THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN HOLT FAMILY
OF
HARDIN COUNTY, TENNESSEE

By Robyn N. Smith

Don’t ask me where I am going, but where I have come from. -An African Proverb

Holt Children (Back, From Left): OraLee, Ivie, Madelina, Troy, Roxie, Lawson (Front, From Left) Swanson, Cora, Freddie. Date: Abt. 1902

The deed, executed April 5, 1871, began like any other deed: “We, William Spencer and Eliza Spencer wife of William Spencer of the county of Hardin and State of Tennessee have this day for and in consideration of the sum of one thousand dollars to us in hand paid by Philip Holt, Samuel Holt and John Holt…” The deed\(^1\) was for a tract of land in the 12\(^{th}\) district encompassing about 200 acres. What made it notable was that Philip, Samuel and John were three African-Americans, only six years out of slavery. Owning land spoke to the very heart of citizenship, and could be a dangerous prospect for southern blacks. But these three brothers were willing to accept the risks. One of those brothers was John W. Holt, my great-great grandfather. He would go on to become one of the largest black landowners in Hardin County in the early twentieth century.
In Slavery

When I first started researching the Holt family back in 1997, I knew it was important to have an understanding of the history of slavery and life for blacks in Hardin County. Tony Hays does an excellent job of covering these subjects in his books, “On the Banks of the River: A History of Hardin County, TN,” and “No Man’s Land: The Civil War and Reconstruction in Hardin County, TN”. Hardin County never had as many slaves as other middle and west Tennessee counties. In 1850, slaves were about 12% of the population of Hardin County and by 1860 they were just over 14%. Most of the largest slave owners in Hardin either lived on the west side of the river or had extensive holdings there, cotton being the dominant crop.

Researching ex-slave ancestors necessitates a determination of who the last slave owner was before the end of the Civil War. Oddly, because slaves were personal property, most information about them must be gained from researching the slave owners. I knew from oral history that my great-great-great grandmother’s name was Malinda. I began my search for Malinda on the 1870 U.S. census records, where ex-slaves appeared for the first time (unless they had been freed earlier).

I found one woman with that name living in the 4th Civil District of Hardin County:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Color</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Holt, Malinda</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliza</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cynthia</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*“M” stands for Mulatto, which meant having one white parent and one black parent, however, census takers often labeled any light-colored black person as a Mulatto.

I suspected this was my Malinda, as the names and ages of her children matched information I already had. Based on this census document, Malinda was born around 1815; she could not read or write. Now my question was if she had indeed been a slave, who owned her?

In search of that answer, I turned to the 1850 and 1860 Slave Census schedules. Imagine the time period. The country was moving towards civil war and fiery arguments arose on the subject of slavery in Congress. Questions about slavery in the western territories, the fugitive slave act, the internal slave trade and
numerous petitions for freedom were tearing the government apart. The congressional debates are online and I highly recommend them for anyone interested in getting a real feel for the extreme tension of the times. The debates are available at the Library of Congress’ American Memory Project website (http://memory.loc.gov).

The 1850 and 1860 U.S. slave census schedules are unique in that they list only slave owners. Contained within these records are the name of each slave owner, and each of their slaves by age, race and sex. Conspicuously missing (and sadly for the descendants of slaves) are any names. In spite of this limitation, I turned to these records for Hardin County. I looked for any ‘Holt’ slave owners, keeping in mind that many slaves chose last names different from the last slave owner. In Hardin, I found only one slave owner with the surname Holt living in Hardin county: Giles Holt.

Giles appears in Hardin County for the first time in 1840. In 1850, Giles is living in the 6th district and owns 13 slaves. In 1860, Giles is still living in the 6th district and owns 19 slaves. This places him as one of the larger slave owners in the county. According to the 1870 census, my ancestor Malinda Holt would have been born ca. 1815. A female slave matching that birth date is listed in Giles’ lists of slaves in both 1850 and 1860. (Note: I have just pulled out the information on that one slave, not all that he owned):

1850 Slave Schedule- 6th Civil District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slave Owner:</th>
<th>Slave:</th>
<th>Age:</th>
<th>Sex:</th>
<th>Color:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Giles Holt</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1860 Slave Schedule- 6th Civil District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slave Owner:</th>
<th>Slave:</th>
<th>Age:</th>
<th>Sex:</th>
<th>Color:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Giles Holt</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At this point in my research, I’d joined the Hardin County Tennessee online mailing list and connected with several descendants of Giles Holt who generously shared background information. Giles is a colorful character who has been covered by the Hardin County Historian before. I discovered that Giles was originally from Virginia and had come to Hardin County by way of Smith County, TN. He had apparently been married several times and had between 11-15 children. I knew from these conversations and other published information that Giles did not die until 1876, so looking for a will and estate inventory (documents which can often illuminate individual slaves) would not be helpful in this case.
Next, I turned to the Hardin County Deed Books. It wasn't long before I'd found something: two bills of sale between Giles Holt and Dauphin P. Holt in 1843 and 1845. Both documents listed slaves. Here is an excerpt from the 1843 bill of sale:

"...sold unto Dauphin P. Holt of said County and State thirteen negro slaves for life named as follows Susan Malinda Juda Marga Awry Sam Mark Tom Daniel Mose Frank Henri and Philip for and in consideration of the sum of three thousand dollars..."

I can't adequately define my emotions the first time I read this document. I was looking at my flesh and blood, being sold or put up for collateral or anything else possible with personal property. Three thousand dollars is what they were worth, or about $230.77 apiece for life. This was certainly one of those moments in family history research that I will never forget.

Later I found out (from a very helpful descendant of Giles') that Giles was doing a classic ‘straw man’ transaction. He deeded all of his property to his son Dauphin because he was in the middle of a divorce and was attempting to keep from losing any of his assets; he even moved out of state to Mississippi until the divorce was over. Records indicate a contentious divorce from wife Mary. Two years later, the 1845 bill of sale shows most of those slaves being returned back to Giles from Dauphin. The slaves probably never physically moved anywhere.

Malinda’s Family

I was unable to locate Malinda on any census records after 1870, so I assumed she died. However, several years ago, a cousin and I made an incredible discovery: we found Malinda’s headstone in one of the historically “colored” cemeteries in Hardin--Cawthon Cemetery. The headstone was overturned and cracked, but still readable. It listed Malinda’s birth date as 1816 and her death date as 1881. Even today I recall how fulfilling that moment was.

A Proud Heritage

In the late 19th and early 20th century, John W. Holt was one of the most prosperous and well-known African-American men in the county. In the early 1900s, the Savannah Courier newspaper mentions seeing John W. Holt in Savannah many times; perhaps he was on his way to the court house making land transactions. John owned a general store in the Hooker’s Bend area referred to in
records as “Holt’s Store”. He amassed hundreds of acres of land, and in 1902 was Postmaster at Holtsville, TN. He and his wife, Mary Garrett, had eight children together. Mary Garrett was from Decatur County and was part Cherokee Indian, according to oral history. “I remember her always smoking those Indian pipes,” one grandson recalled.

John W. Holt was an industrious and generous man. He does not seem to have been a person interested only in his own welfare, but someone concerned about helping others in the community. In the early years of the 20th century, Hardin County Deed Books show John W. Holt extending credit to others in the community like Solomon Bradley, John Davy, Jo Crumby and many, many others. Some had to put up land or cotton and several were furnished with supplies and merchandise from John W. Holt as part of the agreement. I can picture the scene in my mind; area farmers coming into Holt’s Store and making these arrangements for the coming crop year. “I can remember that my grandpappy would write down everything in a little record book,” one grandson recalled. There are also deeds where John W. Holt is being used as credit security for loans from others. He would either loan people the money they needed or co-signed for them to get it from somewhere else!

There is one particularly moving set of deeds which I think speaks to the character of John W. Holt. Henry Luton apparently defaulted on a loan in November 1897 and lost 2 town lots he owned in Savannah. The lots included the home where Henry & his wife and children lived. As per the agreement, the lots were sold at auction. Lee Smith and T.J. Welch won the bids for the lands. A later deed shows John W. Holt, purchasing the bids back from both men. He subsequently deeded that land back to Viney Luton (Henry’s wife) and her five children for a small price. It is possible that Henry Luton may have died in the interim.

The Holt’s youngest daughter, Freddie, was greatly influenced by her father. She fondly remembered riding on horseback with him (the horse was named “Dolly”) to meet the steamboats at the Tennessee River and then deliver the community’s mail. For a time, the area where they made their home was known as Holtsville
and there was also a school established by that same name. I had the great honor and privilege of meeting Freddie Holt, on my first visit to Hardin County in 2000. She was 102 at the time.

Other Holts reached degrees of prominence in the community as well. John’s brother George W. Holt was a successful farmer and landowner until his tragic death in 1887. He was appointed to serve on the first board of colored school directors in Hardin County, along with William Bradley and Green Barnes. At his death, he owned about 250 acres of land. One of his sons (George W. Holt, Jr.) went on to become a successful teacher in New York City.

Many of the Holt women were well-educated and some were even fluent in other languages; Ivie Holt was fluent in German. Freddie Holt attended the exclusive Bradley Academy in Murfreesboro, TN, which began to serve African Americans in 1884. Several Holts (and others in the community who were able) attended the Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial School in Nashville, now Tennessee State University. Minnie Holt, Roxie Holt, Cordia and Anna Holt were just some of the Holt women who became teachers and were fondly remembered by elders. Some eventually relocated to other parts of the country, but stories of these women abound and support the notion that blacks valued education and educators.

Minnie Holt was a particularly dynamic figure. She was a no-nonsense teacher who graduated from Tennessee Normal in Nashville and Lane College in Jackson, TN, and taught for many years in Hardin County schools as well as in surrounding counties. She also owned land that she managed with meticulous precision. Minnie Holt was a genealogist before her time; she kept detailed notes that survive today of most of the black families in the Hookers Bend/Right/Morris Chapel/Savannah community. Minnie noted marriages, deaths, births and all manner of events. She saved hundreds of beautiful photographs; she kept letters and cards and other memorabilia. Clearly, Minnie, born in 1880, valued the knowledge of family and community history.
In addition to John W. Holt, other men stand out in the records and collective memories as leaders in the black community over the years, men like the Rev. James Tall, Solomon Bradley, John Hardin and Edward “Ned” Hays. The Holts are representative of many other African-American families in the county with long histories. Other surnames include: Hayes, Lowery, Brashears, Luton, Cherry, Hardin, White, Laster, Davy and Broyles. These families and others intermarried over the past hundred plus years so that everyone truly is “cousin this” or “cousin that”.

**Building Communities**

Beyond the names and dates and numbers, this lineage illustrates a bigger story that must be remembered and told. In Hardin County, after the Civil War, ex-slaves formed communities on the fringes of Savannah, Saltillo, Hooker’s Bend, Sibley and Right. Blacks were largely shut out of society at large by Jim Crow and segregation. For example, blacks were driven out of the Morris Chapel area at some point after the Civil War and did not return there until after World War 2. There were other instances of racial strife, including a riot and a lynching—as there was all over the country but particularly in the South.

There are a series of marriage records in the Hardin Court House where the word “Coon” is written across the certificates, evidence of the sentiments of some at the time. But there are also stories of progressive whites who helped those in the black community and developed long-lasting friendships. In 1874, John M. Hooks (a white man) sold land in the 13th district “for the purposes of building a colored school”. And in a Savannah Courier article dated February 3, 1911, an anonymous white citizen is pleading for the “NightRiders” to stop terrorizing the “colored people”. So, even in the midst of cruelty and ugliness, there are stories of hope and redemption that serve as inspiration.

Regardless of these hardships, black families farmed the land, built their houses, continued centuries-old cultural traditions that had survived slavery and even started their own socio-economic groups. For example, on September 24, 1885, the Courier newspaper reported that the Hardin County Colored Agricultural and Mechanical Association were having their 10th Annual Fair in October 1885 for 4 days. Another group is mentioned, “The Colored County Wheel” in October 1888. The Courier also mentions a Prince Hall lodge (No. 73 F. and A.M.) having a meeting at Newtown in Savannah in June, 1929, and many local blacks remember their ancestors being masons. Many of the women belonged to the corresponding black organization for women, the Eastern Stars. Even the “colored picnics” were mentioned in the paper sometimes.
The black community formed churches like: New Zeal Baptist in Sibley, Grahams Chapel C.M.E. in Newtown, St. Paul A.M.E and the Church of the Living God in Hooker’s Bend, St. Mark A.M.E. in Saltillo, and St. Mark Baptist in Stringtown. Graham’s Chapel was started on land donated by an African-American couple, William and Edith Davis in October 1899. St. Paul A.M.E. was built on land owned by John Hardin. New Zeal Baptist was started on land donated in June 1880 by Samuel C. Holt. In the land records, local blacks can be found also donating land for their cemeteries, for example, Ned Hays, John W. Holt, Dave C. Crowder and James Tall sold 1 acre to John Hardin in 1919, land known as the “Hooker’s Bend Graveyard.” The Cawthon family donated the land for the cemetery that still bears their name today. A black cemetery called “Norwood” is mentioned in the Courier as early as 1889.

Blacks helped establish their own schools like the Sibley Academy, Union Academy in Hooker’s Bend, Dunbar in Savannah, Lincoln in Saltillo, and an earlier unnamed one-room school in Newtown. The school at Newtown was apparently financed by funds raised by one of the “colored fairs” mentioned above in 1888. There were also black schools in Swift, St. Paul, St. John, Spring Hill, Nance and Sparks Bend.
The Sibley Academy was established with land deeded in January 1887 by Solomon Bradley, James Bradley and Thomas Lacy, and its building and dedication were covered in the Courier newspaper. A school called Dunbar is mentioned educating blacks as early as 1919 but it must have been rebuilt because the Courier newspaper did a short article on its opening in August 1935. Dunbar was a Rosenwald school, built with grant money from the Julius Rosenwald fund. (A fascinating person, Julius Rosenwald was a millionaire philanthropist who made his fortune through Sears and Roebuck, Inc. He used part of his wealth to begin a program that ultimately contributed to building almost 5,000 schools in the rural South for black children between the years 1917-1932. His grants built 354 schools in Tennessee alone. Find out more about him at http://www.rosenwaldschools.com)

As an agricultural society, most of life in Hardin County centered on farming the land; social life was often centered around the church. After the Civil War, the government (through the Freedmen’s Bureau) supported labor contracts for ex-slaves to work the land as sharecroppers—instead of providing a better way for more to own the land outright. Because the majority of blacks were illiterate, these systems lead to widespread abuse across the South in general. Many families, through sharecropping, became indebted and strapped to working that land, rarely being able to acquire enough to move forward.

Given this economic environment, the ability to purchase and hold onto land was a tenuous prospect at best. Even those who acquired land often had to use it as security for the next year’s crop supplies, and sometimes that land was lost. Obviously, many poor whites faced the same difficulty, but without the added burden of racism. African-Americans knew that securing an education for their children in addition to land ownership was the path to a better future. In this way—working hard and wanting safe and secure families—black and white Hardin Countians were no different. They took their histories, separate and violent at times, and crafted a county from which many can take pride in today.

Military Service

Records from the National Archives show that African-Americans from Hardin County proudly served in America’s military. In fact, during the Civil War,
Tennessee had the largest number of black recruits of all the states. Over 20,000 black men volunteered for service in the United States Colored Troops (USCT). Isaac Cherry and Richard D. Kendall are the names of just two of the ex-slaves who joined the 55th United States Colored Infantry (USCI) from Hardin County.

Henry Holt, of Savannah, joined the 55th USCI and died during the war at a hospital in Port Hudson, Louisiana in September 1864. His mother, Julia (or Judy) Holt applied for a pension in 1890. Julia was also owned by Giles Holt who owned Malinda Holt; perhaps Malinda and Julia were sisters, or related in some other way. Julia Holt and several of her children are listed in both the 1843 and 1845 Giles Holt deeds discussed earlier in the article.

World War I Draft Registration cards show several of the Holt brothers: Troy, Lawson, George, Swanson and Hundley. They all registered between the years 1917-1918 at Union Academy; Harry Allen was the registrar. They could all sign their own names indicating they were literate and the cards note the particularly common Holt trait of grey or blue eyes. This is indicative of the Native- and European-American influence in this Holt bloodline. Mary C. Garrett, wife of John W. Holt, had a white father and a Cherokee slave mother.

According to family members, Mary had a very close friendship with Queen Haley (grandmother of the author Alex Haley), and one of the similarities they often spoke of was being the offspring of a slave mother and a white slave owner. The pictures accompanying this article can also attest to the interracial background of many of the Holts. Oral history includes several incidents of some “passing” as whites.

My great-grandfather, Lawson Holt, served for almost 3 years in World War I. During the war, he served with the Field Hospital #368 in France, and was discharged a little over two years later in 15 March 1919 at the rank of Corporal. Interestingly, Lawson appears to have trained for his service at the now historic Fort Des Moines Training Camp in Des Moines, Iowa. Fort Des Moines was the first training camp built for colored officers. He received the World War I Victory Medal for his service.

The Courier newspaper, on August 1, 1919, mentions a celebration Hardin Countians were planning for returning soldiers. They were presenting flags to both the white and black soldiers and a choral selection by the
Holtsville Glee Club was also in the program. I often wonder if my great-grandfather Lawson attended the festivities that day. Several other blacks from Hardin County served in World War I, such as: Carlos Bradley, Barley Brashears, Allen Eanes, brothers Con and Simon Haley and James Davy.

The second World War also saw black Hardin Countians heed the call of service. They returned from that war to major changes occurring in the country. During what became known as “The Great Migration”, an estimated one million blacks left the South for Northern factory jobs. The Great Depression and the boll weevil had taken its toll, along with plummeting prices for cotton and the rise of the lynch mob.

All of these factors contributed to the migration. Many of these ex-soldiers moved north to cities like Chicago, Dayton, Cleveland, Indianapolis, Milwaukee and Detroit. The factory jobs replaced sharecropping, and gave the next generation even greater opportunities. Some black Hardin Countians that served in World War II are: Robert Beene, James and Tommie Burge, Charles Eanes, William Tall and Curtis Luton, just to name a few.

My grandfather, Luther Holt, who also served, moved his family to Dayton, Ohio after the war. My mother and aunts were raised there and as children in the late 1940s and 1950s, they would often head back down to Hardin County and to Henderson, TN to visit family members. Many of those relatives also eventually relocated to Dayton. This emphasizes even more why these stories must be shared and their legacies preserved. Many descendants of these earlier black Hardin Countians do not live in the area now and as elders pass away, these wonderful stories and histories will go with them unless we make an effort to keep them alive.

Several of Malinda’s children and their descendants remained in Hardin County throughout the turn of the century and beyond. Here is what I have gathered about the first three generations of her family. (Note that some children disappeared from the area or the local records.)
1. Malinda Holt, born 1816, unknown birthplace, died 1881 in Hardin County, TN. Spouse or Partner, unknown. The names of her children are from both census records and also information copied and given to me by a Holt elder, possibly from an old family Bible.

First Generation:
I. Thomas HOLT born 18 March 1834
II. Daniel HOLT born August 1838
III. Phillip HOLT born November 1840
IV. Chana HOLT born 12 April 1884
V. Eliza Ann HOLT born 28 August 1846, died between 1910-1920
VI. Samuel C. HOLT born ca. 1847, died 30 Sep 1897
VII. George W. HOLT born 30 Nov 1848, died 30 Apr 1887
VIII. John W. HOLT born 28 Dec 1850, died 24 October 1925
IX. William E. HOLT born 21 July 1853
X. Cintha Jane HOLT born 30 August 1856
XI. Elizabeth HOLT born 4 January 1859
XII. James HOLT born 20 October 1863

Second and Third Generations:

III. Phillip Holt m. Louisa MCCLAIN abt. 1871, possibly in McNairy County, TN. Their children were:
   A. John HOLT, born ca. 1872
   B. Bettie HOLT, born ca. 1874
   C. Annie HOLT, born ca. 1876
   D. Jennie HOLT, born ca. 1879

V. Eliza Ann HOLT m. Calvin ORR on 17 Jan 1878. Calvin ORR was born ca. 1833 and died sometime after 1886. Their children were:
   A. Thomas ORR, born ca 1876. He married Lucy [last name unknown] ca. 1895, then later married Betty [last name unknown] ca. 1909,
   B. William ORR, born on 15 Oct 1877, d. on 15 Feb 1973. He married Cora CAWTHON, and later Birdie DAVY.
   C. George ORR, born ca. 1880. He appears to have died by 1910.
   D. Jennie ORR, born ca. 1883
   E. Cora [?] ORR, born ca. 1884
   F. Lucy ORR, born ca. 1886

VI. Samuel C. HOLT m. Lucy BARNES abt. 1871. Lucy was born ca. 1850 and died between 1900-1910. Their children were:
A. Mattie HOLT, born ca. 1872. Mattie HOLT married George MAY.

B. John G. HOLT, born ca. 1875, married Ila SPEARS on 18 July 1897. Ila SPEARS was born ca. 1879 in Saltillo. In the 1930s, they moved to Detroit, Michigan. Their children were:
   1. Samuel HOLT, born 5 July 1894, died October 1985 in MI.
   2. Granville HOLT, born 12 Jan 1900, died 5 September 1990 in MI.
   3. Velma HOLT, born ca. 1903
   5. Pruella HOLT, born ca. 1907
   6. Beatrice HOLT, born 24 March 1908, died 30 August 1909
   7. Genare[?] HOLT, born on 10 January 1910

C. Sylvester HOLT, born ca. 1878 and died between 1915-1920. He married Ethel SPEARS on 4 March 1900. Ethel SPEARS was born ca. April 1881. Their children were:
   1. Bertha HOLT, born in 1902
   2. David HOLT, born in 1905
   3. Herbert HOLT, born in 1907
   4. Leona HOLT, born 16 March 1909
   5. G. Vivian HOLT, born in 1913

D. Anna Bell HOLT, born 13 Feb 1880 and died 2 Jan 1972 in Chicago, Illinois. She married David CROWDER on 25 December 1900. They had the following children:
   1. Ulus CROWDER, born 19 November 1901, died 15 May 1988
   2. Garvin CROWDER, born 6 May 1903, died June 1961
   3. Roland CROWDER, born 6 March 1904, died 17 November 1989
   4. Lawrence CROWDER, born 8 September 1908.

E. Leelous “Lula” HOLT, born ca 1884. She married a [first name unknown] YOUNG.

VII. George W. HOLT married Anner GARRETT on 21 Dec 1875 in Decatur County, TN. Anner was born ca. Sep 1853 and died after 1930. Their children were:

A. Henry E. HOLT, born ca. Jan 1877 and died on 29 August 1952. He married Elzora DAVY on 18 August 1898. Elzora DAVY was born in August 1880. Their children were:
   1. Cora L. HOLT, born ca. January 1897
   2. Clara M. HOLT, born ca. December 1899
   4. Dossy HOLT, born ca. 1906
   6. Ozie HOLT, born ca. 1910
   7. Tobe HOLT, born ca. 1915
8. Katherine HOLT, born ca. 1916
9. Lorraine HOLT, born ca. 1918

B. Edward HOLT, born ca. Aug 1878 and died after 1927. He married Bell [last name unknown], about 1906. Their child was:
   1. Ellen HOLT, born on 20 March 1910

C. Betty HOLT, born April 1880 and died 6 February 1954. She married Jim HARBOUR on 26 December 1899. Their children were:
   1. Rosa HARBOUR, born 11 November 1900, died 19 February 1976
   2. George Roy HARBOUR, born ca. 1913
   3. Rochester HARBOUR, born ca. 1915

D. Maynard HOLT, born ca. Jan 1884
E. Esther HOLT, born ca. Nov 1886
F. George W. HOLT, born 29 Jan 1887 and d. 13 Nov 1970. He married LEONIA [last name unknown] about 1908. Their children were:
   3. Lola HOLT, born ca. 1913, died between 1970-1980
   4. Artimus HOLT, born ca. 1914
   5. Sherman HOLT, born ca. 1915
   6. Hardy Holt, born 9 March 1917, died 10 November 2000
   7. Agnes HOLT, born ca. 1920, died between 1985-1990
   8. William T. HOLT, born ca. 1923

VII. John W. HOLT m. Mary Cornelius GARRETT (Mary was apparently the sister of Anner Garrett above, who married John’s brother George) on 21 Oct 1879 in Decatur County, TN. Mary was born abt. 1862 in Decatur County and died 20 Oct 1932. Their children were:

A. Troy Mason HOLT, born 19 Nov 1879 and died 22 May 1962. He married Cora BRADLEY in about 1902. Their children were:
   3. Beatrice HOLT, born on 6 July 1911, died (Troy Holt’s children, continued) on 25 October 1980 in Detroit, MI. She married Vernon WHITE.

Troy also had another son:


(John W. Holt’s children, continued)

B. Ivie True HOLT, born 23 Dec 1882, died in April 1971
C. Swanson HOLT, born 25 Jan 1885 and died on 26 April 1938 in Gainesville, Florida. He married Vannie SHANNON about 1904. Vannie SHANNON was born ca. 1886 in Decatur County. Their children were:

1. Willie HOLT, born ca. 1907
2. Raymond HOLT, born on 30 December 1908, died in 1997 in Detroit, Michigan.
3. Syvoid HOLT, born on 9 October 1911, died on 21 December 1969
4. Floyd HOLT, born on 2 November 1914, died on 5 September 1927

D. Madelina HOLT, born ca. 1887 and died on 6 December 1959. She married Abner HALEY about 1902 (the uncle of Alex Haley of ‘Roots’ fame). By 1930, they settled in the Detroit, Michigan area. Their children were:

1. Julia HALEY, born ca. 1904
2. Abner HALEY, born 7 August 1907
3. Connie HALEY, born ca. 1909

F. Oralee HOLT, born 22 Apr 1892 and died 16 Jul 1921. She married Terrell JOHNSON. Their child was:
1. Gwendolyn JOHNSON, born on 9 January 1920, died on 22 February 2002 in Detroit, Michigan. She married Coy BURGESS.

G. Lawson HOLT, born 15 Apr 1895 and died 4 Jan 1939 in Tuskegee, Alabama. He married Vannie HARBOUR and Helen WHITE. He had the following children:
1. Luther HOLT, born 11 October 1921, died on 23 August 1993 in Herndon, Virginia (grandfather of the author). Luther married Mattie M. SPRINGER.
2. [Living] HOLT, name/dates not included for privacy purposes
3. Rovenia HOLT, dates of birth/death unknown

H. Freddie HOLT, born 8 Mar 1898 and died 17 Feb 2002

John W. Holt also had another son:
I. Hundley Irwin HOLT, born 20 Feb 1880 and died in 1940. He married Etta BARNES on 29 July 1898. Etta BARNES was born about 1880. Their child was:
1. Lily HOLT, born ca. 1899. She died while still a young girl.

XXI. James HOLT m. Nannie BARNES in abt. 1880. Their children were:
A. Manly HOLT, born & died 13 Mar 1880
C. Ulie HOLT, born 31 Jan 1883, died 2 Apr 1900
Conclusion

Community Picnic/Reunion in Hookers Bend, June 1939, showing Holts, Lutons, Bradleys, Talls, Harbours and others.

I have spent the last 10 years researching, documenting and admiring the Holts, along with my other family lines. I started with a list of names that elders had given me, headed down to the National Archives in Washington, D.C. and began my research. I began wanting to know more about Malinda Holt—much of that information that appears to be lost in the annals of slavery. I cannot determine, from existing records, where or how Giles Holt acquired Malinda or more specific details about her life. Strangely enough, I can feel the horror of the institution of slavery, but also pride because I am here only because Malinda somehow endured. Malinda survived.

It has been an absolute joy finding my new Hardin County family members and meeting others researching their family history. I believe our common goal is that we learn and grow from our family’s experience; not through judgment but through knowledge and understanding. Feel free also to visit my website at http://www.robynsfamilyhistory.com.

I would like to extend a special thanks and acknowledgment of the following individuals and families who provided crucial information and wonderful photographs over the years of my Hardin County Holt family research:

The Tall Family  Vivian Gross  Gloria Cox
*Nella Hayes Hockett  *Gwendolyn Burgess  *Thelma Burdine & family
Descendants of Giles Holt, especially Lee Cate and Barry Holt

* in memoriam

Recommended Reference Biography:

2. For a sense of the violence perpetrated against blacks in Tennessee after the Civil War, see http://www.freedmensbureau.com/tennessee/index.htm

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1 Hardin County Deed Book Vol. P: 133-134, Hardin County Court House, Hardin County, Tennessee.
2 See http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/ for historical census data
7 See Hardin County Historian, Vol. 1, No. 1:8-11 (Jan-Dec 1996) and Hardin County Historian, Vol. 1, No. 2:46-50 (Jan-Jun 1997)
9 Hardin County Circuit Court Minutes, Vol. B, 1840-1850: 84-86, Family History Center microfilm # 980979, Tennessee State Archives, Nashville, Tennessee, microfilm of original data from Hardin County Court House
"George Holt, col, who lived near Sibley, left this world by the rope route last Friday." Savannah Courier
Newspaper, May 5, 1887. This death was remembered by elders as a lynching, although the newspaper item
does not specifically say that.


Williams, Gary Thomas, “Going to the Chapel: History of A Rural Town.” West Tennessee Historical
Society Papers, Vol 52: 44-63 (December 1998)

"The Work of A Mob", Savannah Courier Newspaper, November 20, 1890

Hardin County Marriage Book 1: 234 (one example), Hardin County, Tennessee Court House

WB Davis and wife to Colored M. E. Church of America, Deed, Hardin County Deed Book AA: 540,
Hardin County, Tennessee Court House

Hardin County Deed Book Vol. V: 144, Hardin County, Tennessee Court House

Archives and Records Administration. M1509, 4,582 rolls.