

John King Byrd and James Byrd

[image: John King Byrd and Mary Malissa Byrd]

Family History

John (Jack) W. Byrd and his wife, Elizabeth (Betsey) Whitehead Byrd were parents of three sons: James, Edward Luton, and John King, who was born on December 24, 1833. Edward was blind and died at age 50. The date of James' birth is unknown.

The family lived in Simpson and Covington Counties, Mississippi. They were farmers and also raised cattle. When hostilities arose between the North and South, James and King Byrd joined the Southern volunteers.

Identification of about 20% of Mississippi's Civil War soldiers is not possible due to the lost or never-recorded information. Nothing "official" could be found on the Byrd brothers' enlistment, discharge, or surrender. (J. K. Byrd was wounded and left the army, so he probably never received a discharge. James King was killed in action.) However, an old newspaper article, from the Collins, MS "News-Commercial" does document their enlistment. Listed below are the members of Company I, the "Covington Rangers" or the "Covington Rifles", including the Byrd brothers:

Capt. John Fairley, 1st Lt. William H. Holloway, 2nd Lt. Jasper D. Terrell, 3rd Lt. D. C. McRaney, 1st Sgt. D. J. McInnis, 2nd Sgt. J. L. Beavers, 3rd Sgt. Peter Fairley, 4th Sgt. J. N. McInnis, 1st Cpl. J. S. Williams, 2nd Cpl. L. W. Gray, 3rd Cpl. C. D. Walker, 4th Cpl. A. T. Leonard and the following 75 Privates:

N. C. Blount, J. N. Bucles, James Byrd, King Byrd, John Copeland, J. M. (Jack) Cross, R. B. Costillo, Allen Davis, T. J. Davis, F. M. (Frank) Dyess, J. W. (Jack) Dyess, J. N. (James) Easterling, James Eaton, L. B. or S. B. Foles, William Foles, Alex Fairley, R. G. Garner, Christopher Graham, Alex Graves, John Hill, W. S. (William) Holloway, J. E. (John) Holloway, D. C. (Dan) Hubbard, W. J. Hubbard, Thomas Hubbard, Benton Holcomb, M. P. Harrell, Alex Johnson, Allen Jones, Jeff Lee, Seaborn Lee, Wash Leggett, Jack Loflin, Richard McInnis, Neil McInnis, Howorth McInnis, Miles McLeod, M.B. McLeod, J. K. McLeod, G. W. (George) McRaney, Jackson McRaney, Robert (Bob) McRaney, W. C. (William) Mobley, J. H. (Hosey) Mobley, Calvin McNease, W. A. McFate or McFale, James Odom, J. L. Palmer, F. M. Polk, Frank Pope, James Pope, Wiley (Rush) Russel, West Russel, C. M. (Caleb Martin) Reddoch, J. L. (John) Reddoch, William Reddoch, P. W. Rogers, W. C. (Carey) Robertson, William Rutledge, W. R. Smith, D. B. Smith, William (W. W.) Self, P. B. (Peter) Stubbs, N. C. Short, Charles (Charles William) Story, Edmon Tfiefer (or Pfiefer), A. J. (Albert) Turnage, W. P. (Preston) Turnage, William Turnage, W. C. (William) Williams, J. H. Williams, Ike Williams, A. G. Walker, Daniel Walker and B. F. Weathersby.

Therefore, on September 11, 1861, at Old Mt. Carmel in Covington County, Mississippi, King Byrd enlisted in Company I, (Covington Rifles, aka Covington Rangers), 7th Regiment, Mississippi Infantry and served as a private under the command of Captain John T. Fairley.

(Note: Family lore says that James Byrd enlisted at Citronelle, AL. and later transferred to the 7th Regiment, Mississippi Infantry.)

The 7th Regiment was organized and transferred into Confederate service (CSA) with the men from Marion, Amite, Pike, Franklin, Lawrence, Yalobusha, Holmes, and Covington Counties. It was then assigned to Generals J. P. Anderson's, Tucker's, and Sharp's Brigade of the Army of Tennessee. The 7th participated in many conflicts of the army from Murfreesboro to Atlanta. They marched with Hood to Tennessee and fought in North Carolina. It was mustered into Confederate service with 911 officers and men, and sustained 20 casualties at Munfordville, KY; 113 at Murfreesboro, TN; and 75 at Chickamauga on the Tennessee/Georgia border. The unit was briefly consolidated with the 9th Mississippi Regiment in December, 1863, and totaled 468 men and 252 arms. On April 26, 1865, it surrendered with 74 men. The field officers were Colonels William H. Bishop, E. J. Goode, Hamilton Mayson, and A. G. Mills; Lieutenant Colonels R. S. Carter and Benjamin F. Johns; and Major Henry Pope.

King Byrd was wounded in the Battle of Murfreesboro, TN, in December of 1862, and again at Chickamauga, September 18-20, 1863. Gangrene sent him to the army field hospital, and upon seeing the "cure" for a gangrenous limb, King got up from his sick bed and made his way home to Mississippi. He eventually recovered from his injuries, but was bothered by side effects for the rest of his life. In his later years, King applied for a Civil War pension but was denied. The reason of this denial was probably the lack of an official record of his enlistment and discharge.

James Byrd continued to fight with the Army of Tennessee and on May 15, 1864, was fatally wounded at Resaca, Georgia. His place of burial is unknown.

After the Civil War, in 1867, John King Byrd married Mary Malissa Rogers, the daughter of Josiah and Kiziah Duckworth. Life after the War was a miserable period in the South. Property values plummeted, livestock was depleted due to the war effort, crops had not been grown and what foodstuffs had been raised were often confiscated by the hungry armies. Confederate money was worthless and Federal money was hard to come by. A lot of household items had been stolen by deserters from both armies, and clothing was worn and mended many times over. With the former Confederate state governments being in turmoil, taxes were raised to exorbitant proportions and small farmer/planters were having a hard time.

The Byrd family lived during this difficult period on property inherited from King's father. Some of the land had to be sold immediately after the War to pay taxes. In later years, King purchased additional land in Covington County, however. At least on one occasion, on February 15, 1897, he bought 149.40 acres in Covington County and the land patent was signed by then President Grover Cleveland. He made other land purchases and sold land to individuals, as is recorded in the Covington County records.

The Byrd property lay approximately four miles south of the present-day town of Mt. Olive, MS in the Rock Hill Community. The Byrd home "was to the left of the road going down to the old baptising [sic] place in Burton's creek." From old pictures of the King Byrd family taken in the front yard of their home, apparently they lived in a "dog-trot" house with a picket fence in the front yard. Large shrubs were planted between the fence and the front porch with a grassy lawn separating the front porch and the shrubbery.

To this family were born eight children, four sons and four daughters. The daughters were Mary Kiziah, Charity Elizabeth "Betty", M. (probably Malissa) Annie, and Tanie Frances "Fannie". The sons were James Edward, Archie Fairley, Joseph Bronson and John King Byrd, Jr.

J. K. Byrd lived to be 73 years old, dying on July 26, 1905. He is buried in the church yard of the church he supported through the years, Rock Hill Baptist Church, near Mount Olive, Covington

County, Mississippi. His wife Malissa outlived her husband by sixteen years. She was a cherished member of the community and of the Rock Hill Baptist Church. She died on April 21, 1921, in Collins, Mississippi and is buried beside her husband in the Rock Hill Baptist Church cemetery.