

## The History and Story of Moses Riney

To tell the story of Moses Riney, one must start with his mother who was known as Melinda Riney. Melinda was a slave owned by Gabriel M. Duvall, this gentleman died and on Feb. 10<sup>th</sup>, 1842, Melinda was purchased by Thomas Edward Riney for \$600.00. At this same time Thomas Riney purchased two children of Melinda named David 2 years old \$200.00, George 4 months old \$100.00. Melinda also had one other child at that time a daughter named Celeste 5 years old, she was purchased by Moses Farrar for \$250.00. With this purchase of Melinda by Thomas Edward Riney the story of Moses begins.

Moses Riney was born at Perry County, Missouri, on his baptism record from the, Church of the Barrens, his birth date is listed as January 18, 1845, his death certificate list January 18, 1844. His parents are listed as Melinda Riney and Alfred / Anthony Farrar. Moses had a twin brother named Josias aka Joseph. This is the first record that Moses has been found on. The next time I find him is the 1846 Barrens Parish Census, where he his mother, Melinda, and at least 3 of his siblings are listed, one of them his twin brother Josias. After that record Moses is next found on a slave schedule in the year 1850 where he is listed only by age and sex. Thomas Edward Riney, the slave owner of Moses, died on February 19, 1859, in his will he gave Moses his mother and several of Moses's siblings to his second wife Sarah Ann French Riney. Moses once again is listed on another slave schedule for the year 1860 which again just list his age and sex his master being, Sarah Ann Riney, the widow of Thomas Riney. The slave schedule of 1860 is also the last time we can find Moses's mother, Melinda, what happened to her we do not know.

One thing I might add is a tax list for the Thomas Riney Estate 633 that shows the land he owns Perryville Lots 14, 16, 66, 1,569 acres and a list of slaves Melinda, mother of Moses, 50 years old \$600.00, Jim 27 years old \$1,100.00, Helen 24 years old \$900.00, Moses 14 years old \$900.00, Julia 3 years old \$300.00, Mary 1 year old \$150.00, total \$3,950.00. This is the only record I've found that shows the value of Moses to the Slave Owner Thomas Riney.

On June 1, 1863 the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect, but for those slaves living in Missouri it meant nothing at all. It would be over 2 years later before slaves living in Missouri would be free. On September 12, 1863 Moses Riney was married to Mary Jane Burgette at Perry County, Missouri. While the Catholic Church married slaves it was actually against the law. Moses wife Mary Jane Burgette is the daughter of Michael Burgette and Clara Burns. Mary Jane Burgette is listed on baptism records of her children at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, St Mary, Ste Genevieve, Missouri as Mary Jane Evans, the only time I find her listed with the surname, Burgette, is on her death certificate.

So who was Mary Jane Burgette ? Why was she listed as Mary Jane Evans on Church Records? I think the answer to all of this can be found in the Perry County Heritage Volume 38, 2020, in an article written by Denise Lincoln, titled, The Civil War History of Moses Riney, US Colored Troops. Moses's wife, Mary Riney gave a deposition in 1911 for Harrison Davis which clarified, in her own words, her relationships in slave times and freedom. She said, "I was born a slave, in Perry County, Missouri and lived there about 5 miles from St. Mary, Missouri, southeast of here until 1908 since which I resided in St. Mary, Mo. I was in Illinois from 1864 to 1866. I was a slave of Perry Evans who was the father in-law of Harrison Davis's owner, Erastus Davis." From this one tiny record we learn a lot about the wife of Moses and why Evans is used as her surname on baptism records of her children. Interestingly enough Perry Evans, the master, of Mary Jane died in 1859. In his will Mary Jane Burgette Riney was given to his daughter, Emily Evans, one other interesting thing about the will of Perry Evans is the fact that he gave a slave women named, Clara, and two of her children to another one of his daughters named, Nancy Evans Burns, the wife of Henry T Burns. The woman named Clara appears to be the mother of Mary Jane Burgette, known on records as Clara Burns.

On May 22, 1863, the United States War Department issued General Order Number 143, creating the U.S.C.T.. This order created the opportunity for slaves like Moses Riney to join the United States Colored Troops.

Moses Riney made a decision in February 1864, to join the USCT , this was most likely his first opportunity to make a decision on his own. I will again in Moses's own words taken from The Civil War History of Moses Riney, U S Colored Infantry, by Denise Lincoln. Moses said, "I was enlisted. About February 15, 1864, under Galloway and Ross { the last names of the recruiting officers } at Cape Girardeau, Mo. Galloway and Ross were men out enrolling men. They got me in Perry County, in the bottom, four and a half miles southeast of St. Mary." His testimony was that he was recruited from the bottom land field belonging to, Thomas Edward Riney Jr., the son of his former master also called Thomas Edward Riney. The place called the bottom land would be the Bois Brule Bottoms. On February 20, 1864, Moses enlisted at Cape Girardeau, Mo. On March 8, 1864, Moses was mustered into service at Benton Barracks, St Louis, Mo. Moses was now a member of Company A, 68<sup>th</sup> Regiment USCT Infantry, holding the rank of private. From his obituary and the testimony of his wife, Mary Jane Burgette Riney, that while Moses was in service she lived in Sparta, Illinois, with a member of the white Riney family.

With his wife in Sparta, Illinois, Moses Riney began his Military Service. The 4<sup>th</sup> Missouri Regiment of Colored infantry was an African-American Infantry Regiment that served in the Union Army during the Civil War. It was re-designated as the 68<sup>th</sup> Regiment of U.S. Colored Troops on March 11, 1864.

Engagements of the 68<sup>th</sup> Regiment U.S.C.T., Battle of Tupelo, Battle of Old Town Creek, Siege of Fort Blakely, Assault on Fort Blakely and Occupation of Mobile. These are the engagements we know that Moses Riney was part of.

In his obituary it states that Moses was at Fort Pillow. During this Battle many black soldiers were slaughtered after their surrender according to history.

How it came to be in Moses's obituary I can't tell you but the fact is Moses's Regiment was not part of that battle. Now, no doubt Moses knew of the atrocities that befell his fellow black troops! But history tells us that Moses's Regiment only left St Louis bound for Memphis, Tennessee, about 7 weeks after the incident at Fort Pillow.

In one record from the National Archives and Record Center, Washington D. C., obtained by Denise Lincoln, for her article in the Perry County Heritage Volume 38, 2020, Moses had this to say about the Battle of Fort Pillow.

This is a small excerpt from Denise Lincoln's story about Moses Riney's military service.

From April 1-9 they participated in the siege, assault and ultimate capture of Fort Blakely, Moses Riney, promoted to the extra duties and responsibilities of corporal, recalled the intensity of the battle experience. He said, "we were charging bayonets – our order was to retreat. "I told my men not to retreat, to remember what they gave us at Fort Pillow." Moses also talked about a Captain Gagger who was killed there. This would be Captain George Geiger killed in action on April 9, 1865. He commanded Company C, Moses was a member of Company A. Ironically this battle ended 6 hours after General Robert E Lee had surrendered at Appomattox, about 800 miles away.

On February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1866, The 68<sup>th</sup> Regiment U.S.C.T. was mustered out of service at Camp Parapet, north of New Orleans, Louisiana. Corporal Moses Riney was headed home. Moses Riney's name is listed on the African American Civil War Memorial 68<sup>th</sup> Regiment United States Colored Troops, Washington, DC. I might add the only two siblings of Moses who we have been able to find, David and Gabriel, are also listed on the Memorial, they served in the 62<sup>nd</sup> Regiment.

The 1870 Census for Saline, Perry, Missouri, lists Moses, his wife, Mary Jane, and two of his children Henry and Mary Jane Johanna, also in the household is his mother-in-law, Clara Burns, and 3 of her other children Miles, Robert and Rosa all siblings of Moses's wife. The 1880 Census also finds Moses living in Saline, Perry, Missouri with his wife and 6 children.

On October 21, 1882 Moses purchased a tract of land from Charles Francis Lawrence, in Perry County, Missouri. This property which is off Hwy H in Saline, Perry, Missouri is located on what is now known as PCR 950.

By 1900, Moses seemed to prosper on the land he was now farming, he owned this piece of land and his family was growing in total Moses and Mary Jane Burgette Riney had 13 children, although we can only account for 9 of them and one of those a little boy was born and died in 1892. So by 1900 only 8 of the 13 children of Moses were living.

From Civil War Pension records we learned that Moses and Mary Jane moved into the town of St. Mary, Ste Genevieve, Missouri in 1908. On the 1910 Census Moses is living on 5<sup>th</sup> Street in St Mary, and the man who had been a slave owned his home there free and clear.

Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in St Mary, played an important part in the lives of Moses and family most of his children were baptized there and many of them were married at the Church in St Mary. From a few old newspaper articles I learned that education of his children must have been important to him. One article talks about one of his daughters attending the Thompson Colored School. One other thing that is found on the 1900 and 1910 census is the fact that Moses and Mary Jane helped raise a number of their grandchildren. By 1910, 3 more of the children of Moses Riney had died and like I stated above Moses provided for these grandchildren.

On February 16<sup>th</sup>, 1921, at 10 a.m. Moses Riney passed away at his home on 5<sup>th</sup> St in the little town of St. Mary, Missouri. Moses had come to be one of the most respected citizen of this community. On February 17<sup>th</sup> his funeral was held at Immaculate Conception Church and his body was laid to rest at the Cemetery at St. Mary. His obituary which was published in the St Mary's Weekly Review on February 25<sup>th</sup>, 1921, reads more like a tribute to him. The respect that was given to Moses in this obituary is normally held for men of power and wealth. Considering the times and the fact this was a white owned newspaper what an honor for this man. Roughly 10 years later on May 27<sup>th</sup>, 1930, the beloved wife of Moses, Mary Jane Burgette Riney, died at their home in St Mary.

On Saturday July 6, 2019, The Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, honored Corporal Moses Riney by placing a plaque on his tombstone honoring his service to his Country, many of Moses's descendants were present for the event. At the bottom of the plaque it simply reads "Freedom for Eternity".

On February 23, 2021, at Immaculate Conception Church, St Mary, Missouri several local artist unveiled their art work pertaining to the life of Moses Riney. It was on this evening that Anita Alsup displayed her amazing painting of Moses Riney, Once again a number of members of the Riney Family were present.

I don't believe the story of Moses Riney would be complete with out listing the known children of Moses and Mary Jane Burgette Riney. Henry W Riney 1868-1904, Mary Jane Johanna Riney 1870-1941, Mary Louise Riney 1873-1901, Joseph Eustus Riney 1875-1950, Mary Matilda "Tillie" Riney 1877-1954, George Robert Riney 1880-1935, Rosabelle Mary Riney 1882-1901, Clara Della Riney 1885-death date unknown, infant son Riney 1892-1892.

Most of the Riney Children are buried at the Cemetery at St Mary, Ste Genevieve, Missouri.