

**William Elisha Upshaw****(28 Feb 1833–8 Jan 1882)**

**Son of Richard Upshaw Sr. & Rebecca Elder,  
Husband of Laura Ann Rockett & Julia Ann Garner**

**by Timothy Dean Hudson**

William Elisha Upshaw was born 28 February 1833 in Walton County, Georgia, the son of Richard Upshaw Sr. and Rebecca Elder. His father died in the 1840s, and in 1850, he lived with his widowed mother and siblings in Butler County, Alabama [1]. In early 1852, William Elisha Upshaw traveled from Alabama to Union Parish, Louisiana with his brother, Alexander Wilson Upshaw, and Henry Barron, his brother's father-in-law. Merely thirteen days after selling his farm in Tallapoosa County, Henry Barron appeared in the courthouse in Farmerville, Union Parish, Louisiana, where he purchased a 640-acre tract of land on Bayou Corney, some few miles south of the village of Spearsville. William Elisha Upshaw witnessed that transaction, indicating that he made the trip with his brother's in-laws [2].

Elisha Upshaw's mother remained in Butler County, Alabama for a few more years, for on 16 June 1856, Rebecca Elder Upshaw and her brother-in-law, Leroy Upshaw Jr., went to the Greenville Land Office and purchased the land on which they had settled several years earlier [3]. Rebecca must have previously purchased another 40-acre tract sometime between 1851 and 1856. On 10 September 1856, Rebecca Elder Upshaw sold her Butler County, Alabama farm for \$400 to A. C. L. Davis [4].

Elisha Upshaw may have remained in Louisiana between 1852 and 1856, but it seems more likely that he returned to Butler County and after she sold her farm, helped his mother move to Spearsville, Union Parish, Louisiana in late 1856. Elisha's younger brother, Jonathan, joined the Spearsville Baptist Church "*by Letter*," in September 1857. At the church conference held on the first Sunday in August 1858, the church clerk recorded that the church "*Received by letter Bro. Edmond Upshaw.*" This indicated that both Jonathan and Edmond had previously joined a Baptist church, and they presented their letters of dismissal from that church to the Spearsville Church when they joined [5].

The following year, on Saturday, 6 August 1859, the Spearsville Baptist Church clerk recorded that after preaching by Elder William Hunt, the church "*Opened the Door for the reception of*

*members & received by letter Bro. E. Upshaw.*" Since Edmond had joined the following year, this indicates that Elisha Upshaw was the man who joined that day [6].

On 8 April 1859, Elisha's older brother, Alexander Wilson Upshaw, purchased a 320-acre tract of land that adjoined Wilson's own farm for \$533 [7]. The following year, on 20 August 1860, Wilson sold this new tract to his brothers, William Elisha and Jonathan W. Upshaw, for \$500 [8]. In 1860, William Elisha Upshaw lived on their new farm with his mother and younger brother, Jonathan [9]. On the same day, several households away, Elisha, Rebecca, and Jonathan were enumerated again, this time in the household that adjoined his older brother, Edmond. Their older sister, Mary Upshaw, lived with them [10].

When war broke out in 1861, Jonathan and William Elisha Upshaw joined a company of Union Parish men under Larkin Cleveland Callaway. Although the unit went south to Camp Moore for induction into the Confederate Army, disagreement over the length of their enlistment caused the men to disband and return home. Jonathan and William Elisha Upshaw then joined the "*Carroll Rebels*," a group of men from Carroll Parish, Louisiana. The battalion organized in July 1861 in Richmond, Virginia, and the Upshaws' unit became Co. D, 4th Battalion Louisiana Infantry [11].

The 4th Battalion Louisiana Infantry acted as the bodyguard for President Jefferson Davis and as guards at Libby Prison until the fall. After reorganization on September 19th, the battalion moved into what is now West Virginia, where they served in the Kanawha Valley. The men skirmished with the Union Army at Cotton Hill between November 1-10 before returning to Richmond in December. Shortly afterwards, the men received orders to board a train bound for South Carolina, where they were assigned to occupy Skidway Island, located on the Georgia coast south of Savannah. On 17 March 1862, they moved to the Isle of Hope, and on April 21, they moved to Camp Mercer near Savannah.

On June 4, the 4th Battalion moved to Charleston, South Carolina and assigned to duty on James Island. They fought in a skirmish there on June 10. At the Battle of Secessionville on June 16, they arrived on the field in time to repulse the second Yankee attack, and in the action, the battalion had six men killed and twenty-two wounded [12].

Elisha and Jonathan Upshaw's battalion saw action at the Battle of Secessionville. During the battle, Jonathan suffered a severe wound to his leg. Surgeons amputated the leg, but he never recovered. Jonathan W. Upshaw died at a Charleston hospital on 18 July 1862 [13].

After Secessionville, William Elisha Upshaw was assigned to picket duty at Savannah, Georgia in September and October. He was promoted to the rank of sergeant on 9 January 1863, and

present for duty through February 1863. He was discharged sometime in early 1864, but records do not exist to show the reason for his discharge [14].

William Elisha Upshaw returned home to Spearsville by early 1864, and at the April 1864 conference of the Spearsville Baptist Church, a member filed a charge against him, David Post, and Samuel Post for nonattendance. The next month, the charges against them *"was laid over to next conference."* At the conference the next day, May 7, both David and Samuel Post appeared at the conference and *"acknowledged they had done rong. Asked the church to forgive them which was done."* At the same conference, it appears they spoke up for the charge against Elisha Upshaw, but the wording implies that he was not himself present in church that day. The clerk recorded that, *"Taken up the Charge against Bro. E. Upshaw and forgave him"* [15].

On the very day that the Spearsville Baptist Church forgave Elisha Upshaw for his nonattendance, he enlisted as a private in a unit of soldiers raised at Spearsville by Abraham A. Cann, later designated as Company F, 2nd Battalion Louisiana Heavy Artillery [16].

Two days after his enlistment, on May 9, Elisha Upshaw went across the state line to El Dorado, Union County, Arkansas and married Laura Ann Rockett Hunt, a woman with several children whose first husband had died of disease while serving in the Confederate Army in 1862 [17].

Elisha Upshaw's unit sent south to join the main Confederate Army in Louisiana stationed at Pineville. He was listed as absent without leave from August through October, but present for duty in November and December 1864. In the early months of 1865, his officers put him on detached service. In February 1865, he was *"Sent to Sabine Town for Ord.,"* presumably to obtain ordnance for the unit at Pineville. On March 9, he was *"ordered to Alexandria to serve as a witness"* at a court martial. In April 1865, he was on *"Detached Service at Guard at Grand Ecore"* [18].

After the War, William Elisha Upshaw returned to his farm south of Spearsville, Union Parish, Louisiana. His wife, Laura Rockett Upshaw, gave birth to a son, Jonathan Richard Upshaw, in 1865, but she died on 13 January 1867 [19].

In October 1867, Elisha Upshaw joined the New Hope Primitive Baptist Church at Spearsville *"By Experience."* This was the same church that his older brother, Alexander Wilson Upshaw, had joined in 1856 [20].

Primitive and Southern Baptist churches had starkly differing doctrines, and his joining a Primitive Baptist Church created a problem in regard to his membership in the Spearsville Baptist Church. Two months later, at the Spearsville Church conference held in December 1867, the church *"Motioned and Second to exclude Brother E. Upshaw for declaring a none fellowship of the church"* [21].

On 1 February 1868, Elisha Upshaw married in Union County, Arkansas to Julia Ann Garner, the widow of Thomas Jefferson Gathright (1839–1866), and daughter of Thomas Jefferson Garner (15 Mar 1815–Mar 1878) and Elizabeth Kelley (c1813–aft. 1860). Julia had one daughter by Gathright, and both Elisha and Julia brought in one child from their first marriages [22].

At the New Hope Church Conference on 7 November 1871, *“Bro. W. E. Upshaw called for a letter for Col. Sister China Selby,”* an indication that he asked the church for a letter of dismissal for a black member. At the conference held on 13 April 1872, the clerk recorded, *“W. E. Upshaw asked the Church to forgive him to drinking to excess, which request was granted.”* Later that year, Elisha must have again drunk to excess or made another transgression in the viewpoint of the church. At the conference held on November 10th, *“Brother W. E. Upshaw made acknowledgement & was recd.”* [23]. Elisha Upshaw remained a member of New Hope Church until his death in January 1882, although he is not mentioned in the minutes after 1872 [24].

Elisha and Julia Upshaw lived on their farm near Spearsville for the next thirteen years, working their farm and raising their children [25]. In 1868, his farm produced three bales of cotton and 250 bushels of corn. In the spring of 1869, he had 20 acres planted in cotton and 22 acres planted in corn, and he paid taxes on livestock valued at \$400 and vehicles at \$50 [26].

In 1870, Elisha Upshaw’s farm consisted of 35 acres of improved land and 85 acres of woodland, valued at \$300. He owned farming implements and machinery valued at \$50 and livestock valued at \$335, including 2 horses, 3 *“milch”* cows, 2 working oxen, 15 other cattle, and 30 swine. In 1869, Elisha Upshaw’s total farm production was valued at \$1000, including 300 bushels of *“Indian corn,”* six 450-lb bales of cotton, 75 bushels of sweet potatoes, 50 pounds of butter, homemade manufacturers valued at \$30, and slaughtered animals valued at \$150 [27].

In 1880, Elisha Upshaw’s farm was valued at \$500, including 50 acres of improved land, 140 acres of woodland and forest, two acres of orchards and pastures, and 20 acres of unwooded old fields. He owned \$5 worth of farming implements and machinery and spent \$25 on building and repairing fences in 1879. He owned livestock valued at \$250, including 2 horses, 2 milch cows, 2 other cattle, 2 calves born in 1879, 30 swine, and 50 barnyard poultry. He estimated his 1879 farm production at \$300, including 2 cattle sold, 2 cattle slaughtered, 50 dozen eggs, and 10 bushels of cow peas. In 1879, Upshaw planted 20 acres in Indian corn that produced 150 bushels, 8 acres in cotton that produced 3 bales, one acre in sweet potatoes that produced 50 bushels, one acre of 50 apple trees, and one acre of 150 peach trees [28].

William Elisha Upshaw died on his farm on 8 January 1882. His family buried him in the Spearsville Cemetery, probably beside his mother, Rebecca Elder Upshaw. His death left Julia with

five young children and a farm to manage. She continued to operate her farm until her death on 23 November 1903 [29].

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## Notes

1. Spearsville Cemetery (Union Parish LA), tombstone of "*Elisha Upshaw*" (28 Feb 1833–8 Jan 1882). 1850 Butler County AL Federal Census, Township Seven, p. 246b, Household #39: Rebeca Upshaw. 1860 Union Parish LA Federal Census, P.O. Spearsville, 21 July 1860, p. 615, Household #703, line #21: M. E. Upshaw (26, male, Farmer, real estate: \$1000; personal estate: \$155) [recording mistake; should be "*W. E. Upshaw*"; line #22: R. Upshaw (51, female, "*House Keeper*"; line #23: J. Upshaw (age 20, male). No primary source document lists the children of Richard Upshaw Sr., but these census records provide strong circumstantial evidence that William Elisha Upshaw was a son of Rebecca Elder Upshaw. She married Richard Upshaw on 27 February 1820 [Elbert County GA Will Book L (1816-1821), p. 475; Marriages Box M1 (1818-1821), Images #436-437 (Richard Upshaw to Miss Rebecca Elder, 27 February 1820).] They lived in Walton County, Georgia between 1822 and the mid-1830s, and then moved to Butler County, Alabama in the 1840s. Richard Upshaw is believed to have died there soon after their arrival. See also 1830 Walton County GA Federal Census, p. 158, line #6: Richard Upshaw; line #7: Edmund Elder.
2. Union Parish LA Deed Book F, p. 15 (Oliver B. Hill to Henry Barron, 18 February 1852; witnesses: P. T. Barton, "*Elliah W. Upshaw*").
3. Greenville, Alabama Land Office Cash Entry #49865, Rebecca Upshaw, 16 June 1856, 39.79 acres: NW¼ of SE¼ of Section 10; Cash Entry #49886, Leroy Upshaw, 16 June 1856, 39.99 acres: SW¼ of NW¼ of Section 4; both in Township 8, Range 17.
4. Butler County AL Deed Book D, p. 286 (Rebecca Upshaw to A. C. L. Davis, 10 September 1856).
5. Spearsville Baptist Church Minutes, Spearsville, Louisiana, church conferences of September 6–17, 1857, and August 1858. A transcription of the original minutes is available at <http://files.usgwarchives.net/la/union/churches/spearsville-bc-minutes.txt>
6. Spearsville Baptist Church Minutes, Spearsville, Louisiana, church conferences 6 August 1859.
7. Union Parish LA Conveyance Book J, p. 316 (Thomas P. Lawrence to Alexander W. Upshaw, 8 April 1859). Upshaw bought the W½ of Section 16, Township 22 North, Range 2 West.
8. Union Parish LA Conveyance Book J, pp. 327–328 (Alexander Wilson Upshaw to William Elisha Upshaw and Jonathan Upshaw, 21 August 1860). Wilson Upshaw sold his brothers the W½ of Section 16, Township 22 North, Range 2 West.
9. 1860 Union Parish LA Federal Census, P.O. Spearsville, 21 July 1860, p. 615, Household #703, line #21: M. E. Upshaw (26, male, Farmer, real estate: \$1000; personal estate: \$155) [recording mistake; should be "*W. E. Upshaw*"; line #22: R. Upshaw (51, female, "*House Keeper*"; line #23: J. Upshaw (age 20, male).
10. 1860 Union Parish LA Federal Census, P.O. Spearsville, 21 July 1860, p. 612, Household #684, line #23: Ed Upshaw (29, male, Farmer, personal estate: \$150); line #24: M. E. Upshaw (23, female, "*House Keeper*"; Household #685, line #25: Rebecca Upshaw (60, female); line #26: Mary Upshaw (55, female); line #27: Elisha Upshaw (28, male, Farmer, personal estate: \$150); line #28: Jonathan Upshaw (20, male, Farmer).
11. Compiled Military Service Records, W. E. Upshaw and J. W. Upshaw, Co. D, 4th Battalion Louisiana Infantry.
12. Bergeron, Arthur W. Jr. *Guide to Louisiana Confederate Military Units, 1861–1865*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989, pp. 157–158.
13. "*The Christian Index*" (Macon, GA), 29 July 1862, Tuesday, p. 3, column 6.
14. Compiled Military Service Records, W. E. Upshaw, Co. D, 4th Battalion Louisiana Infantry.
15. Spearsville Baptist Church Minutes, Spearsville, Louisiana, church conferences of April and May 1864.
16. Wilson Library, Special Collections–Manuscripts, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, Collection #1560, George William Logan Papers, muster rolls of Company F, 2nd Battalion Louisiana Heavy Artillery.
17. Union County AR Marriage Book B, p. 298 (Wm. E. Upshaw to Laura Hunt, 9 May 1864). The marriage was performed by Rev. Samuel T. Cobb.
18. Wilson Library, Special Collections–Manuscripts, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, Collection #1560, George William Logan Papers, muster rolls of Company F, 2nd Battalion Louisiana Heavy Artillery. Elisha Upshaw's assignment as a witness at the court martial comes from Box 4, Folder 45.
19. Spearsville Cemetery (Union Parish LA), tombstone of "*Laura Ann Rockett Hunt*" (13 June 1831–13 Jan 1867). Technically, Laura's surname at her death was "*Laura Upshaw*," but she was buried beside her first husband, Alva J. Hunt, and her modern tombstone gives her surname as "*Hunt*."
20. New Hope Primitive Baptist Church Minutes, Spearsville, Louisiana. This information comes from a page titled "*Earliest Church Members*." A transcription of the original minutes is available at <http://files.usgwarchives.net/la/union/churches/new-hope-church-minutes.txt>
21. Minutes of the Spearsville Baptist Church, Spearsville, Louisiana, December 1867 church conference.
22. Union County AR Marriage Book C, p. 59 (Elisha Upshaw of Union Parish, La., to J. A. Gathright of Union Parish, 1 February 1868).
23. New Hope Primitive Baptist Church Minutes, Spearsville, Louisiana, church conferences of April 13 and November 10, 1872.

24. New Hope Primitive Baptist Church Minutes, Spearsville, Louisiana. A page titled "*Earliest Church Members*" states "*Elisha Upshaw, Oct 1867, By Experience, Dec. Jan,*" with the right side of the page torn. The notice indicates that he was deceased in January 1882, although the year is torn off.
25. 1870 Union Parish LA Federal Census, Ward No. 3, p. 53a, Household #54: Elisha Upshaw, aged 38. 1880 Union Parish LA Federal Census, Ward No. 3, ED #87, pp. 465a-465b, Household #198: Elisha W. Upshaw, aged 48.
26. 1869 Union Parish LA Tax Assessment, W. E. Upshaw. Nineteenth century tax assessments are available in the Louisiana State Archives, Baton Rouge. In 1869, Upshaw's farm consisted of 120 acres valued at \$300, with 78 acres uncultivated.
27. 1870 Union Parish LA Federal Census, Agricultural Schedule, Ward No. 3, pp. 7-8 (37-38), line #1: Elisha Upshaw.
28. 1880 Union Parish LA Federal Census, Agricultural Schedule, Ward No. 3, ED #87, p. 14, line #8: Elisha W. Upshaw.
29. Spearsville Cemetery (Union Parish LA), tombstones of "*Elisha Upshaw*" (28 Feb 1833-8 Jan 1882) and "*Julia A., Wife of Elisha Upshaw*" (23 Dec 1836-23 Nov 1903).

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## Known Children of William Elisha Upshaw

Child of William Elisha Upshaw and Laura Ann Rockett Hunt:

1. **Jonathan Richard Upshaw**

born: 1865, Spearsville, Union Parish, Louisiana

died: 28 Sept 1881, Spearsville, Union Parish, Louisiana

personal information:

Jonathan's date of death and age at death was recorded in a Family Bible, with the record listing him as "*Johnnithan Richard Upshaw*." The information was copied by Mr. Wayne Barrett in the 1950s and given to Timothy D. Hudson in the 1980s.

Children of William Elisha Upshaw and Julia Ann Garner Gathright:

2. **Edward D. Upshaw**

"Ed"

born: 23 Oct 1868, Spearsville, Union Parish, Louisiana

married: 5 Apr 1885, Ashley County, Arkansas, to **Fannie Bryan** (23 May 1866–29 Mar 1934)

died: 5 Jan 1947, Bastrop, Morehouse Parish, Louisiana

buried: Eden Baptist Church Cemetery, Milo, Ashley County, Arkansas

3. **Ida Upshaw**

born: 1 Jan 1870, Spearsville, Union Parish, Louisiana

died: 1870–1880, Spearsville, Union Parish Louisiana

buried: probably Spearsville Cemetery

4. **Ira Franklin Upshaw**

born: 1 Jan 1870, Spearsville, Union Parish Louisiana

married: 15 Dec 1892, Union Parish, Louisiana, **Nancy Alice Sturdivant** (27 Mar 1873–5 May 1948)

died: 29 July 1909, Pineville, Rapides Parish, Louisiana

buried: Central Louisiana State Hospital Cemetery, Pineville, Rapides Parish, Louisiana

5. **William Elisha Upshaw, Jr.**

born: 18 July 1872, Spearsville, Union Parish, Louisiana

married: (1) 20 Dec 1894, Ashley County, Arkansas, to **Martha Frances Phillips** [Fannie] (17 Mar 1877–7 Mar 1918)

(2) 15 Jan 1920, Union County, Arkansas, to **Mary Lucinda Smith** [Mollie] (1874–23 Sept 1951)

died: 26 Mar 1950, Spearsville, Union Parish, Louisiana

buried: Canaan Cemetery, Spearsville, Union Parish, Louisiana

6. **James Milton Upshaw**

born: 24 July 1875, Spearsville, Union Parish, Louisiana

married: (1) 1 Dec 1901, Union Parish, Louisiana, to **Mary Lou Seale** (1885–1924)

(2) 27 Aug 1924, Union Parish, Louisiana, to **Minnie Ola Sumners** (5 Sept 1895–25 July 1968)

died: 4 Sept 1939, Spearsville, Union Parish, Louisiana

buried: Canaan Cemetery, Spearsville, Union Parish, Louisiana

7. **Lena Upshaw**

born: 7 Jan 1878, Spearsville, Union Parish Louisiana

married: 19 June 1898, Union Parish, Louisiana, to **William T. Burnside** (16 Sept 1878–4 Nov 1973)

died: 8 Sept 1964, Spearsville, Union Parish Louisiana

buried: Canaan Cemetery, Spearsville, Union Parish, Louisiana

Stepdaughter of William Elisha Upshaw, daughter of Julia Ann Garner and Thomas Jefferson Gathright:

**Sarah Elizabeth Gathright**

born: 23 July 1861, Union County, Arkansas

married: 11 Nov 1881, Union Parish, Louisiana, to **Wilburne J. Bryan** (7 July 1849–4 Apr 1898)

died: 27 July 1919, Spearsville, Union Parish, Louisiana

buried: Spearsville Cemetery, Union Parish, Louisiana

