

# Melissa Cherizade Averett Riggs Turnbeaugh

Melissa Cherizade Averett was born 19 March 1853 in Manti, Sanpete, Utah Territory.<sup>1</sup> She was the youngest daughter of Elijah Averett and Cherizade Bernice Grimes. Melissa was the first White child born in Manti. Her father helped work on the foundations of the first four Temples in Utah.<sup>2</sup>

In 1860 the family was still living in Manti, but moved to Utah's Dixie in 1862. They passed through many hardships in the early days of the settlement of Dixie. Melissa helped pick cotton and shear sheep and that cotton and wool were the first to go through the factory at Washington, Utah.<sup>3</sup>

In 1866, at age fifteen, Melissa married William Thomas Riggs. They had two daughters and then they separated. He remarried a 15-year old girl and divorced her after twelve children, then married again.<sup>4</sup> Melissa's older brother, a 19-year old Indian scout during the Walker Indian War, was killed by Indians while on the Green River expedition in 1866.<sup>5</sup>

On the 1870 census, Melissa was back living with her parents in Washington, Washington, Utah Territory. The next year, she married William Madden Turnbeaugh. They had 23 children together, including five sets of twins (her father was a twin). Twelve of the children died as infants. One baby weighed fifteen pounds at birth.<sup>6</sup>

In 1880, Melissa was living with her husband and eight children in Silver Reef, Washington, Utah Territory.<sup>7</sup> They were the largest family in town (although there were several families with six children). William owned and operated the mine called the "Silver Reef".<sup>8</sup> In 1890, William started receiving an Army pension of \$12 per month.<sup>9</sup> This was the maximum amount by law, indicating that he was totally unable to earn a support by manual labor.

By 1900, they were living in Jerome Town, Yavapai, Arizona Territory with ten children.<sup>10</sup> Jerome Town was in the Black Hills in copper mine area, where the United Verde Mine is located. Jerome was incorporated in 1899, and one reason was to require brick buildings after four disastrous fires.<sup>11</sup> It had a population of 2,500 in 1900, with telephone service and electric lights. It was 78% male<sup>12</sup>, so their family was quite an oddity. In 1903, the *New York Sun* proclaimed Jerome to be "the wickedest town in the West".<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Utah Death Certificates, 1904-1961.

<sup>2</sup> *St George News*, 26 May 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> *Familysearch.org*

<sup>5</sup> *St George News*, 26 May 2013; *Findagrave.com*.

<sup>6</sup> *St George News*, 26 May 2013.

<sup>7</sup> United States Census, 1880.

<sup>8</sup> Utah's "Dixie" Birthplace, 1996, p. 193.

<sup>9</sup> Congressional Serial Set, Senate Reports, 1913, p. 19.

<sup>10</sup> United States Census, 1900.

<sup>11</sup> [Legends of America](#).

<sup>12</sup> *Wikipedia*: Jerome, Arizona.

<sup>13</sup> Jerome: A Ghost Town That Never Gave Up the Ghost, in *Geotimes*, American Geological Institute.

William and a Mr Beckman discovered a gold mine in in Eureka District, Yavapai, Arizona, in 1895.<sup>14</sup> They sold half-interest in the mine as well as another mine<sup>15</sup> as William wanted to purchase a ranch on the Verde<sup>16</sup> (probably near the United Verde Mine in Jerome, Arizona Territory).

In 1907, there was a bill in Congress to increase the Army pension of certain soldiers.<sup>17</sup> That year, William had a medical examination that showed he was afflicted with rheumatism, heart disease, right inguinal hernia, and enlarged prostate. He also suffered chronic diarrhea, chronic Bright's disease, heart disease, bronchitis, rupture, and enlarged prostate. Neighbors testified that he could not do any work and was hardly able to get out of his house; that his wife was aged and invalid and required much attention. They had no property except a small home that was heavily encumbered and they were compelled to receive charitable assistance from their neighbors<sup>18</sup>

In 1910, the family was farming in Washington, Washington, Utah, with four of their sons.<sup>19</sup> Finally, in 1913, when they were living in Boise, Idaho, William's Army pension was increased to \$30 per month.<sup>20</sup> William served as the town marshal in the city of Washington, Utah, for many years. He was known as the "town bull" (meaning policeman) as well as "Uncle Bill". Their home was located at 250 North 300 East in Washington, Utah.<sup>21</sup>

William died 13 June 1915 in Washington, Washington, Utah, of uremic poisoning due to chronic hypertrophy of prostate. He had not ever recovered from a recent surgery in St George Hospital.<sup>22</sup> He was buried in the Washington City Cemetery. On the 1920 census, Melissa is widowed and living with two of her sons in Washington, Washington, Utah Territory.<sup>23</sup> She spent her last three or four summers in Cedar City and the winter in Washington, Utah.<sup>24</sup>

Melissa died 13 April 1927 in Cedar City, Iron, Utah Territory of mitral insufficiency<sup>25</sup> and was buried in the Washington City Cemetery next to her husband.<sup>26</sup> She was survived by twelve of her children.

---

<sup>14</sup> *Arizona Journal-Miner*, Mid-summer edition, 1895.

<sup>15</sup> *Los Angeles Herald*, 10 May 1909, p. 10.

<sup>16</sup> *Weekly Journal-Miner* [Prescott, Arizona], 9 November 1898, p. 2; *Mohave County Miner* [Mineral Park, Arizona], 17 December 1898, p. 1; *Mining and Scientific Press*, 1898, Vols 77-78, p. 533.

<sup>17</sup> US Veterans Administration Pension Payment Cards, 1907-1933.

<sup>18</sup> Congressional Serial Set, Senate Reports, 1913, p. 19.

<sup>19</sup> United States Census, 1910.

<sup>20</sup> The Statutes at Large of the US, Vol 35, Part 2, p. 1396.

<sup>21</sup> Utah's "Dixie" Birthplace, 1996, p. 193.

<sup>22</sup> Utah Death Certificates, 1904-1964.

<sup>23</sup> United States Census, 1920.

<sup>24</sup> *Stewartkin.com*

<sup>25</sup> Utah Death Registers, 1847-1966.

<sup>26</sup> Utah Cemetery Inventory; *Billiongraves.com*.

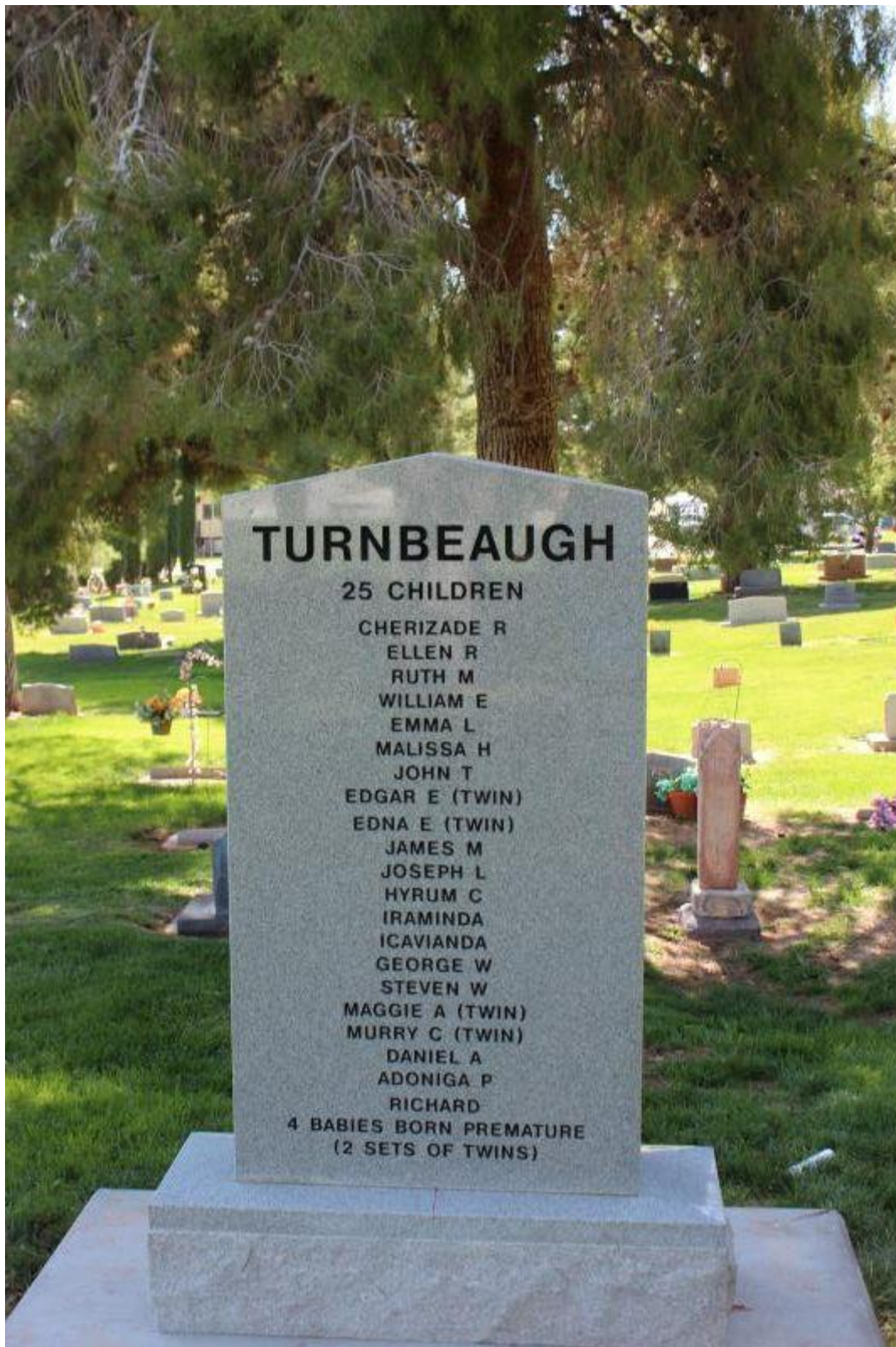


William Madden Turnbeaugh and Melissa Cherizade Averett Riggs Turnbeaugh  
(image from *Familysearch.org*)



Tombstone (image from *Familysearch.org*)





A new Turnbeaugh tombstone placed in 2013  
(image from the *St George News*, 26 May 2013).