

The Whiteds **by Jeffrey P. Whited**

The name Whited has evolved from Whitehead, an English surname that dates to the Middle Ages. Whitehead could mean either “silver headed/elderly” or “fair headed/blond.” In 1790, Whitehead was the 937th most common surname in America, with 94 families bearing the name. It is believed that most Whiteheads in America emigrated from England, though some may have arrived from Scotland and Ireland.

In the source materials, the earliest known ancestors of Gerald Leon Whited were often spelled as “Whitehead,” and sometimes as “Whitead,” or “Whithead,” or “Whitted” - inconsistencies which made this research more challenging. It appears that sometime around the middle 1800's the spelling “Whited” became standard for this line of families. The spelling follows the pronunciation of the name, the second syllable was probably “swallowed” by those with thick accents. In addition, since most of these early Whiteheads were illiterate, they may not have been too concerned with how others spelled their name.

Foreword

This report provides information on the ancestry of Gerald Leon Whited, who was born January 24, 1927, in southern Jackson County, Missouri, and died October 1, 1991, at Trinity Lutheran Hospital, in Kansas City, Missouri.

Most of the research was conducted at the Mid-Continent Public Library on 24 Highway at Spring Street, in Independence, Missouri, and in the LDS Family History Center at 705 West Walnut, also in Independence. Some information on the Whiteds in Tennessee was provided by Mrs. Joyce Curry, who lives in Brisbane, California. She conducted the research for her young granddaughter, Jessica Faye Jordan, who is a descendant of these same Whiteds. Gratitude is also owed to Mrs. Dorothy Cunningham, author of *The Overturf Family*, and to Mrs. Glenda Nelson, granddaughter of Bessie Smith Kosticka, who provided much-needed information on the Smith ancestry.

The dozens of source documents used to compile this information are reliable to varying degrees. Census records are notoriously inaccurate, especially in the earliest years. Census marshals were often friends of those who wielded power in the county, and were handed this well-paying job whether they were capable or not. Because these marshals were paid by the name, accuracy was a low priority. Should a household be empty, for instance, the marshal might ask a neighbor for the information. And, because much of the populace was illiterate, the name spellings and the dates and ages are sometimes inconsistent from census to census. Fortunately, a researcher can turn to other documents for substantiation, such as birth and baptismal records, marriage banns, tax

lists, deeds, court archives, county history books, cemetery records, and old newspapers to name a few.

The research has taken me to southern Missouri on two occasions this year. On September 4, I found the land in Wright County that was settled in 1874 by John whited, great-grandfather to Gerald Leon. The land, now occupied in part by families named Thornhill and Worrel, is tucked away off Missouri Highway 95, near the town of Mountain Grove. Located in the Ozark Plateau, it is a peaceful, private grove, highly wooded with oak and hickory trees. While the elevation in Wright County is notably high – the highest in the state – the land John Whited settled is more rolling than rugged. The rocky terrain is mostly sandstone and marble, and has never been ideal for farming. On November 26, I visited Polk County long enough to tour three cemeteries: the Welsh Cemetery, Barren Creek Cemetery, and Mitchell Campground Cemetery. Buried in each of these peaceful, secluded lots are several of Gerald Leon Whited's ancestors.

Jeff Whited
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