

Ellen Brazeal McLelland Ward
(1804–1884)
of
Hempstead & Union Counties, Arkansas, Claiborne Parish, Louisiana
&
Shiloh, Union Parish, Louisiana
Wife of James McLelland Jr.[†] & David Ward

by Timothy Dean Hudson

Ellen Brazeal was born in Georgia on 13 May 1804, reputedly the daughter of Benjamin Brazeal. Records indicate that Ellen's father lived in Hempstead County around the time of its creation by the Missouri territorial government in 1817 from what had previously been Arkansas County. At that time, Hempstead consisted of the southwestern corner of the present-day State of Arkansas, a region designated as Missouri Territory until the 1819 creation of Arkansas Territory, as it was originally spelled. Hempstead also included an undefined portion of what is now Oklahoma.

In 1817, while still a very young teenager, Ellen became the wife of James McLelland Jr., the son of James McLelland Sr. The elder James had arrived in what is now southwestern Arkansas quite early. He wrote his will in 1817, naming Francis, John, and James as his sons and Martha McLelland Thompson as his daughter. Following their father's death about 1818, John and Francis McLelland lived in Hempstead County, where John remained until his death between 1832 and 1836.

Meanwhile, by about 1818, James and Ellen McLelland moved across the state line into Louisiana. By 1830, they resided in Claiborne Parish, which then included much of northwestern Louisiana. Sometime in the 1820s, James' brother, Francis, moved across the state line and joined

[†] The McLellands were a rather progressive family for their time in that they ensured that all of their children, both male and female, received an education and could sign their own names, while many contemporary families only educated the males, leaving the females illiterate. Although government officials used a variety of spellings, most of Ellen's family signed their surname as "*McLelland*." An exception is her eldest son, Francis, who signed his name "*McClelland*" in 1857 when he signed his will and in 1870 when he witnessed the inventory of his brother's estate. Ellen's daughter-in-law, Elizabeth Frances Gee, signed her name as "*McLeland*" on various records immediately following her husband's death. Thus, as with many surnames during this era, there was no uniformly accepted spelling of the name. Most modern descendants of this family spell their surname "*McLelland*" or "*McLeland*."

him in Claiborne Parish, and in 1830, they lived in adjoining households. The 1830 federal census provides us with the only estimate of James McLelland's approximate date of birth: between 1780 and 1790.

Shortly after 1830, James and Ellen McLelland returned to Arkansas and settled in Union County. He wrote his will on 23 May 1834, stating that he suffered from some disease and was about to leave home. McLelland was still alive on June 30th, for he added a note to his will, naming his wife's brothers, Gordon Brazeal (12 May 1812–28 Jun 1894) and Allen Brazeal, as his executors and ordering that they and Ellen divide his property among the McLelland children as each came of age. McLelland died a short time later.

Ellen Brazeal McLelland remained a widow for over thirty years after James' death, maintaining her farm and raising her children. In 1840 she lived near her brother, Gordon, and son-in-law, Joel Smith, who had married her daughter Mary Ann in 1837. About 1847, Ellen left Arkansas and moved south to Shiloh, in western Union Parish. She settled on the extreme western edge of the parish, about eight miles northwest of Shiloh and less than one mile from the Claiborne Parish line. Ellen left her married daughter, Mary Ann McLelland Smith, in Arkansas with her husband, Joel, but the records indicate that Ellen remained close to her daughter and her Smith grandchildren.

Through church meetings, Ellen Brazeal McLelland may have met [David Ward](#) and his family in the 1840s while she still lived in Arkansas or perhaps in the 1850s after she moved to Shiloh. We know that Ward actively participated in the Methodist Protestant Church that he established on his property east of Farmerville. Ellen and David's families became connected in the early 1860s when her youngest son, Frederick Marion McLelland, married David's niece, Elizabeth Frances Gee. Frederick and Elizabeth had one daughter born in January 1862 before he left for service in the Confederate Army that spring. Frederick survived the war, but Ellen's other son, James McLelland, died at Grenada, Mississippi in 1862 while serving in the Confederates Army. Another of Ellen's sons, Benjamin F. McLelland, also survived his Confederate military service, but he died soon after his parole in June 1865.

After spending thirty-three years as a widow, Ellen Brazeal McLelland married on 31 January 1867 to David Ward. The ceremony was performed by a Methodist minister and witnessed by her sons, Francis M. and Frederick M. McLelland, and her grandson, a younger Frederick M. McLelland. After her marriage, Ellen left her old house west of Shiloh on which she had lived for almost twenty years and moved to David Ward's farm east of Farmerville.

That fall, while on a visit to see his mother on David Ward's farm east of Farmerville, Ellen's son, Frederick, made his mother and uncle (now stepfather) a proposition: if they would move to Shiloh near him, he would build a house for them on a tract of government land he had purchased in 1856 but never cleared. McLelland offered them free use of the house and property for the remainder of Ellen's life. McLelland related to others at the time that he worried about his aging mother and his uncle and wished for them to be close to him so he could see after them.

David and Ellen agreed, and they moved onto their new retirement home later in the fall of 1867. Ellen and David did not live alone in their new home. Ellen's son, Benjamin, and his wife, Julia, died in the latter 1860s, leaving their three children, Frederick Marion, Ellen Melissa, and Francis D. McLelland, orphans. The McLelland children moved in with their grandmother and lived with them in the latter 1860s and early 1870s.

The tragedies among Ellen's children continued in the 1870s. Ellen's youngest, Frederick Marion McLelland, died of tuberculosis in 1870, and her eldest son Francis M. McLelland perished the following year. By 1871, at the age of sixty-seven, Ellen Brazeal McLelland had outlived each of her five sons and one of her daughters. Her only surviving children were her two daughters, Sarah, who lived in eastern Union Parish near David Ward's former home, and Mary Ann, who lived just south of El Dorado in Union County, Arkansas.

Fred McLelland's death left his three minor children as the legal owners of the retirement home he had given rent-free to his mother and uncle. The 1873 remarriage of Fred's widow to Thomas N. Bailey caused serious problems for Ellen and David. After assuming legal control of Fred McLelland's estate in the latter part of 1873, Bailey apparently squandered the money and property and so by 1876 the estate was insolvent. Moreover, the house had become dilapidated, and Bailey apparently wanted to move to a nicer one. Apparently, the new retirement home Fred McLelland had built for his mother and uncle/stepfather became irresistible to Bailey.

In 1876, Thomas N. Bailey demanded that Ellen and David Ward yield possession of their retirement home to him. Believing they had the legal right to occupy the place until Ellen's death, the Wards refused Bailey's demand. In January 1878, Bailey and his wife sued Ellen and David for possession, demanding that they vacate the place and pay some \$550 in rent for their use of it. The matter dragged on through the legal system for three years through a total of three district court trials and two Louisiana Supreme Court trials. The courts finally ordered Ellen and David, by then an elderly couple in their mid-70s with David in the midst of serious health problems, to vacate their home and turn possession to the Baileys.

In December 1880, Ellen and David left their retirement home given to them by Fred McLelland on which they had lived since 1867. They moved back to Ellen's old home about one-half of a mile away from their retirement home, the place upon which she moved her family when she came to Louisiana from Arkansas in 1850. Contemporary descriptions of her house indicate that by 1876 it had become quite dilapidated, and we do not know if she and David had a new house built on her farm or if they moved into her old house.

David Ward lingered in poor health until his death in May 1882. For the remainder of the growing season after David's death, Ellen lived on her old farm near Shiloh with several sharecroppers who worked the fields, namely Dan, Dave, and Peter McLelland. We believe they were all men formerly enslaved by Ellen's family. After the 1882 harvest, it appears that Ellen left her old farm and moved in with her widowed daughter, Sarah McLelland Wickliffe Taylor, the widow of former Union Parish Judge John Taylor.

Ellen died there in 1884, and Sarah buried her mother in the Taylor/Liberty Hill Cemetery, the community graveyard founded by Sarah's deceased husband soon after he moved to Louisiana in January 1837. Ellen's tombstone reads: *"Sacred To the Memory of Ellen Ward; Born May 13, 1804; Died Mar. 21, 1884."* Some six years later after her death, Sarah buried her daughter, Amanda Wickliffe Tatum, beside Ellen in the Taylor/Liberty Hill Cemetery. Today, the graves of Ellen and her granddaughter lie directly beneath the large magnolia tree in the center of the cemetery.



Children of Ellen Brazeal & James McLelland Jr.

The children of Ellen and James McLelland are all named in his will, and these are the same children listed with her on the 1850 and 1860 federal census enumerations in Union Parish, Louisiana [1]. Their children still alive in 1834 include:

1. **Francis M. McLelland** [Frank] (c1818–6 Jul 1871) married between 1850 and 1860 to Mary Lowrey (c1820–21 Jul 1887), daughter of George Lowrey (c1796–20 Jan 1856) and Elizabeth Cox (c1798–19 May 1862).
2. **Mary Anne McLelland** (6 Apr 1821–13 Sep 1910) married on 31 August 1837 in Union County, Arkansas to Joel Smith (3 Apr 1818–2 Jun 1883), son of William Smith and Isabella ?. Joel Smith and Mary Ann McLelland are buried in the Warner–Brown Cemetery in downtown El Dorado, Union County, Arkansas.
3. **Benjamin F. McLelland** (1822/1823–1865/1868) married on 8 March 1843 in Union County, Arkansas to Julia H. Slaytor (1826/1827–1860s), daughter of Isaiah Slaytor (1770/1775–1835) and Hannah Grubb (1784/1790–aft. 1835).
4. **Sarah C. McLelland** (1827–24 Jun 1899) married on 13 June 1844 in Jackson Township, Union County, Arkansas to Joseph A. Wickliffe (Wyckliff) (1818/1823–1860/1868). Sarah married on 7 September 1868 in Union Parish, Louisiana to Judge John Taylor (12 Mar 1804–30 Dec 1877), the son of William Taylor (1770/1775–Jan 1830) and Catherine Gray (c1775–28 Jan 1833). After the deaths of her older two daughters in 1888 and 1890, Sarah moved with her youngest daughter to Fort Worth, Texas and died there. She is buried in the Greenwood Memorial Park and Mausoleum in Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas.
5. **Elizabeth McLelland** (c1832–1852/1860) married on 9 December 1852 in Union Parish, Louisiana to Thomas Lowrey (1824/1829–aft. 1870), son of George Lowrey (c1796–20 Jan 1856) and Elizabeth Cox (c1798–19 May 1862). Thomas Lowery had remarried by 1860, implying that Elizabeth had died between 1852 and 1860.
6. **James M. McLelland** (c1832–21/22 Jun 1862) married in 1861 to Frances J. Tubb [Fanny] (c1843–after 1880), the daughter of William Tubb (c1802–1864) and Mary B. ? (c1808–after 1878). James M. McLelland enlisted at Monroe, Louisiana on 26 February 1862 as a private in Co. E, 12th Regiment Louisiana Infantry. He joined his unit and died four months later while stationed at Grenada, Mississippi.
7. **Frederick Marion McLelland** [Fred] (17 Jan 1834–22 Mar 1870) married about 1860 or 1861 in Union Parish, Louisiana to Elizabeth Frances Gee (25 Apr 1840–24 Feb 1926), daughter of Richard H. Gee (1800/1810–27 Jul 1843) and [Mary Caroline Ward](#) (1 Feb 1818–15 May 1892).

Mary was the sister of David Ward who married Fred's mother, Ellen. Frederick Marion McLelland is buried in the Alabama/Weldon Cemetery near Bernice, near his wife and their three children.

8. **John McLelland** (1830/1835–1834/1840) was listed in his father's 1834 will, presumably the youngest child. If so, then he may have been a twin to Fred McLelland. John does not appear to be listed in his mother's household in 1840, which suggests that he died between 1834 and 1840.

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Notes

1. [Union County AR County Court Record A \(1830-1846\), p. 37](#): Will of James McLelland, signed 23 May 1834, note added 30 June 1834 naming "*my wife Brothers Gorden and Allen Brazzell to be executors.*"

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