

# Sentimental Sunday: Elizabeth Ann Murrell and John S. Roberts



1892- John S. Roberts and Elizabeth Ann (Murrell) Roberts, cropped from larger family photo with their descendants. Taken in Jasper County, Iowa. Owned by author.

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

Once the Wiley Anderson Murrell-Mary Magdalene Honts family settled in Roseville/Warren County, Illinois, their daughter and our ancestor Elizabeth Ann Murrell met a young farmhand named John S. Roberts. He had moved from the family farm of his parents, John Roberts (1805-1875) and Jane Saylor/Salyers (1806-1880), in Indiana, looking for work in the productive

grain fields of Illinois. The convergence was fate, as John and Elizabeth married on 8 March 1857 in Roseville, where they set up housekeeping. Elizabeth's brother John Henry Murrell was living with them in 1860 and working as a farm laborer. Elizabeth had already borne two sons, William Edward Roberts, born in 1858, and Jason Lee Roberts, born in 1859, so it would have been a busy farm household. Their son George Anthony Roberts (the father of Edith Roberts McMurray Luck) was then born in 1861, and finally a daughter, May Jane Roberts, joined the family in 1863, and was also born in Illinois.

We know that the Roberts family had a friendship with a Daniel family in Warren County. Charles M. Daniel (1819-1875) and his wife Elizabeth Thomas (1817-1885) had both been born in Virginia. Elizabeth and then their son, Robert Woodson "R. W." Daniel (1843-1922), were born specifically in Rockbridge County, Virginia, just north of Botetourt. This family may have known the Murrell or Honts families even as far back as the early 1800s in Virginia, as suggested by some research that still needs more work. The Daniel family, however, decided to migrate to Missouri about 1845 (R.W. was just 2 years old), and then on to Illinois around 1864-1865. Their second migration is understandable, too, by considering the Civil War, as we did for the Murrell family. Being a border state, Missouri was a very dangerous place to live during that conflict. A farmstead could be raided by the Rebs in the morning, and then have Union troops descend that evening, also looking for food, supplies, and "spoils of war." And then there were the border gangs that took no heed of any allegiance and were themselves committed to violence... It was challenging for a family to survive in Missouri, no matter the side they championed or who was beating on their door.

"R. W." Daniel enlisted in the Missouri State Military Cavalry in 1862, and served until 1865. (More on R.W. in the future.) Some sources state that he was in Warren County,

Illinois in 1865, but he did marry Margaret Ann Hemphill (1839-1915) on 18 January 1866 in Pike County, Missouri. (He likely knew her from when he lived there, and may have gone to Warren Co. to recuperate from the war after his discharge.) The couple moved about 150 miles north to Young America, Warren County, Illinois, where their first child, Ella Viola Daniel, was born on 29 October 1866.

The John and Elizabeth Roberts family went to visit and congratulate the Daniel family on the birth of their child. John and Elizabeth took their sons and daughters with them for the visit, per their granddaughter, Edith (Roberts) [McMurray] Luck. It was the first time that little George A. Roberts, about to turn five years old, saw his future wife for the very first time.

And that is why this is a “Sentimental Sunday” post!

To be continued...

### **Notes, Sources, and References:**

1. Vital records such as birth, marriage, and census that can be found on Ancestry.com, FamilySearch, etc.
2. Family stories written and told by Edith (Roberts) [McMurray] Luck.

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## **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.

*Click to enlarge any image. Please contact us if you would like an image in higher resolution.*

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## Friday's Faces from the Past: William Edward Roberts and Family, 1900



William Edward Roberts Family, 1900. Standing, from left: W. E. Roberts, son Orville Roberts, Orville's mother, Mary M. (Main) Roberts. Seated on the ground in front of them are Clara Roberts & Maude Roberts, with Maude (probably) sitting in front of her mother. Cropped from a larger family photo.

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

In the year 1900, William Edward Roberts, also known as "W. E. Roberts" or "Ed," and the eldest of the children of John & Elizabeth Roberts, was 42 years old; his wife Mary Margaret (Main) Roberts was 39 and they had been married about 19 years. They had five children, but only three were still living the year this photo was taken. They were a farming family, and lived in Jasper County, Iowa, all of their married life. W. E. died on 6 July 1935, and Mary survived him 10 years, dying on 29 November 1945.



Portrait of William E. Roberts, 1901.

Daughter Edna M. Roberts, their firstborn, was born about 1883 per the 1885 Iowa State Census, but had passed away most probably before the 1892 family photograph was taken.

Maude Mae Roberts was the eldest of the two surviving daughters, and was about 16 when the large family photo was taken. We believe she is the daughter sitting in front of her mother, due to the thinner face and darker hair, after comparisons to photos of them both in later life. Maude married Andrew D. Jensma (186-1961) at the home of her father, W. E. Roberts, which was in Mound Prairie Twp., Jasper County, Iowa. They had seven children. Andrew was a farmer, like her father. Maude died 14 September 1980 in Kellogg, Jasper County, Iowa.



Four generations of the Roberts family: William Edward Roberts on left, his daughter Maude (Roberts) Jensma standing, and her grandfather John Roberts holding his great-grandson, Andrew Edward Jensma. Taken 22 August 1909.

Clara D. Roberts was about 14 in the big family photo of 1900, and married Albert J. Zang, also a farmer like her father, on Valentine's Day, 14 February, 1911. They moved to Osceola, Polk county, Nebraska, by the 1920 census, and were enumerated after another Zang- possibly the brother or cousin of Albert? They were still in Nebraska in 1930, and moved back to Mound Prairie Twp., Jasper County, Iowa after 1935, with daughter Frieda Zang and her husband. Clara had attended 2 years of college, whereas Albert had finished only the 5th grade- likely he had to work on the farm at that young age. Clara died in 1960 and is buried in Osceola Cemetery, Polk County, Nebraska.

Son Orville J. Roberts was 12 in 1900, and he later married Anna E. Hall, (1894-?) on 5 March 1913. They had two children, both girls. His WWI Draft Registration lists him as tall, medium build, grey eyes and light hair. He was farming in Colfax, Iowa, in 1917. In April of 1942, he was living in Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa when he completed his WWII Draft Registration. Orville passed away in August of 1979 in Fayette, Howard County, Missouri.

Little Freddie Roberts was born 11 March 1896, but sadly passed away at the age of 4 years, 4 months, 23 days. As his death date was 3 August 1900, this picture would date after that.

#### **Notes, Sources, and References:**

1. Photos from family treasure chest and cousins who have so kindly shared.
2. Census and marriage records from Ancestry.com were used in writing this post, and Find A Grave links as well.

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## Wordless Wednesday: William Edward Roberts and Family, 1892



William Edward "W.E." or "Ed" Roberts Family, from left: Mary Margaret (Main) Roberts; Clara and Maude Roberts- not sure which child is which but think Maude is on left; W. E. Roberts with son Orville John Roberts, 1892, Jasper County, Iowa.

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

This image was cropped from a larger family photo.

## Notes, Sources, and References:

1. For large family portrait with all the descendants of John and Elizabeth Ann (Murrell) Roberts, see "Treasure Chest Thursday: The John Roberts and Elizabeth Ann (Murrell) Roberts Family in 1892" at <http://heritageramblings.net/2014/02/06/the-john-roberts-and-elizabeth-ann-murrell-roberts-family-in-1892/>
2. Please let us know if you can positively identify the two girls.
3. Photo from family treasure chest.

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# Tuesday's Tip: Use a Photo as a Starting Point to Tell the Family Stories



1904- The Three Brothers: William Edward Roberts on left, Jason Lee Roberts in center, George Anthony Roberts on right.

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

## Tuesday's Tip:

**Use a photo as a starting point to tell the family stories.**

We family historians have interviewed, researched, downloaded, copied, organized, and stayed up late nights/early mornings to find our ancestors and learn their stories. We have our family history saved as pixels, paper, and more in our brains than is



probably written down. But how do we *share* those stories, to make them more a part of our family's history? How can we ensure the stories will be passed to generations to come??

More importantly, how do we decide just where to start?

Photos tell us about relationships when there is more than one person in the image. Thus we can use photos as a way to think about family and friends, and as a way to limit us or give us a starting point for sharing stories. There are so many stories about so many people in our family's history—obviously, since the number of people doubles with each generation! Sometimes it is tough to decide where to start with writing, or a new blog post. So in the near future, we will use the above image as a starting point for a series of articles about the family of John S. Roberts (1832-1922) and Elizabeth Ann (Murrell) Roberts (1835-1917), the parents of these three men.

We will also tell the story of the sister of these three, Mary Jane Roberts, and the infant son, Wilbert John Roberts (1877-1878), who died very young.

And how are we related to these folks? George Anthony Roberts was the father of Edith Mae (Roberts) [McMurray] Luck, therefore William Edward and Jason Lee were her paternal uncles, and Mary Jane her paternal aunt.

Stay tuned for more information about these ancestors and their families!

### **Notes, Sources, and References:**

1. Image from family treasure chest of photos and ephemera.

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