

# Biographies of Bledsoe County Citizens

## Leander T. Billingsley

Leander T. Billingsley is a well-known and respected citizen of Bledsoe County, whose home and base of operations is situated not far from the village of Billingsley. His principal occupation is that of a farmer, although he has taught a few terms of school since locating at his present home. He was born October 20, 1843, the son of John Billingsley.

The father of our subject was a son of Captain Samuel and Mary Billingsley. The Captain was a soldier in the Revolutionary War and was once wounded during that struggle. He afterward moved to the Sequatchie Valley and died in Bledsoe County. He was a member of the Missionary Baptist church, and a charter member of the first Masonic lodge in Bledsoe County. He died in the year 1816, at the age of sixty-nine years, and his wife passed away in 1838, at the age of eighty-five years. John Billingsley was first married October 10, 1802, and the same year he and his bride started from North Carolina on a blind pony to find for themselves a home. They finally reached the Sequatchie Valley with a cash capital of one dollar and twenty-five cents. The valley was then one large cane brake, but the located on the farm which Mrs. Harris now makes her home, cleared a strip of ground, and put in and cultivated a crop with their pony. During the spring of the following year this animal fell and broke its leg, so the second crop was put in and cultivated with a young bull. Arising from these humble circumstances under which he began life, he become on of the wealthy and prominent men of eastern Tennessee, and at his death John Billingsley's property was valued at eighty-five thousand dollars, an example of what can be accomplished by push and energy and an immoderate amount of patient, persistent effort. For forty years this gentleman was a member of the county court, and a part of this time he was chairman of this body. He also represented his county in the state legislature. He died in the Sequatchie Valley, Mary 25, 1856, at th age of seventy-six years, and his first wife died in 1829 at the age of forty-three years. To this first marriage were born ten children, nine of whom lived to rear families, and one of whom, Elizabeth, wife of James Rankin, is still living. Of the sons, Samuel was a Baptist preacher, Calvin was a farmer, and A.B. Billingsley and J.D. Billingsley were very prominent Christians.

**(1880 Census of Bledsoe County lists: A.B. Billingsley 66, farmer; Susan J. 52, Thomas S. 21, Dora 15, Tecora 13, all born in TN)**

September 13, 1831, John Billingsley was married to Jane Hoodenpyle, daughter of Phillip Hoodenpyle, born in Raleigh, NC, April 21, 1812.

**(1880 Census of Bledsoe County lists: Jane R. Billingsley age 66 widow, housekeeper, b. TN, parents born in Holland.)**

She died in Bledsoe County, TN in September 1894. To this last union were born nine children, all of whom lived to rear families, and eight of whom are now living: Mary T., widow of Reuben Rankin; P.M., a farmer of Marshall County, TN; Amanda, wife of John Rankin of Pikeville

**(Listed on the 1880 Census of Bledsoe County as Amanda Rankin, 40, mother-in-law, in the household of James and Gertrude Barnett);**

Hixey, wife of Jesse Hall, died in Pikeville;

**(listed on the 1880 Census of Bledsoe County: Jessey Hall, 42, Grocer, Hixey 41, wife, Henry 18, Laura 16, Marshall 14, Austin, 9)**

Viola, widow of William Farmer;

**(listed on the 1880 census of Bledsoe County: W.W. Farmer 44, Viola 39 wife, Pehiah 17, Rodia 15, Lucusia 13, Thomas 11, Wade 9, Elizabeth 7)**

Leander T., the subject of this sketch, owns the old home, is farming and trading in stock; the wife of T.A. Reynolds; Sarah, wife of Frank Hutcheson;

**(Probably listed on the 1880 Census of Bledsoe County as: F.J. Hutcheson 50, N.A. Hutcheson 48, T.A. 18, son; D.L. 15, son; N.S. 13, dau; A.C. 10, son; S.E. 9, dau)**

and Eva J., wife of John Swafford.

Leander T. Billingsley attended the Sequatchie College eight months after the war. June 16, 1861, he joined Branham's battalion of cavalry, and one year later he joined Company F, Second Tennessee Cavalry, Confederate. He participated in the battles of Fishing Creek, Stubensville, KY, Murfreesboro, Chickamauga, and several other battles; and his command was in Kentucky to relieve Morgan, when our subject rode eleven days and nights. Mr. Billingsley's clothes were cut several times by passing bullets, but he was never wounded. He was taken prisoner by Michigan troops at Smith's Cross roads, now known as Dayton, TN, and was taken to Sale Creek, Chattanooga, Nashville, Louisville, Camp Morton, Indiana, and Camp Delaware, and from the latter place he was released at the close of the war. He then returned to his home in Bledsoe County, TN, and began farming on the old Billingsley farm but later he moved to his present home. December 23, 1873, our subject was united in marriage to Miss Mary E. Worthington, daughter of James Worthington. Mrs Billingsley was born May 27, 1849, and died April 1, 1890. To

this union were born seven children, five of whom are still living: Samuel W., now a United States soldier in Cuba; Flora, deceased; John, Lula, Grover and Leander S., all living at home; and Mary Della, deceased. Mr. Billingsley was married again February 9, 1898. The family is connected with the Christian Church. Politically Mr. Billingsley is a stalwart supporter of the Democratic Party, and for twelve years has held the office of justice of the peace.

**(Listed on the 1880 census of Bledsoe County as follows: L.T. Billingsley 37 Farmer, Mary E. 31, Samuel W. 5, Flora Jane 3, John M. 8/12 son b. Nov)**

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