

A Brief Biography
of George Thomas Copeland
1826-1892

Researched and Compiled
by his great-great granddaughter
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Introduction

My grandfather was William Delvie Copeland, son of Thomas Copeland and Myrtle Crider, and it is from him that I received the name I carried with me everywhere until I married my husband in 2010. And, I'm still a Copeland in spirit if not in name, just like many of you. Although we never met in person because of unfortunate family relations, I was able to exchange some letters with my grandfather when I reached adulthood, before he passed away in 2003. Along with one of his letters he sent me a family tree that included his grandparents and great-grandparents on both sides of his family. Perhaps it is because I never had a real connection to my extended Copeland family growing up, but I have always felt compelled to learn about my origins on this side of my family tree. It might be a little bit similar to the way an adopted person might feel about their birth family: apprehensive; confused; but, above all, curious. I've spent the past ten years researching my Copeland ancestors, and I have finally reached a place where I feel like I know enough, and am confident enough in my research, to share what I know with all of you.

To give you a sense of where I started, here are the basics of what my grandfather knew about his ancestry: he wrote that his grandfather was George Copeland, born 1826 and died 1892; his grandmother, George's wife, was Charlotte Eve Kingsley; and George's parents were George Lewis Copeland (born 1790s in Ireland) and Mary Ellen Wilson (born 1790s). I always suspected that this was incorrect, but had no way of knowing for sure. In my grandfather's defense, both of his grandparents on the Copeland side died decades before he was born, so he never knew them in life. And, on top of that, Thomas Copeland's grandparents had also died before he was born, so the chances that my grandfather knew anything about his great-grandparents is pretty slim.

My journey to this point has been difficult, frustrating, and confounding, but ultimately incredibly meaningful. By a combination of unwavering dedication to pursuing every possible avenue of research, and the miracles of 21st Century science, I can now say with certainty that I know the identity of George's parents (and even his grandparents on the Copeland side). Please keep this in mind: at this point in my life with two young children in my care I'm really limited to being an "armchair genealogist," which means that the entirety of the research contained in this manuscript was done from my home, using whatever sources were available online, and collaborating with other researchers via email. So, just be aware that this little document is just the tip of the iceberg, and I hope over the coming months and years to be able to share more and more of the Copeland family story with you. I've arranged this manuscript to highlight the events in George's life chronologically, based on the records I've found over the past several years, rather than in the order that I discovered the information that led me to these conclusions; it was really a winding path that took over a decade to figure out and I'm not sure I could re-create it even if I tried. Someday I hope to really flesh out the story by visiting Missouri and Illinois, where our Copeland ancestors lived. I'm sure there are lots of interesting records out there just waiting to be found.

Your cousin,

Kelli Copeland Wilson
12 December 2014
Walpole, NH

A Brief Biography of George Thomas Copeland (1826-2892)

George Thomas Copeland was born in 1826, probably in Gallatin County, Illinois. He was the second child of Obediah Copeland and his first wife Catherine Allen. Obediah and Catherine were married 20 April 1820 in Gallatin County, Illinois¹. George T. Copeland had an older sister, Mary Ann Copeland, who was born about 1822, probably in Gallatin County, Illinois. He also had a younger brother known from one record simply as J.M. Copeland who was born about 1827, probably in Gallatin County, Illinois. Sadly, George's mother Catherine died sometime after the birth of J.M., and Obediah Copeland remarried on 18 April 1828 in Gallatin County, Illinois to a woman named Elizabeth Burton². From his father's second marriage George gained several half-siblings: Martha, born 1833³ probably in Gallatin County, Illinois; Sarah, born 1835⁴ probably in Gallatin County, Illinois; Melissa, born 1841⁵ probably in Wayne County, Illinois; Nathan, born 1842⁶ probably in Wayne County, Illinois; and possibly Benjamin, born 1857⁷ in Illinois.

Before I go any further, I'd like to give some information about the Copeland family and how they came to settle in Illinois, where George was born. George's father Obediah Copeland was born about 1803 in Virginia.^{8,9,10} Obediah's parents were Thomas Copeland, born about 1780, and Ann Hood, born 1779, and they were married 23 October 1802 in Campbell County, Virginia.¹¹ The parents of Thomas Copeland are not yet known, but Ann Hood was without question the daughter of James Hood¹² (she is named in his will dated 26 April 1828, Gallatin County, Illinois). Sometime after Thomas and Ann's marriage in 1802, Ann's father James Hood, her uncle William Hood, Sr. and her cousin William Hood, Jr., and her brother-in-law Edmund Fears left Virginia. They next appear on the 1805 Tax List for Grainger County, Tennessee.¹³ The following year, 1806, John Copeland (possible brother of Thomas) married

James Hood's daughter, Mary Polly Hood, in Jefferson County, Tennessee,¹⁴ which borders Grainger County to the North. It is unclear when Thomas and Ann left Virginia, but they rejoined their relatives in 1809, appearing on the Elk River Intruder List¹⁵ in an area that includes modern-day Limestone County, Alabama^a, and the 1810 Elk River Petition¹⁶ of the same place.¹⁷ James Hood (father of Ann and maternal grandfather of Obediah) next appears in 1812 in Union County, Kentucky, where he signed for the marriage of his daughter, Susan Hood, to George Hedge(s).¹⁸

It is assumed that the rest of the party was with him or headed in that direction because Obediah Copeland, his brother Pleasant Copeland, and his maternal grandfather James Hood are listed on census records in Gallatin County, Illinois in 1820¹⁹ (Gallatin County is right across the border from Union County, Kentucky). It is not yet known where Thomas and Ann Hood Copeland were at this time, but the rest of their children show up in marriage and census records in subsequent years in the Illinois counties of Gallatin, White, Edwards, and Wayne. And, based on the places of birth given by the children on later records, it seems likely that they arrived in Illinois sometime around 1813.

A combination of wills and other documents, along with common sense, shows us that Obediah Copeland was one of at least seven children born to Thomas Copeland and Ann Hood: Obediah, born 1803 in Virginia;²⁰ Pleasant born 1805²¹ in Virginia;^b Martha Patsy Copeland,

^a The Elk River Intruders were settlers who had crossed over into land that was designated as belonging to the Chickasaw Indians. The "intruders" were subsequently forced off their settlements by government troops.

^b Pleasant Copeland's place of birth is listed on various records (both about him directly, and in regards to him by his children) as Kentucky, Illinois, and United States of America. I am taking the liberty of assuming that he was born in Virginia, as his next youngest sibling, Martha Patsy Copeland Knodell, is consistently listed as being born in Virginia. It doesn't seem likely that the family left Virginia and then went back between 1803 and 1806. Pleasant is named in James Hood's will, in relation to property being left to James's daughter Ann Hood Copeland, so his placement in the family is fairly certain.

born 1806 in Virginia;²² Rebecca ‘Becky’ Copeland born 1810^c possibly in Alabama or Kentucky;²³ William Copeland born 1812^d possibly in Kentucky;²⁴ Agnes ‘Aggie’ Copeland, born 1813 in Illinois;²⁵ and Hannah Ritta Copeland, born 1815 in Illinois.²⁶ It is not clear what happened to Thomas after the family arrived in Illinois, but his wife Ann Hood remarried to John Hammel on 20 January 1825 in Gallatin County, Illinois.²⁷ She married a third time on 27 February 1832 in White County, Illinois to a man named William Horsford/Hosford.²⁸ Ann (Hood) Copeland Hammel Hosford is buried at the Old Brushy Cemetery in Ellery, Wayne County, Illinois.²⁹

Returning to Obediah and George Copeland we find them listed under Obediah’s name on the 1830 US Federal Census for Gallatin County, Illinois. On this record Obediah’s household includes: 2 free colored males under 10 (George and his brother J.M.); 1 free colored male 10-23 (unknown, possible a relation of Obediah’s); 1 free colored male 24-35 (Obediah); 1 free colored female under 10 (Mary Ann); 2 free colored females 24-35 (1 of these is probably Elizabeth Burton, the other is unknown, possibly a relation of Obediah’s).³⁰ [See [Appendix A](#)]

What is interesting about this record is that Obediah and his family (including George, though he is not enumerated by name) are listed as “free colored persons.” The veracity of this is born out in the descendants of Thomas Copeland and Ann Hood who have done DNA tests (5 of us so far, on two different lines) who all have non-European DNA -- African & Native American -- ranging from 0.5% to more than 3% of our genomes. It is very likely that Thomas or Ann, or

^c Year of birth based on approximate age of 18 at the time of her marriage to Houston Mulkey, 25 Mar 1828, in Gallatin County, Illinois.

^d Year of birth based on approximate age of 18 at the time of his marriage to Laura Rudd, 30 Sep 1830, in Gallatin County, Illinois.

both of them, were of African and/or Native American descent, though which individuals in their ancestry were non-European is yet to be determined. On all subsequent census records, Obediah and George and their families are listed as “white.”

Sometime between 1830 and the early months of 1836 Obediah Copeland moved his family, including George, from Gallatin County, Illinois to Wayne County, Illinois, both of which are bordered by White County, Illinois where Obediah Copeland’s maternal grandfather James Hood lived before his death in 1828 (other members of the extended Hood family were still living there when Obediah passed through on his way to Wayne County). Obediah Copeland purchased 40 acres of public land in Wayne County, Illinois on 29 February 1836 for \$50.00.³¹ On 28 July 1838 he purchased an additional 40 acres in the same location.³² What makes the purchase of these lands particularly interesting is their extremely close proximity to land owned by a man named Samuel Skinner who was the maternal grandfather of Clara Bunting, my great-grandfather’s first wife and the ancestor of the Wollmershauser & Grimes families.^e To put it in layman’s terms, the distance from the farthest eastern edge of Obediah’s land to the farthest western edge of Samuel Skinner’s land was 1.5 miles. There were only two other farms in between them. There is absolutely no way that Obediah Copeland and Samuel Skinner did not know each other and, in fact, they probably interacted a great deal.^f

^e Connie Spindel has created a wonderful series of graphics illustrating early Wayne County, Illinois land purchases http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~familyhistorypages/Land_Purchase_Sec_22-23_Wayne_Co_IL.htm.

^f Many of the men who owned land in section 23 have some connection to our Bunting and Copeland families. When I first discovered this land connection, I had already spent a great deal of time tracing Obediah Copeland’s family, thinking that there was a possibility that George was connected to him in some way. Once I traced the Bunting family and associated lines back into Illinois, and found them living in the exact same location as Obediah, it became very obvious to me that it was no coincidence that George and his descendants married into the Bunting family in Dunklin County, Missouri. Often families moved in tandem, and their descendants would marry because the families were known entities to each other.

Moving forward in time, we find his father Obediah Copeland enumerated on the 1840 US Federal Census for Wayne County, Illinois. His household consists of: 1 free white male under 5 (unknown); 1 free white male 15-19 (this could be George); 1 free white male 30-39 (Obediah); 1 free white female under 5 (Sarah); 1 free white female 5-9 (Melissa); 2 free white females 10-14 (1 of these is Martha, the other unknown); 1 free white female 30-39 (Elizabeth Burton, 2nd wife of Obediah).³³ [See [Appendix B](#)] There are a few things to note in regards to this census record: first, the family is now considered “white”; second, there are some children whose names are not known, but their ages would put them as children of Obediah & Elizabeth; third, Obediah was living right next door to Susan Hedges, who was his maternal aunt (Susan Hood married George Hedges in 1812 in Union County, KY, with James Hood signing his consent). There is only one free white male age 15-19, which could be either George or his brother “J.M.” It’s possible that George was already living elsewhere, perhaps working as a hired hand, as he would have been 14 at the time of this census. Because only the head of household was enumerated on federal census records before 1850, it is impossible to know.

This is the last record for our George in Illinois. How and why did George migrate from Illinois to Missouri? A working theory is that George left Illinois in the early 1840s along with some extended family members. As I mentioned previously, George’s grandmother Ann was married in 1832 to a man named William Horsford/Hosford. William’s son from a prior marriage, also called William, married 09 February 1839 in Edwards County, Illinois to a woman named Henrietta Joiner.³⁴ Although I have yet to prove it, I believe that Henrietta Joiner was the sister of a man named John Joiner, who migrated from Illinois to Ripley County, Missouri about the same time as our George. John Joiner and his wife Rebecca Monkey were married 11 June 1835 in Edwards County, Illinois³⁵ (which borders both White and Wayne

Counties in Illinois – Obediah would eventually live in Edwards County, as well). John and Rebecca Joiner’s daughters Mahala (b 1836) and Manda (b 1843) were born in Illinois, but their daughter Rebecca was born in Missouri (b 1845),³⁶ which indicates to me that the family arrived in Missouri sometime between 1843 and 1845, and there’s a good chance that George was with them. William Hosford, Jr. must have died sometime after the family’s arrival in Missouri, or he never made it there in the first place, because his wife Henrietta Joiner Hosford remarried to a man named John Campo on 30 July 1845 in Ripley County, Missouri.³⁷

George first appears on a record in Missouri at the time of his marriage to Elizabeth Lawson^g on 02 August 1849/1850 in Ripley County, Missouri³⁸ (the records are hard to read, and both years were used on different sources). Although he does not appear on the 1850 US Federal Census, it is very likely that George was already in Missouri at that time. The other families in question appear living in close proximity to one another: Henrietta (Joiner) Hosford is living with her new husband John Campo and her son William Albert Hosford on page 28 of the census;³⁹ John Joiner, his wife Rebecca, and their daughters Mahala, Manda, and Rebecca are listed on page 29;⁴⁰ Elizabeth Lawson’s family is listed on page 30,⁴¹ including her brother, Ira Lawson, who married John and Rebecca Joiner’s daughter Mahala on 19 June 1851 in Ripley County, Missouri.⁴² Yes, it is a tangled web!

The next official record I have for George in Missouri relates to his serving on a circuit court jury in the spring of 1853,⁴³ in the case of “The State of Missouri vs. E.D. Crittenden,” who

^g George’s wife Elizabeth was the daughter of William Lawson who arrived in Ripley County, Missouri sometime between 1838 and 1840.

was charged with “felonious assault with intent to kill.”^h George appears again on 20 October 1856 in the Ripley County, Missouri Probate Court log. He had come before the court to request an appropriation of \$10.00 in funds from the estate of Squire Lawson for the keeping of two of Squire’s minor children, who were in George’s care at the time. Squire Lawson was the older brother of George’s wife Elizabeth Lawson.ⁱ George was 27 and 30 years old, respectively, at the time of these court proceedings.

On 15 April 1857 George Copeland purchased a total of 240 acres of land in Butler County, Missouri,⁴⁴ which borders Ripley County to the East. The land, in sections 24 & 25, is located right on the border of Ripley County. George also acquired two pieces of land on 10 October 1859: 120 acres in Ripley County⁴⁵ that was given as Bounty Land to George Morris for his service in Capt. Hunter’s Company, Illinois Militia, Black Hawk War; and 80 acres in Ripley County⁴⁶ that was given to George Bowman for his service in Capt. Tipton’s Company, Tennessee Militia, War of 1812.^j George was 31 and 33 years old, respectively, at the time of these land purchases. [See [Appendix C](#), [D](#), [E](#)]

^h This was an important find because there was previously some confusion about whether or not the George Copeland of Ripley County was actually a George Westley Copeland. This record cleared that up, since it mentions both George AND Westley, so we know they were two different people.

ⁱ Squire Lawson married Esther Shelbut on 28 April 1844 in Ripley County, Missouri. They were the parents of: John Lawson (b 1845); Elizabeth Lawson (b 1848); Emily Lawson (b 1848); William Lawson (b 1849); Ira Lawson (b 1850). I do not know which ones of these children were the two that were in George’s care in 1856, and there may be others that were born after the 1850 US Federal Census (from which these names were taken).

^j George Morris was a man who lived in White County, Illinois, and owned land abutting James Hood (this James Hood is most likely the son of William Hood, Sr., and not the James Hood who was George’s maternal great-grandfather).^j The Muster Roll for Capt. Hunter’s Company in the Black Hawk War lists George Morris among many other familiar names that are connected to the Copeland and Bunting families of Illinois. It’s possible that George Morris sold or bequeathed this land to George because he knew him back in Illinois, or at least knew members of his family. Bounty Land Warrants could be sold or assigned (as is the case here). Of George Bowman, less is known. There was a George Bowman living in Ripley County, Missouri in 1860, born about 1783 in Tennessee, which is the right age and location to be the George Bowman who assigned his land warrant to George Copeland; nothing else is known at this time.

The next official record for George is the 1860 US Federal Census for Ripley County, Missouri. Since this census was taken after 1850, all of the household members are listed by name. They are as follows: G T Copeland (George), age 36; M A Copeland (his wife, Marritta, widow of Leonard Stringer), age 22; a son, J W Copeland, age 5; a daughter, Malissa Copeland, age 3; a stepson, L Stringer (Leonard Stringer, Jr., son of Marritta and Leonard Stringer, Sr.); R Joiner, age 64 (Rebecca Monkey Joiner, widow of John Joiner); R Joiner, age 15 (Rebecca Joiner, daughter of Rebecca and John Joiner); Albert Halsford, age 21 (William Albert Hosford).⁴⁷ [See [Appendix F](#)]

The 1860 US Federal Census had an accompanying mortality schedule, which indicates that George's wife Elizabeth Lawson had died of fever in November 1859.⁴⁸ The 1860 Census also indicates that George and his second wife Marritta were married "within the year."^k According to this census, George had two children with Elizabeth Lawson before her untimely death: a son "J.W." and a daughter Melissa. We also see that Rebecca Monkey Joiner and her daughter Rebecca Joiner are living with George, along with William Albert Hosford, the son of William Hosford, Jr. and Henrietta Joiner.^l This was not the first time that George had taken on the care and keeping of his extended family, as he had previously provided for his brother-in-law's minor children. I think we can see in his actions a person who wanted to do right by others, and would take on additional responsibilities and even debts, if necessary, to make sure that those in need were taken care of.

^k George undoubtedly remarried so quickly after his wife's death because he had such young children to care for.

^l By this time John Campo, the second husband of Henrietta Joiner, had remarried, so it's possible that Henrietta had died and William Albert Hosford went to live with George and the Joiner women, his nearest relatives.

The 1860 US Federal Census also contains information about J.M. Copeland, who I believe is George's brother. J.M.'s household consists of: J M Copeland, age 33, born Illinois; E L Copeland (his wife), age 26; a son, S Copeland, age 4 (Stephen Copeland); a daughter, Martha Copeland, age 2; a son, C Copeland, age 2 months (Jacob Copeland).⁴⁹ J.M.'s son Stephen Copeland would remain close to George, even after George moved from Ripley County to Dunklin County, Missouri, as later records will show.

The next records for George do not bring good news. Sometime after 01 July 1863 George registered for the Civil War draft. This record indicates that George was living in Thomas, Ripley County, Missouri at the time of the draft. He was 37 years old, white, a farmer, married, and born in Illinois.⁵⁰ There is a red line through his name and information, with the note "Rebel Army 1864" written next to it; this is only partially true. At some point during the fall of 1863 George did join Capt. Reeves' and Capt. Cunningham's band of "Independent Missouri Scouts" which was a group of individuals from Southeast Missouri who joined together to protect their homes and families from Union forces and other marauding groups. They were initially non-partisan, but were later conscripted into the Confederate Army as the 15th Missouri Cavalry (Confederate). Specifics of George's involvement with this group (i.e. why he joined) may never be known, but he was present on 25 December 1863 when a large number of Reeves' troops were captured during an incident known as "Skirmish at Pulliam Farm." A contemporary writer gave the following account:

Reeves had been up in Missouri on a raiding trip and had retreated across the line to safety, as he thought, after having ridden day and night traveling a road about 4 miles northeast of Warm Springs near Uncle Tom Pulliam's they left the road and went over a high hill and down in the next hollow where they struck camp. To their surprise, Col. Leeper's men were in hot chase and just at daybreak they crept up on the top of the hill, raised the yell and charged down on Reeve's men, kill and wounding quite a number of them, two of the Phelps brothers of

Walnut Ridge, John and Fount as I remember and I knew all of them at that time. A number of others were killed and wounded that I do not remember. They utilized Uncle Tom's house as a hospital until the wounded could be moved. I lived for several years within a mile of this battle ground hollow as it has ever since been called. It was not uncommon for these raiding parties to take innocent parties out and shoot them for no offense at all but such was our great and cruel war.⁵¹

It is not known if George Copeland was among the wounded, but it is certain that he was apprehended. He was held as a Prisoner of War at Pilot Knob, and then sent on to the Union prison in Alton, Illinois. He was charged with “Violation of the Oath of Allegiance to the United States Government,”⁵² tried on 09 February 1864, convicted, and sentenced to hard labor at Alton for the duration of the war.⁵³ Given the deplorable conditions of both Union and Confederate prisons during the Civil War, it really is a wonder that he survived such a long incarceration period. But, after spending 1 year, 4 months, and 11 days as a prisoner of war, George’s name appeared on a list of persons “Recommended for Release” from Alton Military Prison on 05 May 1865. That same day he made “his mark” on a document indicating his taking of the Oath of Allegiance, which would have been required for his release. This document also gives the following physical description of George: “The above named has fair complexion, light hair, and blue eyes, and is 5 feet 8 inches high.”⁵⁴ George was 39 years old. The Civil War officially ended four days later on 09 May 1865. [See [George Copeland Civil War Records](#)]

I can’t imagine what sort of physical and mental condition George was in at the time of his release. He undoubtedly wanted to get back home and start his life over, but what was waiting for him? Did he lose his farm and his land? It seems he might have lost his wife Marritta and possibly his son J.W., as they do not appear on the census with him in 1870. Did he return to Ripley County? It’s hard to say, but by the time of the 1870 US Federal Census he had moved to Union, Dunklin County, Missouri. At that time his household was as follows: Thomas

Coplin, age 40 (this is George, going by his middle name); Sarah Coplin, age 37 (George's third wife, maiden name unknown);^m a daughter, Melissa Coplin, age 13 (seen on 1860 census); a daughter, Artamissa Coplin, age 10 (probably the daughter of George and his second wife Marritta); a daughter, Martha, age 3 (most likely the child of George and Sarah); a daughter, Mary (or Marg) Coplin, age 2 months (this is Margaret Rose, probably a child of George and Sarah); a woman named Mary Thomasⁿ, age 22.⁵⁵ [See [Appendix G](#)]

There are a couple of things to note about the 1870 US Federal Census. First, George's son J.W. is missing from this census, although he would have been 15 at the time, so perhaps he was off working. Second, in 1870 Leonard Stringer, Jr., George's stepson from his second marriage, was living in Ripley County, Missouri with his paternal grandparents, Dickerson and Elizabeth Stringer.⁵⁶ Third, in 1870 Rebecca Monkey Joiner was living in Thomas, Butler County, Missouri^o with her daughter Rebecca and her son-in-law (Rebecca's husband) Daniel

^m Research into the identity of George's wife Sarah, who is the mother of my great-grandfather Thomas Copeland, is ongoing. I've had some interesting leads, but nothing has been clarified at this point. Thomas Copeland's death certificate states that his mother was Mary Lawson, and notes that my grandfather William D. Copeland took in the 1950s (in the possession of my grandmother until earlier this year) state that her name was Susan Lawson. The 1870 and 1880 US Federal Census records clearly state that her name was Sarah. There are a couple of young women by the name of Sarah Lawson listed on the 1860 US Federal Census in the Ripley County, Missouri area, but I have not yet determined if either of them is George's third wife. And, of course, his first wife was Elizabeth Lawson, so it's possible that the Lawson name was mistakenly attributed to Thomas's mother because it had been handed down in family lore in connection to George. The only facts that are known are as follows: Sarah was born in Missouri, probably sometime between the late 1830s and mid-1840s. According to census records, her father was born in Indiana; her mother was born in Illinois. George and Sarah may have married in Butler, Ripley, or Dunklin County, or somewhere else entirely, but probably sometime around the year 1867. She is the mother of at least two, but probably three, of George's children: Margaret Rose Copeland, born 1870, married Shelby Pruett; Mary Jane Copeland, born 1874, whereabouts unknown after 1880; and Thomas F. Copeland, born 1876.

ⁿ The Mary Thomas who is living with the family is most likely the daughter of John and Mary Thomas, and appears on the 1860 US Federal Census for Ripley County, Missouri along with her parents, and brothers: Samuel Marion Thomas; Daniel J. Thomas; and Harbird N. Thomas.

^o Thomas, Butler County, Missouri is the exact location where George was living prior to his incarceration, at least according to his draft registration which is his last known address prior to the Civil War. I wonder if Daniel took over George's farm in his absence, or if George sold it to him after the war.

Doolin, two of Rebecca and Daniel's children, a young boy John Lawson, and Daniel Doolin's younger sister, Mary Doolin.⁵⁷ This information is important to note in regards to later events. Lastly, it appears that George's brother J.M. Copeland died sometime prior to 1870, because his wife Elizabeth remarried on 21 April 1870 in Ripley County, Missouri to a man named James Mullins,⁵⁸ and on the 1870 US Federal Census she and the Copeland children (Stephen, Martha, Jacob, and Mary) are living with him in Ripley County, Missouri.⁵⁹

Here's where a couple of loose ends are tied up: on 29 March 1874, Stephen Copeland (son of J.M. Copeland) and Mary Doolin (younger sister of Daniel Doolin, and sister-in-law of Rebecca Joiner) were married in Dunklin County, Missouri,⁶⁰ where George was living at the time. Two years later Stephen and Mary they had their first child, a son, and named him George T. Copeland.⁶¹ To me, this is very strong evidence in favor of a close relationship between our George and this Stephen, and J.M. by extrapolation.

The next official record we have for George Copeland is the 1880 US Federal Census for Cotton Hill, Dunklin County, Missouri.^p His household is enumerated in the following manner: G.T. Coplan, age 43, born Illinois, father born Virginia, mother born France (this is George, but the birth year is way off); Sarah Coplan, age 37, born Missouri, father born Indiana, mother born Illinois; a daughter M.J., age 6; a son, Tom F., age 4 (Thomas F. Copeland, my great-grandfather).⁶² By 1880 Daniel and Rebecca Joiner Doolin were also living in Cotton Hill, Dunklin, Missouri, but Rebecca Monkey Joiner was no longer with them, and had probably died.⁶³ [See [Appendix H](#)]

^p The information in this record was my starting point and allowed me to work backward, first to the 1870 Census, and then beyond; there were little stepping stones along the way, and they should be clear now.

The 1890 US Federal Census was lost in its entirety in a fire in 1921, so there is no way to know what George's household looked like at that time. But, there are a few things we know from other records of the same time period. First, there is the June 1890 Veterans Schedule for Malden, Dunklin County, Missouri, which lists George as "George T. Copeland" and states that he served as a Sgt. In the 11th Missouri Infantry, Company C, with a line through his information and the word "Conf" written next to it, indicating the Confederate Army.⁶⁴ The information in this record is grossly inaccurate, see note below.^q Second, there are several probate records from this time period that show George selling land in Dunklin County, Missouri:^r to Susan A. Phillips (22 September 1890);⁶⁵ E. S. Stephenson (15 December 1890);⁶⁶ Eliza S. Stephens (24 July 1891);⁶⁷ and Isaac Mills (25 July 1891).⁶⁸

The very last record I have for George Thomas Copeland is his marriage to Nancy Keeton/Keating on 10 September 1891 in Stoddard County, Missouri⁶⁹ (which borders Dunklin County, Missouri). What makes this marriage interesting is that during the prior year Nancy's daughter, Ella Keeton, had married a young man named Henry Bunting on 01 November 1890 in Dunklin County, Missouri.⁷⁰ Henry Bunting was the brother of Clara Bunting, who was George's son Thomas Copeland's first wife. Henry and Clara Bunting's mother was Elizabeth Skinner, whose father was Samuel Skinner, the man who owned land less than a mile from

^q My theory is that either the person who supplied the information had no idea (i.e. it was not George himself), or the data was fabricated to turn attention away from the truth. By the 1890s, Reeves and Cunningham of the 15th Missouri Cavalry (under whom George served in the Civil War) were notorious, and not in a good way. A quote from page 38 of the 1895 book entitled *History of Dunklin County, MO*, by Mary F. Smyth-Davis gives some indication of this sentiment: "Several merciless guerrilla bands operated in the southern part of Missouri led by such men as Pope Conyers, Timothy Reeves, Hilderbrandt and the Bowlins." If this was the general consensus, and I suspect that it was, then it would make perfect sense for George to lie about his service so as not to be associated with the guerrillas. George's life was undoubtedly hard enough even without the stigma.

^r It is not uncommon for individuals to divest themselves of land holdings toward the end of their lives so that their heirs will not have to worry about that aspect of their estate. George probably died in 1892, and so this seems to me like a situation where he wanted to make sure that his estate was settled before he passed.

Obediah Copeland in section 23, Wayne County, Illinois. It seems fitting that George's last known record reconnects him to the people and places that began his story.

My grandfather stated that George died in 1892, and I believe this to be true. George's widow, Mrs. Nancy Copeland, remarried to Henry P. Allmond on 28 February 1894 in Dunklin County, Missouri.⁷¹ There are no more records for George after his marriage to Nancy, but there is one more part of the story that might be of interest: sometime before 1900, the family of Obediah Copeland's brother Pleasant also arrived in Dunklin County, Missouri. Pleasant's son, Obediah Copeland (born 1838) married twice in Dunklin County: first on 01 December 1872 to Ellen Simms/Timms;⁷² and again on 29 July 1882 to America Jackson.⁷³ He can also be seen on the 1890 Veterans Census living in Cotton Hill, Dunklin County, Missouri,⁷⁴ right where our George was living at the same time. And, the family of Pleasant's son, Pleasant, Jr. (born 1848), can be seen on the 1900 US Federal Census living in Cotton Hill, Dunklin County, Missouri, as well.⁷⁵ These two men were George's first cousins, and for a long time their presence in Dunklin County intrigued me, since I had not yet discovered some of the information I now know about George's life. Tracing them and their families back to Illinois allowed me to see how other pieces of the puzzle fit together, and put George's father Obediah on my radar.

The last piece of evidence I have to present comes from the 21st Century, in the form of DNA. Both my father, Brian Copeland, and my cousin David Wollmershauser (who shares only my Copeland line) match a man named Terry Harper and his mother Lois in the same spot on their 15th chromosome. Terry and his mother are direct descendants of Obediah Copeland's sister Martha Patsy Copeland Knodell, so the most recent common ancestors for my father, David, Terry, and his mother are Thomas Copeland and Ann Hood, the parents of Obediah Copeland, and paternal great-grandparents of George Thomas Copeland.

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