

A Memory of Adventure on the American Frontier

By Edith D. Lyle

I will tell you a bit about my Jacob Eller. From Bible records we know he was born 25 Dec. 1789 in North Carolina (now Sullivan Co., TN). He married on 29 Sept. 1810, probably in Buncombe Co., NC Susannah McCarty (McCarthy), daughter of a Revolutionary War soldier, James McCarty (McCarthy) and Elizabeth Pruitt who were living in Buncombe Co., NC according to 1800 and 1810 censuses. Sometime after 1810 census, James McCarty left Buncombe Co., NC and in 1812 a daughter, Sally, married Moses Langley in Christian Co., KY.

In August, 1819, James McCarty with two sons and son-in-law, Jacob Eller, were voting in the first election in Cooper Co., Missouri (Territory until 1820). They had to have been a resident for one year in order to vote. They were not listed on 1817 tax list for Howard Co., MO, from which Cooper Co. was formed. The McCartys and Ellers settled about six miles south of Boonville, MO which is on the Missomi River.

Jacob died 16 Oct. 1847, leaving a will, and is buried in Walnut Grove Cemetery in Boonville, along with wife, Susanna, who died 28 Aug. 1865. The children of Jacob Eller and Susanna McCarty Eller were:

1. James Me. Eller b. 23 July 1811, NC
2. Mary Ann Eller b. 3 Dec. 1812, NC
3. Jacob Eller, Jr.* b. 8 Dec. 1813
4. Martitia Rebecca Eller b.23 Apr. 1817
5. Joseph Eller b.13 Aug. 1819- d. 13 Aug. 1821
6. David S. Eller** 1 b. 9 Oct. 1822, Cooper Co., MO
7. George N. Eller b 12.Apr. 1825, Cooper Co., MO
8. Robert Woodson Eller b. 6 Apr. 1827, Cooper Co., MO
9. Harriett E. Eller b. 18 Aug. 1829, Cooper Co., MO
10. Christopher Columbus Eller b. 23 Feb. 1832, Cooper Co., MO d. 31/5/1851

*Jacob Eller, Jr. was not in father's will (1847). No further records have been found. Some years ago, an elderly relative in Cooper Co., told me there was a legend in the family that a son had left home and was never heard of again. If the tale is true, this Jacob would be the one as all others are accounted for.

**David S. Eller was my great-great grandfather. He married 9 Dec. 1847, Cooper Co MO, Martha Jane Oglesby b. KY daughter of John B. Oglesby and Elizabeth (Thomas) who were married 1811 in Albemarle Co., VA. (I have traced this family back to the Rev. Jacob Ware who was minister at St. Peter's, New Kent Co., VA in 1689).

DAVID S. ELLER was murdered by bushwhackers on his plantation, 18 Sept. 1864, during the Civil War. The area where he lived Was called "Little Dixie" due to the large number of -southerners and

slaveholders. Feelings ran high during the war, and a total of eight southern men were killed in the county in the month of August, 1864.

The family was having supper, when someone called that the horses were out in the roadway. David went out, and then shots rang out. The bushwhackers then rode whooping and cat-calling by the house, driving the horses ahead of them. The story goes that the kerchief covering the leader's face slipped down and he was recognized by the family.

That night the mother and oldest daughters slipped out to bury David; it was too dangerous for the men of the neighborhood to do so. They rolled his body in a quilt and put it on a sled with wooden runners, and an ox pulled it to the woods. There they buried him in a shallow grave. However, after the war, he was taken up, placed in a coffin, and buried properly in the Walnut Grove Cemetery in Boonville, MO, along with his mother and father. (Actually, his mother died a year later, and it is thought they were buried at the same time.)

A short time later, the leader of the bushwhackers was found dead, floating in the Missouri River. Hiram Mark Kepner, a son of one of the neighbors of the Ellers and a family friend, was put under a Peace Bond. His father felt it was too dangerous for him to stay in the county, so in great secrecy, they placed Hiram in a coffin and shipped him by stage coach, with a brother accompanying him to Westport, now a part of Kansas City, MO. There Hiram hoped to join the southern army of General Sterling Price. However, the Battle of Westport had been fought, and General Price was defeated and driven south into Arkansas. Consequently, Hiram, then age 26, joined the freighting firm of Majors, Waddell, and Reed, of Pony Express fame, and ultimately Hiram became a Wagon Master on the overland trails to California and Oregon.

I grew up on the tale of his days on the plains, and in my possession, I have letters written by him during those days speaking of Indian fights, etc. Thus, my interest in genealogy and family history began very early.

David Eller's third child was Elizabeth Susan Eller, b 15 Mar. 1853. She was only eleven years old when her father was killed. It was so traumatic for her she would never speak of it during all the years of her long life. She died 26 Mar. 1936 at Creighton, Cass Co., MO. She was my great-great grandmother and a very elegant southern lady. I was age 12 when she died, so I, too, remember her well. In particular, I was awed when she would take down her hair, worn in braids, to brush it out. It touched the floor.

Hiram Mark Kepner returned to visit Cooper Co., in 1878, passions of the war had died down somewhat, although his parents had moved to Henry Co., Mo. There he found the little girl of 1864 all grown up, and after a whirlwind courtship, he and Elizabeth Susan Eller were married Feb. 1878.

Hiram's days on the plains and in the mountains were over. They settled near his parents in Henry Co., MO, near the town of Urich. He built for his bride a two-story log home, warmer in winter, and cooler in summer. After his adventurous years, it was a haying accident that caused his death in 1909.

Elizabeth Eller Kepner lived in the house for some years, then sold it to their only son, Jerome David Kepner, my mother's father. I was born in that house many years later. It still stands, now covered with clapboard and modernized, and an uncle, only 4 years older than me, lives in it.

The David Eller house also still stands in Cooper Co., MO. A large imposing place, with bullet holes in the columns left over from the Civil War. (A battle was fought around the house after David's death.) The slave quarters still existed when my grandfather visited as a small box, but are now gone. The house no longer is owned by any family member, so I've seen it but never been inside. Someday, I'll get up my nerve and go knock at the door. . . perhaps.

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