

Gardner Family History

Our Roots
Our Story
Our Family
Our Legacy

Imagine searching for your ancestors and finding almost no trace of them. Not because they did not exist, but because for generations their names were rarely ever recorded. You see, enslaved black people were documented under their slave master name, as part of their property. These documents showed only a person's age, whether they were male or female, and (B) if they were black or (M) if they were mulattoes!

But NO NAMES!!!!

Then, in 1867, a name appears: James Gardner!

Just a few years after slavery ended, our **Gardner Family Story** begun to emerge from the shadows of a **horrific** history. In **1867**, we find one of the earliest known records of our family patriarch, **James Gardner**. James was living in **Thomas County, Georgia**, where his name appears on a voter registration record. Never taught to write his English name, James signed the document with an "X", his mark.


his mark

That simple "X" may not look like much, but for this family it means everything. It is one of the earliest records we have of **James Gardner as a free man**, standing on his own and leaving a mark that his descendants can still see more than 150 years later!

Then, in 1870, the story becomes even more meaningful.

For the first time, the United States Census, which started recording white families as far back as 1790, allows us to see **our Gardner family together as a household!**

There they are, our ancestors listed by name, with their ages, birthplaces and occupations. No longer hidden within the records of slavery, **our Gardner ancestors!**

James and Millie are where our documented Gardner family story begins.

Finally they appear as individuals and as a family unit!



At the head of the household is our family patriarch, **James Gardner, 35 years old**, alongside his wife and our family matriarch, **Millie "Jones" Gardner, 34 years old**. (No marriage certificate has been found for the two.)

James "Ruben" Gardiner is recorded as a native of Georgia, and his occupation is listed as a **farmer**. The document shows James having acquired \$100 and is a US citizen. And don't let the spelling of his last name fool you! **Gardner, Gardiner** and other variations of the name appear throughout our family's historical records.

Millie's story takes us even farther back...

Millie was born in **Virginia**, and records indicate that her parents were also born in Virginia. Our family research suggests that Millie may have been brought or sold from Virginia into Georgia during slavery, possibly with her mother, whose name we have not yet discovered in the surviving records.

We also believe that Millie may have left siblings behind in Virginia and that some of the names she later gave her children could have been a way of honoring or remembering the family from whom she had been separated!

In 1870, James and Millie made a home for their growing family in a little southern town known as **Duncanville**, which was then located in Thomas County, GA. It is believed that both James, Millie and their children were enslaved on one of the many plantations in Duncanville!!

James and Millie Children:

George (1855-1924) & **Virginia** (Atkins) **Jones** (1862-1943) married in 1883 were parents of 12 children.
Joseph (1858-1910) & **Janie** (Taylor) **Gardner** (1863-1947) married in 1883, were parents of 8 children.
Caroline (1860-1897) & **Boston Smith** (1852-1926) married in 1878, were parents of 1 son.
Patsy (1862-1949) & **Charley Taylor** (1862-1957) married in 1883, were parents of 3 daughters.
Johnny (1862-1932) & **Virginia** (Revel) **Gardner** (1864-1934) married in 1884, were parents of 2 daughters.
James (1863-1945) & **Rachel Floyd** (1869-1911) married in 1890, were the parents 7 children.
Vinny (1866-1938) & **James Ross** (1867-1897) married in 1887, were the parents of 5 children.
Tommy (1867-1944) & **Annie Davis Gardner** (1892-1920) married approx. 1910. Tommy had 9 children.
Emma (1873-1955) & **John Johnson** (1869-7) married 1892, were the parents of 9 children.

Our Patriarch, **James Ruben Gardner's** death date is unknown. Tax records shows he was alive in 1886. However his dear wife Millie, would carried out his legacy for him. Millie would unfortunately pass on Feb 28, 1921, due to injury she sustained in a house fire.

Almost all of the Gardner children lived and or buried in **Metcalf**, a small Town in Thomas County, Georgia, making it the Gardner Family Homestead.

From these Gardner households would come many grandchildren, great-grandchildren and generations of descendants!

FAMILY
A LEGACY
THROUGH
GENERATIONS

To Speak the name of the dead is to make them live again!