

John Phelps

1802-1888

Family Information:

John Houston Phelps (1802-March 13, 1888)

Alsey Love (1805 – after 1870)

Children

William A.	Abt 1825
Marion	Abt 1827
Almira	Abt 1830
Nancy	January 27, 1832
Dorcas	Abt 1834
Samuel	Abt 1836
Mary	Abt 1838
Melville	July 7, 1840
Rachel	Abt 1843
Amy	Abt 1845
John J.	Abt 1848

Narrative,

Not much is known about John Phelps. His parents remain a mystery. There is speculation on a number of fronts regarding a Samuel Phelps but, to this day, no definitive evidence has been unearthed that identifies his parents with certainty. A Samuel and Rosie(Rhody) Collins were married ca 1798 in Grayson Co., VA. What we do know, from the census data is that John H. Phelps was born in 1802 and his birthplace is listed as North Carolina on the 1850, 1860, and 1870 censuses. On the 1880 census, when he was 79 years old and living with his son, Melville, his birthplace was recorded as VA as were the birthplaces of both of his parents. It is possible that census information on the first three censuses is incorrect on the birthplace of John H., but it does raise questions regarding not only where he was born but also whether or not Samuel and Rhody are really his parents. However, given that John H. was likely out of the house and working on the farm when the census taker came to his home, others in his household might have answered incorrectly for him regarding his state of birth. Then, in 1880, he is likely at home when the census taker visits, allowing for more accurate data on his birthplace and that of his parents. DNA testing points, not to the North Carolina Phelps line, but to the Maryland line of Phelpses. However such testing without additional support is inconclusive.

The Phelps Family Association of America reports that John H. married first in N.C., and that he and his first wife had five children, William A. Phelps, who is thought to be the first of the PHELPS children, probably born about 1825 in Grayson Co. VA. Shortly after the birth of the fifth child, Dorcas, b. 1834, it is suggested that John's first wife died. On March 23, 1834, John

H. married Alsey LOVE in Grayson Co. Virginia. Despite the claim that John H. had two wives, there is no evidence of a first wife that passed on. In fact, there is evidence that suggests that Alsey Love and John H. married in 1824 and not 1834 as is widely believed. First, the marriage document is pre-printed and the 3 could have been an error. Second, Alsey Love's father at age 82 is still alive in 1860 and is living, not with John H. and Alsey, but with William A. Phelps, John H.'s first son near John H. and Alsey. If William's mother was actually not Alsey, it seems unlikely that he would feel obligated to house and clothe William Love, Alsey's father. In fact, given the shared name William, it is more likely to believe that William A. Phelps is named after Alsey Love's father. However, it could be that William Love treated William Phelps as his own grandson and that since he was young when his true mother passed on, William Love became a surrogate grandparent. Finally, typically when a wife has passed on there is some type of delay in child birth. In this case, however, we see no disruption to the regular arrival of children in John's household. Nevertheless, this is not completely clear.

John H. was a farmer his entire life. He first appears on the tax rolls in Grayson County, VA in 1823 when he is 21 years old. The tax rolls do not indicate any white males over age 16 in his home until 1840 which would be consistent with William, his oldest son, turning 16. Throughout the period of 1823 until 1850, he typically has only two horses. For a period of time, from 1840 till 1847, he has between 4 and 5 horses. He apparently never owned any cattle. He also did not own any slaves. By 1850, he lists his real property as worth approximately \$800 in the census.

John H. participated in public life and was involved in the community in Grayson County. In 1834, the court issued an order that John H. Phelps "appointed overseer of the road from Ben's Branch to the Island Ford". He would have been responsible for grading and maintaining that portion of the road and would have received a small remuneration in return for his services.

Also on September 13, 1834, in Grayson co, Va, Will Book I-454, John H. Phelps and a John Hail took the inventory of a deceased individual by the name of Sexton. Finally, John appears as a witness to William Pool's will noted on August 15, 1836 in Will Book I-505.

John H. and Alsey Phelps apparently moved to Laurel County, KY between 1850 and 1854. They followed their son, William A. Phelps who married in Laurel Co. in 1851, so John H. could have been in the county as early as that, however he and Alsey appear on the 1850 Census in Grayson Co. William A. Phelps likely sent back word that better land was available in Laurel County, KY and John's whole family, except for his second oldest daughter, Nancy, follow William. By 1860, John's real estate in Laurel County is noted to be worth \$1500.

From 1860 to 1880, John appears on Laurel Co. Census, however by 1880, he is enumerated as "79 (yrs.); Father; Widowed" in his son Melville's household. Evidently Alsey died between 1870 and 1880. It is assumed that Alsey died in Laurel County, KY. John dies in Laurel County, Ky on March 13, 1888. It is recorded in the *Mountain Echo*, the local paper of Laurel County, at the time. The notice reads:

Died: At the residence of Mr. Melville Phelps, nine miles east of London, on the 13th inst., of general debility, Uncle John Phelps, in his 87th year. Mr. Phelps has been very feeble for several years and leaves many friends to mourn his death.

Mountain Echo, March 23, 1888.

The presumption is that both Alsey and John H. Phelps were buried in the Phelps Cemetery on Route 80, 6.5 miles east of route 192 in London. The cemetery does not have actual marked graves for either, but there are over 20 unmarked graves on that site and it is on the location of Melville Phelps former property. It also contains the graves of Melville and his wife, Elizabeth. Elizabeth predeceased both Melville and John H.