

# KK's Kin Khronicles



By Kathy Kult



William J. Lawhorn

William J. Lawhorn  
1847 - 1920

---

**O**ur family legend on the Lawhorn side says that our forefather, William J. Lawhorn, was “an American Indian who was found deserted as a baby by a white couple who were on their way through Oklahoma”. This is a fantastic story... but is it true? Let's find out!

## ■ The Source of the Legend

This story all stemmed from a conversation which Vern (Edwards) Lawhorn (who was married to my great-uncle Bill “Beaucoup” Lawhorn, a grandson of William) had with Bill’s mother’s brother’s wife, Edna Coates. (Did you follow that? Edna isn’t a Lawhorn... she’s the wife of Bill’s uncle, Denton Marion Coates). Edna was in the Nashville, Illinois nursing home while Vern was working there. One day when Vern visited Edna during her rounds, Edna said “You know Grandpa Lawhorn [referring to William J.] isn’t a Lawhorn... a white couple was in a covered wagon on their way through Oklahoma when they heard a baby crying. They stopped and found the baby, but couldn’t find anyone else around, so they took the baby with them. *They had always wanted a son* and the baby was a boy.”

## ■ A Documented History of William J.

The only solid information I had on William J. Lawhorn was that he was buried in Mt. Zion Cemetery, Blissville (near Ashley), Jefferson County, Illinois. His tombstone reads: “WILLIAM J. LAWHORN, BORN OCT 13 1847, DIED JAN 12 1920.”

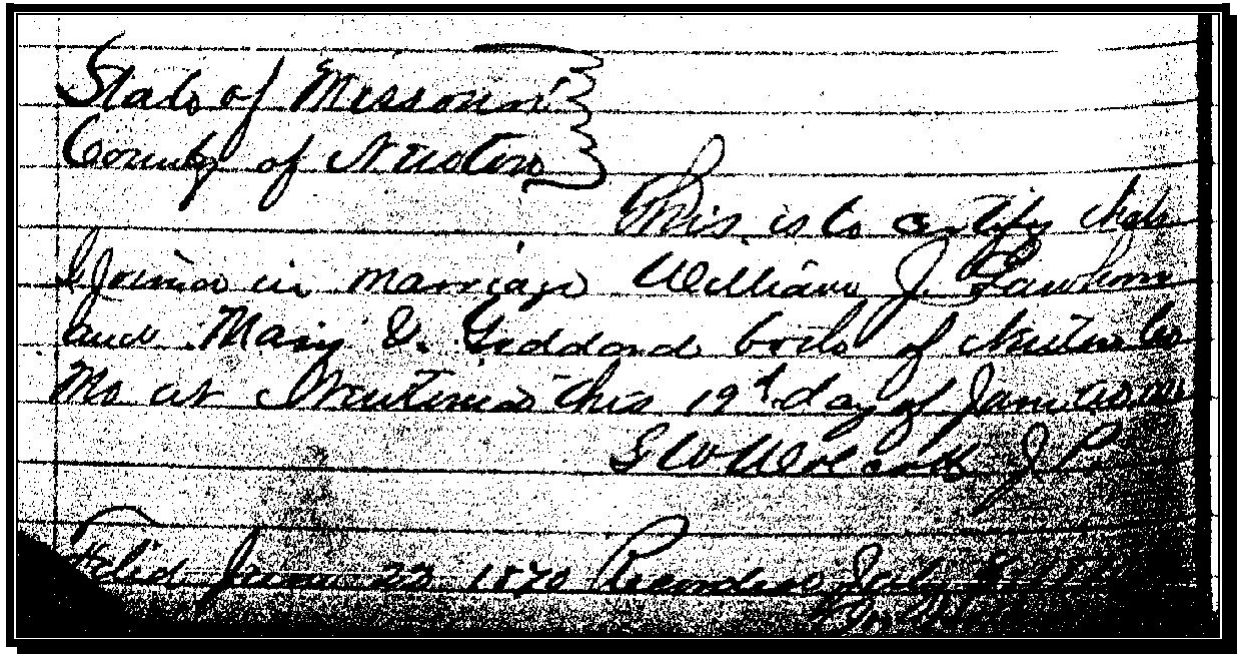
Since all I had to go on was a birth and death date (as well as place of burial), I started looking for a William Lawhorn who was born in 1847. I first found a “William J. Lawhorn” on the 1860 census<sup>1</sup>, age 12, living in the household of a Jacob Lawhorn in Finley Township in Webster County, Missouri. This William was listed as the 5<sup>th</sup> child (3<sup>rd</sup> male) out of 11 children, and was listed as being born in Missouri (as well as the rest of his siblings). Since the name was a perfect match (including the middle initial of “J.”), I kept the record in my “shoebox of hopefuls”.



I wanted to find the 1850 census for William, but couldn't find him until I searched for variations of the "Lawhorn" surname. Finally I found a "William Lohorn", age 3,<sup>2</sup> who turns out to be living in the *same* household as the 1860 census, but this time they were recorded in Greene County, Missouri. An investigation on county boundaries showed that part of Greene County became Webster County in 1855, so they probably didn't physically move – the county line just moved. The William in this census was listed as the 8<sup>th</sup> child (the 6<sup>th</sup> male) out of nine children listed. Again, he and his immediately older and younger siblings were all listed as being born in Missouri. This too was added to my "shoebox of hopefuls".

Further research found that a William Lawhorn was enlisted in the 8th Regiment Missouri State Militia Cavalry Volunteers, Company H as a Private on 17 July 1863 in Webster County, Missouri<sup>3</sup> (in addition, two of his brothers who were listed on the 1850 and 1860 censuses, Daniel and James King Lawhorn, were also in this regiment). This fact further links William to the one found in the 1850 and 1860 censuses.

Another record found in the "Marriage Records of Newton County, Missouri"<sup>4</sup>, on microfiche at the Family History Library states that on 19 Jun 1870, a William J. Lawhorn married Mary V. Goddard in Newton County, Missouri (Mary V. Lawhorn is also buried next to William in Mt. Zion cemetery). Further, a William Lawhorn is listed on the 1870 census for Granby Twp, Newton County, Missouri<sup>5</sup> (along with a "Mary V. Goddard", his wife), and the place of birth for him was recorded as "Missouri".



*Marriage Record for William J. Lawhorn and Mary V. Goddard  
19 June 1870 in Newton County, Missouri  
Married by S.W. Wolcott, J.P.*

William & Mary are then listed on the 1880 census for Richview, Washington County, Illinois<sup>6</sup>. This indicates they moved between 1870 and 1880 from Missouri to Illinois. They're listed again on the 1900 census for Bald Hill Township, Jefferson County, Illinois<sup>7</sup>. Then they're listed on the 1910 census for Casner Township, Jefferson County, Illinois<sup>8</sup>. And lastly, they're listed on the 1920 census for Ashley, Washington County, Illinois<sup>9</sup> when William was 73 years old. And the place of birth for William on all of these censuses: "Missouri".

An interesting note, according to his death date, William died just three days after the 1920 census was taken in Ashley, Illinois.



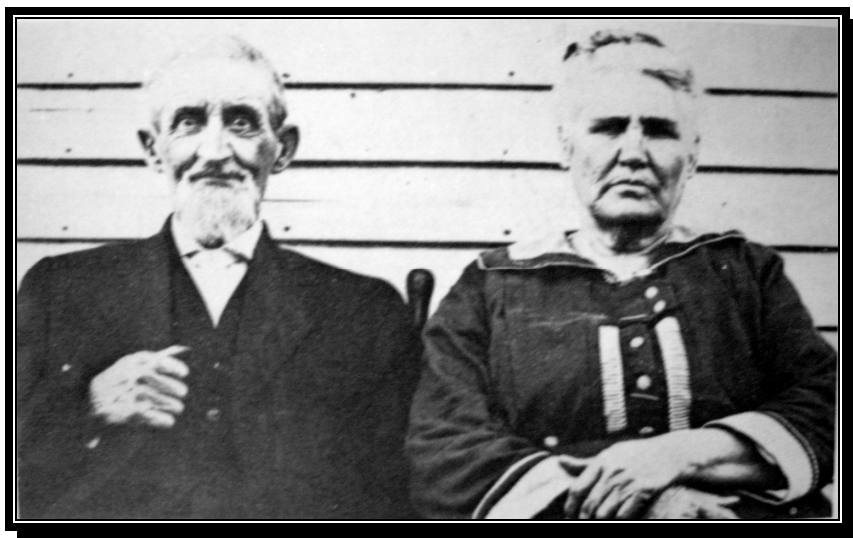
1. PLACE OF DEATH			STATE OF ILLINOIS State Board of Health - Bureau of Vital Statistics		ORIGINAL
County <u>Washington</u>			Registration Dist. No. <u>3696</u>		<b>STANDARD Certificate of Death</b> Registered No. _____ <small>If death occurred in a hospital or institution, give its NAME instead of street and number.</small>
Township or Road District <u>Ashley Ill</u>			Primary Dist. No. _____		
Incorp. Town or Village of _____					
City _____ No. _____					
2. FULL NAME <u>Wm Lawhorn</u>					
PERSONAL AND STATISTICAL PARTICULARS					
3. SEX <u>M</u>	4. COLOR OR RACE <u>W</u>	5. SINGLE, MARRIED, WIDOWED, OR DIVORCED, (Write the word) <u>married</u>			
6. DATE OF BIRTH <u>Oct 13</u> 19 <u>20</u> (Month) (Day) (Year)		7. AGE <u>72</u> yrs. <u>2</u> mos. <u>29</u> ds. IF LESS than 1 day, _____ hrs OR _____ min?			
8. OCCUPATION (a) Trade, profession, or particular kind of work <u>Farmer</u> (b) General nature of industry, business, or establishment in which employed (or employer) _____					
9. BIRTHPLACE (State or Country) <u>Green Co. Mo</u>					
PARENTS	10. NAME OF FATHER _____				
	11. BIRTHPLACE OF FATHER (State or Country) _____				
	12. MAIDEN NAME OF MOTHER _____				
	13. BIRTHPLACE OF MOTHER (State or Country) _____				
14. THE ABOVE IS TRUE TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE (Informant) <u>Mrs Essie Jones</u> (Address) <u>Ashley Ill</u>					
15. Filed <u>Jan 13</u> 19 <u>20</u> by <u>N. L. Barrett</u> Deputy Registrar					
MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH					
16. DATE OF DEATH <u>Jan 13</u> 19 <u>20</u> (Month) (Day) (Year)					
17. I HEREBY CERTIFY, That I attended deceased from _____ to _____ 19 <u>20</u> that I last saw him alive on <u>Inquest Jan 13</u> 19 <u>20</u> and that death occurred, on the date stated above, at _____ m. The CAUSE OF DEATH* was as follows: <u>Heart disease was the finding of coroner jury</u> Contributory (Secondary) _____ (Duration) _____ yrs _____ mos _____ ds. (Signed) <u>D. P. Schroeder</u> Coroner M.D. (Address) <u>Nashville, Ill</u> Date <u>Jan 18</u> 19 <u>20</u> Telephone _____					
18. LENGTH OF RESIDENCE (For Hospitals, Institutions, Transients, or Recent Residents) At place of death _____ yrs _____ mos _____ ds. In the State _____ yrs _____ mos _____ ds. Where was disease contracted, if not at place of death? _____ Former or usual residence _____					
19. PLACE OF BURIAL OR REMOVAL <u>Mr Green Inf. Co. Ill</u>					DATE OF BURIAL <u>Jan 15</u> 19 <u>20</u>
20. UNDERTAKER <u>N. L. Barrett</u>					ADDRESS <u>Ashley, Ill.</u>
<small>*Has decedent ever served in military or naval service of U. S.?</small> <small>*State the DISEASE CAUSING DEATH, or, in deaths from VIOLENT CAUSES, state (1) MEANS OF INJURY; and (2) whether ACCIDENTAL, SUICIDAL, or HOMICIDAL</small>					

**Death Certificate of  
William J. Lawhorn**

Further research in the Washington County Clerk's office finds William's death certificate<sup>10</sup> which states (the informant being his daughter, Essie (Lawhorn) Jones) that he was **born in "Green Co. MO"**. This essentially proves that the 1850 census I found for William in Greene County Missouri is the correct one.

On 23 July 1920, his widow, Mary V. Lawhorn, filed for pension benefits in Illinois<sup>11</sup>. It states William was in the "H 8 Mo. S. M. Cav." This proves that the military records found for William in Missouri are the correct ones as well... which links William to his brothers (they were in the same regiment), which then links them back to the 1850 census in Greene County.

Lastly, I found a photo of William in the book "Washington County, Illinois 1979 History"<sup>12</sup> in which he appears to have light skin and hair.



**William J. and Mary V. (Goddard) Lawhorn  
Circa 1919, Ashley, Illinois**

## Conclusion

William Lawhorn was not really a Native American Indian... although technically, he is a native of America. Of course, the quintessential element of proving that William J. Lawhorn was born in Greene County, Missouri, would be a birth certificate. Unfortunately, birth certificates were not issued in Greene County, Missouri until after 1883. Since I've found all of the censuses for William which state that he and all of his immediately older and younger siblings were born in Missouri, and William's death certificate states he was born in Greene County Missouri as well, all facts point to William being born in Greene County, Missouri, and not "found in Oklahoma by a white couple wanting a son". In addition, since William was the 6<sup>th</sup> son of Jacob Lawhorn, it also disproves the story that "the white couple" had "always wanted a son"... William's true parents already had five sons by the time he was born!



- 
- <sup>1</sup> 1860 U.S. census Webster County, Missouri, population schedule, Finley Township, pp. 133 and 134 (penned), dwelling 877, family 873, Jacob Lawhorn household; digital image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 23 May 2005); citing National Archives microfilm publication M653, roll 660.
  - <sup>2</sup> 1850 U.S. census, Greene County, Missouri, population schedule, Benton Township. p. 342 (stamped), dwelling 1448, family 1448, Jacob Lawhorn household (indexed as Jacob "Lohom"); digital image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 31 March 2006); citing National Archives microfilm publication M432, roll 400.
  - <sup>3</sup> National Park Service, Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System, database (<http://www.civilwar.nps.gov> : accessed 30 Sep 2007), William J. Lawhorn entry. Regiment Name : 8 Missouri S.M. Cav.; Side : Union; Company : H; Soldier's Rank\_In : Pvt.; Soldier's Rank\_Out : Pvt.; Flm Number : M390 roll 28
  - <sup>4</sup> Newton County, Missouri, "Marriages", (1867-1872), A2:172 and 187, entries for Wm LAWHORN and Mary V. GODDARD, 19 June 1870; MSA microfilm C20256, Missouri State Archives, Jefferson City.
  - <sup>5</sup> 1870 U.S. census, Newton County, Missouri, population schedule, Granby Township, p. 372 (stamped), dwelling 49, family 48, William J. Lawhorn household; digital image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 31 March 2006); citing National Archives microfilm publication M593, roll 795.
  - <sup>6</sup> 1880 U.S. census, Washington County, Illinois, population schedule, Richview Township, enumeration district (ED) 127, p. 57 (penned), p. 410A (stamped), dwelling 503, family 501, William J. Lawhorn household; digital image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 31 Mar 2006); citing National Archives microfilm publication T9, roll 256.
  - <sup>7</sup> 1900 U.S. census, Jefferson County, Illinois, population schedule, Bald Hill township, enumeration district (ED) 65, p. 6B (penned), dwelling 118, family 119, William J. Lawhorn household; digital image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 31 Mar 2006); citing National Archives microfilm publication T623, roll 308.
  - <sup>8</sup> 1910 U.S. census, Jefferson County, Illinois, population schedule, Casner Township, enumeration district (ED) 94, p. 3B (penned), dwelling 40, family 40, Sylvester Green household; digital image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 31 March 2006); citing National Archives microfilm publication T624, roll 294.
  - <sup>9</sup> 1920 U.S. census, Washington County, Illinois, population schedule, Ashley Township, p. 83 (stamped), enumeration district (ED) 214, sheet 3-A, N. Third Street, dwelling 64, family 64, William Lawhorn household; digital image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 31 March 2006); citing National Archives microfilm publication T625, roll 412.
  - <sup>10</sup> Illinois State Board of Health, death certificate registered no. 3696, William J. Lawhorn, (12 Jan 1920), Bureau of Vital Statistics, Springfield.
  - <sup>11</sup> "Civil War Pension Index: General Index to Pension Files, 1861-1934," digital images, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 12 March 2006); William J. Lawhorn (H 8 Mo. S. M. Cav.) index card; imaged from *General Index to Pension Files, 1861-1934*, T288 (Washington, D.C. : National Archives [n.d.]), no roll number cited.
  - <sup>12</sup> The Historical Society of Washington County, *Washington County, Illinois 1979 History*, (Dallas, Texas : Taylor Publishing Company, 1979), p. 314, [submitted by Velda D. Langrand].