

THE HENDRICK/HENDRIX FAMILY: THE EARLY YEARS

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Introduction

These are some very preliminary notes on Hendrick/Hendrix family history during the 1800s. I have drawn on U.S. census and slave schedule records, as well as probate and Superior Court records in the Newton County court house. These official records, of course, are not absolute “truth.” In many cases the legal records should be read with some skepticism, since the memories that have been passed through the family for generations may in fact be more accurate. I have extensively relied on the excellent short family history written by Mrs. Mary Church Terrell Williams Marshall, based on information collected by Mrs. Nannie Helen Burroughs Williams Parker from Mrs. Alberta Josephine Hendricks Williams. Mrs. Marshall’s history is published in the History of Newton County. I am especially grateful to Mrs. Eleanor Dixon McCleary (“Baby Sister”), Adele Smith and Forrest Sawyer for all their assistance in uncovering the Hendrick family’s long and proud history.

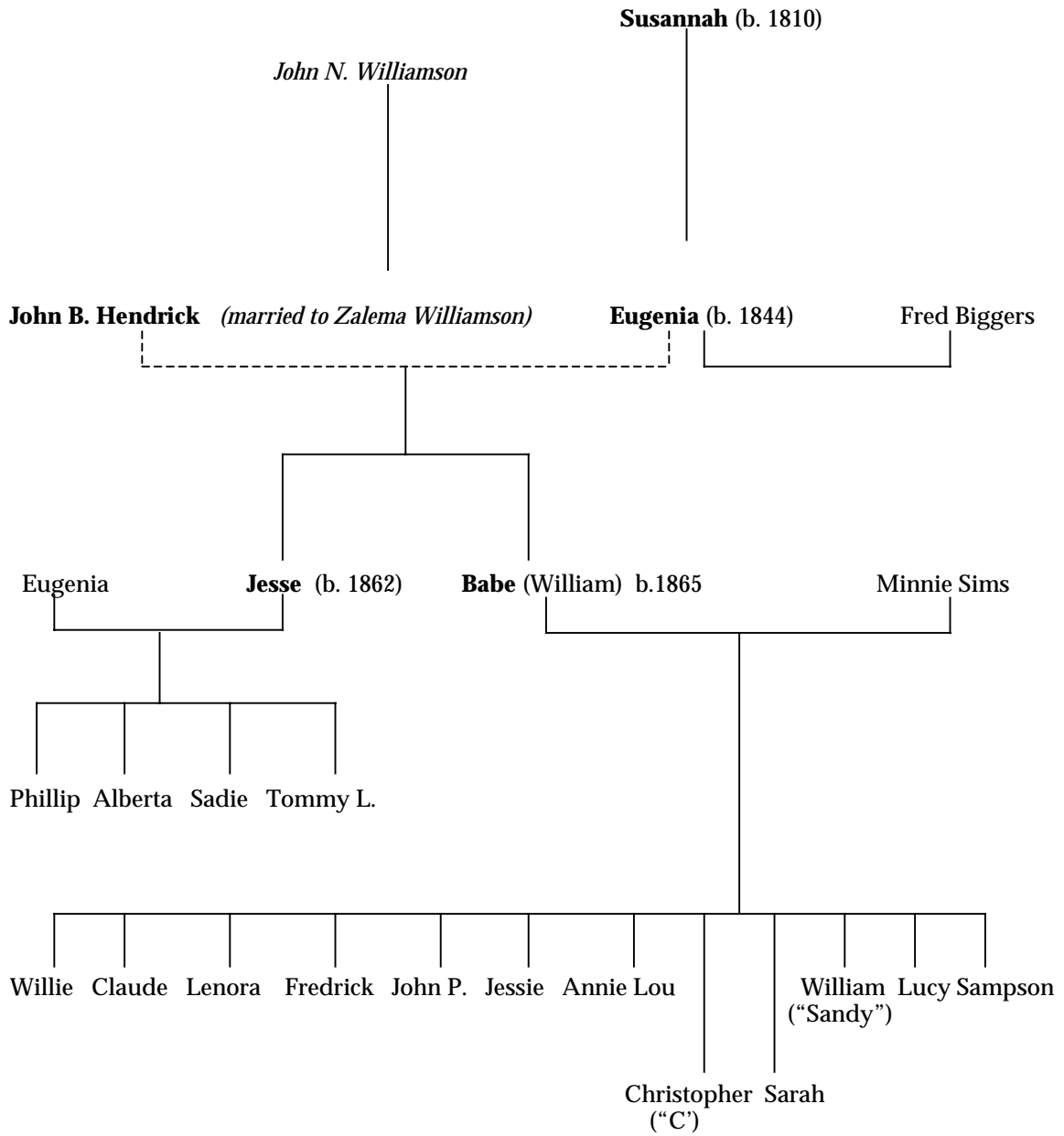
I look forward to working with family members as we deepen our understanding of Hendrick family history. Please call me if you find mistakes in the notes below or come across additional information. My students and I would like to put together a corrected version in time for the next family reunion!

With warm congratulations to all the family on the occasion of its reunion,

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The Hendrick Family (The Early Years)



The Hendrick Family: Summary of Family History

The first known African American member of the Hendrick family was **Susannah Hendrick**, born around 1810 in South Carolina. Susannah was held as a slave by **General John N. Williamson** (1892-1857) who became a wealthy attorney in Covington, Georgia. Susannah gave birth to a daughter, **Eugenia** (later known as "Dahma Biggers) in South Carolina, around 1844. In 1857, when General Williamson died, Susannah and Eugenia were willed to General Williamson's daughter Zalema Williamson Hendrick, the wife of **Dr. John B. Hendrick**, a wealthy white Covington physician and planter. During the 1860s, Eugenia became the mistress of her master, Dr. John B. Hendrick. She bore him a son, **Jesse**, in March 1862, about a year into the Civil War. She bore him a second son, **William ("Babe")** in February 1865. Jesse, in other words, was born in slavery, but Babe was born free.

By 1870, five years after emancipation, the only African Americans still residing in Dr. Hendrick's household were Susannah, Eugenia, Jesse and Babe. Susannah was employed as a laundress, Eugenia as a domestic servant. Around 1874, Eugenia married a black man, Fredrick Biggers (born in August 1845 in Alabama), who eventually became a minister. In 1877, Susannah, her daughter Eugenia, and grandsons Jesse and Babe purchased, for three hundred dollars, about one acre of property containing a house within which they had already been living. They purchased this property from **William W. Clark** (c.1818-1883, one of the wealthiest white men in Newton County. Clark was a close associate and neighbor of Dr. Hendrick; it is possible that Dr. Hendrick assisted Susannah and her family in making this purchase, or perhaps they raised the three hundred dollars on their own. In any event, this land remained in the African American Hendrick family for generations and became known as Hendrick's Circle (or Hendrix Circle). Dr. John Hendrick's white daughters, Lottie and Ludie, remained on friendly terms with their African American relatives throughout their lives.

In 1883 Jesse Hendrick married a woman named **Eugenia Russell Hayes** (the same first name as Jesse's mother), who was born in 1866 and who died in 1934. Eugenia's mother, Mary Hayes, had been a slave and her father was Judge Phillip Russell, who was Jewish.

The next year, in 1884, Babe (William) Hendrick married Miss **Minnie Sims** (born January 1867), when she was about 17 years old. It is said that he collected (or "kidnapped") her from her family home in Bald Rock, near the border of Newton and Rockdale counties. Minnie was quite possibly the sixth child of **Washington Sims** (born 1827) and his wife **Jane Sims** (born 1833). Washington and Jane presumably had been slaves of one of the several white slaveowning Sims who lived near Conyers.

Important Dates in Hendrick Family History

1810	Susannah (slave) born in South Carolina (approx. date)
1817	John. B. Hendrick (son of General Gustavus Hendrick) born in Georgia
1844	Eugenia born to Susannah in South Carolina (approx. date)
1846	Dr. John B. Hendrick marries Zalema Williamson, daughter of General John N. Williamson
1851-52	Dr. John B. Hendrick serves as Georgia state representative.
1857	The slave woman Susannah and her daughters Eugenia & Susie inherited by John B. Hendrick from F-in-law John Williamson
1861	Civil War begins
1862	Jesse Hendrick born to Eugenia (fathered by Dr. John B. Hendrick)
1864	November: Union troops under General Sherman liberate all African Americans enslaved in Newton County
1865	William ("Babe") Hendrick born to Eugenia (fathered by Dr. John B. Hendrick)
1866	Eugenia Russell (future wife of Jesse Hendrick) born in Savannah
1867	Minnie Sims (future wife of Babe Hendrick) born in Bald Rock (possibly to Washington and Jane Sims)
1874	Eugenia marries Fredrick Biggers
1877	Susannah Hendrick (with her daughter Eugenia and grandsons Jesse and Babe) purchase for three hundred dollars a house and one acre of land from William W. Clark, a wealthy white landowner.
1881	Dr. John B. Hendrick dies
1883	Jesse Hendrick marries Eugenia Russel Hayes
1883	Phillip Hendrick born (to Jesse and Eugenia)
1884	Babe marries Miss Minnie Sims of Bald Rock
1886	Willie Hendrick born (to William and Minnie)
1888	Claude Hendrick born (to William and Minnie)
1889	Sadie Hendrick born (to Jesse and Eugenia)
1890	Lenora Hendrick born (to William and Minnie)
1892	Alberta Hendrick born (to Jesse and Eugenia)
1892	Fredrick Hendrick born (to William and Minnie)
1893	Tommy Louis Hendrick born (to Jesse and Eugenia)
1894	John P. Hendrik born (to William and Minnie)
1894	Sarah Hendrick born (to William and Minnie)
1895	Annie Hendrick born (to William and Minnie)
1896	Joe Hendrick born (to William and Minnie)
1897	Jessie Hendrick born (to William and Minnie). Named after his uncle Jesse Hendrick.
1910	Sampson Hendrick born (to William and Minnie)
1910-1920	Fredrick Biggers (husband of Eugenia Biggers) dies during this time
1929	Jesse Hendrick (b. 1862) dies

More Details

Here are more details on the persons and documents mentioned above:

Dr. John B. Hendrick (1817-1881)

Dr. John B. Hendrick was a prominent member of the white slave-owning elite of Covington during the decade before the Civil War, closely allied to other members of the local elite by bonds of marriage, business partnerships and common political interests. He was the son of General Gustavus Hendrick (of Alabama and Butts County, Georgia). A popular medical doctor and farmer, Dr. John B. Hendrick helped establish the Southern Masonic Female College in Covington, and was a trustee of the Male Academy. He also served as one of Newton County's four representatives to the Georgia Convention of 1850 (at which Georgia's white leaders considered seceding from the United States) and served a two year term in the Georgia state House of Representatives, 1851-52.

Dr. Hendrick's White and Black Families

Like many members of the southern white slaveowning class, Dr. Hendrick had a white family and black family. He married his white wife Zalema Williamson (1826-1868) in January 1846. Zalema was the daughter of the leading Covington attorney, John N. Williamson (1802-1857) who had served as a Brigadier General in the Georgia State Militia. General Williamson, one of the wealthiest men in Newton County, owned about 70 slaves when he died and worth over \$20,000. General Williamson's will bequeathed the following slaves to his daughter Zalema, wife of Dr. John Hendrick: "the negro woman Fanny and her children, also negro girl Flora...the negro woman Mary and her child, also Susannah, and her two children." An inventory list compiled in 1957 (held in the loose probate records of the Covington courthouse, records that "Susannah and [her] two children, Eugenia and Susie [?]" were valued at \$1400.00. We have no subsequent record of a Susie Hendrick.

With Zalema, John Hendrick had two white daughters, Mary Louise ("Loudie"), who married Dr. A.C. Perry in 1898, and Charlotte N. ("Lottie") who married John Conyers in 1891. John and Zalema Hendrick had one white son, John Williamson, who died in infancy. Lottie's marriage may not have lasted long; she seems to have kept the Hendrick name until her death in 1933. She and her sister Mary Louise ("Loudie") ran a dry goods store in Covington for many years and kept up good relations with their African American relatives throughout their lives.

Although there is no legal record to this effect, it is well known in the African American Hendrick family that Dr. Hendrick fathered, with his mistress, Eugenia, two children, Jesse and William ("Babe") Hendrick.

Persons Enslaved in Dr. Hendrick's Household

The 1850 U.S. slave schedule records that Dr. Hendrick owned twenty slaves: seven males and thirteen females, ranging in age from thirty-three to one year; two men were aged thirty-three, one woman was twenty-four, a man was aged twenty, three were adolescents, and the rest were children aged ten or less. All are listed as "black," except for a ten-year-old girl listed as "mulatta." (It is important to remember, however, that ages on the slave schedules are unreliable).

By 1860, just before the start of the Civil War, Dr. Hendrick's wealth and slaveholdings had increased; he owned 44 persons, including eleven adult women (older than sixteen years old) and seven adult men. Ten were infants under one year old.

Some of the increase in slaves was presumably due to natural increase through procreation, but some of these new slaves were obtained as a result of the death in 1857 of Dr. John B. Hendrick's father-in-law, General John N. Williamson. As noted above, Dr. Hendrick's wife Zalema inherited Susannah and her daughters Eugenia and Susie, but under Georgia law Dr. John Hendrick would have been the effective owner of all his wife's property, including her slaves.

Some of the slaves owned by Dr. Hendrick must have resided as house servants in his town house in Covington. Most were probably kept on Dr. Hendrick's plantation, to the immediate west of Covington (on the site where the Turner Lake Complex is now located.) Dr. Hendrick bought this land (890 1/2 acres) from William Dearing in September 1852, for \$7124.00.

Susannah Hendrick

We know (from the 1857 probate court inventory list and from an 1877 legal deed) that the mother of Eugenia ("Dahma Biggers") was Susannah Hendrick. According to the 1870 census, Susannah was 60 years old and employed as a "laundress" in the home of Dr. John B. Hendrick. The 1860 slave schedule (which does not list the names of slaves) records that the oldest slave owned by Dr. John B. Hendrick was a black woman, age 50 years ago; this must have been Susannah herself, who Dr. Hendricks had inherited three years earlier.

Hendrick family lore recalls that the family of the enslaved woman Eugenia (born around 1844) "arrived in Virginia on a slave ship" (see Mrs. Marshall's article in the History of Newton County, p. 952). Mrs. Marshall's family history states that Eugenia "made her way to Covington to a plantation owned by Dr. Hendrick." In the 1870 census, both Susannah and her daughter Eugenia are listed as being born in South Carolina. So, if the family story is correct, it must have been an ancestor of Susannah who arrived in Virginia on a slave ship (from Africa or from an island in the Caribbean.) The original owner of Susannah and Eugenia, General John Williamson, was in fact in born in Virginia; presumably his family brought many slaves with them from Virginia.

It is quite possible that Susannah's brothers, sisters and parents were owned by General John Williamson, and that she was separated from them after the estate was broken up in 1857. Some of the slaves belonging to this estate were sold off: for example, one receipt records that "Lem" was sold to W.H. Gordon for \$960/00 and "Dennis" was sold to A.G. Miller for \$805.00.

Mrs. Marshall records that the father of Eugenia was a "Cherokee Indian." We do not know if this man was also a slave on the Williamson plantation, or if Susannah was allowed to perform a marriage ceremony with him.

Eugenia, daughter of Susannah (later Eugenia Biggers, or "Dahma" Biggers)

We know from the 1857 probate records of General John Williamson's estate that Eugenia, her sister Susie, and her mother Susannah, were acquired by Dr. Hendrick and his wife Zalema in 1857, when she was about 13 years old. Perhaps she was given the job of caring for one of Dr. Hendrick's white daughters, who would have been nine and seven at the time (in wealthy white households, each white child was almost always given her or his own personal slave as a servant and companion.) In any case, Eugenia must have soon come to the attention of Dr. Hendrick, whose mistress she evidently became by around 1861 (when she was perhaps 17 years old).

When precisely were Eugenia's sons born? The various census listings give different dates. According to the 1870 census, Jesse was nine years old (born around 1861) and William ("Babe") six years old (born around 1864). But for the 1900 census, Jesse is recorded as born in March 1862. In this 1900 census, Babe is listed as born in February 1865, three months after liberation had come to the African Americans of Newton County. However, in the 1920 census, Babe is listed as 50 years old (which means he was born around 1870.) Since the 1900 census is usually considered the most thorough and accurate census of the period, I am inclined to go with its dates, and to conclude that Jesse was born in slavery, but that Babe was born in freedom. Eugenia would thus have been about eighteen years old when her first son, Jesse, was born.

The next written record we have of Eugenia is the 1870 census (the first census that listed the names of most African Americans in Georgia). She is listed as employed as a domestic servant, residing in the home of Dr. Hendrick, along with her her children -- Jesse, age nine, and William, age six. Also living in Dr. Hendrick's household was Eugenia's mother, Susannah Hendrick, age 60, employed as a laundress.

The Hendrick Family Land

On 31 December 1877, a very interesting legal deed was filed in the Newton County Superior Court. William W. Clark, a wealthy white man (worth over \$20,000) sold to Susannah Hendrick, Eugenia Biggers, and William and Jesse

Hendrick a plot of land in Covington for three hundred dollars. The deed states that this tract of land “is the premises now for some years occupied by said Susannah Hendrick containing about one acre of land with house built thereon and is part of the old mill tract.” The land was expressly conveyed “fully” to Susannah Hendrick who “paid the purchase money” and that at her death the land would pass “to her daughter Eugenia Biggers and her two children, William and Jessie Hendrick.”

(Note that Mrs. Marshall’s family history of the Hendricks in the History of Newton County contains a small mistake: William W. Clark did not “will “the land for Hendricks Circle. Rather, Susannah, Eugenia, Jesse and William purchased this land from William Clark in 1876 for three hundred dollars.

In 1870, three hundred dollars was a great deal of money. How did the black Hendrick family acquire this money? They may have saved it up through hard work, or is it possible that Dr. John B. Hendrick (the father of Jesse and William) assisted Susannah and her family in this purchase. We do know that William W. Clark was a close associate of Dr. John B. Hendrick. They lived close by one another in town (indeed, to this day, Clark and Hendrick streets intersect one another in downtown Covington, one block south of the town square) and they served on at least one college board together. Perhaps Doctor John B. Hendrick arranged with his friend William Clark for Susannah to acquire the land legally, in order to give his sons a degree of financial security.

Mrs. Marshall writes that Dr. Hendrick “gave” Eugenia the land on Hendrick Circle. This is not supported by the legal record, but it may be that Dr. Hendrick played a “behind the scenes” role in this transfer of land to his sons.

At this point, I am not sure if the Hendrick Circle land had ever been owned by Dr. John B. Hendrick; there were many complicated land transfers between the powerful white landowners of Covington during this period. (The question needs to be investigated further.)

The Marriages of Eugenia, Jesse and Babe

Official marriage records for African Americans were not kept in Newton County during the 19th century, but we do have approximate marriage dates for Eugenia, Jesse and Babe since the 1900 census asked each couple how long they had been married. Eugenia and Fredrick Biggers stated they had been married 26 years (i.e. married around 1874). Jesse and his wife (also named Eugenia) had been married for sixteen years (i.e. married around 1883-1884); since their first son, Phillip, was born in 1883 I assume they were married in that year. In 1900 William (Babe) and his wife Minnie also stated that they had been married 16 years; so both Jesse and Babe must have gotten married within a year or so of one another.

Fredrick Biggers, Eugenia's husband, is listed as head of household in the 1910 census, but is not listed in the 1920 census; I assume he died during this period. (This needs to be checked.)

Minnie Sims and her family

According to the detailed 1900 census, Miss Minnie Sims was born in June 1867. She came from the Bald Rock area (Sheffield District) of Rockdale County, an area that was part of Newton County before 1870. The Sims family were early members of the Bald Rock Baptist Church. Indeed, the founding pastor of the church was Mr. Abraham Sims (listed in the 1870 census as born around 1829).

The first clear record we have of Minnie Sims is the 1900 census, when she had been already married to Babe Hendrick for 16 years. (The 1890 census was destroyed by fire, so we have no records from that year.) However, there may be a record of Minnie's family in the 1870 census, the first census that records newly freed African Americans in Georgia. There is in the Conyers area a listing for a "farm worker," named Mr. Washington Sims, age 44 (i.e. born around 1826), with his wife Jane (age 34) and their children, Leroy (16), Georgia A. (13), Dora (6), Ellen (2), and a little baby girl "Mitty" (ten months old). It is possible that "Mitty" was really Minnie and that the census enumerator wrote her name down incorrectly. Mrs. Eleanor Dixon McCleary recalls elderly cousins (living on Raymond Street in Atlanta) named Dora and Lucy; these may have been named for the daughters of Washington and Jane Sims.

(Note, however, that the 1880 census listing for Wash and Jane Sims' family does not record a Mitty or Minnie; this might be because the census enumerator had made a mistake, or that Minnie was living somewhere else, or this might not have been Minnie's family after all. The matter needs to be investigated further.)

In 1870, in addition to Washington Sims' family there were a number of other African American Sims families living in the Conyers area: the families of Mr. Abraham Sims (age 41), Mr. Anderson Sims (54), Mr. Dempse Sims (50), Mr. Elbert Sims (45), Mrs. Martha Sims (age 70), and Stephen Sims (age 24). These families presumably came off of the Sims plantations, and may have been related to one another.

I'm not sure who the slaveowners of these families had been. There were at least five white Sims slaveowning families in Newton County before the Civil War: Hall Sims, Richard L. Sims, A.B. Sims, Jerusha Sims and Kelly Sims. Judging from the 1860 slave schedule (which does not list the names of slaves but only gives their gender and age) it strikes me as most likely that Washington Sims and his family were owned by Richard L. Sims. (This also needs to be investigated more closely.)

The Children of Minnie Sims and Babe Hendrix

By 1900, when she was 32 years old, Miss Minnie Sims had seven children (Willie, born 1886; Claude, born 1888; Lenora born 1890; Fredrick, born 1892; John P., born 1894; Annie Lou, born 1895; Jessie, born 1897). The 1900 census indicates that one of her children (name unknown) had died. Later, Minnie had the following additional children: Sarah, Sandy, "Kid" (Lucy), Christopher and Sampson. Christopher (known as "C") died in the tragic fire that destroyed Minnie Sims' house on Hendrix Circle.

The Children of Eugenia Russell Hayes and Jesse Hendrick

According to the 1900 census, Eugenia Hendrick (the wife of Jesse Hendrick) gave birth to nine children, but only four of these—Phillip, Sadie, Alberta and Tommy Louis, survived to adulthood. She worked as a seamstress for much of her life.

Other African American Hendricks in Newton County

In 1870, only four African Americans (Susannah, Eugenia, Jesse and Babe) were still living in the household of Dr. Hendrick. In other words, by 1870, the other 40 or so former slaves of Dr. Hendrick must have moved away from the white Hendrick household. Some of these ex-slaves presumably took the Hendrick name. These persons may or may not have been kin of Susannah, Eugenia, Babe and Jesse.

Here are some other black Hendricks living in Newton County after the Civil War:

1870: a free black man, Joseph Hendrick, 30 years old, working as a striker for a blacksmith.

1880, in Oxford: another Jesse Hendrick (b. 1874), married to Lou Hendrick, with children Willie, Alene, Hercules and Comer.

Also in Oxford in 1880: Mrs. Lidia Hendrick (age 70).

In Covington in 1880, James Hendric, age 27 (born in South Carolina) married to Emeret Hendric, with daughters Mary and Susan.

In Covington in 1880: Ellick Hendrik (age 39) living with his wife Mary and their children, Betty, Gertrude, Lula and Milbern.

In Stansell's District in 1880: Mrs. Jody Hendricks (age 50), living with her son Solomon and her grand-daughter Clara.

In Stansell's in 1880: Eliza Hendrick (age 27) living with her children, John, Mamie, Fanie, Dealy, and Henry.

In Stansell's in 1880: Georgia A. Hendrick (age 8) and Anna Hendrick (age 2) living with their grandfather Wash. Hendrick.

In 1900, in Covington: Eugene Hendrik (age 16) living with his grandmother Jane Layle.

William E. Hendrick (1916-1982), buried in the Oxford City Cemetery.