

# Redd Family Children of Clarkesville, Georgia

## Biological Parent Mystery Discussion

- |                               |                        |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. John Benjamin Franklin Red | 3. Julia Constance Red |
| 2. Arthur Gadson Red          | 4. Joseph C Red Jr     |

Authored by John R Baldwin (ex-husband of Cinda K Red, 1954-2025, daughter of Joe and Frances Red of Mableville, AR).

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### Abstract

Arthur Gadson Red, his brother, John Benjamin Franklin Red, and Julia Constance Red are listed in the 1850 Habersham County Georgia Census, as living in the home of Joseph and Nancy Red, their grandparents. Arthur was 5, John was 9, and Julia was 3. Arthur and Julia being born in Georgia and John, in North Carolina. In the 1860 Habersham County Georgia Census, a 4th child was in the same household, Joseph C Red, age 2, born in Georgia.

Who were the true biological parents of these children? Let's examine available and new found evidence and discuss possible true biological parents.

I discovered a small trove of Habersham County, GA legal documents that extend from the 1840's to the 1880's. In these are clues as to the relationships of the Red Family.

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### Principals

#### **Grandparents:**

Joseph Clingon Redd  
BIRTH 1793 • Spartanburg County, South Carolina  
DEATH AFT. JUN 1870 • Clarksville, Habersham, Georgia  
and  
Nancy C Walker  
BIRTH ABT. 1803 • North Carolina  
DEATH 1881 • Clarksville, Habersham, Georgia

#### **Parents - selected children of Joe and Nancy Red:**

Elizabeth Red  
BIRTH 1820 • Spartanburg County, South Carolina  
DEATH ABT. 1879 • Habersham County, Georgia

Matilda Red  
BIRTH 1826 • Spartanburg County, South Carolina  
DEATH AFT. 1880 • Habersham County, Georgia

### **Children on the Census Records - 1850, 1860, 1870:**

John Benjamin Franklin Red  
BIRTH 8 JUL 1842 • Henderson County, North Carolina  
DEATH 14 SEP 1939 • Sweet Home, Pulaski, Arkansas

Arthur Gadson Red Sr  
BIRTH 1844 • Habersham County, Georgia  
DEATH 16 OCT 1882 • Saline County, Arkansas

Julia Constance Red  
BIRTH ABT. 1846 • Habersham County, Georgia  
DEATH 15 DEC 1897 • Birmingham, Jefferson, Alabama

Joseph Clington Red Jr  
BIRTH ABT. JUN 1857 • Habersham County, Georgia  
DEATH 13 DEC 1914 • Mill, Dade County, Georgia

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### **Discussion - John B.F. Red and Arthur G. Red**

We have two regularly cited documents that indicated John B.F. Red and Arthur G. Red were sons of Joe and Elizabeth Red.

The first is a 1937 Arkansas Gazette article in which 95 year old John B.F. Red discussed his life.

Here we see his biological parents are stated as being Joe and Elizabeth Red, and that they died young.

*Citation: Arkansas Gazette, Sunday Magazine Section, P. 6, June 13, 1937.*

The second article is a 1939 Arkansas Gazette OBIT in which it was stated that the parents of John B.F. Redd died when he was a youngster.

From these newspaper accounts it's apparent that John Red and Arthur Red were adopted by their grandparents in the late 1840's, in Habersham County, Georgia.

Born in Hendersonville, N. C., in 1842, the first of two sons of Joe and Elizabeth Red, he was christened John Benjamin Franklin. At first he was called John, but because he had an uncle of the same name, he later was called Frank.

Mr. and Mrs. Red died when he was young and his grandparents took him into their home. The grandmother was a cousin of William Walker, famous as the author of Southern songs. Two of the songs "General" Red remembers hearing her sing were "Southern Harmony" and "Seven Notes."

John Benjamin Franklin Red, 97, veteran of 13 battles as a member of Confederate forces during the Civil war, died at 8:30 p. m. yesterday at the Arkansas Confederate Home. He was born July 8, 1842, at Henderson, N. C.

He was the sole survivor of Company C, Phillips Legion of Georgia, a part of General James Longstreet's regiment, with which he was enlisted at the age of 19, June 11, 1861, and served until he was discharged in 1865. He had the longest war record of any veteran at the home.

His parents died when he was a youngster and he went to live with his grandparents. An Episcopal minister was hired as a tutor for young Red and his brother. When he entered the Confeder-

Based on the 1850 - 1870 census records for Clarksville, Habersham, Georgia, we know the grandparents were the following:

Joseph C Red Sr

BIRTH 1793 • Spartanburg County, South Carolina

DEATH AFT. JUN 1870 • Clarksville, Habersham, Georgia

and

Nancy C Walker

BIRTH ABT. 1803 • North Carolina

DEATH 1881 • Clarksville, Habersham, Georgia

**NOTE:** - there's some conjecture that Nancy was born in South Carolina. I usually, in cases where there's no birth record and census age variances, select the first available census record, when the person is youngest in the census records, as being the most accurate - in this case, the 1850 census.

Let's take a closer look at the 1850, 1860, 1870 Clarksville, Habersham, Georgia Census Records for the household of Joe and Nancy Red:

Household members		
	Name	Age
	Joseph Red	57
	Nancy Red	47
	E Red	30
	M Red	26
	B F Red	9
	A G Red	5
	Julia Red	3

Household members		
	Name	Age
	Joseph Red	68
	Nancy Red	59
	Elizabeth Red	
	Matilda Red	34
	Franklin Red	17
	Arthur G Red	
	Julia Red	12
	Joseph C Red	2

Household members		
	Name	Age
	Joseph Red	78
	Nancy Red	69
	Eliz Red	50
	Matilda Nichols	46

We can see that two children of Joe and Nancy Red, Elizabeth Red and Matilda Red-Nichols, were in their household for at least **30 years**. I contend that John BF Red and Arthur G Red were the children of Elizabeth Red with perhaps two, as yet unidentified/unverified, fathers. Thus, they were half brothers.

**NOTE:** <https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/full-text/r> has made available a large collection of documents that have not been indexed but have been scanned. As such you can search the collection for names, dates, and keywords. If a relevant document is found, a transcription can be generated. Using this tool, I was able to locate numerous legal documents associated with the Red Family of Habersham County, GA between about 1840 to 1910.

Here are selected newly discovered and relevant documents on FamilySearch.org (transcribed from the originals - with corrections as needed) for consideration, with citations.

Clarkesville, Habersham County, GA, January, 1881

*Know all men by these presents that we Arthur G. Red and Benjamin H Red of the County of Saline in the State of Arkansas have made Constituted and appointed Nancy Red of the County of Habersham and State of Georgia our true and lawful attorney for each of us the said Arthur G. Red and Benj H. Red to execute good and sufficient titles for us and in our name to all the interest we own in the House and lot in the town of Clarksville in the County of Habersham and State of Georgia **said property being our interest as heirs of Elizabeth Red sold, in the place wherein Joseph Red lived at the time of his death and which was deeded by John Red or James R. Wyly or his Executors to Elizabeth Red and Matilda Red** - Hereby ratifying and confirming all that our said Attorney Nancy Red may do in the premises the same as if we have bodily present - In witness whereof the said Arthur G. Red and Benjamin F. Red have hereto their hands and affixed their Seals this day of January 25, 1881. Arthur G. Red , Benj. H. Red*

**Citation:**

"Habersham, Georgia, United States records," images, FamilySearch (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSLX-5QSZ-M?view=fullText> : Aug 16, 2025), image 37 of 413; Georgia. Superior Court (Habersham County). Image Group Number: 008192771

Here, we have confirmation that John BF Red and Arthur G Red were living in Saline County, AR in 1881. It's likely that following the Civil War, both brothers relocated to Arkansas soon after the war, never returning to Habersham County, GA.

The brothers declared themselves as heirs of Elizabeth Red and appointed their grandmother, Nancy Red, as their attorney, representing their interest in the property. It's known that the grandfather of Arthur and Benjamin, Joseph C Red, had died in 1870. Their home had been inherited by the mother of Arthur and Benjamin, Elizabeth Red and her sister, Matilda Red-Nichols. It's not clear if this action was taken in defence of their interest in the property. It looks like they were communicating that they were still actively interested in maintaining their property rights.

Minutes of the Superior Court April Term 1860

Thursday Morning, April 12th 1860

*Elizabeth Red vs Thomas B. Wheeler / Mandamus*

*John Laprade*

*Armsted Popham*

*J B. Whitehead*

*Justices Supreme Court of Habersham County*

*Said case is settled and Alonzo L. Harshaw is discharged from all further liability to the Superior Court of Habersham County and to the said Elizabeth Red upon the bond referred to in said proceedings and for the **support, maintenance, nursing and education of the child referred to in said bond** and the living expenses of the mother and that A. L. Horshaw pay the cost of the Mandamus.*

*Armsted Popham J. S. C*  
*Elizabeth Red*  
*Philip Martin Atty for E. S. Barclay Atty for Elizabeth Red*

**Citation:**

"Habersham, Georgia, United States records," images, FamilySearch (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSLX-Y9DT-7?view=explore> : Aug 19, 2025), image 289 of 657; .  
Image Group Number: 008192776

This is an interesting document in that Alonzo L Harshaw was released from his liability to Elizabeth Red for “support, maintenance, nursing and education of the child referred to in said bond and the living expenses of the mother”. No mention is made of the name of the child. Coincidentally, 1860 was the year Arthur G Red turned 16 - and, viewed as an adult.

Was the bonded financial liability of Alonzo L Harshaw associated with the biological father of Arthur G Red? If so, was Alonzo L Harshaw the biological father of Arthur G Red? Alonzo was a neighbour of the Reds in 1850, a son Moses Harshaw. He was born about 1827 and would have been about 17 or 18 when Arthur G Red was born.

FYI - The term Mandamus is defined as: “a court order that commands a government official or entity to perform a duty they are legally required to fulfil. It is typically used when an official fails to act as required by law, and it is not a matter of right but rather at the court's discretion.” The court had taken action on behalf of Elizabeth Red but the crucial details, such as the name of the child, are lost to us.

It's clear that Elizabeth Red (daughter of Joe and Nancy Red) was the mother of John BF Red and Arthur Red. There's no evidence that she ever married. She remained in the household of her parents, with her two children, until they departed during the Civil War, from before 1850 until she died, about 1879. They were half brothers with the same mother but different fathers - as yet unidentified/verified.

Thus, it may be that these two children, adopted by their grandparents while toddlers, were told a story of their birth parents that simply was not true or forgotten over time. Their lives were formed by living their early lives with their grandparents and their mother. These two fellows may NOT have been born to a biological father with a Red surname. And, with that, we are left with an enduring mystery as to the true identities of the biological fathers of John BF Red and Arthur G Red.

This may be a mystery that DNA analyses could help solve.

As a side note, in an interview, John BF Red mentions he and his brother, Arthur were tutored early in life by an Episcopal minister from a local church. The church in question may be: Grace-Calvary Episcopal Church - Clarkesville, Habersham County,

GA. It was established in 1838 as Grace Protestant Episcopal Church and is still active to the present day. Possible tutors for John BF Red and Arthur G Red are:

Alexander J Berger, Rector, 1843-1845  
Matthew G Henderson, Rector, 1859-1860  
William E Eppes, Rector, 1861-1864

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## Discussion - Julia C. Red

Returning to the 1850, 1860, 1870 Clarksville, Habersham, Georgia Census Records, we see that Julia C Red was in the household of Joe and Nancy Red for at least 20 years.

Household members		
	Name	Age
	Joseph Red	57
	Nancy Red	47
	E Red	30
	M Red	26
	B F Red	9
	A G Red	5
	Julia Red	3

Household members		
	Name	Age
	Joseph Red	68
	Nancy Red	59
	Elizabeth Red	
	Matilda Red	34
	Franklin Red	17
	Arthur G Red	
	Julia Red	12
	Joseph C Red	2

Household members		
	Name	Age
	Joseph Red	78
	Nancy Red	69
	Eliz Red	50
	Matilda Nichols	46

We also see that the sister of Elizabeth Red, Matilda Red, was in the household of Joe and Nancy Red for at least 30 years - like her sister, Elizabeth.

We know that Matilda Red married John Nichols in May, 1855 (divorced in Oct, 1857), some ten years after giving birth to daughter Julia. In each of the two relevant census records we have for Juila C Red, she remained named as a Red - not Nichols.

Julia C Red married Walter K Brock in 1868. Thus, she was in the household of Walter K Brock in the 1870 and subsequent census records.

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## Discussion - Joseph C Redd Jr

Returning to the 1860, 1870 Georgia Census Records, we see that Joseph C Red Jr was in the household of Joe and Nancy Red and then the household of John BF Redd (DeKalb County).

Household members		
	Name	Age
	Joseph Red	68
	Nancy Red	59
	Elizabeth Red	
	Matilda Red	34
	Franklin Red	17
	Arthur G Red	
	Julia Red	12
	Joseph C Red	2

Household members		
	Name	Age
	Benjamin F Redd	28
	Martha C Redd	26
	William Redd	2
	Joseph Redd	13

The question is: Was Joseph C Red Jr a son of Elizabeth Red or Matilda Red?

The fact that he was in the household of John BF Red in 1870 could indicate he was a close relation to John BF Red - perhaps a half brother, like Arthur G Red, and, thus, a son of Elizabeth Red.

However, we know Matilda Red married John Nichols in May 1855. Evidence suggests that Joseph C Red Jr was born about June 1857. And, we know that by Oct. 1857, Matilda and John Nichols were divorced (abandonment by John Nichols). It could be that the abandonment was related to the birth of a son to John and Matilda, with additional responsibility of step-daughter, Julia Red. I'm leaning towards Joseph C Red Jr being a child of John Nichols and Matilda Red and a 1st cousin of John BF Red.

*Minutes of the Superior Court October Term 1857*

*Matilda Nichols vs John Nichols*  
***Libel for Divorce***

*It appearing to the Court by the return of the Sheriff, that **defendant is not to be found in this County** it is ordered that service of the Libel be perfected on him by publication of this rule in the North East Georgian once a month for three months prior to next term of this Court or by personal service of the Libel and of this order upon him, by the Sheriff of any County in which he may be found, at least thirty days before the next term of this Court.*

**Citation:**

"Habersham, Georgia, United States records," images, FamilySearch (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSLX-Y968-F?view=explore> : Aug 21, 2025), image 178 of 657; Image Group Number: 008192776

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## Abstract of Letters to the Red Property, Clarkesville, GA

For reference, we have the following summary of deeds and relevant transactions related to the Red Family. Descriptions of the transactions support that Matilda Red was the daughter of Joe and Nancy Red. That Julia C Red-Brock was the granddaughter of Joe and Nancy Red.

### Clarkesville, Habersham County, GA, 1883

*Abstract of Letters to the Red Property, west side of the Street , ½ acre part Lot No 20 - 10th District*

- 1) *James R. Wyly to John Red deed made June 1st 1846 , Recorded Book "R" pg. 158 Oct 30th 1845.*
- 2) *John Red to Elizabeth & Matilda Red deed made 11th day Nov. 1847 & Recorded Book "R" pg. 481 - Nov 13 1847 East side of the street 1/2 acre part of No 3 - 12th District*
- 3) *James R. Wyly To Elizabeth Red & Matilda Red deed made 4th day October 1850 , Recorded in Book "R. R." 216 Dec 20th 1850 / Both sides of the street*

- 4) **John Nichols & Matilda Red having intermarried John & Matilda Nichols Conveyed to Julia C. Brock ( formerly Red & daughter of Matilda Nichols formerly Red )** dated 26th November 1855 . Recorded Book . "S" page 514 Nov 26th 1855
- 5) Julia C. Brock by attorney in fact W. K. Brock Power of Atty properly witnessed to to Wm J Rusk deed dated 21st January 1881 - not yet recorded - **Nancy Red Grandmother of Julia Brock & Mother of Matilda & Elizabeth Red** for some reason joined in this deed , she is now dead , Deeds 4 & 5 Carried the interest of Matilda Nichols formerly Red to W. J. Rusk - **Elizabeth Red is dead she left three Children**
- 6) Arthur G. Red, Benjamin F. Red / said to Wm J. Rusk dated 16th February 1881 not recorded made under power of attorney to Nancy Red duly authenticated.
- 7) Joseph C. Red deed to Julia C. Brock dated 28th August 1878 - - - - Recorded Book "BB" sec. 4 1878 30650 deeds 6 & 7 caused the half interest of Elizabeth Red to Dr . Rusk and under the title to the whole property in him. All these deeds are now in my possession except the deed from John and Matilda Nichols to Julia C. Brock , which is on Record C. H. Sutton, Attorney at Law, Recorded Dec - 14th 1883, J. H. Addison

**Citation:**

"Habersham, Georgia, United States records," images, FamilySearch (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSLX-5QSC-J?view=explore> : Aug 18, 2025), image 38 of 413; Image Group Number: 008192771

NOTE: The John Red referred to above was John D Red (1821-1911), son of Joe and Nancy Red and brother of Elizabeth and Matilda.

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## Conclusions and Comments

- 1) The biological mother of John BF Red and Arthur G Red was Elizabeth Red.
- 2) Elizabeth Red likely never married and lived in the household of her parents for over 30 years.
- 3) John BF Red and Arthur G Red likely were not born to a biological father with the surname "Red". They were legally named "Red" by their mother, Elizabeth Red.
- 4) The biological father of Arthur G Red may have been Alonzo L Harshaw of Clarkesville, GA.
- 5) Elizabeth Red had a third child, yet to be identified. We know this from examining the document abstract above (see #5 - "...she left three children").
- 6) Matilda Red married John Nichols well after daughter, Julia C Red was born. The father of Julia likely was not John Nichols.
- 7) Joseph C Redd Jr, born about June 1857, may have been a child of John Nichols, who abandoned Matilda Red in the summer/fall of 1857 - divorced in Oct. 1857.
- 8) The Joe and Elizabeth Red referred to in the OBITs of John BF Red as being the parents of John BF Red and Arthur G Red were a mix of a foster grandfather, Joe (Joseph C Red), and a biological mother - Elizabeth Red (daughter of Joe and Nancy Red).



It's clear that this 1840-1860 time period was when the ancestral surname Redd was shortened to Red. With two exceptions, parents and children and grandchildren and subsequent descendants were named Red. The exceptions were Joseph C Redd Jr. The other was John D Redd, son of Joseph C Red and Nancy Walker-Red. They maintained the traditional Redd surname spelling for their families.

If you are a descendant of Arthur Gadson Red, John Benjamin Franklin Red, Julia Constance Red, or Joseph C Redd Jr, your family name of "Red" was the result of a maternal naming decision by either your great grandmother Elizabeth Red or your great grandmother Matilda Red in the 1840's and 1850's. The surname "Red" is not a paternal ancestry of subsequent generations.

To date, for Joseph C Red Sr, his wife, Nancy Walker-Red, daughters Elizabeth Red and Matilda Red, we don't have any exact dates of death. We just know the year they dropped off census records. I've checked Find a Grave for any Reds with cemetery memorials in Habersham County. There are no Find a Grave memorials for these individuals.

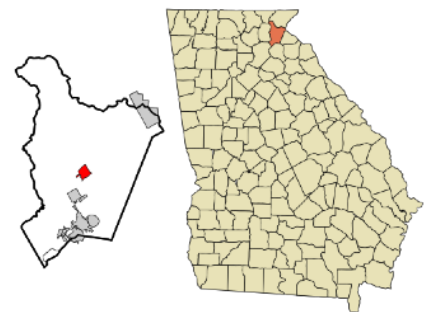
The four children - Arthur Gadson Red, John Benjamin Franklin Red, Julia Constance Red, and Joseph C Redd Jr - all seemed to live normal lives once they reached adulthood, married and had children of their own; basically conventional lives.

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## Clarkesville, Habersham County, Georgia

The standard story I heard while married to my wife, Cinda, was that the Red family were Cherokee in origin. That story is partially true in that the Red family settled on former Cherokee land in Habersham County, GA not long after the Cherokee's had been removed.

Habersham county was formed from a part of a land grant ceded from the Cherokee Indians in 1817. Clarkesville, GA was founded in 1821 as the seat of Habersham County. The current population hovers around 2,000. In the period 1850 to 1880, there were fewer than 500 citizens in the town.



Appleton's American Travel, 1857, describes Clarkesville as follows:

*A pleasant village in Habersham County, it is a favorite residence of the people of the "low County" of Georgia, and the point of rendezvous for the exploration of the landscape of the region—the point from whence to reach Tailulah, Toccoa, Nacoochee, etc. from Charleston or Columbia, or other places in South Carolina, follow the railways to Greenville or to Anderson, South Carolina and proceed by stage, one or two days*

*and. to Clarkesville; or take the Georgia railway from Augusta to Athens, and thence by stage, one or two days travel to Clarkesville, passing the Madison Springs, Mount Currahee and Toccoa. . . . We ought, perhaps, to remind the traveler, that when he leaves the frequented route hereabouts, or anywhere among the southern hills, he must voyage in his own conveyance, wagon, or horseback (the latter being the better stop for the night at any cabin near which the twilight may find him. content himself with such fare as he can get (we won't discourage him by presenting the cane), and pay for it moderately when he resumes his journey in the morning.*

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