overton County, Tennessee census and the 1840 Ripley County Missouri Census. His age is listed as 30-to-40 in both. This is an indication that that he was about age 30 in 1830 and about age 40 in 1840. With this data we can put a fine point on his birth year of about 1800.

The next record is his marriage to Milly Walker on December 18th 1823, in Knox County Tennessee.ⁱⁱ At this time we do not know who Milly's parents were, but looking at the 1820 Overton County census we see William Walker has a daughter listed the right age for Milly. There is no records that we have found that can verify she is his daughter, but he is a leading candidate. The next record we have of Stephen is when on February 12th 1829 he and West Riley were witness and chain carriers for the survey for his Zachariah's land for grant number 3589. Stephen is found listed on page 213 of the 1830 Overton County Census, and is found especially close to his mother Mary Ann Eldridge.

In 1827 Ransom S. Bettis came down the Black River looking for a site for a trading post and ferry. He built a house on the bluff overlooking the Black River later named Bettis Bluff. He is the first documented US settler in this part of Lawrence County Arkansas. Thomas Drew moved into the area and married Bettis' only daughter, Cinderella. He would later become the third governor of Arkansas.

Stephen and his uncle, Sampson Eldridge move to Columbia Township Lawrence County Arkansas shortly after the 1830 federal census is taken. Both are found listed in the yearly tax records 1831 through 1835.

In 1835 a portion of Lawrence County was set aside to create Randolph County. Residents of the Columbia Township, eight miles north of Bettis Bluff, tried to have the county seat located there. On the date set for the vote, Drew and Bettis provided a free barbecue and alcoholic beverages on their property. A majority of residents, who could vote at either site, attended and voted for Bettis Bluff, the name of which was later changed to Pocahontas for reasons that still remain unknown. The Eldridge family and friends had of course had settled in Columbia Township and it appears they were not very

happy about this party and vote. After the election several moved out of the county and state settling in Ripley County just across the Arkansas and Missouri border.

West Riley and Stephen Eldridge seem to have had a close friendship. Others have reported that West Riley's mother was Nancy Walker and given their friendship it may have been that Stephen's wife Milly Walker and Riley's mother Nancy Walker were somehow related. There could also be a second connection. Riley's wife is reported to have been Mary Allen. Stephen's nephew "West" Eldridge son of John Eldridge married Matilde Allen on 22nd June 1848 in Ripley County, Missouri. Stephen Eldridge, John Eldridge and West Riley all move to Ripley County, Missouri before 1840.ⁱⁱⁱ

By 1836 Stephen had moved to Ripley County Missouri, which is located just across the Missouri-Arkansas border from present day Randolph County Arkansas. In the book "History of Ripley Co., Missouri", by Jerry Ponder, on page 18, it states, "*...In 1836, the Arkansas portion of the Pososi-Little Rock road was improved... It ran from the Stephen Eldridge farm on Fourche Creek at the Missouri-Arkansas line south crossing the Natchitoches Trail where Maynard is now located, to Pocahontas, Arkansas.*" This places the Stephen Eldridge farm in close proximity to land owned by his uncle, Sampson Eldridge. The Pososi-Little Rock road is known today as Arkansas state highway 115.

Stephen was a farmer and as such he bought and sold land. There was a deed recorded on September 29th 1840 where in Stephen sold, and transferred land to his uncle, Sampson Eldridge. The deed states that "we Stephen Eldridge and Milly Eldridge his wife". This deed was witness by West Riley. This is the same West Riley that was from Overton County and helped Stephen with the survey his father's land for grant number 3589.^{iv} This gives proof that the Stephen Eldridge of Ripley County Missouri and the Stephen Eldridge of Overton County Tennessee are one in the same.

Stephen is found in the 1840 Ripley County Missouri census, listed next page over from his brother John Eldridge. West Riley is listed next to Stephen.^v He died in 1845 and was buried in the old Doniphan cemetery in Ripley County. Jerry Ponder, author of several historical books about Missouri, canvassed this cemetery in 1990 and reported that Stephen's tombstone was still there at the time. However, when we visited the cemetery in 2003 the marker was gone.

ⁱ *1820 US Census* Overton, Tennessee; *Page:* 254; *NARA Roll:* M33_122; *Image:* 217

ⁱⁱ *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, International Genealogical Index (R), Copyright (c) 1980, 2002, data as of September 2, 2008, Batch #: 7222907, Sheet #: 85, Source Call #: 0822004, Printout Call #: NONE, Family History Library, 35 N West Temple Street, Salt Lake City, Utah 84150 USA

ⁱⁱⁱ *1840 United States Federal Census*, Ripley County, Missouri, Roll 229, Page 348 and 349

^{iv} *Prospect News*, Doniphan Missouri, Obituaries Published November 22nd, 1878, Abstracted by Kathy Newton, [Online] <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~moripley/prosp.htm>

^v *1840 United States Federal Census*, Ripley County, Missouri, Roll 229, Page 348 and 349