

JOSEPH W. RIGGS (C1802-1874)
OF DECATUR COUNTY, TENNESSEE,
AND HIS FAMILY

Alvy Ray Smith, FASG

Items in red are unproved

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First Generation

1. **JOSEPH W.¹ RIGGS** was born about 1802, Kentucky, and his will is dated 8 Apr. 1874, Decatur Co., Tenn. Joseph married **ZELPHA [ZELPHIA]** —, who was probably born about 1815, Tennessee, and died before the 1870 census.

In 1850 Joseph Riggs, 48, a laborer born in Kentucky with real estate valued at \$200, resided in Decatur Co., Tenn., with Zelphia, 24 [sic], born in Tennessee. Both were illiterate. With them were William C., 14, James E., 12, Sarah J., 8, Delphia, 6, John J., 5, Joseph M., 3, Louis C., 1/12, and Tennessee, 1/12.^[1]

In 1860 J. W. Riggs, 59, born in Kentucky with \$500 and \$320 in real and personal estate value, respectively, resided in Decaturville, Decatur Co., Tenn., with “Zelpha,” 45, born in Tennessee, and with W. C., 23, a male farmer, J., 22, a male day laborer, S. J., 19, female, D., 18, female, J. J., 16, male, J. M., 12, male, M. A., 9, female, and F. M., 6, female, all born in Tennessee.^[2]

In 1870 “Josoep” W. Riggs, 68, a farmer born in Kentucky with \$1,000 and \$600 in real and personal estate, respectively, resided in Decaturville, Decatur Co., Tenn., with Sarah, 28, “insane,” John J., 23, Mary Ann, 17, and “Zilpha” A., 15, all born in Tennessee. All but John J. were illiterate. “Delpha” A. Swayne lived next door, and Joseph M. Riggs resided nearby.^[3]

Joseph, in his will dated 8 April 1874, Decatur Co., Tenn. (see appendix A), mentioned “My four Daughters and One Son, to wit, Sarah Jane Riggs, Delphia Swain Mary Ann Riggs and Zelphia Riggs and Francis

1. U.S. census, 1850, district 6, Decatur Co., Tenn., r. 876, p. 427, dw. 3, fam. 3.

2. U.S. census, 1860, district 6, Decaturville PO, Decatur Co., Tenn., r. 1247, book 1, p. 43A, dw. 518, fam. 518.

3. U.S. census, 1870, district 6, Decaturville PO, Decatur Co., Tenn., r. 1524, pp. 63-64, dw. 90, fam. 90. Joseph M. resided in dw. 94 and Delphia in 91.

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M Riggs,” who shared his estate, and “my three Sons, to wit, James Riggs John Riggs and Joseph Riggs,” who got only one dollar each.^[4]

Children:

- 2 i **WILLIAM C.² RIGGS**, born about 1836, Tennessee. Not mentioned in his father’s will of 8 April 1874, so perhaps deceased.
- 3 ii **JAMES E.² RIGGS**, born about 1838, Tennessee.
- 4 iii **SARAH JANE² RIGGS**, born about 1842, Tennessee, unmarried at her father’s will of 8 April 1874. She is described as insane in the 1870 census.
- + 5 iv **DELPHIA A.² RIGGS**, born about 1844, Tennessee, married before 1870 – **SWAIN [SWAYNE]**, and had one daughter.
- + 6 v **JOHN JACKSON² RIGGS**, born May 1846, Tennessee, married (1) **MARY JANE LOFTON [LOFTIN]**, and had one child, married (2) **ELIZABETH C. STEED**, and had one child.
- + 7 vi **JOSEPH M.² RIGGS**, born about 1847, Tennessee, married **MARGARET V. T. —**.
- 8 vii **LOUIS C.² RIGGS** [twin], born about 1850, Tennessee. Not mentioned in his father’s will of 8 April 1874, so perhaps deceased.
- 9 viii **TENNESSEE² RIGGS** [twin], a daughter born about 1850, Tennessee. Not mentioned in her father’s will of 8 April 1874, so perhaps deceased.
- 10 ix **MARY ANN² RIGGS**, born about 1851, Tennessee, unmarried at her father’s will of 8 April 1874.
- 11 x **FRANCIS M.² RIGGS**, a son born about 1854, Tennessee.
- 12 xi **ZELPHIA A.² RIGGS**, born after 1860, Tennessee, unmarried at her father’s will of 8 April 1874.

4. Joseph Riggs will, Decatur Co., Tenn. Probate Records, 1869–1927, p. 39, see appendix A.

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Second Generation

5. **DELPHIA A.² RIGGS** (*i*Joseph W.¹) was born about 1844, Tennessee, married before 1870 – **SWAIN [SWAYNE]**.

In 1870 “Delpha” A. Swayne, 26, resided in Decaturville, Decatur Co., Tenn., with Angeline A., 6, born in Tennessee. Delphia’s father, Joseph W. Riggs, lived next door, and her brother, Joseph M. Riggs, resided nearby.^[5]

Child:

13 i **ANGELINE A.² SWAIN**, born about 1864, Tennessee.

6. **JOHN JACKSON² RIGGS** (*i*Joseph W.¹) was born May 1846 (1900 census), Tennessee (probably in Decatur Co.), married (1) 16 Nov. 1870, Decatur Co., Tenn.,^[6] **MARY JANE LOFTON [LOFTIN]**. He married (2) 6 May 1877, Decatur Co.,^[7] **ELIZABETH C. STEED**, who was born July 1840 (1900 census), Tennessee.

In 1880 J. J. Riggs, 34, born in Tennessee of a father born in Alabama and a mother in Tennessee, resided in Decatur Co., Tenn., with his wife, E. C., 39, born in Tennessee of a father of unlisted nativity and a mother born in Tennessee, and with daughter, “L.” E., 5, born in Tennessee, and son, J. S., 3, born in Tennessee.^[8]

In 1900 John J. Riggs, 54, a grocer born May 1846 in Tennessee of a father born in Mississippi and a mother in Tennessee, resided in Decatur Co., Tenn., with his wife of 30 [sic] years, “Eelistor” C., 59, born July 1840

5. U.S. census, 1870, district 6, Decaturville PO, Decatur Co., Tenn., r. 1524, p. 64, dw. 91, fam. 91. Joseph M. resided in dw. 94 and Joseph W. in 90.

6. Alexander, *Early Marriage Records of Decatur Co., Tenn.*, 77: “John J. Riggs Mary Jane Loftin [license]11-15-1870 [marriage]11-16-1870 L. L. Myracle.”

7. Hill, *Decatur Co., Tenn.—Marriages—Riggs Fam.*, cites Marriage Records 1874-1879, 2:256, John J. Riggs to Elizabeth C. Steed, 6 May 1877 [bond] John J. Riggs.

8. U.S. census, 1880, district 6, Decatur Co., Tenn., ED 29, r. 1252, p. 79D, dw. 106, fam. 106.

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in Tennessee of a father born in Georgia and a mother in Tennessee. She had had no children.^[9]

Child of the first marriage, to Mary Jane:

- + 14 i **VERNA E.³ RIGGS**, born Nov. 1875, Tennessee, married **EVERETT E. DUKE**, and had at least two children.

Child of the second marriage, to Elizabeth:

- + 15 ii **JOHN SAMUEL³ RIGGS**, born 22 Nov. 1878, Decatur Co., Tenn., married **IDA MAE MCCORMICK [MCCOMICK]**, and had 16 children.

7. JOSEPH M.² RIGGS (*Joseph W.¹*) was born about 1847, Tennessee, married **MARGARET V. T. —**, born about 1850, Tennessee.

In 1870 Joseph M. Riggs, 20, a farm laborer born in Tennessee, resided in Decaturville, Decatur Co., Tenn., with Margaret V. T., 20, born in Tennessee. Joseph's father, Joseph W. Riggs, lived nearby.^[10]

9. U.S. census, 1900, district 6, Decatur Co., Tenn., ED 23, r. 1566, p. 67, sh. 8A, dw. 147, fam. 147.

10. U.S. census, 1870, district 6, Decaturville PO, Decatur Co., Tenn., r. 1524, p. 64, dw. 94, fam. 94. Joseph W. resided in dw. 90.

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Third Generation

14. **VERNA E.³ RIGGS** (*John Jackson², Joseph W.¹*) was born Nov. 1875, Tennessee. She married 20 Jan. 1895, Decatur Co., Tenn.,^[11] **EVERETT E. DUKE**, who was born Sept. 1875, Tennessee.

In 1900 Everett E. Duke, 24, a farmer born Sept. 1875 in Tennessee of Tennessee natives, resided in Decatur Co., Tenn., with his wife of six years, Verna, 24, born Nov. 1875 in Tennessee of Tennessee natives. She had had two children with both still living and residing in the household: Curtis, 4, born Oct. 1895, and Zetta, 2, born Sept. 1897, both in Tennessee. Verna's brother, John S. Riggs, 21, was also in the household.^[12]

Children:

16 i **CURTIS⁴ DUKE**, born Oct. 1895, Tennessee.

17 ii **ZETTA⁴ DUKE**, born Sept. 1897, Tennessee.

15. **JOHN SAMUEL³ RIGGS** (*John Jackson², Joseph W.¹*) was born 22 Nov. 1878, Decatur Co., Tenn., died 6 Apr. 1950, Ceres, Stanislaus Co., Calif.^[13] Samuel married 26 Aug. 1900, Decatur Co.,^[14] **IDA MAE MCCORMICK [MCCOMICK]**, who was born 13 Nov. 1884, Henderson Co., Tenn., died Dec. 1975, last residence Ceres.^[15]

In 1900 John S. Riggs, 21, single, a farmer born Nov. 1878 in Tennessee of Tennessee natives, resided in Decatur Co., Tenn., in the

11. Hill, *Decatur Co., Tenn.—Marriages—Riggs Fam.*, cites Marriage Records 1893–1898, 6:164, Everett Duke to “Vernie” Riggs, 20 January 1895 [bond] C. C. Brizzell.

12. U.S. census, 1900, district 6, Decatur Co., Tenn., ED 23, r. 1566, p. 63, sh. 4B, dw. 70, fam. 70.

13. LDS pedigree resource file, [unsourced](#) “John Samuel Riggs, born 22 Nov. 1878, Decatur Co., Tenn., died 6 April 1950, Ceres, California, married 26 Aug. 1900, Decatur Co., Ida Mae “McComick,” born Nov. 1884, Henderson Co., Tenn.”

14. Alexander, *Early Marriage Records of Decatur Co., Tenn.*, 77: “J. S. Riggs I. M. McComick [license] 8-25-1900 [marriage] 8-26-1900 W.A. Wilkins, J.P.,” Hill, *Decatur Co., Tenn.—Marriages—Riggs Fam.*, cites Marriage Records, 1898–1903, 7:251, J. S. Riggs to I. M. McCormick, 26 Aug. 1900.

15. SSDI, SSN 549-66-1632, born 13 Nov. 1884, died Dec. 1975, last residence 95307 Ceres, Stanislaus Co., Calif., issued Calif. (1962).

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household of his brother-in-law, Everett E. Duke, and sister, Verna, and their two children.^[16]

In 1930 John S. Riggs, 51, a fruit farmer born in Tennessee of Tennessee natives, resided in Ceres Twp., Stanislaus Co., Calif., with his wife, Ida M., 45, born in Tennessee of Tennessee natives. He was first married at age 22 and she at age 15, so they had been married for about 30 years. With them in the household were the following 11 children, all born in California except the first: son John, 28, a farm laborer born in Tennessee, daughter. Flossie, 27, son. Irwin, 14, daughters, Lenora, 12, Dorothy, 10, Virgie, 8, and Pearl V., 7, son. Merle, 5, daughter. Wanda, 3, son. Howard, 2, and daughter. Thelma, 1/12.^[17]

Children:^[18]

- + 18 i JOHN ARLISS⁴ RIGGS, born 28 Aug. 1901, Tennessee.
- 19 ii FLORENCE [“FLOSSIE”] MAE⁴ RIGGS, born about 1903, California.
- 20 iii ULUS JACKSON⁴ RIGGS.
- 21 iv COY LEE⁴ RIGGS.
- 22 v ROY DONALD⁴ RIGGS.
- 23 vi ELSIE RAE⁴ RIGGS.
- 24 vii ALICE LORENE⁴ RIGGS.
- 25 viii IRWIN [ERVIN] ODELL⁴ RIGGS, born about 1916, California.
- 26 ix LENORA MAUDE⁴ RIGGS, born about 1918, California.
- 27 x DOROTHY IOLA⁴ RIGGS, born about 1920, California.
- 28 xi VIRGIE JANE⁴ RIGGS, a daughter born about 1922, California.
- 29 xii VIOLET PEARL⁴ RIGGS, born about 1923, California.
- 30 xiii MERLE EDWARD⁴ RIGGS, a son born about 1925, California, living 2004.^[19]

16. U.S. census, 1900, district 6, Decatur Co., Tenn., ED 23, r. 1566, p. 63, sh. 4B, dw. 70, fam. 70.

17. U.S. census, 1930, Ceres Twp., Stanislaus Co., Calif., ED 4, r. 223, pp. 45-46, sh. 11B-12A, dw. 288, fam. 288.

18. All middle names and children iii-vii from Ancestry World Tree Project: Evans, contributed by Jessica Mason, last updated 25 August 2001, <<http://awt.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=:793319&id=I36624174>> (accessed 28 January 2004), **unsourced**. There is much information on this site, but all unsourced.

19. Email from Arthur Dale Riggs, 29 Dec. 2003, to Shelley Holmes Caroe, my research associate.

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- 31 xiv **WANDA FAY⁴ RIGGS**, born about 1927, California.
32 xv **HOWARD CONRAD⁴ RIGGS**, born about 1928, California, living
2004.^[20]
33 xvi **THELMA⁴ RIGGS**, born about 1930, California.

20. Email from Arthur Dale Riggs, 29 Dec. 2003.

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Fourth Generation

18. **JOHN ARLISS⁴ RIGGS** (¹⁵*John Samuel³, John Jackson², Joseph W.¹*) was born 28 Aug. 1901, Beacon [probably Beacon Junction, Decatur Co.], Tenn., died 23 Oct. 1988, last residence La Verne, Los Angeles Co., Calif.^[21] He married about 1935, **NELLIE LAURA CAULKINS**, who was born 10 Oct. 1901, Ceres, died 9 Jan. 1991, Ceres.^[22]

John Arlis Riggs is a helicopter pilot, inventor, and gold miner. He lives in Redwood City, San Mateo Co., California. His wife, Nellie Laura Caulkins, is a nurse.^[23]

Children:^[24]

- 34 i **ARLENE⁵ RIGGS**, married **JACK LOGAN**, and had three children.
- + 35 ii **ARTHUR DALE⁵ RIGGS**.

21. SSDI, John A. Riggs, SSN 553-18-7123, born 28 Aug. 1901, died 23 Oct. 1988, last residence 91750 La Verne, Los Angeles Co., Calif., issued Calif. (1952).

22. LDS pedigree resource file, **unsourced**: "John "Arlis" Riggs, born 28 August 1901, Beacon, Tennessee, died 23 October 1988, Ceres, California, married 1935 Nellie Laura Caulkins, born 10 October 1901, Ceres, died 9 January 1991, Ceres."

23. Jessica Mason, Ancestry World Tree Project: Evans, <awt.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=:793319&id=136624175> (accessed 29 Jan. 2004), **unsourced**.

24. Jessica Mason, Ancestry World Tree Project: Evans, **unsourced**; email from Arthur Dale Riggs, 29 Dec. 2003.

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Fifth Generation



1. Dr. Arthur Dale⁵ Riggs

35. ARTHUR DALE⁵ RIGGS (₁₈*John Arliss*⁴, *John Samuel*³, *John Jackson*², *Joseph W.*¹).

Arthur received his Ph.D. in molecular biology from California Institute of Technology. He is Director and CEO of Beckman Research Institute of the City of Hope, Duarte, Los Angeles Co., Calif.^[25]

Arthur D. Riggs, Ph.D., a noted molecular biologist, serves as the Chair, Division of Biology, and Associate Director of the Beckman Research Institute of the City of Hope National Medical Center, which has been designated a Comprehensive Cancer Center by NCI. Dr. Riggs' was one of the scientific founders of Genentech. He is a pioneer in developing an understanding of how methylation acts as an epigenetic control. Currently he is studying X chromosome inactivation and the biological roles of DNA methylation. Dr. Riggs' remarkable résumé spans three decades at City of Hope, during which time his pioneering ideas have brought about life-changing treatments and provided the foundation for discoveries by other scientists around the world.^[26]

25. Email from Arthur Dale Riggs, 29 Dec. 2003.

26. Press release, <www.epigenx.com/sabprofile.htm> (accessed 29 Jan. 2004).

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APPENDIX A. Joseph Riggs Last Will and Testament
Decatur Co., Tenn. Probate Records, 1869–1927,
pages 39–40

State of Tennessee

Decatur County

I Joseph Riggs of the County and State aforesaid Do Make and Publish this My Last Will and Testament hereby Revoking and Making Void all others by Me at any time Made

First

I Direct that my funeral expenses and all my Debts be paid as Soon after My Death as possible out of any Moneys that I May Die possessed of or May first Come into the hands of My executor

Secondly

I Give and bequeath all My personal property Consisting of Live Stock of every Description also My house hold and Kitchen furniture farming implements tools one wagon and Every other Description of personal property to My four Daughters and One Son, to wit, Sarah Jane Riggs, Delphia Swain Mary Ann Riggs and Zelphia Riggs and Francis M Riggs each of the above named Children to have an equal Share of Said personal Property

Third

I Give and bequeath to my Said Children Sarah Jane Delphia Mary Ann Zelphia and Francis M all My Estate both real and Personal except three Dollars which I give [sic] I Give and bequeath to my three Sons, to wit, James Riggs John Riggs and Joseph Riggs, I Each of Said Last Mentioned Children to Share equally the Said amount of three Dollars and I Desire that my Executor See this provision of My Will is Strictly Carried out

Fourth

I Do hereby nominate and appoint James W. Mc . . . lister My Executor to Carry out this My Last Will and Testament in witness hereof I have

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this Day Set My hand Seal the 8th Day of April A D 1874

his
Joseph X Riggs (Seal)
mark

Signed Sealed and acknowledged in our presence on the Day and Date above written and we have hereto affixed our names as Witnesses at the request of the Testator and in his presence and in the presence of each other on the Day and Year aforesaid

J J Steagald (Seal)
J C Graves (Seal)
(Seal)
(Seal)

State of Tennessee
Decatur County}

I John McMillan Clerk of the County Court of Said County Do hereby Certify that the foregoing is a True and perfect Copy of the foregoing will of Joseph Riggs which is now on file in My office Given under my hand “and Seal (crossed out)” at office on this 11th Day of May 1879

John McMillan Clk
of Decatur County Court

[<www.netease.net/decatour/decwills.htm> (accessed 19 January 2004)]

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- Hill, Phyllis, *Decatur County, Tennessee—Marriages—Riggs Family*, <[ftp.rootsweb.com/pub/usgenweb/tn/decatur/vitals/riggs003.txt](ftp://rootsweb.com/pub/usgenweb/tn/decatur/vitals/riggs003.txt)> (accessed 14 Aug. 2004).

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