

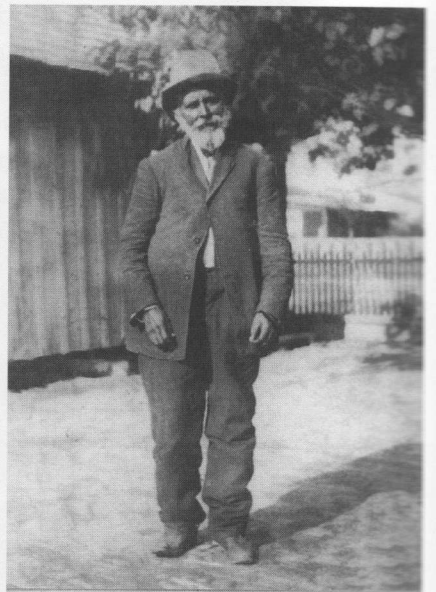


Berry

Isaac Berry outlived most of his contemporaries, having experienced a life filled with memorable events. He was born in Charleston, South Carolina, about 1839 to Richard (Dick) and Sadie Hooper Berry. When asked about the timing of his arrival in Hillsborough County, he recalled that “I was a big boy when my father and a lot of other slaves was brought to Florida.” This occurred in 1843 when “Ike’s” owner Samuel Knight relocated his family and slaves from Lowndes County, Georgia. The party first stopped over in Alachua County before proceeding in 1845 to a site approximately four miles north of modern Plant City in eastern Hillsborough County. In late 1855, the Third Seminole War struck the Tampa Bay frontier area and Isaac found himself attached to the volunteers. “I was a man and waiting on my master when his troops was stationed in the garrison at Tampa in Capt. Hartsuff’s war,” he recollected.⁵¹

Soon after the time of Berry’s military service, he formed a union with Emily Coster. She had been born in Alachua County, Florida, about 1840. “Ike said that he was first married a long time before the civil war,” an interviewer recorded. “A marriage ceremony for slaves in those days consisted merely of an agreement witnessed by the master of the plantation.” The couple formally wed in Hillsborough County on September 9, 1866.⁵²

Emancipation in 1865 brought easier opportunities to the Berrys than to some other area freedmen and freedwomen. Unlike former owners who turned their backs on the needs of their one-time slaves, members of the Knight family and their neighbor Sarah Howell, widow of Joseph Howell, accepted responsibility for providing assis-



Isaac Berry.



Samuel Peter Berry in his WWI uniform.

tance. They first offered food, land, and equipment, then aided many area families in founding their own community. It eventually became known as Bealsville. There, Isaac and Emily Berry homesteaded. Their land was described as the East 1/2 of the Northeast 1/4, Section 10, Township 30 South, Range 22 East.⁵³

At Bealsville, the Berrys made a life for themselves and their growing family, while Isaac prompted a religious controversy. A devout Primitive Baptist, in 1876 he asked to join the local white church. A church historian explained the situation. "Isaac Berry received a hope in Christ and began to enquire whether he could join the Primitive Baptist Church,"

he wrote. "He did not know whether the white Brethren would receive a negro into the fellowship of the church or not," the man continued. "So Elder [Andrew] Kickliter and Elder J. M. Keen took up a stand against the church receiving negroes into the fellowship of the church. They said they would not fellowship a negro and preached to their church that if they received negroes into the church they would have to treat them the same as white Brethren put them up to the table to eat with white brethren and in the bed just the same but the old mother church."⁵⁴

Others rejected such racial segregation in the Baptist church, as a result of which the Absolute Mt. Enon Association split. "Mt. Enon, and four other churches stood on the grounds that they had no right to reject any nationality of people regardless of color," the historian added, "and if a negro came to the church with the evidence that he had received a hope in Christ, they would receive him and baptize him into the fellowship of the church and give him free access to the ordinances of the church and treat him as a brother in the spirit but not in sociality as a man which is contrary to the laws of our country." Accordingly, Mt. Enon Primitive Baptist Church accepted Berry into membership in September 1879. "A colored Bro. came forward Isaac Berry and was received by an experience of Grace into the fellowship of the Church," its minutes noted. Berry

remained a member of Mt. Enon until February 2, 1894, when he transferred his membership to Hebron Primitive Baptist Church "as it was nearer to him."⁵⁵

Isaac and Emily Berry survived the nineteenth century and lived well into the twentieth. She died at home on January 4, 1923. Ike lasted for another half decade. He passed away on July 25, 1928, and was buried at Antioch Cemetery, Bealsville. "Through a century this faithful character, respected by all who knew him," declared a Plant City newspaper, "has carried the torch of a vivid past on high."⁵⁶



Iola Berry.

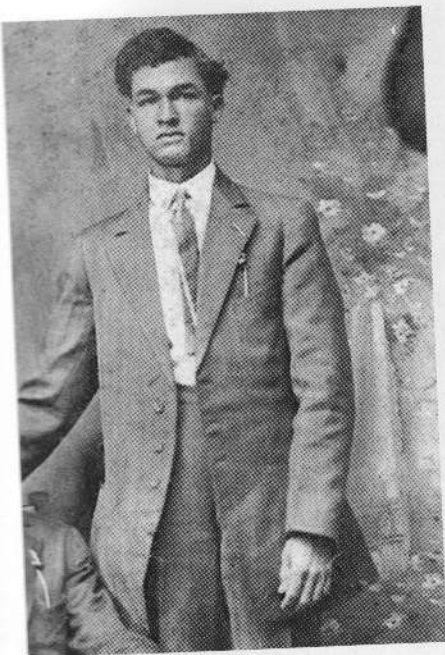
Children of Isaac and Emily Coster Berry

1. Elias, a son born in Hillsborough County during September 1865. He married in the county to Georgia Williams (sister to Alfred Beal) on May 19, 1891 (*see Index*). Their children included:



Palace Berry.

- a. Estella L., a daughter born in Hillsborough County during March 1892. Estella married in the county on October 14, 1911, to Horatio W. Adams.
- b. Samuel Peter, a son born in Hillsborough County on July 27, 1893.
- c. Iola (or Viola), a daughter born in Hillsborough County during November 1897.
- d. Palace, a daughter born in Hillsborough County during September 1899.
- e. Toley (or Tollie), a son born in Hillsborough County during



Toley Berry.

1902. He died during June 1968 and is buried at Antioch Cemetery, Bealsville.

f. Daisy, a daughter born in Hillsborough County during 1905. She married William Gay in the county on March 15, 1926. William Gay (born May 5, 1908) died on September 29, 1963, and is buried at Antioch Cemetery, Bealsville.

g. Henry K., a son born in Hillsborough County during 1909.

h. Artis, a son born in Hillsborough County during 1913.

2. Frances, a daughter born in Hillsborough County during May (or August) 1867. She married in

the county to Charles Horton on December 28, 1885 (*see Index*). Frances Berry Horton died in Hillsborough County on November 3, 1939.

3. Lavonia, a daughter born in Hillsborough County about February 1870. She married in the county to Leonard Holloman on December 24, 1884 (*see Index*). Lavonia Berry Holloman died prior to November 1914 when Leonard Holloman remarried to Catherine Williams (*see Index*).

4. Henry, a son born in Hillsborough County in January 1873. He married in the county to Maggie Young on December 15, 1895. Their children included:

a. Webster, a son born at Bealsville on February 18, 1895. He married Bessie Ferrell in Hillsborough on May 2, 1919. Webster Berry died in Polk County on April 29, 1983, and is buried at Antioch Cemetery, Bealsville.

b. Edgar, a son born in Hillsborough County on January 15, 1900. He married Rubye Hill in the county on May 4, 1925.

c. Ryner (or Rhimer), a daughter born in Hillsborough County during 1904. She married in the county on April 27, 1921, to Earnest Jones.

5. Peter, a son born in Hillsborough County in 1874.

6. Dean (also, Dow and Dauren), a son born in Hillsborough County on December 20, 1876. He married in the county on March 26, 1902, to Flora Horton (*see Index*).

7. Seabon (Sibe or Sebe), a son born in Hillsborough County on February 23, 1878. He married in the county to Allie (Ollie) Harden on July 23, 1902. Sebe Horton died in Hillsborough County during 1927. Children of Sebe and Allie Berry included:

a. Isaac, a son born in Hillsborough County during 1905. He married in the county on March 13, 1926, to Rosa Lee Gay.

b. Columbus, a son born in Hillsborough County during 1907.

c. Alice, a daughter born in Hillsborough County during 1909. She married in the county on December 30, 1925, to Cleo Gay.

d. Lessie, a daughter born in Hillsborough County during 1911. She married in the county on March 22, 1929, to Thomas Walker.

e. Minnie, a daughter born in Hillsborough County during 1913.

f. Mabel, a daughter born in Hillsborough County during 1915. She married in the county on February 2, 1931, to George Knighten.

g. Carrie, a daughter born in Hillsborough County during 1917. She married in the county on September 18, 1933, to George Washington Davis.

h. S. B., a son born in Hillsborough County during 1919.

8. Gettis, a son born in Hillsborough County on September 1, 1882. He married in the county to Georgia Beal on September 1, 1910. Gettis died in Hillsborough County on September 12, 1945.

9. Courage, a son born in Hillsborough County in 1887.⁵⁷