



JOHN GEORGE DAHMER

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

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EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

John George Dahmer was born on July 12, 1838 in the Kline area of Pendleton County, Virginia (now, of course, West Virginia). His parents were Joel Dahmer (1811-1899) and Sarah Stump Dahmer (1812-1901). He was named after his paternal grandfather, John George Dahmer (1775-1842), who came to America from Germany in the 1790s.

John George had five younger siblings: James Washington Dahmer (1841-1885), Sarah E. Dahmer (1845-1922), Deniza Dahmer (1846-1863), Joel Miles Dahmer (1849-1928), and Susan Virginia Dahmer Pitsenbarger (1851-1934). Some sources indicate that he had an older sister who died in infancy - Rebecca Dahmer (1836-1838).

When John George was thirteen years old, his family moved from Kline to an area approximately 20 miles south that later came to be known as Dahmer Gap. The story of this journey is a treasured part of family tradition and has been passed down in vivid detail.

The move got underway on May 1, 1851. Early in the day, Joel and Sarah Dahmer loaded their worldly belongings and five children into two wagons that were each pulled by two horses. The wagons were driven by men named Moore and Hartman. Their destination was a place that was then known as "Propst Neighborhood." In that neighborhood, a family named Stunkard had experienced some hard times. Their house had burned to the ground in 1848. It seems that somebody was lighting a pipe and an ember fell into the place where they stored seeds. The seeds eventually caught fire and destroyed their home. It is said that the person who was smoking the pipe was Mrs. Stunkard.

By 1851, the Stunkards had decided to move west and needed to sell their farm. The farm was located at the head of a gap in the hills with a home site that overlooked a big meadow. Through the meadow ran an old Indian trail. In the early days of the settlement, there had been a battle in the meadow between the Indians and the settlers. There were still some mounds in the meadow that people believed to be Indian burial mounds. And it was rumored to be one of the possible locations for the famous Swadley Gold, a treasure buried in a copper kettle that has never been found.

Jim Stunkard sold his land and house to Joel Dahmer. Some accounts say the log house on the property at the time of the sale not totally finished. The Stunkards

also had an auction because they needed to sell all their personal possessions that they could not carry with them on the long road west. The sale turned into a big community event.

The crowd attracted to the sale included Bill Eye, who considered himself a fighter. He'd recently beaten another fighter in the neighborhood and he was looking to enhance his reputation. So his fondest ambition was to have a bout with Elias Propst, who was also known as Alie. Alie Propst has been described as a Paul Bunyan character, a giant in height and strength. Legend says that he was the kind of guy who could split a hundred rails before breakfast. The kind of guy who would shake a tree trunk if he wanted a few nuts. The kind of guy who once walked all the way to Iowa, leading a bull by a rope as if it were a little dog.

For someone like Bill Eye, beating someone like Alie Propst would have been the ultimate accomplishment.

There was a small problem: Alie Propst didn't want to fight. He too was getting ready to head west and he had little interest in beating up his neighbor as a farewell gesture. But apparently Bill Eye spoke some unkind words to Alie by way of a challenge and that changed Alie's attitude.

The crowd was pleased because they had been hoping for a good fight. At the beginning, Bill Eye managed to catch one of Alie's fingers between his teeth. He bit so hard that the giant man could do nothing until he worked his finger free. At that point, however, Alie proceeded to give Bill Eye a good licking. As Eye was carried from the field of battle, he kept insisting that he wanted a rematch. But the rematch never happened. Alie soon headed west and Bill Eye never acquired his reputation.

It's not clear whether the Dahmer family were aware of these events on their moving day. Joel, Sarah, and the children travelled all day on May 1, 1851, but as night was falling they were only at McCoy's Mill – several long miles short of their destination. The youngest child, Joel Miles Dahmer, was still nursing and had the colic. There was an enslaved woman at the mill by the name of Nellie. She took the baby and sat up with him all night. Nellie kindly said to his mother, "Sarah, go to bed, you have a hard day coming tomorrow."

The next morning, the whole family was able to be on the way toward their new home. They got as close as they could with the wagons, but the road did not go all the way to the house. Fortunately, some neighbors had come to help. None other

than Alie Propst himself was there to greet them. There was a bureau dresser that had taken several men to load onto the wagon when the family left Kline. Legend says that Alie picked up the whole thing by himself. He carried it through the meadow on his broad shoulders and into the house.

In this manner, the Dahmers and their belongings came to their new home. You might say they arrived on the shoulders of a giant.

John George soon found adventure in his new neighborhood. He became friends with Jim Keister, who was raised by George and Sally Propst. One Sunday, according to family lore, the two boys were exploring a narrow passageway with high rocks on both sides leading to a cliff. When they entered into this place, a noise caused them to look around. To their horror, they saw dozens of rattlesnakes crawling out of a snake den. They were frightened because their way of retreat was blocked by rattlers. In looking for a way to escape, one of the boys noticed a tall tree growing close to a cliff. They jumped and grabbed onto the tree and shinnied down, swearing they would never to return to this snaky spot again.

The 1850 census recorded that John George had attended school within the last year. The nature of his early education is not known, but his schooling later took an unusual course. John George traveled to attend a pay school that was located approximately 30 miles away on the Cowpasture River in Highland County. Because of the distance, he boarded with the James Leach family. The teacher of his school was a “full-blooded Irishman” named Patrick Maloy.

Maloy was born in Ireland in County Roscommon in 1815. He reportedly was in London and witnessed Queen Victoria’s coronation in June of 1838 before immigrating to the United States soon afterward. Maloy attended the Staunton Academy in 1847 and graduated with honors from Washington College in 1849. After teaching at Lyndhurst in Augusta County for one year and in Rockbridge County for eleven years, he went to Highland County. Maloy enlisted in the Confederate army in 1861, but was discharged because of illness in November 1862. He subsequently returned to teaching for the rest of his life.

In later years, John George remarked that his decision to attend Maloy’s school was “the best investment I ever made.” He described Maloy as a wonderful mathematician who could solve problems of almost any conceivable nature. John George, in turn, came to regard math as his hobby. By all accounts, Maloy was a very strict disciplinarian who frightened his students, but had some compassion in his nature and enjoyed playing with the children at recess. John George remembered

Maloy as a witty man who liked him quite well and always referred to him as his “curly-headed boy.”

The specific location of this school is not currently known. However, Highland County sources indicate that in Liberty, a community near to where the Leach family lived, there was a large one-room building constructed of hewn pine logs that were chinked with hardened clay mud. This school stood near to the spot where the Cowpasture and Headwater streams converge. This may have been the school attended by John George, although no clear evidence has been found.

Even more unclear is the exact timing of John George’s attendance. In an account written by his son in the 1950s, the relevant timeframe was identified as “a short time after the Civil War.” This statement is surprising because, by the time the war ended, John George would have been nearly 27 years old. It may have been that John George actually attended shortly before the Civil War rather than after. In any event, though, it seems likely that John George was in his twenties when he travelled far from home for Maloy’s tutelage. Interestingly, a pupil at the Liberty schoolhouse later recalled that “[m]any large or grown-up men were in this school . . .”

CIVIL WAR YEARS

When the Civil War broke out, the Dahmer family sided with the Southern cause. The family’s two eldest sons joined the Confederate army. Although the circumstances of their initial enlistment are not recorded, it seems that when James Washington (John George’s younger brother who was known as “Wash”) marched off to war, his parents Joel and Sarah wanted him to carry a testament. Unfortunately, all they had was the cumbersome old family Bible. Their solution was to cut out the 91st Psalm, which Wash Dahmer carried with him during the war. The text of the psalm may give some indication of the family’s thoughts and fears as their two eldest sons left home:

*I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my
God; in him will I trust.*

*Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler,
and from the noisome pestilence.*

*He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings
shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.*

Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day;

Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.

A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.

Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.

Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation;

There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.

Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.

He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him.

With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.

The available military records for John George do not begin until July 1, 1862, when he enlisted in the 62nd Virginia Infantry. Family tradition, however, says that

John George participated in the Battle of McDowell in May of 1862. It seems likely that he was a member of one of the local units that existed prior to the formation of the 62nd Virginia.

The military records state that John George served as a Private in the 62nd Virginia, first in Company A and then in Company K. The records indicate that he enlisted on July 1, 1862 in Pendleton County, was present as of April 30, 1863, and was absent sick from July 26, 1864 through as least December 31, 1864. John George's obituary and other sources state that he served as an assistant quartermaster for the regiment.

Wash Dahmer is shown as having enlisted at the same time as John George and serving as a Private in the same companies of the 62nd Virginia. The records state that Wash was captured on October 4, 1862 at Capon Bridge, West Virginia, and sent to Camp Chase, Ohio on October 9, 1862, but was forwarded to Cairo, Illinois on October 13, 1862 for exchange. According to family tradition, Wash returned home after his time as a prisoner of war in such a weakened condition that he was barely able to talk. He is shown as having returned to his regiment as of April 30, 1863, but as absent sick from September 1, 1863 through at least December 31, 1864. Wash was described as having a “[l]ight complexion, brown hair, brown whiskers, hazel eyes” and being 5’8” in height.

Neither the military records nor family tradition record much more detail about his John George's experiences in the war. It is clear, however, that after the war he frequently attended reunions of his old comrades. His son later wrote the following account of one of these gatherings that took place at Thorn Spring in September of 1886:

The old Confederate soldiers came from far and near to be present and have a good handshake with their dear old comrades. Some wore the gray or the Confederate uniform and some did not. A long line of soldiers was drawn up and marched two abreast of each other, or side by side up and down over a portion of the Reunion Grounds. The band music was furnished by local talent – mostly from Franklin.

The soldiers were called to order by some Confederate officer, usually a captain, and marched according to his instructions. Beginning about 10:30 and ending at noon. An intermission was given until 1:30. Then all assembled to

engage in the parade again that lasted for a while, then a march to the speakers stand where the following names were called: Captain Daugherty, Captain Hiner, Captain Lurty, W.C. Kiser, G.A. Pennybacker, only a few responded. After a few short speeches were made, a business session was called and officers elected for the ensuing year, for another Confederate reunion to be held at the same place.

I remember only one peace officer being present, John W. Byrd, Sheriff of Pendleton County. But all seemed to work in apple-pie order for him. When the time came for the parade all persons stood back on both sides of the Confederate lines, and the men had ample space to march and the crowd had a good view of the soldiers all the time. Good eats were on sale and the best lemonade sold at five cents a glass. A Merry Go Round was operated by the strength of a few men. When it came to a standstill, the one who held the bright ring was given a free ride. A few old time fiddlers and other stringed instruments were played by the best talented musicians of the day. The fantastic toe was displayed gracefully by several men who were in a jolly mood.

Some incidents happened that today may seem a little strange in comparison to the present day. Cider was hauled in kegs and barrels and sold to the public at five cents a pint. Quite a bit was given to old friends free of charge. One man had several gallons of metheglin or bee-cider as it was sometimes called, and sold at five cents a glass. I only remember one man dead to the world by the use of ardent spirits. Two stalwart men picked him up and carried him away from the crowd. John Morgan Propst was one of the helpers and the other was a stranger to me.

MARRIAGE, FAMILY, AND A NEW HOME

Little is currently known about John George's life in the years following the Civil War until the census of 1870. At that time, the census recorded him as still living with his parents and four siblings (his sister Deniza having died in 1863 at the age of 17). His occupation was described as "teacher." Although he is listed as possessing no real estate, his personal estate was valued at \$1,100 and slightly

exceeded that of his father's personal estate (\$1,041). His father's real estate was valued at \$700, while John George apparently owned no land.

The details of John George's teaching career are not presently known. He seems to have been a strict disciplinarian, perhaps following the example of his school days with Patrick Maloy. One of the few surviving anecdotes from his teaching days was told by C.B. Ruddle, who attended a school in Buffalo Hills taught by John George. At that time, whooping cough was a much feared disease among young children. John George announced that he would punish anyone who brought the epidemic into the school. Soon, however, the whooping cough was accidentally brought into the school by the teacher himself. Mr. Ruddle wryly recalled that was "no punishment administered" for this offense, but that nevertheless "Mr. Dahmer was a good school teacher."

On May 25, 1872. John George completed the purchase of 219 acres located about one mile south of Dahmer Gap. He acquired this property for \$200 from Joseph and Martha Propst, the heirs of Tom McQuain. Tom McQuain had purchased the property in 1842 and operated a distillery on the northern part of the tract. He made pure, unadulterated old-time apple brandy, which he sold at the price of 12 and ½ cents per pint or \$1 per gallon.

Sadly, Tom McQuain was the victim of one of the most notorious murders in Pendleton County history. In February of 1864, two men named Lake and Harney came to McQuain's home, representing themselves to be Confederate soldiers. They stayed with McQuain for several days and learned that he was getting ready to take his savings to Augusta County for a business transaction. When McQuain began his journey, the two men followed at a distance. They overtook him as he was crossing Shenandoah Mountain and shot him twice in the back. Harney and Lake stole McQuain's fine saddle horse and \$1,500 in Confederate currency that he had been carrying. They left him to bleed to death on the mountain trail beneath a Spanish oak tree. McQuain's body was later discovered by another traveler and returned to his home, where it was buried in a small hilltop cemetery on the property that John George later purchased.¹

¹ The most complete account of McQuain's murder is found in *'Twixt North and South* by H.M. Calhoun. Calhoun, however, appears to have been mistaken in stating that the event occurred in 1862. Contemporary sources place the murder in 1864. See "To Be Tried for Murder," *Richmond Dispatch*, July 30, 1864 ("Willoughby C. Hardy [sic] and Granville Lake, members of the 10th cavalry, charged with the murder of Charles McGrain [sic] of Pendleton County, in March last, were yesterday sent from Castle Thunder to the Sheriff of that county, to be tried for the offence. They both stoutly deny any participation in the crime."); "Escape of a Supposed Murderer,"

Less than a year after buying the McQuain place, John Dahmer married Eliza Rexroad on March 13, 1873. The groom was 34 and the bride was 31 – an “old” couple by the standards of the day. Eliza was from the Sugar Grove area and her parents were Henry and Mary Ann Rexroad. According to family tradition as remembered by Johnny Arvin Dahmer, Eliza was a “lively somebody” who loved to dance. She “grew up a girl that had parties.” Some of these parties took place during the Civil War when the soldiers would come home to Sugar Grove on furlough. “That was a big time,” Johnny Arvin said. He also commented that “[s]he was a pretty good dancer, it seems.” Johnny Arvin also remembered that Eliza had a happy laugh. She would “just laugh and laugh,” he recalled.

The couple had their first child, Joel Washington (who came to be known as “Bud”) on March 12, 1874. They had a daughter, Sarah Jane, on January 28, 1876. On February 10, 1878, they had a second son whom they simply named John with no middle name. He was delivered by a midwife named Barbara Ann Puffenbarger.

During these years, the family lived in a house of mostly unhewn white oak logs that had been on the property when they purchased it. They had occasionally contentious relations with their near neighbors, Ananias and Susan Pitsenbarger. Susan was a sister of John George, but their social interactions were not uniformly cordial. Family tradition, as related by Johnny Arvin Dahmer, says that after one unhappy visit by the Pitsenbargers to the Dahmers, Ananias turned to Susan and said “well, it looks like you got into it worse than ever.” On August 27, 1877, Ananias found it necessary to swear to a rather remarkable affidavit:

West Virginia/Pendleton County to-wit:

This day personally came Ananias J. Pitsenbarger and made oath before me that he never told John Morgan Propst that ‘Old Lize Dahmer had bewitched all four of his cows, that she took all the milk & butter from his cows, that she took 8 [] 10 lbs twice a week to the S[tore],’ that he never told said Propst that ‘Old Lize Dahmer was so drunk she wasn’t able to go over from her house to Joel

Staunton Vindicator, Aug. 17, 1864 (“Several months [ago] an old gentleman by the name of McQuain, while on his way from Pendleton county to Harrisonburg, to invest his money in C.S. Bonds, was murdered.”).

Dahmer's, and that he never told said Propst that Joel Dahmer had stolen a jug from him."

In the 1880 census, John George was described as a "farmer" and Eliza's occupation was listed as "keeping house." The family's eldest son, Bud, is shown as living with his grandparents Joel and Sarah Dahmer in Dahmer Gap. This record is consistent with family memory, which says that Bud enjoyed staying with his grandparents and that the arrangement became permanent for many years.

Around 1884, John George built a new home to replace the old cabin. This home was an innovation -- the first frame house to be constructed in the community. The house was built by Miles Dahmer. The lumber was sawed by John and Frank Fultz using steam engine power. The Fultzes brought their steam engine equipped with a whistle that they blew as the engine moved along. At that time, such a sound was a novelty to the people of the county and, according to Johnny Arvin Dahmer, made a particularly strong impression on a woman named Katie Hoover. Upon hearing it, she went to the neighbor's house and said, "You all can quit work now, because the end of time has come." She sincerely believed that she had heard Gabriel blowing his horn.

The new Dahmer home had two stories, five rooms (three down and two up), and a front porch that ran the length of the house. The porch overlooked a front yard surrounded by a picket fence. Judging from an old photograph, the yard was filled with large rose bushes.

Also on the property were a log spring house, chinked with pieces of wood rather than mud, and a dry house. The latter had a stove inside and was used for drying fruit such as apples and peaches. Eliza would store the dried fruit in old oatmeal boxes. Eliza also enjoyed making lemonade and would send the children to fetch water from the coldest spring on the property (by Tom McQuain's old still house) for that purpose.

In 1885, tragedy struck the family when Wash Dahmer was killed in an accident in Dahmer Gap. The event was later described by John Dahmer as follows:

On January 20, 1885, my uncle James Washington Dahmer, was killed by a crooked chestnut log on the Joel Dahmer place, about one-fourth of a mile from the house, but not directly in sight of it.

When he arose in the morning and did the chores around the house and on the farm, he told the family that he was going to burn brush. He did so, and was in the habit of coming home in the evening around four o'clock to do the evening work. Because he did not come home at the usual time my brother, J.W. Dahmer, was sent to look for him. As he approached the clearing he found my uncle lying in a brushheap face downward and a log lying on the back of his head and neck. His face was burned beyond recognition.

The news spread and many people came, but no removal was made until Justice of the Peace I.S. Pennybacker, came and decided that an inquest was not necessary because it was an accidental death.

It appears that the *Mountain News* (published at that time in Franklin) carried a story about the incident that led to accounts being published in other papers in West Virginia and Virginia. The *Wheeling Register* ran a lurid article with the headline “ROASTED ALIVE: Horrible Fate of a Pendleton County Farmer.” The article read as follows:

On Wednesday of last week Wash. Dahmer, son of Mr. Joel Dahmer, who lives near Franklin, was engaged in rolling logs and burning brush. He had no help. In the evening he was missed, or rather did not turn up at his home at the usual time. A search was instituted by friends and in a short time his remains were found in a brush heap, the body burned almost beyond recognition. The eyes were burned out, the nose off and hands burned to a crisp. When found a log was lying on his body – or what was left of it. It is supposed a log caught him in a runaway, throwing him into the burning heap.²

² *Wheeling Register*, Jan. 28, 1885, p.1. The *Greenville Banner* in Augusta County, Virginia similarly reported on January 28, 1885 that “on Tuesday of last week, Mr. J. Wash. Dahmer, while rolling logs and burning brush, was killed by a log weighing over a ton rolling on his head. He was also burned to a crisp save his feet and legs below the knees.”

THE DAHMER POST OFFICE

In the 1890s, John George took an active part in getting a mail route established between Franklin and Doe Hill, Virginia. When this was done, those in authority suggested that the new post office should be named Dahmer in his honor. The office and mail route came into existence August 7, 1896. John George served as the postmaster and the first mail was carried by H.A. Eye of Harrisonburg.

The establishment of the post office sparked the creation of a small community. In those days, the people of the area would walk to the post office for their mail. In addition, Granville Blizzard established a blacksmith shop nearby. He also did woodworking and was good at fixing wagons.

This combination of services made the Dahmer home a popular gathering place. As Johnny Arvin Dahmer later recalled, “people would come on Sundays” thinking “we’ll see somebody there, and get the mail, get the mail.” There was also another attraction. As Johnny Arvin put it, “they kept some good cider, and my grandmother was pretty nice in passing out cider, and cider will draw people. Even the women liked to taste a little.” By these means, the “Propst Neighborhood” became “Dahmer.”

In 1898, John Dahmer began writing a column for the *South Branch Review* describing the local news from the community. He continued this column under the title of “Dahmer” (later in the *Pendleton Times* for more than 60 years).

Not surprisingly, Dahmer became a regular stop for traveling salesmen. These included an agent of the Singer Company by the name of Ford, who traversed the country in a horse and buggy selling sewing machines for a price around \$125. Ford came one day to the Dahmer home and showed a new machine to Eliza, but John George opposed it. Ford tried to persuade him by saying that the machine was so excellent that few families could live without it; “I have never taken but two machines back to my wagon” he claimed. John George coolly replied “you may have the pleasure of taking the third one back.”

As the century drew to a close, the 1900 census recorded that the family living at Dahmer consisted of John George and Eliza, as well as all three of their children, Sarah, John, and Bud. Interestingly, Bud was also listed as living with his grandmother and aunt in Dahmer Gap as a “stepson.” His grandfather Joel had died the prior year.

SQUIRE DAHMER

John George for many years served as a Justice of the Peace. The date when he was first elected has not been identified, but he reportedly served for approximately 40 years. If that is true, then his tenure would have begun in the 1870s. In this capacity, John George exercised jurisdiction over civil disputes of up to \$300 and criminal matters if the penalty did not exceed \$10 or 30 days imprisonment. He also conducted preliminary criminal hearings. Performing these functions was commonly known and “squiring” and John George became known as “Squire Dahmer.”

Press accounts from this period refer to John George’s judicial activities. On May 10, 1906, the *Harrisonburg Daily News* reported the news from Pendleton County and noted that “Justices Carter and Dahmer took turns about dispensing justice, to those wanting it here, Saturday.” It later reported on August 17, 1906 that “in a civil action before Justice Dahmer, Saturday, L.E. Bowers was given judgment against L.S. Cook for the sum of \$12.60, with costs.” The *Daily News* in 1907 variously reported that “Marion Moyers secured a judgment for \$160.56 against P.P. Nelson yesterday before Justice Dahmer” (April 24, 1907), that “Casper Cowger was today given a preliminary hearing before Justices Carter and Dahmer on the charge of committing a felonious assault upon Melie Lerner” (June 7, 1907).

Reflecting on the judicial career of John George, Johnny Arvin Dahmer commented that “people would get mad at him, would go to the grave mad at him.” He also recalled that one day, after deciding a case in Franklin, John George walked into a nearby store and struck up a conversation with John McClure. “I decided a case today that satisfied both sides,” John George told him. McClure responded by saying "John, if you did that, you performed a miracle."

LATER YEARS

In 1907, the two youngest children of John George and Eliza both got married. Sarah Jane married Granville Blizzard and John (who had been teaching school for almost 10 years) married Estella Dickenson. All six of these adults lived under the same roof. Then, in early 1908, the Blizzards had their first child (Elsie). In September of 1908, Estella and John had their first child (Ella). At that point, there were three families living in a five-room house with two small babies. Estella latter commented, with characteristic understatement, that this arrangement was “quite a change for all the people in the household.”

This living situation was not destined to last. Before winter arrived, Estella took Ella and returned to her parents on Dickenson Mountain. John stayed on with his parents and continued to teach school. Before long, he started building a one-room home just a short distance away from his parents. He bought lumber and did most of the building himself while continuing to teach. A new Dahmer family (John, Estella, and Ella) moved to their new home on October 4, 1910. The next year, they were joined by a second daughter (Verona) and the family ultimately grew to include four more daughters (Elvira, Arla, Jenny, and Rose) and a son (Johnny Arvin).

John George, at some point in the next decade, declined to run for another term as Justice of the Peace. In September of 1916, he and Eliza executed a deed to split their property between their two youngest children. The southern part was transferred to John and the northern part went to Sarah Jane, with John George and Eliza retaining a life estate in the properties. The two siblings were granted rights of way across the property of the other, including with respect to “the water” (not identified). Sarah Jane also was granted “the cellar and a right of way to it” without further explanation.

By 1920, John George was regarded as the oldest man in the community. He seems to have been in declining health and, at the time of the 1920 election, was mentioned as one of three “lifelong Democrats and Confederate veterans” who were unable to make it to the polls. He clearly, however, retained sufficiently vitality to make an impression on his grandson Johnny Arvin Dahmer. Johnny Arvin later said that his earliest memory involved sitting beside the stove in his grandfather’s house. Moreover, when the young boy broke his arm, he was not taken to a doctor and was instead presented for “curing” by his grandfather. John George, like his father before him, practiced healing arts that combined folk remedies with a mixture of occult and Christian beliefs. John George rubbed his hands over the broken arm, mumbled some words, and put the arm in a handkerchief sling. In later years, Johnny Arvin was circumspect in describing this event. He did note, however, that when he underwent a military physical at the time of World War II, an x-ray was taken and showed that the bone had healed perfectly without ever being set.

John George died in January of 1923. His son recorded that “Quite a crowd attended the funeral of John G. Dahmer last Sunday. Rev. Walter G. Dyer preached a very appropriate sermon for the occasion and giving good advice to both old and young.” An obituary appeared in the *Pendleton Times* as follows:

John G. Dahmer, died at his home at Dahmer, W.Va., on Monday night, January 8, 1923, after a general

breakdown caused by the infirmities of old age.

The deceased was a man of character and highly respected by all who knew him. He served his county as justice of the peace for many years, possibly longer than any other justice ever held office in the county, and finally retired declining to again be a candidate about 10 years ago. He was also the postmaster at his office for many years.

He was born July 12, 1838 and at his next birthday would have been 85 years of age. He was one of the few surviving Confederate Soldiers of his county, having been a member of Company K, 62nd Regiment, and was Assistant Quartermaster of Imboden's Brigade. He is survived by one daughter, Mrs. Granville H. Blizzard, and two sons John and Joel W. all of whom live in the community. Funeral services were held on Wednesday and the burial was in the home burial grounds.

After the death of John George, Eliza remained an important and genial presence in the community. She became increasingly sick and could no longer get around, but continued to host gatherings in her home. In 1925, the Rev. Walter G. Dyer came and preached a "splendid sermon" from the 33rd Psalm. Eliza and her children reportedly were "highly pleased with the large attentive crowd that was there."

She also continued to hold parties to celebrate her January birthday. These occasions included delicacies such as cake (a rarity in the neighborhood at that time), pie, warm bread with butter, pickles, and of course Eliza's best cider. These parties were well attended. Eliza's guests at her last party in 1927 included H.D. Bowers, who had lived long enough to become a great-grandfather but had never before attended a birthday party.

The hospitality that Eliza provided made a lasting impression on her grandson, Johnny Arvin. Sixty years later, he still remembered the happy atmosphere at his grandparents' house. He recalled that their gatherings often featured string music provided by the Blizzard boys, dancing, and an open invitation to everyone to have something to eat. According to Johnny Arvin, Eliza particularly wanted children to come inside and enjoy the food. If the kids were too "bashful" to do so on their own, she would enlist someone to drag them in and make sure they enjoyed a big dinner.

Eliza died in February of 1927. Her obituary in the *Pendleton Times* stated as follows:

Mrs. Eliza Dahmer, widow of the late John G. Dahmer, died on Monday, February 14, 1927, at her home in Dahmer, West Virginia, in her 88th year.

She was born Jan. 8, 1840, and lived all her life in that community where her children all live. Her husband, who was a justice of the peace and held the office for more than forty years, died about four years ago and she has since lived with her daughter, Mrs. Granville H. Blizzard.

Mrs. Dahmer was a woman of sterling character, was of a bright and sunny disposition, and was of that class of good, conscientious home loving women who are loved by all who know them. She was a life-long member of the Lutheran Church and lived up to her profession and was ready when the summons came to leave this world.

She is survived by three children: Mrs. Sarah J. Blizzard, Joel W. Dahmer, and John Dahmer, all living in the immediate neighborhood on adjoining farms.

Funeral services were conducted by her pastor, Rev. Walter G. Dyer, at 10 o'clock on Wednesday morning, and the internment was in the home burying ground.

Nearly one hundred years later, the graves of John George and Eliza may still be found in a small hill-top cemetery overlooking their former home. They share a common marker that stands tall and proud. The south face of this stone commemorates John George and the east face commemorates Eliza. On the north face, there is a single inscription that applies to them both. "Gone but not forgotten" is how it reads.