

September 27, 2003

Hi folks,

I would like to give you some updated information on John, Emily, and Starks Milstead. As you all know, John and Emily were the progenitors of the Milstead line in Louisiana, moving there from Florida in the 1850's. John and Emily were my great great grand parents and Starks, one of their sons, was my great grandfather.

There have been a couple of problems with my genealogy research on these folks. I have never been able to determine exactly when either John or Emily died or where they are buried. As all of the Rapides Parish records were burned in 1864 by the retreating Yankee troops and the Grant Parish records burned in 1873 during the Colfax Riot, it has been just about impossible to trace probates, successions, and so forth. I know John died sometime between 1860 and 1870 because he appears in the 1860 census, and Emily appears as a widow in the 1870 census. Though I don't know the exact date Starks died, I know it was in 1898, a couple of months after my grandfather, his youngest son, was born. Emily was still alive in 1886 as I have the record of her selling 75 acres of land to one of her son-in-laws at that time.

The second problem is that I don't know where John and Emily were buried. I know that Starks was buried in the Liberty Chapel Cemetery in Williana, La., because my grandfather told me so. Many of the other, early Milsteads are also buried at Liberty Chapel. The cemetery there has been in existence since 1849.

I think I might have solved part of the problem, though I must admit my conclusion is based on a great deal of speculation. Unfortunately, the records of the early burials at Liberty Chapel were destroyed in a fire in the first part of the 20th Century. To make things even more difficult, though I know for certain that Starks is buried there, no marker can be found.

What I have found are the burial plots of Samuel and Virginia Waits. Virginia was the eldest daughter of John and Emily and, of course, the sister of Starks. A short distance away on a parallel line is the grave of one of Samuel and Virginia's daughters, Alice. In between there is room for exactly three graves. I know where the other Waits children are buried so the graves are not for them. I believe John, Emily, and Starks are buried in those three gravesites.

Let me give you my reasoning for thinking this. Samuel died in 1895, but Virginia did not die until 1923. They have large, identical

markers. Alice died in 1913, ten years before her mother. It would seem reasonable that Alice would have been buried beside her father and mother's gravesites, but she is three graves away. I am assuming that she was buried where she was because the other plots were already occupied.

Once again, I am guessing, but I believe that John had at least six plots all in a row. He and Emily were buried there first. Samuel was buried there in 1895 and Starks in 1898. Alice was buried at the far end of the row in 1913 and Virginia buried beside her husband in 1923.

I realize that my conclusion is not based on hard evidence, but it is the best I can do for now. I am leaving the date of death for John and Emily blank in the hope that I can eventually determine what they are. People, especially my people, should have some record somewhere that they lived and died, and these tombstones will have to do.

I am having the stones installed the second week of November and will send pictures when I do. They are small, in ground stones, for now, but the Liberty Chapel folks have graciously allowed me to place them at no charge, except for the markers themselves.

Just thought you all would want to know.

David Raines