



Ancestry of Eada Simmons of Tennessee

John Simmons

John Austin Simmons (1816-1898)

Almost all of what we know about the family of John Austin Simmons comes from entries in his family Bible, currently in the possession of Steve Simmons; the pages showing family births, deaths and marriages are reproduced here in the Family Table section..

John Simmons was born on 6 July 1816 somewhere in North Carolina. According to one of his grandsons, his middle name was "Austin" and his parents were of English birth. The middle name Austin appears on no official papers, but he did name one of his sons Austin. When asked directly where he was from, he is said to have equivocated: perhaps he traveled into Tennessee to escape a legal problem or perhaps his parents were convicted of some crime in England and forced to emigrate. His origin is a mystery which hopefully will someday be solved.



John Austin Simmons and wife Rachael Sparks

In any case, by the time he was 22 he had moved to Tennessee where he met and married Rachael H. Sparks [or Sparkes-- it is spelled both ways in the Simmons family Bible] (born 30 Sept 1823 and just 14 at the time of her marriage) on 30 July 1838. They remained in Tennessee for several years. Their children, Eada or Eady, as she was known (spelled "Ede" in the Simmons family Bible; born 3 June 1839), and Joseph (born 31 Aug 1840), were born there, and possibly also their children Mary (b.3 Feb 1841) and William (b.2 Aug 1842).

The 1840 census records for Tennessee suggest that John Simmons (then 24 years old), wife Rachael (17 years old) and one-year-old daughter Eada were living in Bradley County at

that time. Of the 13 John Simmons families in Tennessee in 1840, only the one in Bradley county has just one infant girl child besides the two young parents. This hypothesis is corroborated by the presence in Bradley County of other members of the Sparks family, including James Rose and his wife Eda Sparks, (thought to be the sister of Rachael Sparks), and Andrew Shelton and his wife Alice Sparks (thought to be another sister of Rachael—in the 1850 Missouri census they are living between Elijah Sparks and Rachael Sparks Simmons). Correspondence preserved by the Shelton family proves that Andrew and Alice Sparks Shelton were from Bradley County. The 1850 census suggests that Rachael’s father was Elijah Sparks (see below); in Bradley County in 1840 there was no Elijah, but there was an Abijah (rhymes with “Elijah”), who is probably the same person. Abijah Sparks is listed on the 1820 census as living in Rutherford County, North Carolina (the 1850 census says Elijah Sparks was born in North Carolina). An Abijah Sparks appears on the 1830 census for Roane County, Tennessee, up the Tennessee River about 40 miles from Bradley County.

The John Simmons family moved to Missouri between 1840 and 1845 [when daughter Sarah Simmons was born in Missouri], settling first in St. Francois County. By an odd coincidence the family appears on the 1850 Missouri census in *both* St. Francois County and Washington County [misspelled “Simons”], where the census was taken on September 28 and October 28 respectively. The only way this could happen is if they moved from one county to the other between those dates. The only discrepancy between the listings is that Mary is listed as born in Tennessee on one and in Missouri in the other.

Unfortunately, letters of inquiry sent to the county courthouses of all 95 counties in Tennessee, as well as the State Vital Records office in Nashville, failed to locate any independent marriage record for John and Rachael that might have provided information about their parentage. This, of course, does not prove that they weren't married in Tennessee. Only 33 of the counties had any records that old to search; 35 counties were not formed until after 1838; in 15 counties the county courthouses and all records they had contained had burned at some time after 1838, often during the Civil War; in 5 counties the inquiries were "undeliverable" for unknown reasons (in one case the letter came back marked "Courthouse Vacant"); and 7 counties failed to respond or refused to make a search.

The 1850 Census for Johnson Township gives the best clue to the parentage of Rachael Sparks, because here are listed two Sparks families virtually next door. The adjacent families appear as follows:

- | | | |
|-------------------|------|-----------------------|
| SPARKS, Elijah | [57] | b. NC (b.1792/3) |
| Mary | [53] | b. NC (b.1796/7) |
| Richard | [20] | b. TN (b. 1829/30) |
| Seth [Frank] | [18] | b. TN (b. 1831/2) |
| John H[arvey][16] | | b. TN (b. 6 Apr 1834) |
| Cassander | [14] | b. TN (b. 1835/6) |
| Sarah | [8] | b. TN (b. 1841/2) |
| | | |
| SHELTON, Andrew | [26] | b. TN |
| Alice (Sparks) | [22] | b. TN (b. 1827/8) |

Mary [7] b. TN
 Lewis [6] b. TN
 James [3] b. TN
 Elizabeth [10 mo.] b. TN

SIMONS, John [33] b. NC (b. 6 July 1816)
 Rachel [Sparks][26] b. TN (b. 30 Sept 1823)
 Eada [10] b. TN (b. 3 June 1839)
 Joseph [9] b. TN (b. 31 Aug 1840)
 Mary [8] b. MO or TN (b. 3 Feb 1841)
 Sarah [6] b. MO (b. 2 Apr 1845)
 Nancy [2] b. MO (26 Jan 1849)
 Andrew [3 mo] b. MO (26 Apr 1850)

Clearly Rachael Sparks would fit right in as a married older daughter of Elijah Sparks. Furthermore, it appears possible that the three families left Tennessee together in 1840-1845 and moved to Missouri. Descendants of John Harvey Sparks claim that he was born in Henry County, Tennessee, which may therefore also be the birthplace of his siblings including Rachael Sparks, and Rachael Sparks' daughter Eada Simmons. However, records from that time period do survive in Henry County, and have been searched without success. The Sparks family was still in Tennessee in 1841/2 and could only have moved to Missouri at the same time as the Simmons family if that move took place between 1841/2 [when Sarah Sparks was born in Tennessee] and 1845 [when Sarah Simmons was born in Missouri].



Richard Sparks (1829/30 - ca.1885)
 Younger brother of Rachel H. Sparks (wife of John Simmons) *Photos courtesy of Patricia Topolski*



Mary Catherine Baker Sparks (b.1834)
 Wife of Richard Sparks and daughter of David Nathan Baker (the man who was murdered in 1862 by Richard Marshall, Smith Jackson's uncle, whom Smith Jackson was tried for killing in 1867)

No home town in North Carolina is known definitely for Elijah, but in 1814, when our Elijah was 21, an Elijah Sparks was mustered into the First Regiment of Rutherford County, North Carolina. Given the relatively unusual name, this may well be the same person. As mentioned, Abijah Sparks (probably the same person) appears on the 1820 census in Rutherford County as well.

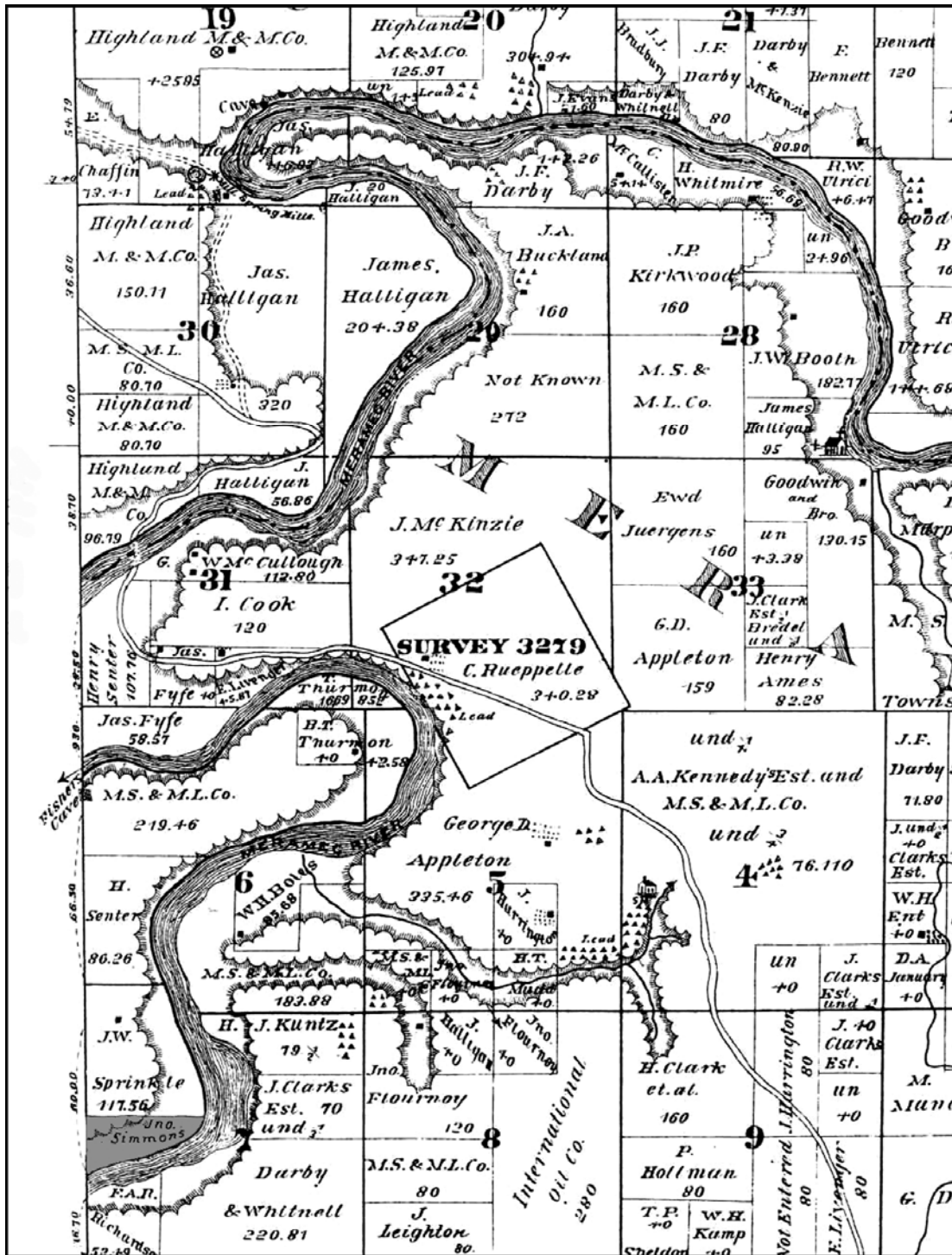
The 1850 St. Francois County census provides another clue about the Sparks family: Living just a few doors down from John Simmons was the following family:

SPARKS,	Thomas	[28]	NC
	Polly	[37]	VA
	Martha	[6]	MO
	Stephen	[4]	MO
	Wm. H.	[11 mo]	MO
	Jane	[29]	VA

It is consistent with these census records to suppose that the families of Elijah (Abijah) Sparks, his son Thomas Sparks, and John Simmons (who married his daughter Rachael Sparks) originally lived near each other in St. Francois County, that Elijah moved to Washington County just before the 1850 census was taken, his son Thomas (28) and unmarried daughter Jane (29) electing to stay behind. The John Simmons family, including Elijah's daughter Rachael Sparks (27), then followed in October 1850. This remains to be confirmed but is a one hypothesis.

NOTE: A *possible* clue (though one I tend to discount) has been found in the 1840 census for Haywood County, Tennessee. An Elijah Sparks is listed and columns checked for the ages of male and female family members. At first this appears *not* to be the right Elijah Sparks because the family members and ages do not correlate correctly with those on the 1850 census. However, Raquel Lindaas, a genealogical researcher for Lineages, Inc. in Salt Lake City, believes that the census taker switched the names on two adjacent lines in recopying his interview data into the census ledger. The line directly below Elijah Sparks' line, listed as the family of Littleton Caple, in fact matches perfectly the Elijah Sparks family (not including daughter Rachael Sparks who had married John Simmons two years earlier). Furthermore, this Elijah Sparks is known to have married (2) Mary Rutledge [his wife's name is given as "Mary" on the 1850 census], daughter of William and Joanna Rutledge, on 17 December 1831 in Rutherford County, Tennessee. William Rutledge appears on the 1820 and 1830 censuses for Rutherford County, and died before 1840. The household of his widow, Joanna Rutledge, is listed immediately *after* Littleton Caple on the 1840 census, such that if the names of Elijah Sparks and Littleton Caple are indeed switched, Elijah is then seen living next door to his widowed mother-in-law. Joanna Rutledge died in 1847, and among her heirs was listed "Mary Rutledge who married Elijah Sparks." Elijah and Mary moved to Missouri between 1843 and 1849, perhaps following or in the company of his daughter by his first wife, Rachael Sparks and her husband John Simmons, who moved to Missouri between 1840 and 1845. This Heywood County theory rests on the wife's name "Mary" being the same as on the 1850 census, but supposes a serious census error in the switching of lines. In my opinion, the

Bradley County theory has much more evidence to support it, given its clear connect with related Sparks and Simmons families.



Location of the John Austin Simmons property on the Meramec River, Franklin County, Missouri in 1878 (southwest corner of the map area).

The surname "Sparks" or "Sparkes" is of early English origin, having been used as a nickname for anyone who raised and trained sparrowhawks for sporting purposes. The name "Sparrowhawk" dates to well before the time of William the Conqueror, the earliest known example being a monk of St. Edmundsbury named Spearhafoc (the Anglo-Saxon spelling) who was appointed abbot of Abingdon in 1048. He was given the Bishopric of London by Edward the Confessor in 1050, but (according to *The Domesday Book*, written in 1085-1086) was never consecrated because of political opposition. It was not until the 13th century that "Sparrowhawk" became a surname in the modern sense, in some cases shortened to "Spark."



Seth Simmons (seated), Seth's wife Kate Northcutt, and their children: (top row) Austin, Addie, Walter, (front row) Robert, Arthur, Effie and Charles. Photo taken ca. 1895 in front of their log cabin in Missouri, probably built by John Austin Simmons himself. The man standing is Franz Schwarzer, a world-famous zither manufacturer and the organizer of a tour group called "the Cave Exploration Party." He hired Seth as a guide to various caves up the Meramec River, including Fisher's Cave and Saltpeter Cave (Meramec Caverns). The party's photographer took this picture.

There were probably a number of independent originators of the name in different family lines. An Adam Spark was recorded as a murder victim in Geddington in 1279; a John Spark lived in Berwick-on-Tweed in 1292. In the 15th century the "s" began appearing at the end of the name, probably as a shortening of "Spark's" or "Spark's son," and by 1600 the

variants "Spark" and "Sparks" or "Sparkes" were about equally common in England. People of that name came over to America from the time of the earliest settlements, and by the time of the 1790 census one person in every 5,000 was names Sparks.

According to family tradition, John Austin Simmons gave food to the outlaw Jesse James when he was hiding out in the nearby Meramec Caverns in the early 1870's. The Simmons property in Franklin County was on the east bank of the Meramec.

Rachael Sparks died of fever just nine days after giving birth to Harvey, her 13th child in 22 years. She was just 36 years old when she died on 16 Feb 1860. A few months later, on 4 Oct 1860, John Simmons married Sarah Anderson, daughter of John Anderson and Nancy Ayers, and widow of Green Calvert (or Calbert.) Sarah had been born in Missouri in 1831. With her he had another nine children during the following 18 years, for a total of 22 children.

When Eady was 14 she was given in marriage to William Smith Jackson, on 31 May 1855, and at some point the couple moved in with her parents. They were still living there as of the 1860 census of Johnson township, Washington County. Perhaps they were there at the time of the census simply to help out, as Rachel had died early that year, and there were children to care for.

John Austin Simmons died 6 July 1898 in Franklin County, Missouri. He is buried with he second wife Sarah in the Brush Creek Cemetery or Whitmire Camp Ground Cemetery [cem.book cem.092F], located off the river bend near Meramec State Park, on property currently owned by Timothy and Marian Ahal [629-7243]. The cemetery is very difficult to locate and reach from the nearest road.



Graves markers for John Austin Simmons (1816-1898), father of Eada Simmons. Note that, like his son-in-law Smith Jackson, he was a Mason.



Andrew Simmons (1850-1931), brother of Eada Simmons, with his second wife, Mary Jane Hogan.

