

THE GUNTER TRAGEDY

A History of Putnam County Tennessee, by Walter S. McClain

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THE GUNTER TRAGEDY—A deplorable tragedy of Civil War times that has been invested with a fiction or romance not warranted by the facts, was the slaying of two men and the serious wounding a third by a young girl, Marina Gunter, daughter of John Gunter, one night in March, 1865.



This bloody episode has been rather widely exploited as the outcome of political feeling—a tottering old Confederate sympathizer being whipped by Yankee soldiers, when his daughter rushed to the rescue. The truth of the matter is, the question of politics was not even remotely involved, since all of the parties concerned were republicans and unionists. The facts here set out were given to the writer by several of the best citizens of Baxter, near the scene of the tragedy Old Sam Patton and John Gunter had swapped horses, and the latter, claiming that he had been cheated, was preparing to bring suit against Patton for damages. Thinking to head this off, Patton induced his son, Tom, and a nephew, Alvin Maxwell, and B. F. Miller, to go over to Gunter's, call the old man out and give a whipping with some advice about leaving the country—not an uncommon proceeding in that day.

The three boys, with courage stimulated by drink, proceeded to carry out instructions. Patton held the horses, while Maxwell and Miller called old man Gunter to the gate and then forced him to accompany them to a spot about a hundred yards from his house and were applying the whip, when a son and daughter in the house, hearing their father's cries, rushed to his aid. Marina, the heroine, armed with a keen-edged axe led the way. Passing Patton with the horses, she slashed at him, nearly severing his arm. Next she fell upon Maxwell and Miller with all of the fury and superhuman strength of one possessed, chopping them with the axe until they fell. The two desperately wounded young men were found next day in a large hollow stump where they had been placed, presumably, by the Gunters. They were carried to the house of a Mr. Presley, not far away, where Maxwell lived nine days and Miller eighteen days. Patton's wound healed in the usual length of time. Marina Gunter, high-strung and impulsive, was perhaps justifiable from her point of view and understanding. She lived to a ripe old age, passing away only a short time ago. Sam Gunter, the sole survivor, still lives near Baxter.

Marina Gunter

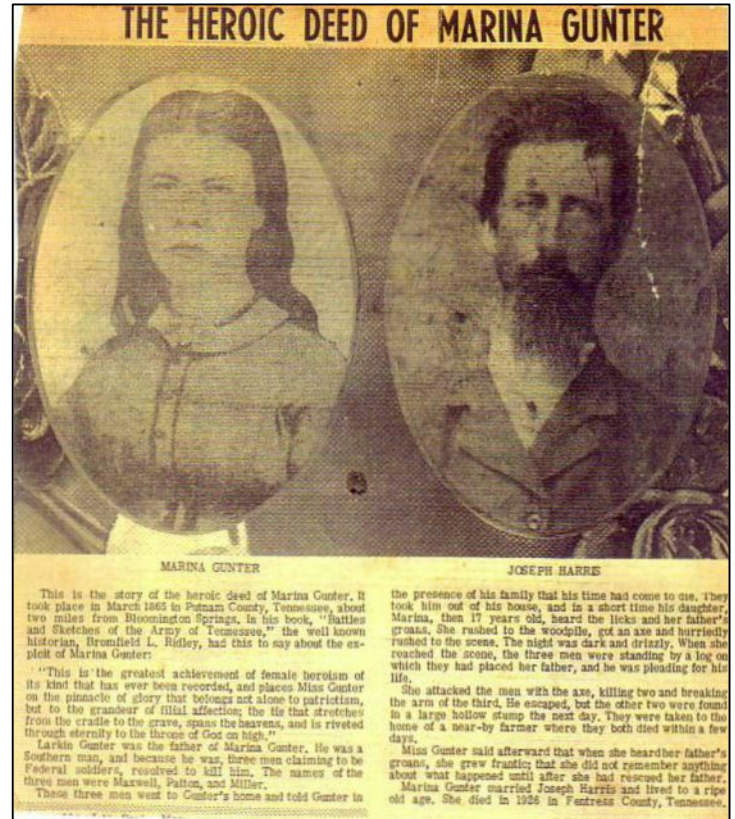
Pictorial History of Putnam County Tennessee

By First American Bank, Cookeville, TN

Pg. 163: People

Marina Gunter Harris (1846-1927), was the daughter of John Larkin Gunter and Sarah Tillery Gunter. During the Civil War, John Gunter and Sam Patton swapped horse. Gunter, thinking he was cheated, prepared to sue Patton. Wanting to head the lawsuit off, old Sam Patton got his son Tom Patton and a nephew Alvin Maxwell and B. F. Miller to go over and give John Gunter a whipping and to advise him to leave the country. The three boys, after building their courage with several drinks, went to the Gunter home. John Gunter met them at the gate and was forced to accompany them to a spot about a hundred yards from the house where they began applying the whip. Marina and her brother, hearing their father's cries, ran to his aide. Marinda, armed with a keen-edged axe, slashed at Patton, nearly severing his arm.

Then she fell upon Maxwell and Miller with superhuman strength, chopping away with the axe until they fell. The two wounded men were found the next day in a large hollow stump. They were carried to the home of Mr. Presley where Maxwell lived nine days and Miller eighteen. Marina Gunter was married to Joseph Harris (1846-1912). Story courtesy of Vella Lee Scarlett McHenry and Dr. Claude E. McHenry.



Joseph Harris & his wife Marina (Gunter) Harris

www.tribalpages.com/tribes/j48c51

This is the story of the heroic deed of Marina Gunter. It took place in March 1865 in Putnam County, Tennessee, about two miles from Bloomington Springs, in his book, *"Battles and Sketches of the Army of Tennessee,"* the well known historian, Bromfield L. Ridley, had this to say about the exploit of Marina Gunter.

"This is the greatest achievement of female heroism of its kind that has ever been recorded, and places Miss Gunter on the pinnacle of glory that belongs not alone to patriotism, but to the grandeur of filial affection; the tie that stretches from the cradle to the grave, spans the heavens, and is riveted through eternity to the throne of God on high."

Larkin Guner was the father of Marina Gunter. He was a Southern man, and because he was three men claiming to be Federal soldiers, resolved to kill him. The names of the three men were Maxwell, Patton, and Miller.

These three men went to Gunter's home and told Gunter in the presence of his family that his time had come to die. They took him out of his house, and in a short time his daughter, Marina, then 17 years old, heard the licks and her father's groans. She rushed to the woodpile, got an axe and hurriedly rushed to the scene. The night was dark and drizzly. When she reached the scene, the three men were standing by a log on which they had place her father, and he was pleading for his life.

She attached the men with the axe, killing two and braking the arm of the third. He escaped, but the other two were found in a large hollow stump the next day. They were taken to the home of a near-by farmer where they both died within a few days.

Miss Gunter said afterward that when she heard father's groans, she grew frantic; that she did not remember anything about what happened until after she had rescued her father.

Marina Gunter married Joseph Harris and lived to a rip old age. She died in 1926 in Fentress County, Tennessee.

www.tribalpages.com/tribes/j48c51



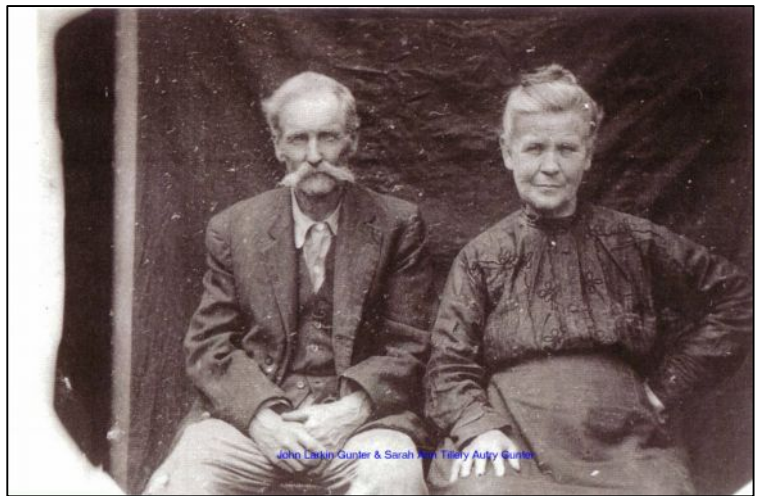
John Larkin Gunter and his wife Sarah Tillery Gunter. Some of their children were: Sam Gunter, Ellender Gunter McHenry and Marina Gunter Harris.

Courtesy of Vella Lee Scarlett McHenry and Dr. Claude E. McHenry.

Pictorial History of Putnam County Tennessee
 By First American Bank, Cookeville, TN
 Pg. 163: People

Photo: John Larkin Gunter was 2nd husband of Sarah Ann Tillery Autry. Sarah married 1st to John C. Autry.

Photos compliments of Cynthia & Thomas Williams/Autry, who received it from Claudean Gragg.
www.tribalpages.com/tribes/j48c51



Marina (Gunter) Harris, b: 23/27 May 1846, Lexington Co., SC - d: 20 December 1927, Overton Co., TN (or born in Columbia, Richland Co., SC).

Buried: Honey Springs Cem., Overton Co., TN

Husband: **Joseph "Joe" Harris**, b. 1 May 1846 – d. 25 August 1912 (see *Livingston Enterprise* on 03/27/1996, h. of Indiana, f. of Leslie, Lem.

Buried: Honey Springs Cem., Overton Co., TN



1860 census 7th Civil Dist., Double Springs, Putnam Co., TN

Dwl: 658 Family: 658 (*Transcribed as Gentry instead of Gunter in the 1860 census*)

Larkin Gunter, 45 yrs. old, SC Farmer

Sarah A. Gunter, 40 yrs. old, SC

Harrison Gunter, 18 yrs. old, SC

Elenor Gunter, 15 yrs. old, SC (*Ellender Gunter md John McHenry*)

Marina Gunter, 14 yrs. old, SC (*Marina Gunter md Joseph Harris*)

Balam Gunter, 12 yrs. old, LA

Samuel Gunter, 9 yrs. old, LA (*Samuel Houston Gunter md Virginia Childress*)

Rebecca A. Gunter, 8 yrs. old, TN (*Rebecca Ann Gunter md Samuel McBroom*)

Emanuel Gunter, 6 yrs. old, TN

[John B. Gunter](#), 3 yrs. old, TN

Larkin Gunter, 1 yrs. old, TN (*Larkin Buchanan Gunter md Laura Essex*)

1870 census 7th Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN

Dwl: 29 Family: 29

Sarah A. Gunter, Head, F W, 50 yrs. old, NC

Ellen Gunter, F W, 25 yrs. old, TN

Balam Gunter, M W, 22 yrs. old, TN

Silas F. Gunter, M W, 20 yrs. old, TN

Rebecca Gunter, F W, 17 yrs. old, TN

Emanuel Gunter, M W, 15 yrs. old, TN

[John B. Gunter](#), M W, 12 yrs. old, TN

Larkin Gunter, M W, 10 yrs. old, TN

Oma Gunter, F W, 8 yrs. old, TN

1870 census 7th Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN

Dwl: 82 Family: 82

Jesse Barnes, 42, M W, 42 yrs. old, TN

Cinda B. Barnes, F W, 40 yrs. old, TN

Mary J. Barnes, F W, 17 yrs. old, TN

Rebecca F. Barnes, F W, 15 yrs. old, TN

James M. Barnes, M W, 13 yrs. old, TN

Manurvia T. Barnes, F W, 11 yrs. old, TN

Jesse C. Barnes, M W, 7 yrs. old, TN

Larkin Gunter, M W, 54 yrs. old, NC

[John Banks Gunter](#)

b. Bloomington Springs

d. 9 January 1914

Age: abt. 55y

Father: [Larken Gunter](#), SC

Mother: [Sarah Ann Trillery](#), SC

Cemetery: 19th Dist., Putnam Co., TN

Source: DC #5, Putnam Co., TN

Census Place: 1880, District 7, Putnam Co., Tennessee

Source: FHL Film 1255275 National Archives Film T9-1275 Page 149A

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace
Sarah GUNTER	Self	F	W	W	61	SC
Occ:	Keeping House	Fa: SC	Mo: SC			
Rebecca Ann GUNTER	Dau	F	S	W	25	TN
	Fa: SC	Mo: SC				
John B. GUNTER	Son	M	S	W	21	TN
Occ:	Labors On Farm	Fa: SC	Mo: SC			
Larken GUNTER	Son	M	S	W	20	TN

Occ: Labors On Farm Fa: SC Mo: SC
 Marma E. GUNTER Dau F S W 11 TN
 Fa: SC Mo: SC

Census Place: 1880, District 10, Putnam Co., Tennessee

Source: FHL Film 1255275 National Archives Film T9-1275 Page 182D

Dwl: 26

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace
Joseph HARRIS	Self	M	M	W	34	TN
Occ:	Farm Laborer	Fa: KY	Mo: TN			
Marina HARRIS	Wife	F	M	W	34	LA
Occ:	Keeping House	Fa: NC	Mo: NC			
Jas. M. HARRIS	Son	M	S	W	10	TN
Occ:	Farm Laborer	Fa: TN	Mo: TN			
Oly M. HARRIS	Dau	F	S	W	6	TN
	Fa: TN	Mo: TN				
Jenny V. HARRIS	Dau	F	S	W	4	TN
	Fa: TN	Mo: TN				
Julin A. HARRIS	Dau	F	S	W	1	TN
	Fa: TN	Mo: TN				

1900 census 14th Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN

Dwl: 98 – Family: 103

Joseph Harris, Head, M W, May 1846, 54 yrs. old, (md 30 yrs) TN TN TN Day Laborer

Marina Harris, Wife, F W, May 1856, 44 yrs. old, (md 30 yrs) (6 children born, 6 children living), SC SC NC

Minnie Harris, Dau., F W, August 1878, 21 yrs. old, TN TN SC

Annie Harris, Dau., F W, February 1885, 15 yrs. old, TN TN SC

Robert Harris, Son, M W, December 1887, 12 yrs. old, TN TN SC

1900 census 14th Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN

Dwl: 100 – Family: 105

James Harris, Head, M W, May 1870, 30 yrs. old, (md 8 yrs) TN TN TN Miner of Coal

Allie Harris, Wife, F W, February 1877, 23 yrs. old, (md 8 yrs) (2 children born, 1 child living), TN TN TN

Idelli Harris, Dau., F W, May 1898, 2 yrs. old, TN TN TN

Joseph Cox, Brother, M W, March 1868, 32 yrs. old, Single, TN TN TN

1910 census 9th Civil Dist., Overton Co., TN

Dwl: 114 Family: 115

Joe Harris, Head, M W, 64 yrs. old (md 40 yrs.) TN TN TN Machinist Railroad

Moy Harris Wife, F W, 64 yrs. old (md 40 yrs.) SC SC NC

Bob Harris, Son, M W, 21 yrs. old, single TN TN SC

Minnie Harris, Dau., F W, 30, single TN TN SC

Charley Harris, Grandson,

Wobie Harris, Granddaughter

1920 census 9th Civil Dist., Crawford Town, Overton Co., TN

Dwl: 104 Family: 109

Calvin Bilbrey, Head, 22 yrs. old TN TN TN Coal Miner

Minnie Bilbrey, Wife, 17 yrs. old TN NC TN

Morina Harris, Grandmother, 73 yrs. old, widow, SC SC NC

Census Place: 1880, District 10, Putnam Co., Tennessee

Source: FHL Film 1255275 National Archives Film T9-1275 Page 182D

Dwl: 264

	Relation	Sex	Marr	Race	Age	Birthplace
Thos. PRESLEY	Self	M	M	W	28	TN
	Occ: Farmer	Fa: TN	Mo: TN			
Eliza PRESLEY	Wife	F	M	W	24	TN
	Occ: Keeping House	Fa: TN	Mo: TN			
Sarah E. PRESLEY	Dau	F	S	W	8	TN
		Fa: TN	Mo: TN			
Jno L. PRESLEY	Son	M	S	W	5	TN
		Fa: TN	Mo: TN			
Wm. E. PRESLEY	Son	M	S	W	3	TN
		Fa: TN	Mo: TN			
Saml. G. PRESLEY	Son	M	S	W	3M	TN
		Fa: TN	Mo: TN			

1890 Civil War Veterans Census, Tennessee by Byron & Barbara Sistler, 1978.

At the time of the 1890 U. W. census the Census Office undertook an enumeration of all veterans who had served in the Union force during the Civil War. In addition to names of the veterans (and their widows, if deceased) the schedules were to include branches of service and unit served with, dates of enlistment and discharge, current post office address, disability incurred, plus "other information necessary for a complete statement of the veteran's term of service." Person who served under assumed names were to be listed under their real names followed by their aliases.

The American Civil War (1861–1865), also known as the War Between the States.

GUNTER, John, Co-68-2; Pvt. E Co 2nd TN; 62 to 65; Cashy PO; chills.

GUNTER, James, H-72-3 (2); Pvt F Co 15th TN inf; 63 to 65; Chattanooga PO

GUNER, John W., He-58-2; Sol; 8th Civil Dist.

Mrs. Lambert, I am Park Manager at Edgar Evins State Park near Buffalo Valley, TN. In doing research for the Center Hill/ Laurel Hill/Caney Fork, your website has come up several times. Have a question for you. Are you familiar with the Gunter tragedy that happened somewhere near Baxter/ Bloomington. The principal characters were Sam Patton, his son, his nephew and a friend, John Gunter and primarily Marina Gunter, Johns daughter.

Patton and J. Gunter had traded horses, Gunter felt he had been cheated and threatened a lawsuit. Pattons Son, nephew and a friend decided to teach Gunter a lesson, went to his house, called him out and proceeded to whip him. Hearing Johns cries for help, Marina ran to his aide with the only weapon she could find, an axe. She supposedly cut off the arm of the Patton Boy who was able to get away. The other two weren't so lucky and were found the next day in a huge stump, one lived 9 days and the other 18 days. Now, where my interest comes in regarding that the incident, is this; the article I read stated that they were taken to the home of a Mr. Presley (no first name) and died there. **My Wife's great grandfather was a Presley who lived at Bloomington Springs near the site of the defunct Military academy he was a blacksmith. Was just wondering if that incident took place in Baxter or Bloomington Springs. An Uncle of my wife, Mr. Earl Presley says he remembers being shown stains on the floor of his grandfathers home in Bloomington and of being told that they were blood stains from where the two victims were brought in.**

GUNTER , HARRIS, TILLERY.

Seeking information on a John Larkin GUNTER and Sarah Ann TILLERY GUNTER of Putnam Co.Tn. they had 9 children : Ellender, Marina (married Joseph HARRIS) Balium, Samual, Rebecca Ann, Emanuel, John B., Larkin Buchanan, and Oma or Maoma Gunter. Any information will be appreciated

Thank You Claudean Gragg Lackey tootsie@tnaccess.com

[Claudean Gragg Lackey](#)

tootsie@tnaccess.com

Submitted on Tue Jan 5 23:47:26 EST 1999

HARRIS

Seeking information on a William S. HARRIS born ca. 1812 in Ky. his mother was Nancy HARRIS fathers first name is unknown. William married a Elizabeth ? born ca.1820 They had 6 children Julia Ann HARRIS born ca. 1841, David B. Harris born ca. 1844, Joseph Harris born 1846 (This is my gggrandfather) he was married to Marina GUNTER daughter of John Larkin GUNTER and Sarah Ann TILLERY.

Margaret Frances HARRIS born ca. 1849, William Cain HARRIS born ca. 1851 and Sarah Elizabeth HARRIS born ca. 1858 I found them in the 1850 and 1860 Overton Co. Tn. census and then in the 1870, 1880, and 1900 Putnam Co. census David HARRIS was married to a Theney and had 4 children in the 1880 Putnam Co. census I have hit a dead end and would appreciate any information on these HARRIS familys
Thank You Claudean Gragg Lackey tootsie@tnaccess.com

[Claudean Gragg Lackey](#)

tootsie@tnaccess.com

Submitted on Tue Jan 5 23:36:31 EST 1999

<http://genforum.genealogy.com/gunter/messages/2123.html>

John Larkin GUNTER (often went by Larkin)

Parents: Balaam GUNTER & Patience JACKSON (not proven)

Born: 1817 SC; Died: March 1879 TN; Buried: Bloomington Springs, Putnam Co., TN.

Married 1st: Elizabeth STEADMAN

Married 2nd: Sarah Elizabeth (TILLERY) AUTRY

Chn of 2nd marriage:

1. Elleander, b: 12 Dec 1844 Lexington Co., SC

d: 22 Oct 1919 Arco, Butte Co., ID

brd: Arco, Butte Co., ID

M: John McHENRY

2. Marina, b: 23 May 1846 Lexington Co., SC

d: 20 Dec 1927 probably Overton Co., TN

brd: Honey Springs Cem., Overton Co., TN

M: Joseph "Joe" HARRIS

3. Balaam, b: abt 1848 in Louisiana

4. Samuel Houston, b: 18 May 1851 in Louisiana

d: 12 May 1934 possibly TN

M: Virginia CHILDRESS

5. Rebecca Ann, b: 1853 TN

M: Samuel McBROOM

Note: they moved to Missouri

6. Emanuel, b: 11 Feb 1854 TN

7. John B., b: 1857 TN

8. Larkin Buchanan, b: 11 Feb 1859 TN

M: Laura Elizabeth ESSEX

9. Oma, b: 1863 TN

I have more info on this family and some descendants. What I am interested in is finding someone who is descended from this line or researching this GUNTER line, who may have info about Sarah TILLERY AUTRY's first husband, John C. AUTRY. They had at least one son, William Henry Harrison

AUTRY/AUTREY, b: 31 Dec 1841 Edgefield District, SC. (Often went by Harrison)
Also, would like to find out where in Louisiana that Larkin & Sarah were living, and what part of Tennessee they then moved to.

Sara, I would like to exchange any info with you as well. I have a family website at www.tribalpages.com/tribes/j48c51

This has my info for GUNTERs and also will give you my email to contact me. Cecile