

Benjamin Franklin Jared
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Benjamin Franklin Jared Family
Back Row: Ada, Lula, Joseph, Tiller,
Elmer
Front Row: Ashland, Benjamin Franklin,
Sarah & Omar – picture taken ca. 1882.

It was the middle of the nineteenth century and for the young United States, it was just beginning. And for a young man born at this time, everything was just beginning for him. For he could experience the new frontier, make a trip to the gold fields, own acres of rich farm land, to fight for your beliefs, and even become sheriff of the county. These were exciting times and to be born into them, to live them, this is what Benjamin Franklin Jared had to look forward to.

Benjamin Franklin Jared was born in Breckinridge County, Kentucky on the 15th of September 1830. His father was John Jared, born in Tennessee, removing from that state to Virginia. His mother was Elizabeth Bandy, born in Botetourt County, Virginia. Benjamin was the ninth child and the seventh son of John and Elizabeth. Here he grew to manhood. Here his parents, John and Elizabeth, died and are buried at Roseville, IL.

In 1849 Gold was discovered in California. Benjamin, with his two brothers, James and Israel, set out for the gold fields. The year was 1852. He was twenty-two years old. The trip was to take six months. They drove oxen and went barefoot, walking most of the way. However, they did rest in Utah, where it is said that Benjamin danced with one of Brigham Young's wives. He remained on the coast for six years, returning in 1858.

When he returned he had money. So he took himself West again. This time into Iowa where he bought a good sizeable tract of land in Wayne Co. In September, 1858 he returned to Warren County and was united in marriage to Sarah Jane Davis. The date was 30th of September.

It was a double-wedding with Benjamin's sister, Elizabeth being united in marriage to Andrew L. Bair. The ceremony took place at the parental home with the Justice of the Peace, Andrew Simmons of Monmouth, Illinois officiating.

They returned to his farm in Wayne Co., Iowa, to start their married life. Their first child, Joseph, was born 19 October 1859 near Promise City, Iowa. James M. their second son, was born 25 December 1861. James remained in the family circle for just a short time. He died 7 November 1862.

August 5, 1862, Benjamin enlisted in the Union Army. The war between the states had begun. His enlistment papers describe him as: 30 years old; eyes: dark; hair: dark; height: five feet four inches. He enlisted for a period of three years and was sent to Burlington, where he was assigned to Comp. "F" of the 34th regiment of the Iowa Voluntary Infantry, with the rank of Second Lieutenant. Here he remained for six weeks and then to Vicksburg and engaged in the battle of Wayne's Bluff, in February 1863. Later that month they were engaged in battle at Arkansas Post. Here nearly 7,000 prisoners were taken. Benjamin and his regiment were detailed to guard the prisoners back to Chicago. He then returned to Benton Barracks at Camp Lauman at Burlington, Iowa.

He had contracted measles while in the army, and they had left him with sore weak eyes. After serving nine months of his enlistment, he resigned from the army and was discharged on 5th of April 1863.

He returned to his farm, his wife and his young son. He and Sarah were to have a total of eleven children. Some did not remain with the family for very long. Little Permelia was born and died on 7 October 1867.

Flaydilla was born 8 January 1869 and died March 28, 1873. Ada was a young woman when she died, having been born 10 September 1874, and passed away the 30th of October 1893.

Coal deposits were found on his land and they were mined. His mine was located in the SESW, Se. 26, twp 70, rg 20, Wright Twp. Wayne Co., Iowa. Here the oldest child and the first born son, Joseph, was to lose his life to poisonous gages in the mine. It was the 3rd of September 1883, and Joseph was about twenty-four years old.

Benjamin was not only a soldier of fortune, a farmer, a miner, and a father of eleven children, he was also a fancier of fine horses. He was known to "break" a few horses in his life-time. And he was always the envy of the county with his high-steppers. Althea Green, Wayne Co., Historian, once wrote, "He was a fine figure of a man with his muscled body, his full-flowing black beard, and his wide-brimmed hat. He was a sight to see when he came into town racing his spirited team, hitched to a topless buggy."

Then there was the MODOCS. Miss Green wrote that many of them were musical, and they played for festive occasions or for their own enjoyment. During these festive occasions, it was said that the home-brew jug was usually on hand. She wrote that following may be the first fifteen men's names whom she considered to be the original MODOCS. They were Bennette, Davis, Jones, Talkington, Hawk, Rissler, Barker, Duer, Hart, Rhodes, Mosby, Swan, Siped, Frame, and Jared. Here Miss Green stopped, having reached one of the most important MODOC names. How Benjamin became known as Chief of the MODOCS remains a mystery.

Most of the MODOCS were of an average age of 35 with several children each. What wild deeds these 15 men committed in the next ten years will remain only in the stories that are told by their great grandsons. However, by 1885 these same men had become solid citizens of the community. In 1898 there were still a few of the MODOCS around, better known as "The Brass Band of Wright Township." They played for the Old Settler's Meeting at Croydon, August 16, 1898.

Politically, Franklin was a Democrat, having cast his first ballot for Franklin Pierce, while he was in California in 1852. Years later he ran for the Office of the Sheriff of Wayne County, 1886. Upon winning the election, he served a term of four years. During his term the Jesse James Gang robbed the Croydon State Bank. The safe of the bank can be seen at the Wayne County Historical Museum.

The Seventh Day Adventist Church of Confidence, Iowa, was incorporated December 19, 1887. Among the donors to the Church was B.F. Jared.

"Many citizens of the Confidence area greatly felt the need of a church building in their midst which shall be open to all Christian people and workers of whatever order, that the said house shall be free to all Christian Denominations for religious worship when not occupied by the Adventist People." Ortha Green, author of "Churches of Wayne County", noted that not all of the tithers and donors were members of this religious group, but that the site of the said Church be used for religious services. Like so many early churches, members moved away, interest lagged, and the property was sold for taxes in 1914.

B.F. was indeed a colorful figure in the history of Wayne County. When talking to people who remember him, they all recall one particular thing about him. Remembered he had gone to the gold fields of California, and when he returned six years later, he had enough money to go into Iowa and purchase a good sizable tract of land. Since that was the case, he no doubt, hired most of the work on his land. When he did not use his hands to do such manual labor, his finger nails would grow long – very long. One person, Altha Green remembered him as having nails up to three inches in length. With nails like that, he certainly did not do much of anything. He was, more or less, a man of leisure.

On 31st of May 1917, Benjamin Franklin Jared died of cancer. Sarah was soon to follow, passing away on 16th February 1919. They are both buried next to their children in the Bethlehem Cemetery, north of Promise City, Iowa.

Benjamin had been a resident of Wayne County for fifty-nine years. During his lifetime he gained the confidence and esteem of all who knew him.