

**Randall Beaird**  
**(c1840–1884)**

**Enslaved Man, Freedman, & Successful Farmer**

**of**

**Farmerville, Union Parish, Louisiana**

**by Timothy Dean Hudson**

Randall was a man of African descent born into slavery in 1840 in the Mulberry Creek community of Bibb County, Alabama (now Chilton County). Randall was the son of Ginney, born in 1820, but his father's identity is unknown. Ginney and her children belonged to Stephen Dunn, a widower in his eighties at the time of Randall's birth. By 1843, Dunn's health had declined, and to prevent the courts from determining the disposition of his slaves, he took legal steps to distribute his seven enslaved people he owned among his daughters. He left Ginney and her children Randall, "Lizar," born in 1841, and David, born in 1842, to his grandson, John Washington Beaird. He charged his grandson to hold the three in trust for Dunn's daughter, Zilpha Dunn Beaird [1]. The document reads:

*State of Alabama, Bibb County. Know all men by these presents that I Stephen Dunn of the County and State aforesaid for and in consideration of the Love and affection that I have for my daughter Zilphia Beaird do this Day Grant unto my Grand Son John W. Beard in trust for the Sol [sic] Benefit and use of my Daughter forever certain negres [sic] to wit: Ginney a woman about twenty three years old Randal a Boy about three years old Lizar a Girl about two years old David a boy about one year old to have and to hold the said Negroes to her and her heirs forever. In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and Seal this the 29<sup>th</sup> day of March 1843...*

Following Dunn's death, Zilpha and her husband, William Beaird, moved in about 1845 with their family, including Ginney and her children, to the Zion Hill Community of Union Parish Louisiana, located a few miles northwest of Farmerville. The Beairds acquired a farm, and they operated it for the next four decades.

In 1850 and 1860, Ginney was listed as the only adult enslaved person owned by William Beaird. Randall, Lizar, and David were probably the older children, and the younger ones were undoubtedly Ginney's children born after the family's arrival in Louisiana. We do not know what became of Ginney or her other children after the abolition of chattel slavery in 1865, but Randall took the surname of his former owners and continued to live in the same area. As federal officials

prepared to allow Louisiana to rejoin the Union by ratifying a new state Constitution in 1867, Randall Beaird registered to vote in Union Parish, identified as a “*colored*” voter [2].

Randall Beaird proved an extremely industrious man, becoming a successful small farmer during the difficult postwar period. In 1867, he produced one-half of a bale of cotton, but in 1868, his farm yielded three bales of cotton, and he owned livestock valued at \$100 [3]. Randall rented an 80-acre farm that adjoined that of Francis Marion Tucker, the nephew of his former owner, William Beaird. In 1870, Randall’s farm was valued at \$320. Randall had 20 acres of improved land and 60 acres of unimproved woodland. He owned farming implements and machinery valued at \$10, and during the previous year, he had paid \$10 in wages for farm labor. Beaird’s current livestock holdings and 1869 crop production are given in the table below [4]:

1870 Union Parish, Louisiana Federal Census, Agricultural Schedule Farm of “Randal Beard”													
Livestock as of 1 June 1870						1869 Farm Production							
Horses	Milch cows	Working oxen	Other cattle	Swine	Value livestock	Bushels Indian corn	Bales, Ginned cotton	Bushels sweet potatoes	Pounds of Butter	Value, Home Mfgs	\$ Slaughtered Animals	Total Farm Production	
1	2	--	2	10	175	125	2	40	20	25	20	395	

Between 1871 and 1874, Randall Beaird acquired an 80-acre farm. In 1874, he paid property taxes on his land, valued at \$200, livestock valued at \$155, and vehicles valued at \$60 [5]. In 1880, his farm was described as consisting of 115 acres valued at \$250. He had thirty-five acres cleared and in cultivation, leaving eighty acres of woodland. He owned farming implements and machinery valued at \$25 and livestock valued at \$75. In 1879, he spent \$10 to build and repair fencing. These tables give the details on his livestock and 1879 farm production [6]:

1880 Union Parish, Louisiana Federal Census, Agricultural Schedule Farm of "Ranson" Beaird																		
Livestock on hand, 1 June 1880									1879 Cattle Movement				1879 Sheep Movement					
Horses	Asses/mules	Working Oxen	Milch cows	Other cattle	Swine	Sheep	Barnyard poultry	Other poultry	Calves Born	Cattle Purchased	Cattle Slaughtered	Cattle died, strayed	Lambs Born	Slaughtered	Killed by Dogs	Died of Disease	# Fleece Shorn in 1880	Pounds of Wool
3	--	--	4	5	15	13	20	3	4	--	1	2	7	2	1	1	13	20

1880 Union Parish, Louisiana Federal Census Agricultural Schedule Farm of "Ranson" Beaird Farm Production									
Total Value, 1879 Farm Production	Dozen Eggs Produced	Acres in Indian Corn	Bushels Indian Corn	Acres in Cotton	Bales of Ginned Cotton	Acres of Apple Trees	Bearing Apple Trees	Acres of Peach Trees	Bearing Peach Trees
200	30	20	50	15	4	¼	10	½	10

On 23 December 1882, Randall Beaird paid \$200 in cash for an additional 240 acres [7]. By the end of 1883, although only 44 years of age, Beaird's health appears to have declined. On 5 January 1884, he sold 120 acres of his farm to his neighbor, Thomas Jefferson Price, the grandson of William Beaird's longtime neighbor, Powhatan Boatright [8]. These records confirm that Beaird was illiterate, as he made his mark instead of signing his name.

Randall Beaird died a few weeks after selling Price part of his farm. His death left his farm in the possession of his widow, Ellen, to whom Beaird married in the early 1860s. He had three children who survived him: Willis, Jane, and Richard Beaird. His property included a farm of 280 acres, plus livestock and tools valued at over \$900 [9]. His estate was far more than that of most middle-class white farmers of this era, an indication of the hard work he put into making his farming operation a success.

Unfortunately, Ellen failed to properly manage her husband's farm following his death, not raising sufficient income to pay property taxes. This resulted in the sheriff seizing it to sell for

delinquent taxes. At the sheriff's tax sale held on 30 August 1886, the sheriff sold Beaird's farm to J. R. Kilgore [10].

Randall Beaird's widow and two eldest children all remarried in the 1880s [11], and it appears that they left Union Parish, Louisiana in search of a better life in the 1890s. Randall's youngest son, Richard Beaird, married in 1898 [12]. He and his wife settled in the Zion Hill Community where Randall had lived and eked out a living as sharecroppers until his death on 30 July 1930 [13].

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## Notes

1. Bibb County AL Deed Book E, pp. 263–264; Union Parish LA Conveyance Book A-1, pp. 54–55: Stephen Dunn of Bibb County, Alabama to his grandson, John W. Beaird to hold in trust for Dunn's daughter, Zilphia Beaird.
  2. 1867 Union Parish LA Voter Registration. These records are transcribed online:  
[files.usgwarchives.net/la/union/court/voter1867.txt](https://files.usgwarchives.net/la/union/court/voter1867.txt)
  3. 1867–1868 Union Parish LA Tax Assessment Rolls, Louisiana States Archives, Baton Rouge, LA.
  4. [1870 Union Parish LA Federal Census, Agricultural Schedule, LDS #7857194, Images #580–581, pp. 9–10](#): Ward No. 3, #34: "*Randal Beard*."
  5. 1874 Union Parish LA Tax Assessment Rolls, Louisiana States Archives, Baton Rouge, LA.
  6. [1880 Union Parish LA Federal Census, Agricultural Schedule, LDS #8931506, Image #89, p. 23](#): #4: "*Ranson Beard*."
  7. Union Parish LA Conveyance Record T, p. 228: Randall Beaird purchased the W½ of NE¼ & SE¼ of Section 6, Township 21 North, Range 1 West.
  8. Union Par LA Conveyance Record U, p. 106: Randall Beaird to Thomas J. Price, 5 January 1884. Beaird sold Price the E½ of SE¼ & SW¼ of SE¼ of Section 6, Township 21 North, Range 1 West. This document shows that Randall Beaird could not sign his name, as he made his mark to the transaction.
  9. Union Par LA Succession Book A-1, pp. 129–132 (Succession of Randall Beaird).
  10. Union Par LA Conveyance Record V, p. 392.
  11. Union Par LA Marriage Book 7 (1883–1889):
    - [p. 373](#): Henry Gafford to Janie Beaird, 6 June 1885.
    - [p. 389](#): Willis Beaird to Rachael Bohannon, 22 August 1885.
    - [p. 634](#): Lewis Jones to Ellen Beaird, 3 February 1887.
  12. Union Par LA Marriage Book 9 (1894–1900), p. 674: Richard Beaird to Rebecca Heath, 11 July 1898.
  13. These Union Parish federal census records show Richard Beaird living in Union Parish in 1910, 1920, and 1930:
    - [1910](#): Ward 4, ED #135, p. 188a, Household #12, line #12: Rich. Beaird (age 33, "*mulatto*").
    - [1920](#): "*West Half Ward 4*," ED #129, p. 74a, Household #74: Rich. Beard (age 42, "*black*").
    - [1930](#): Ward 4, ED #56-9, p. 196b, Household #11: Richard Beard.
- Louisiana Death Certificate #13637, 1930, Vol. 31: "*Rich Beird*," died 30 July 1930, aged 52 years, father: "*Rau Beird*;" spouse: "*Della Beird*."

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