

The Story of Owen Sanders

Owen Sanders was my great-great grandfather, and he was the first ancestor I learned about who owned slaves. He lost his slaves after the Civil War. I will try to give a little history on Owen here, then try to trace the people who were his slaves.

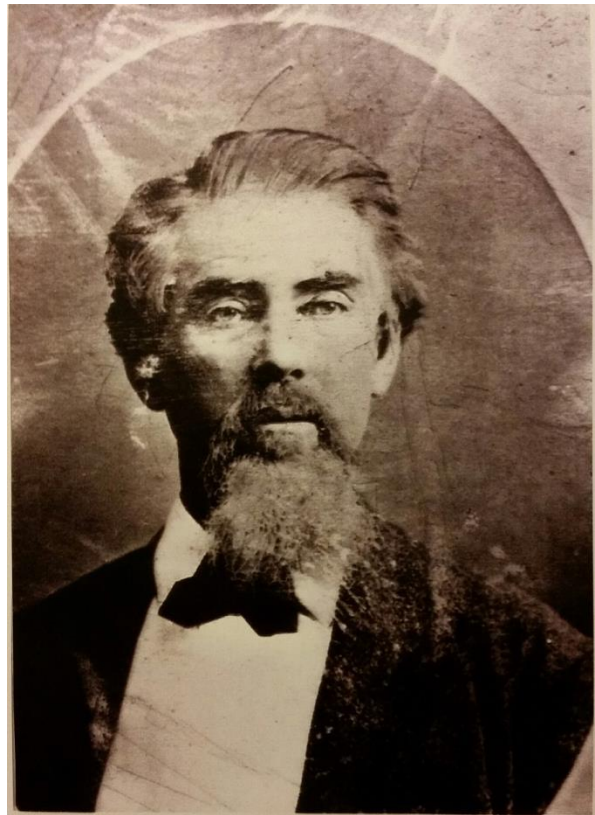
Owen Sanders History

This is a photo of Owen Sanders. I do not know when it was taken, but he looks pretty prosperous in it, so my assumption is that it was taken before the Civil War.

Owen was born August 12, 1805. There is some dispute about where. Ancestry.com says he was born in Williamson County, Tennessee, as do the 1850 and 1860 Federal Censuses, so I will go with Tennessee. I have other “non-authoritative” documents that say he was born in the Blue-grass area of Kentucky, but I am beginning to think this is a mix-up with another family with similar names. His parents were David Sanders (1785 – 1854) and Margaret Fox (1780 – 1850), both of North Carolina.

I can find no mention of an Owen Sanders in the 1830 US Federal Census. However, when I search on his father’s name, I find a David Sanders in Jefferson, AL and there is a male that is 15 to 19 years old, two males 20 to 29 years old (Owen would be 25 at this time), a male 30 to 39 years old, and a male 40 to 49 years old (David would be about 45 years old at this time). There is one female 10 to 14 years old, one female 15 to 19 years old, and one female 50 to 59 years old (Margaret would be about 50 years old at this time). So Owen may have two to three brothers and two sisters, none of which I have any information on. At this time, the Sanders family did not have any slaves. There is a personal tree on Ancestry.com by Jana Armstead which lists the following children of David and Margaret:

- Owen (1805 – 1889)
- Ammon (1808 – 1861)
- Eliza (1810 – 1897)
- Clarence (1812 - ?)

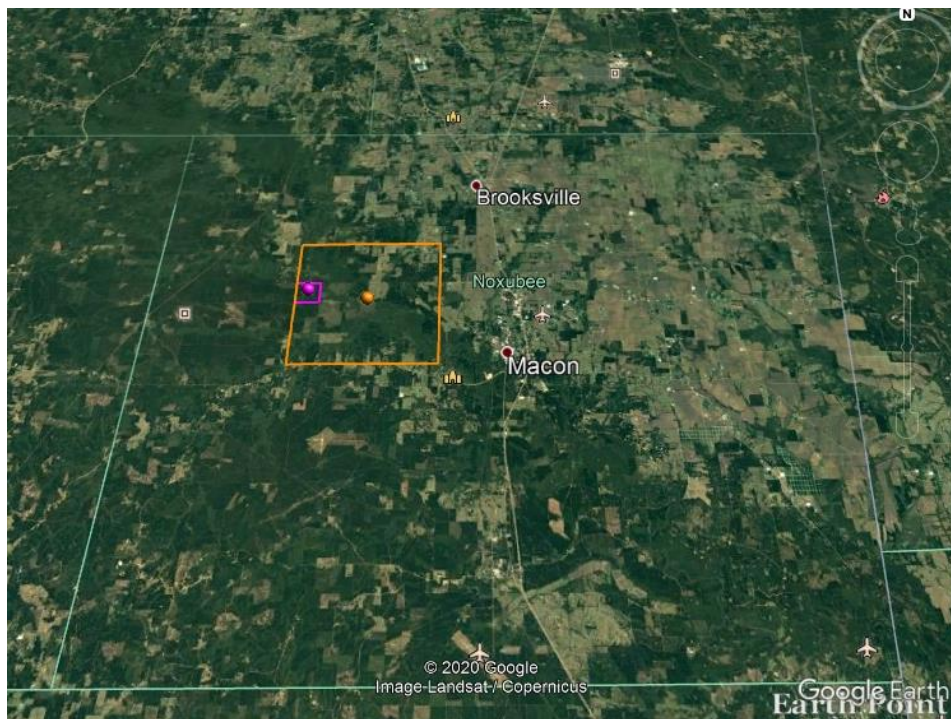


- Susan (1813 - ?)

Using Jana Armstead's dates, by the time of the 1830 Census, Owen would be 25, Ammon 22, Eliza 20, Clarence 18, and Susan 17. These ages are close, but not exactly what the 1830 Census shows. It does match for everyone but Susan (17 according to Jana Armstead, but listed as 10 to 14 years old in the 1830 Census).

Owen married Rachel Caroline Donald (Source 138) (born in South Carolina) in Jefferson County, AL on October 14, 1835. Within a short time, they moved to Leake County, MS. A son (Edward) was born approximately 1836, a daughter (Emily) in 1838, and another son (Thomas) in 1839, all in Leake County. Lound or Laura (daughter) was born in 1842, Harriet (daughter) was born in 1844, Robert (son) born in 1846 – all in Leake County. Elven (or Elvery) (daughter) was born in 1847 in Alabama.

On February 27, 1841, Owen purchased 79.9 acres of land in Noxubee County, MS. In the picture below, you can see the Township 15N, 16E is highlighted in yellow-orange, while Section 18 of that township is highlighted in purple. Owen purchased the eastern half of the southeast quarter of Section 18 (as each "section" of land is 640 acres. This land appears to have been purchased from David Buck. The 1840 Census lists Owen as living in Noxubee County, but I am not sure if this purchase was just for land speculation or actual farming.



Census Data

1840 US Federal Census

The 1840 Federal Census lists the Owen Sanders family as living in Noxubee County. At that time the family consisted of 3 males under 5 years of age (Edward, Thomas, ?), 1 male 30 to 35 years (Owen), 1 female under 5 years (Emily), and 1 female 20 to 29 years (Rachel). I don't know the exact date of the year this census data was taken. I am not sure who the 3rd male is that is under 5 years of age as the 1850 Federal Census does not show a third male child who would have been under 5 years in 1840. It's possible that they had another child who died by the time of the 1850 Federal Census.

The 1840 Federal Census also listed the following slaves (there was not a separate Slave Schedule in the 1840 Census as there was in 1850 and 1860):

1. 1 male under 10 years of age
2. 1 male 24 to 35 years of age
3. 1 female under 10 years of age
4. 1 female 24 to 35 years of age

The 1840 Census did not distinguish between "black" and "mulatto" people, it just said "Colored Slaves" or "Colored Free People". So I cannot tell if the two children under the age of 10 are the children of the older slaves, or if Owen was somehow involved.

1850 US Federal Census & Slave Schedule

In the 1850 Federal Census (enumerated October 19, 1850), the family was living in Leake County, and (not counting slaves) consisted of:

- Owen Sanders (male, head of household), 45 years old, born in Tennessee
- Rachel (female, wife), 38 years old, born in South Carolina
- Edward (male, son), 14 years old, born in Mississippi
- Emily (female, daughter), 13 years old, born in Mississippi
- Thomas (male, son), 11 years old, born in Mississippi
- Lound (female, daughter), 8 years old, born in Mississippi
- Harriet (female, daughter), 6 years old, born in Mississippi
- Robert (male, son), 4 years old, born in Mississippi
- Elven (female, daughter), 3 years old, born in Alabama
- E. S. Burton (male, laborer), 24 years old, born in South Carolina
- Sarah J. Burton (female, wife of E. S.?), 19 years old, born in South Carolina

The 1850 Slave Schedule (enumerated October 20, 1850) lists:

- 1 female, 34 years old, black
- 1 female, 11 years old, mulatto
- 1 male, 9 years old, mulatto

- 1 female, 6 years old, mulatto
- 1 female, 4 years old, mulatto
- 1 female, 2 years old, black

It's definitely possible that the 34 year old black slave in 1850 is the same woman who was between 24 and 35 years old in the 1840 census. However, the male slave between 24 and 35 years old in the 1840 Census has disappeared by 1850. It's also possible that the 11 year old girl and 9 year old boy in the 1850 census were the two children in the 1840 census (actual ages are always a little suspect in census documents). They are both listed as "mulatto" in the 1850 census. It seems to me that these could be Owen's children, but I don't have any other evidence besides they are Owen's slaves and they are mulatto.

1860 US Federal Census & Slave Schedule

In the 1860 Federal Census (enumerated August 14, 1860), the family was living in Leake County, and (not counting slaves) consisted of:

- Owen Sanders (male), 54 years old, born in Tennessee, \$9000 Real Estate, \$11000 Personal Estate Value
- Rachel (female), 48 years old, born in South Carolina
- Edward (male), 23 years old, born in Mississippi
- Emily (female), 22 years old, born in Mississippi
- Thomas (male), 20 years old, born in Mississippi
- Lound (listed as "Laura") (female), 18 years old, born in Mississippi
- Harriet (female), 16 years old, born in Mississippi
- Robert (male), 14 years old, born in Mississippi
- Elven (listed as "Anne E.") (female), 12 years old, born in Mississippi (different from 1850 Census where she was listed as born in Alabama)
- Susan (female), 6 years old, born in Mississippi
- Wesley Bagwell (male), 28 years old, born in Alabama, \$176 Personal Estate Value, farmer

The 1860 Slave Schedule (enumerated August 14, 1860) lists the following slaves owned by Owen Sanders and one other person (not listed):

- 1 female, 40 years old, black
- 1 female, 22 years old, mulatto. This slave has a tic mark in the column "Fugitive from the state".
- 1 male, 19 years old, mulatto. This slave has a tic mark in the column "Fugitive from the state".
- 1 female, 16 years old, mulatto. This slave has a tic mark in the column "Fugitive from the state".
- 1 female, 13 years old, mulatto. This slave has a tic mark in the column "Fugitive from the state".
- 1 female, 10 years old, black
- 1 female, 8 years old, black
- 1 female, 4 years old, black
- 1 male, 9 months old, black

- 1 male, 16 years old, black. This slave has a checkmark in the column “Fugitive from the state”.

This slave schedule also says that Owen Sanders has 2 slave houses, so there were 11 slaves in two houses. I don't know what the tic mark and the checkmark in the Slave Schedules mean in the column “Fugitive from the state”. The instructions for the 1860 Slave Schedule (Source 146 and 146a) for this column say:

6. Fugitives.—Under heading 6 insert, in figures, opposite the name of the owner, a mark or number designating the fugitives who, having escaped within the year, have not been returned to their owners. Such fugitives are to be described as fully as if in possession of their masters. No allusion is to be made respecting such as may have absconded subsequent to the 1st day of June; they are to be recorded as if in possession of their proper owners.

I think the enumerator that did the Owen Sanders' slaves was merely using the “checkmark” as a note for the last slave belonging to a slaveowner. All of the last slaves listed on the same page have a checkmark in the “Fugitive from the state” column, even if they are 1 year old – clearly not a fugitive slave! So in Owen Sanders' case, I think it's safe to assume that he (and one other unlisted person – Rachel?) had 11 slaves in 1860. The first 6 slaves listed seem to match the ages of the same slaves listed in the 1850 Slave Schedule.

It should be noted that the oldest female slave is now listed as 40 years old, where we might expect her to be approximately 44 if this is the same female slave as in the 1850 and 1840 Census documents. I have no explanation for this, but it should be the same woman.

Owen Sanders' Civil War Service

According to Owen's gravestone, he served in Nash's Company, Leake Rangers. I can't find any information on Nash's Company in several websites that normally collate information for Civil War military service (the [National Park Service](#), [Family Search's Military History pages](#), Joseph H. Crute's “Units of the Confederate States Army”, Marcus J. Wright's “List of Field Officers, Regiments, and Battalions in the Confederate States Army, 1861-1865”). However, Nash's Company was listed in [Military Wiki](#), as a “miscellaneous” unit – meaning not Infantry, Cavalry, Sharpshooters, Artillery, or Partisans. It appears that “Miscellaneous” is made up of a lot of these local companies that were probably created by a local person who wanted to be an officer, and just persuaded some local men to join his company. At the start of the Civil War, Owen was about 55 years old, so it may be that Nash's Company was made of older men, who wanted to help in some fashion.

Record-keeping was probably pretty poor in these small companies, and it's not surprising that little is known about them. I found some records in Fold3.com where the leaders of the various units described their activities and events (known as an “Event Record”, but the records for Nash's Company did not contain any events or activities. I also found an April 30, 1863 Muster Record (701, 702) for Owen Sanders, but it really didn't contain any useful information other than he was a Private in Captain Nash's Leake Rangers.

I did find two other people who served in Nash's Company: (1) William Thomas Landrum (1821 – 1906) (see [FindaGrave](#)). However, his FindaGrave webpage doesn't have any information on Nash's Company either, and (2) Lucas Vanarsdale (1807 – 1871) (see [FindaGrave](#)). Lucas' FindaGrave webpage doesn't have any information on Nash's Company either. Lucas was a wealthy plantation owner in Leake County in 1860, with \$12,000 of real estate (worth about a half million in today's dollars) and \$32,000 of slaves (worth about \$1.2 to \$1.5 million in today's dollars), and was 54 years old at the outbreak of the Civil War. Lucas apparently fought in the Mexican-American War also.

I have searched through Ancestry.com's military records, and I can't find any record of a pension applied for in the name of Owen Sanders.

My mother has a copy from a local history on towns in Mississippi, and Owen Sanders is discussed in the section on the town of McVile. There's a story about his Civil War Service that goes: "During the Civil War, Owen Sanders served as a teamster hauling supplies for the Confederate Army. On one occasion, when he had supplies stored in an upstairs bedroom, Yankee troops set fire to them and damaged the ceiling in the room." This seems to support the fact that Nash's Company may not have been a fighting unit, but a supply unit, and hence being listed as a "miscellaneous" company in [Military Wiki](#).

Oral Histories mentioning Owen Sanders

My sister Tara had found some information about the Sanders family, but I really didn't want to re-type them here! Luckily, she gave the webpage URL, so I found these documents and can just copy and paste. The first is from [Rootsweb](#), and is an oral history by William P. Sevier, Sr. of Tallulah, LA from a WPA survey in October 1936. William was born in Leake County, MS on "The Sevier Place", which was previously the home owned by William's mother's (Nancy Nash) father (John Nash). William begins his story:

"I first saw the light some 68 years ago. I was born June 15, 1868 on what is known now as "The Sevier Place" in Leake County, Beat three, four miles north of Thomastown on the Natchez Trace Road.

My father, Captain Henry C. Sevier, is a grandson of General John Sevier, the first governor of Tennessee, and who in his administration as governor had a committee appointed to cut out along with other roads the Natchez Trace from Nashville to Natchez, 1798. (See Annals of Tennessee by Ramsey 1853).

My mother, Nancy Nash, daughter of John and Ophelia Nash, Alabamians, were among the first settlers in our neighborhood. They came in, of course, before the war between the states, acquired and settled what is now known as the Sevier place. My grandfather Nash owned a lot of negroes and was rated in that time a very successful planter. The old Nash negroes, their descendants, are scattered throughout the country."

I think that his mother's father – John Nash – was probably Captain Nash of Nash's Company, Leake Rangers. This was the unit that Owen Sanders served in during the Civil War.

Concerning Owen Sanders, William says:

"Now something about that dear old "wash hole" in the Yockanookany Creek. We called it at that time, river, and should we have been asked at that time the longest river in the world, our answer would have been Yockanookany. We will never love another river like we did Yockanookany. Well the old wash hole known before my time and will ever be known as "Sander's Wash hole". After a hard week's work and our crops safe, every Saturday evening to the "wash hole", some on mules, some on horses and the greater number on foot. We were joined by all the neighbors and visitors, all barefooted and with untold enthusiasm. We were off. There was no such thing as bathing suits, and our neighbors regulars and our own were just barely enough to observe the law, but we were a happy set of people, more so then than we will ever be again. The old "wash hole" is patronized today just the same and with as much enthusiasm as ever before. There have been many great and near great bodies bathed in that old "Sanders Wash hole". Our mules and horses, after we finished our swimming, were carried in, soaped and washed off, then swam around so much they looked forward to it and enjoyed it as much as we did. God bless the old place, and He must have, for there were never in my memory or in the memory of the oldest one, been any mishaps there. The churches both black and white used it at times for a baptizing place. Father was baptized in the old "Sanders Wash hole". Oh how I wish I could turn back the pages of time and go through those happy days again in dear old Leake County."

...

"Uncle Owen Sanders (where the celebrated wash hole gets its name, being located on his property) was the first settler here in this neighborhood. His first wife, a sister of Col. Donald. Uncle Owen came directly after the government traded the Indians out. I often regret the many times he and I were together because I did not listen or pay more attention to him. I remember on one occasion I was going to market with a bale of cotton, driving one yoke oxen. Uncle Owen was with me. I was just a boy, anyway the roads were bad and the oxen slow. It took two days as we took our time. We camped out at night, and all I had to do was to listen to this great and noble old character, but, alas, I guess I was no exception to the rule of all we smart alocs around that age. Father used to tell us that we were getting smart when we found that we were a fool, and that is so. Going back to Uncle Owen and our trip. He would point out each place as we went along telling me its first owner, giving me an abstract to that present day. We were going north on the Natchez Trace, eleven miles to Kosciusko. When we got to what is known as the Fuller Hill, five miles south Kosciusko, Uncle Owen said, "Right there on the top of that hill was the first settler (Mr. Fuller) in this country. I stayed all night with him on my first trip down here." Uncle Owen lived up in the eighties, reared a large family and was married twice. I think all of his children by his first wife are gone under the shade of trees. His grandson, Jesse V. Norwood, and sister are living today on the old Sanders Place. By his second wife he has daughters living in the

neighborhood. They married good, honest, industrious men and are among the first citizens of that community.”

Attempting to trace Owen Sanders’ Slaves

If we are going to trace Owen’s slaves, we will need to look at the 1870 Federal Census, with a female black woman who is between 50 and ~55 years old, with the following children:

- 1 black male, 10 to 11 years old
- 1 black female, approximately 14 years old
- 1 black female, approximately 18 years old
- 1 black female, approximately 20 years old (potentially)
- 1 mulatto female, approximately 23 years old (potentially)

The other children from the 1860 Census may be there, and there could potentially be some younger children, and a potential husband in the 1870 Census. We will look for a last name of Sanders, with a home in either Leake or Attala Counties, Mississippi, but if she married and took the name of her husband, we will not be able to find her.

1870 US Federal Census Results

Leake County

1. Ellen Sanders, 50 Years old – Probably not. The youngest children do not match
2. Peke Sanders, 55 years old – Probably not. The youngest children do not match
3. Julia Sanders, 55 years old – Probably not. No children with last name of Sanders living in household.
4. Celia Sanders, 55 years old – Probably not. No children with last name of Sanders living in household.
5. Martha Sanders, 54 years old – Probably not. The youngest children do not match
6. Pollie Sanders, 50 years old, born in North Carolina, living in Lowndes County
 - a. Charles Sanders, 46 years old, (husband), born in North Carolina
 - b. Jennie Sanders, 15 years old (daughter), born in Mississippi
 - c. Jackson Sanders, 12 years old (son), born in Mississippi
7. Rollie Sanders, 56 years old, born in South Carolina, living in Clarke County,
 - a. Mariah Sanders, 14 years old (daughter), born in Mississippi
 - b. Ransom Sanders, 28 years old (son?), born in South Carolina

The rest of the 60 potentials were eliminated due to being white, or no children, or wrong ages, etc. It seems that either Pollie (#6) or Rollie (#7) have the most potential in this list.

However, this may be as far as I can go on trying to identify the slaves that were once owned by Owen Sanders. It may be that the female slave that was 50 to 55 years old got married and took a new last name, she may have moved, or she may have died. I don’t know how to trace her any further.

