

JAMES MORDICAE BRYAN | SARAH ELIZABETH BURNETT

On March 12, 1862, **James Mordicae Bryan (1837–1867)** married **Sarah Elizabeth Burnett (1838–1915)** in Greene County, Alabama.\*

James Mordicae Bryan, my great-grandfather, lived a relatively short life, and there is very little information in public or family records about him. We do know the following.

He was the fourth of seven children of **Stephen K. Bryan (1807–1855)** and **Polly Mariah Kornegay (1813–1901)** and was 11 years old when he came with his family from North Carolina to Mississippi in 1848. James Mordicae was 17 years old when his father died in 1855.

In family lore,<sup>1</sup> there are accounts of when and why James Mordicae Bryan went from Mississippi as a young man to Greene County, Alabama, and there are stories about him being at the Siege of Vicksburg<sup>2</sup> during the Civil War in 1863. Much of this lore is contradicted by the facts. James Mordicae Bryan, recorded as James M. Bryan,<sup>3</sup> served in the Confederate Army from June 1861 to the end of the Civil

War. He enlisted in Mississippi, and for his entire military time, he was in the Eastern Theater.

James Mordicae and Sarah Elizabeth Burnett Bryan had one son, my grandfather, **James Charles Bryan (1866–1930)**. Six months after my grandfather was born, James Mordicae Bryan died at age 30 of tuberculosis.

James Mordicae Bryan in his 20s.



\*We have spelled the names Mordicae, Sarah, and Storey as found in my family records. The spellings differ from those on their recently replaced tombstones.



And so in 1867, just five years after her marriage, Sarah Elizabeth Burnett Bryan became a 29-year-old widow with a one-year-old son. About three years later, in 1870, she married and moved to live with Robert Cunningham Storey (1831–1895),<sup>4</sup> a 38-year-old widower with at least one son.

Sarah Elizabeth Burnett Bryan Storey probably around 1900.

Robert Storey lived in Mantua, Alabama, a few miles north of Sarah Elizabeth's home in Union, Alabama. Both towns are in Greene County.

In the 1870s, Sarah Elizabeth and Robert Storey had one son and three daughters. They are my half great-uncle and half great-aunts. In 1895 a typhoid fever epidemic killed Robert Storey, his son, and two of his daughters. Of the entire family living in Greene County, only my great-grandmother Sarah Elizabeth and one daughter, my half great-aunt Nora (later a nurse in Memphis), survived.

Sarah Elizabeth, my great-grandmother, died in 1915 at about age 77. She is buried in the Beulah Baptist Church Cemetery in Greene County next to her husband, my great-grandfather James Mordicae Bryan, who had died 48 years earlier. Their tombstones were recently replaced, but we do not know why or by whom.



Grave markers for my great-grandparents James Mordicae Bryan and Sarah Elizabeth Burnett Storey.

**JAMES MORDICAE BRYAN | SARAH ELIZABETH BURNETT****PAGES 28–29****1. JAMES MORDICAE BRYAN: THE LORE AND THE LIKELY FACTS**

In the book *A Tradition of Looking Ahead: The Story of Bryan Foods*, written in 1986, the author Carroll Brinson (1914–2001) wrote what he had learned from family lore about **James Mordicae Bryan (1837–1867)**.

*The story is told that as he grew up to manhood James Mordicae Bryan often expressed a desire to go back to North Carolina to visit members of his family. Finally, Stephen Bryan approved the idea and gave his son a mule and \$15.00 in cash. On his way to North Carolina the young Bryan met up with some boys named Burnett who lived in Greene County, Alabama. They were the sons of James Washington and Linnie Thornton Burnett. The young boys became good friends, and James Mordicae Bryan decided to stay in Greene County.*

*In the Burnett family there was a pretty girl named Sara Elizabeth. She and James Mordicae became friends. What started as a friendship soon blossomed in a romance. Sara Elizabeth Burnett and James Mordicae Bryan were married on March 12, 1862. He was twenty-four. She was twenty-three.*

*At the time of their marriage, the Civil War had been underway for almost a year. Soon after his marriage to Sara Elizabeth, James Mordicae and one of the Burnett boys joined the Army of the Confederacy. Both participated in the Siege of Vicksburg. As the Northern army of General Ulysses S. Grant slowly strangled this important port on the Mississippi River, rations became low and sanitary conditions deteriorated. Both James Mordicae and the Burnett boy became seriously ill. When the news of their illness reached the Burnett family in Greene County, Alabama, the father hitched up a wagon and made his way to Vicksburg. There he picked up the two young soldiers and brought them back to Greene County. The Burnett boy died. James Mordicae contracted tuberculosis.*

The lore about James Mordicae Bryan meeting the Burnett boys on the way to North Carolina is likely an apocryphal story. The Burnett boys were four and six years younger than James Mordicae, who was 17 or 18 years old when his father died. We really do not know when or why James Mordicae Bryan moved from Mississippi to Greene County, Alabama, in the mid-to-late 1850s.

We do know that James Mordicae Bryan is not enumerated with the family of his mother in Mississippi in the 1860 census. There is, however, in 1860, a J. M. Bryan, a 22-year-old living just north of Eutaw, Alabama, as a boarder in the household of Stephen Martin (1808–\_\_\_\_), a 52-year-old Virginia-born planter with three daughters, ages nine, seven, and three. J. M. Bryan is listed in that census as a grocer with a net worth of \$1,400. This J. M. Bryan is likely my great-grandfather.

As for the lore about James Mordicae Bryan and the Civil War, there is no evidence to confirm or even suggest that James Mordicae Bryan was at the siege of Vicksburg. There is, however, a James M. Bryan, age 23, who joined the Confederate Army on June 7, 1861, in Attala County, near Kosciusko, Mississippi (100 miles west of Eutaw). He served throughout the Civil War in the Eastern Theatre in Virginia (see note 3 on pages 168–69). This James M. Bryan is surely my great-grandfather.

James Mordicae Bryan married **Sarah Elizabeth Burnett (1838–1915)** on March 12, 1862, probably while on leave from Virginia. Throughout all of 1863 he was present for duty in Virginia. Thus, he could not have been in Vicksburg in the summer of 1863. I think it is likely that **James Washington Burnett (1814–1871)** went to Vicksburg (probably with a black servant) to get the corpse of his son, Richard, and to bring home his hospitalized son, James Luke.

After the Civil War ended in April 1865, James Mordicae Bryan returned to Greene County, Alabama. His son, **James Charles Bryan (1866–1930)**, was born the next year on September 27, 1866. James Mordicae Bryan died, according to family records, about six months later, on his 30th birthday, March 24, 1867. The cause of his death was tuberculosis.

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**2. THE SIEGE OF VICKSBURG**

In early July 1863, two pivotal battles of the Civil War were concluded. On July 3, 1863, General Robert Edward Lee (1807–1870) was defeated at the Battle of Gettysburg in Pennsylvania. The next day, on July 4, 1863, Major General Ulysses Simpson Grant (1822–1885) accepted the surrender of Confederate forces at the Siege of Vicksburg in Mississippi.

The fortress city of Vicksburg, located on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi River, was the central focus of a military campaign that lasted from December 26, 1862, to July 4, 1863. Federal forces were led by General U.S. Grant, a native of Ohio, and later president of the United States (1869–77). General Grant’s military career was greatly enhanced, for his victory led to his ultimate appointment as Commanding General of the United States Army.

Confederate forces at Vicksburg were under the command of Lieutenant General John Clifford Pemberton (1814–1881), a Pennsylvanian who joined the Confederate Army because his wife’s family was from Virginia. It is his fate to be remembered as the general who lost Vicksburg. He is thought to have been incompetent.

Unable to secure a command as a lieutenant general in the Provisional Army, General Pemberton resigned his commission and served as a lieutenant colonel in the Regular Army for the remainder of the war.

After two assaults failed, General Grant realized that the city could not be taken by force. And so with his 77,000 troops, he surrounded and continuously shelled the city of Vicksburg. That siege lasted 47 days, during which the starving Confederate soldiers ate horses, mules, and dogs.

The garrison was destitute, starved, and diseased. Many of the men were wounded and near death. In return for Pemberton agreeing to surrender on July 4, Grant agreed to parole all the survivors, 2,166 officers and 27,425 enlisted men.



*This 19th-century print depicts the fortress city of Vicksburg during the Siege in 1863.*

**Richard Barney Burnett (1841–1863)**, my great-great-uncle, a private with Company E of the 20th Alabama regiment, died in or near Vicksburg before the surrender on July 4, 1863.

**James Luke Burnett (1843–1863)**, my 19-year-old great-great-uncle, was also with Company E of the 20th Alabama Regiment. He was wounded at Vicksburg on June 26, 1863, paroled while in the hospital on July 16, 1863, and died September 15, 1863 enroute home at age 20.



*Left: James Luke Burnett's tombstone at the Beulah Baptist Church Cemetery.*

*The tombstone of my great-great-uncle reads: "James Luke Burnett, who died from wounds suffered at the Battle of Vicksburg in 1863. He belonged to Co. E 20th Alabama Regt. and was wounded in Vicksburg on the 26th of June 1863. He enlisted as a Soldier of the Cross in his youth."*

*Above: Richard Barney Burnett's tombstone at the Beulah Baptist Church Cemetery in Greene County. The tombstone is of the type erected by the United Daughters of the Confederacy at a later date.*

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3. JAMES M. BRYAN: CONFEDERATE SOLDIER

On June 7, 1861, James Mordicae Bryan (1837-1867), recorded as James M. Bryan, enlisted in the Confederate Army at Rocky Point in Attala County, Mississippi, about 10 miles northwest of Kosciusko, and about 100 miles west of Eutaw, Alabama. We have a copy of his muster-in roll, on which his age is listed as 23. He had turned 24.

It was quite usual for young men to join military organizations in states with which they were most closely associated. Also, men who enlisted in the spring of 1861 were volunteers and were very eager to get to the front lines and see action.

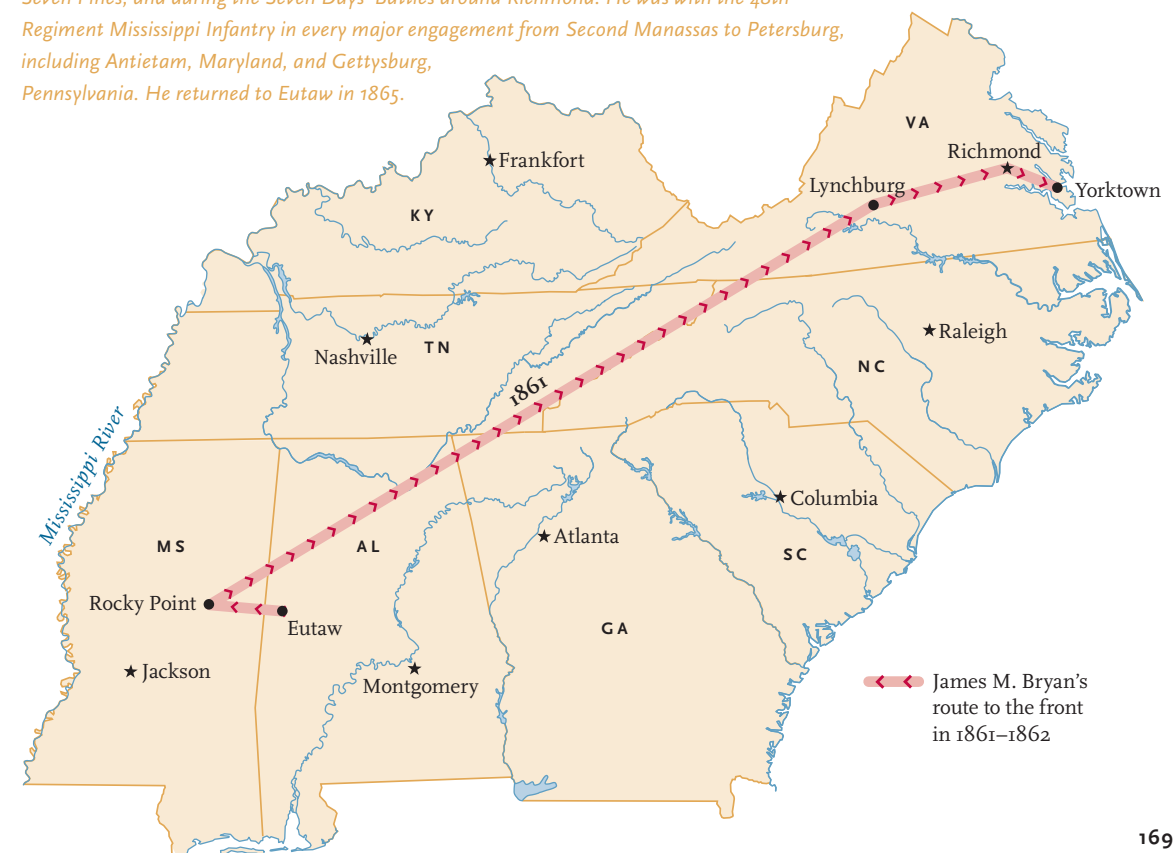
James M. Bryan enrolled in a company called the Rocky Point Rifles. It was organized on May 16, 1861. Also joining the company at that time was a man named Asberry W. Bryan (d. 1862) from Attala County.

The Rocky Point Rifles mustered into Confederate service in Lynchburg, Virginia, on June 18, 1861. Later in Richmond, Virginia, on October 16, 1861, they joined with other volunteer companies to form the Second Battalion Mississippi Infantry. In July 1862, they were organized into the 48th Regiment Mississippi Infantry. James M. Bryan's Confederate service throughout the war was as a private serving in the Army of Northern Virginia in the Eastern Theater.

Let me explain the likely circumstances of James M. Bryan's marriage to Sarah Elizabeth Burnett (1838-1915) in Greene County, Alabama, in March 1862. James M. Bryan appears in records serving as a hospital nurse and on duty in Virginia up until February 1862. On February 25, 1862, Asberry W. Bryan, with whom he joined the Rocky Point Rifles, died of typhoid fever in the hospital in Yorktown, Virginia. Since their battalion had not been engaged in combat, and death was a rare occurrence, it was not uncommon at that time to send a body home with an escort. James M. Bryan likely was assigned to take Asberry Bryan's body home, traveling by steamship to Richmond and by train from there to less than 10 miles from Rocky Point, Mississippi. He would have arrived with days to spare before his marriage to Sarah Elizabeth Burnett on March 12, 1862. That event would have been a valid reason to choose James M. Bryan to accompany the body even if he was not related to A.W. Bryan. James M. Bryan is next recorded as present for duty in Virginia on May 2, 1862.

It appears that James M. Bryan's military career was mostly spent with the Quartermaster Department (transportation and supply) and sometimes with the Medical Department of his regiment. He is listed as a teamster (the driver of a team of horses) and as a forage (animal feed) wagon driver. While expected to join his company for battles, his duties were largely to support the combat soldiers. In February 1864, James M. Bryan was granted a 60-day furlough and \$50 for agreeing to extend his military service beyond three years. His last Confederate War record is dated December 1864, at which time he was with the Quartermaster Department. There are no records for his regiment in 1865 and no record of him being captured or paroled. James M. Bryan made his way back to Greene County, Alabama, after the surrender of General Robert E. Lee (1807-1870) at Appomattox courthouse in April 1865. Fewer than two years later, he died and was buried in the Beulah Baptist Church Cemetery in Greene County, Alabama.

James M. Bryan fought with the 2nd Battalion Mississippi Infantry at Yorktown, Williamsburg, Seven Pines, and during the Seven Days' Battles around Richmond. He was with the 48th Regiment Mississippi Infantry in every major engagement from Second Manassas to Petersburg, including Antietam, Maryland, and Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. He returned to Eutaw in 1865.



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**4. ROBERT CUNNINGHAM STOREY**

Robert Cunningham Storey (1831–1895) was the second husband of **Sarah Elizabeth Burnett Bryan (1838–1915)**, my great-grandmother. He was born on October 1, 1831, in Pickens County, Alabama, and was one of six children of Robert Storey (1795–\_\_\_\_) and Martha White (1797–1840). Robert Storey, the father, had migrated to Alabama from Spartanburg County, South Carolina, around 1820.

Robert Cunningham Storey fought with Company B in the First Alabama Infantry during the Civil War. He died of typhoid fever on June 11, 1895, and is buried at the Hebron Presbyterian Cemetery in Greene County, Alabama.

Robert C. Storey had one son (and perhaps another named James born in 1855) by a previous marriage. His son was Luther Storey (1866–1895), who, like his father, died of typhoid fever in 1895. Robert and Sarah Elizabeth Storey together had four children, who were half siblings of my grandfather **James Charles Bryan (1866–1930)**.

**Andrew Storey (1871–1895)**, my half great-uncle, also succumbed to typhoid fever.

**Lenora (Lena or Nora) Storey (1874–\_\_\_\_)** married a Mr. Fredericks of New York City about 1896. In the 1900 census, Nora Fredericks was living in Manhattan. In 1910 and 1930, she was living in Memphis, Tennessee. Aunt Nora, my half great-aunt, had one child. He was Robert (Bob) Storey Fredericks (1899–1991); he was born in New York, was a banker in Memphis, and died in Houston, Texas.

**Martha Louvenia (Lou or Loula) Storey (1875–1895)** was the third child and was named for her grandmother, **Levinia Mahala Thornton Burnett (1819–1900)**. She married James Pinckney Roebuck and had two children. The oldest was Nancy Elizabeth Roebuck (1893–1983). Their second child was John Pinckney Roebuck (1895–1966). Aunt Loula, my half great-aunt, was another victim of typhoid fever. She died at age 20 and may have contracted the disease while tending to others.

**Florence Storey (1878–1895)** was the last child of Robert and Sarah Elizabeth Storey. She died at age 17 in the typhoid fever epidemic of 1895.

In the Beulah Baptist Church book, in Greene County, there is a written text about the passing of my 20-year-old great-aunt Loula.

*Sister Loula Roebuck 'nee' Storey died December 9, 1895. She was born October 17, 1875; joined this church by experience and baptism November 1888 and was united in marriage to Brother James Pinckney 'Pink' Roebuck December 21, 1892. As a daughter she was dutiful, and as a mother she was tender and affectionate. She died as she lived, trusting in the Lord, as is shown by the following verse which she repeated a few minutes before she died.*

*'Come loving Redeemer and take to Thy breast.  
 The heart that is sighing and panting for rest;  
 Blest Savior I am watching and waiting for Thee,  
 Then O! Let me anchor beyond the dark sea'\**

*When the husband and children would mourn for her, we would point them to this verse which indicates that she has gone to rest.*



*The tombstone of my half great-aunt Martha Louvenia Roebuck, who died at age 20 of typhoid fever in 1895. This marker is in the Beulah Baptist Church Cemetery in Greene County, Alabama. It says: She was a kind and / affectionate wife, / A fond Mother and a / friend to all.*

*\*The third verse of a popular hymn by Knowles Shaw (1834–1878) entitled “Beyond the Dark Sea.”*