

Sibling Saturday: The Jason Lee Roberts Family, 1900



Jason Lee Roberts Family, 1900. Standing, in white dress is Orpha B. Roberts, her brother Guy L. Roberts, Jason Lee Roberts, his wife Julia (French) Roberts holding baby Ralph Roberts. Seated children, from left: Wiley Roberts, Willard Roberts, and Charley Roberts. (Jason's brother George A. Roberts is the man standing on the left, with his son George Jr.)

[Roberts Family](#) *(Click for Family Tree)*

The Roberts family have a legacy of feeding their own families as well as the nation by their work with the soil and food crops, as well as with livestock. Jason Lee Roberts followed in the footsteps of his father, John S. Roberts, and other ancestors, as he farmed the land for all of his working life. In fact, J.L. is listed along with his two brothers, George A.

Roberts and W. E. Roberts, in the "Directory of Leading Farmers in Jasper County, Iowa" in 1901.

Jason Lee or "J.L." was the second child of five children (one died in infancy) of John Roberts and his wife Elizabeth Ann (Murrell) Roberts. J. L. was born in Warren County, Illinois, as were 3 of his siblings; his birth was on 8 December 1859. (He was possibly born in Roseville- records vary.) J.L. would have worked on the farm as a young boy, learning the same skills his father had learned from his own father. In 1868, when J.L. was about 9 or 10, the family migrated via covered wagon to Jasper County, Iowa. The family settled on a farm there, where J.L. and his siblings grew to adulthood.

Jason acquired his own farm "after reaching manhood," as his obituary stated. The homestead was near Prairie City, and his son Charles farmed it after he retired.

Jason married Julia French on 22 December 1881 in Mound Prairie Township, Jasper County, Iowa. Julia had also been born in Illinois, but on 5 December 1863, to John Candor French and Susan F. Peckenpaugh. Julia's parents had lived in Indiana, as had Jason's, and then moved to Illinois- it was a common migration pattern. The known residences of the families were about 70 miles apart in Indiana, but only 45 miles apart in Illinois- perhaps the families knew one another? Both families were enumerated in Jasper County in 1870, so there is the possibility that they migrated together in 1868, as it was a good-sized group. We have been unable to find the French family in the 1860 US Federal Census, so finding where they were that year might give us more clues about whether or not the two families knew each other prior to removing to Iowa.

The two families were close, even if it was only once they took up residence in Iowa: Julia's brother, Reuben H. French, married Jason's sister, Mary Jane Roberts. (More of that story in another post.)

J.L. and Julia had seven children together: Orpha B. Roberts (1883-1948), who married Samuel Blount; Oca S. Roberts (1888-1973), who married Walter Wilkinson; Guy L. Roberts (1890-1962); Wiley A. Roberts (1895-1967); Willard Francis Roberts (1897-1943); Charles Wilder Roberts (1900-1989); and Ralph H. Roberts (1903-1977).

Little Wiley Roberts, seen in the above picture, was most likely named after his maternal grandfather, Wiley Anderson Murrell. The younger Wiley later became the Mayor of Prairie City in the 1950s. See the Facebook page [Prairie City Historical Society](#) for a photo of him as an adult.

The family can be found in Mound Prairie Township, Jasper County, from 1870 to 1910, per US Federal Censuses, and they were included in the 1905 Iowa State Census.

Julia passed away on 28 November 1917 in Prairie City at the young age of 53, and was buried in Westview Cemetery in that city. Their youngest son, Ralph, was just 14 when his mother died.

Jason married May Riley (1872-1961) on 25 October 1919. May, of Newton, Iowa, was the daughter of John and Kate (Gray) Riley.

In 1940 Jason (and presumably his wife May) were spending the winter in Long Beach, California- many farmers, even those retired, spend their winters in warmer climes than frigid Iowa, even now. In April Jason had a heart attack, and after being stabilized, he returned to Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa. Sadly he spent six weeks in the hospital there, but succumbed on 26 May 1940, at age 80. He was buried in Westview Cemetery with his first wife Julia.

May was a schoolteacher, and later that year she moved to Rolla, Phelps County, Missouri, to live with her sister and brother-in-law, Rey and Alfred Mulkey. She taught 8th grade that year. May survived her husband by 21 years, and passed

away on 2 November 1961. She was buried next to her sister Elizabeth (Riley) Harlan in Lone Tree Cemetery, Sioux Rapids, Buena Vista County, Iowa. She was 89 at her death.

We know there are other Roberts descendants out there, and would love to share information. Please also let us know about anything that you think is incorrect in this series of family posts, and if you have some stories to add.

Notes, Sources, and References:

1. Image cropped from original large descendant photo. See "Treasure Chest Thursday: The John Roberts and Elizabeth Ann Murrell Roberts Family in 1900" at <http://heritageramblings.net/2014/02/13/treasure-chest-thursday-the-john-roberts-and-elizabeth-ann-murrell-roberts-family-in-1900/>
2. Family interviews with Edith (Roberts) [McMurray] Luck, her sister and brother, and some of her cousins during the 1960s.
3. "Directory of Leading Farmers in Jasper County, Iowa," in the *Standard Historical Atlas of Jasper County, Iowa*. The Huebenger Survey and Map Publishing Co., Davenport, Iowa, 1901.
4. Iowa Marriage Records, 1880-1937 on Ancestry.com
5. Census records on Ancestry.com.
6. Jason Lee Roberts obituary: *The Jasper County Mirror*, Thursday, May 30, 1940 – Page 2, Col. 5. <http://iagenweb.org/boards/jasper/obituaries/index.cgi?review=252697>
7. See Find A Grave Memorials for images of headstones for Jason and Julia.
8. Jason Lee Roberts- Find A Grave Memorial #76815012 at <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=76815012>
9. Julia (French) Roberts- Find A Grave Memorial #76815050

at <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=76815050>

10. May (Riley) Roberts- Find A Grave Memorial #169716084 at <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=169716084&ref=acom>
11. Some sources state picture was taken in 1900, some state 1904. I tend to agree with the 1900 date, as Edith Roberts was born 10 October 1899, so would have been 1-1/2 or 2 when this image was taken. That seems more consistent with her size, as if the photo was from 1904, she would have been 5 years old.

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