

Wiley Rogers Biography

Wiley Rogers was born in 1877 a possible product of Andrew Roger's second marriage to Susan Johnson. Andrew Rogers initially married Mary Jane Poston in November 14, 1867. The 1870 Montgomery County census listed the family in District 12 which includes the City of Clarksville. Andrew was working as a Mill Hand and had a personal estate of \$100. Two children were listed: Reuben, aged 1 and Louisa, aged 4 months. On May 8, 1871 Andrew bought a city lot on St John Street from Z. M. Taylor for \$207.50. Andrew bought a second lot next to the first lot from Taylor on November 20, 1874 for his wife and paid \$125. Between 1874 and 1879 Mary Jane Poston died because on November 20, 1879 Andrew married Susan Johnson.

The family was listed in the 1880 census as living between College and Marian and Spring and First Street. Andrew was working as a cooper and six children are listed in the household: Ness, aged 12; Lou, aged 10; Ben, aged 8; Andrew Jr., aged 6; Willie (or Wiley), aged 4; and Frank, aged 3. Unless Andrew "took up" with Susan before they were married, all these children were Mary Jane Roger's prodigy. Later in legal documents, Susan will claim Wiley as her son.

Andrew Rogers probably died in 1888 because that was the year his will was probated. He left the homestead to Susan and upon her death, to the children to share and share alike. One proviso was "if before that time any of the children named shall so conduct himself or herself as to bring disgrace upon the family then in that event, I direct that such one are entitled to only ½ of his or her share, the balance to be divided among the others." This directive might indicate that Andrew was aware of problems with some members of his family.

On September 26, 1892 Wiley Rogers bought a lot on Baseball Hill¹. On April 12, 1894 Wiley took out a marriage license to marry Ellen Ray. He had to pay a bond to get this document. It is doubtful that the marriage took place. First, the Certification of Matrimony section was never filled out. Second, there is no other evidence of marriage in any other document. Wiley's brother Benjamin Franklin Rogers married Carrie Bailey on June 20, 1894. Susan Rogers deeded a house on 11th Street to Wiley out of the love she had for her son. She made the transfer depended on Wiley paying the mortgage and allowing Amanda Conrad to live there for life.

Sometime in the spring of 1896, Wiley moved to Louisville, Kentucky. That summer he was employed by Mrs. John McComb as a cook. He was a good employee until February 13, 1897 when he deliberately tried to burn her house down. He prepared breakfast and did his morning chores as usual, but then took coal oil and poured it on excelsior² in the basement and all over the furnishings in an upstairs room and set it on fire. While the fire department fought the flames, Wiley laughed heartily. The Courier-Journal reported that his mind had become deranged over love and religion. The authorities in Louisville determined Wiley was of unsound mind and that he was from Clarksville and had property there so they put him on a train and sent him to Clarksville. He went back to Louisville at the first opportunity and Louisville sent him back home again.

¹ Martin and Elder Street compose this hill.

² Wood shavings used to pack fragile objects.

On February 19, 1897 Wiley's brother, Andrew Jr., was arrested for lunacy. He was wandering along Greenwood Avenue only half clad and scaring the women there. This is the last record currently found on Andrew Jr. It is possible that he was committed.

On June 14, 1898 Susan Rogers was arrested. She was preaching and swearing in the Ninth Ward and was fined \$20. They decided she was of unsound mind and were going to turn her over to the county for proper care. On March 1, 1899 the Sheriff was ordered by the County Court to empanel a jury to determine her sanity. This jury met, heard evidence and on March 6, 1899 judged Susan to be of unsound mind and recommended she be sent to the poor house.

The 1900 census listed Benjamin and Carrie living at 114 St John St which was probably the Andrew Rogers homestead. Benjamin was working as an upholsterer. Three children were listed in the household: Laurine, aged 5; Lillie, aged 2; and Webster, aged 8 months. Susan Rogers, now aged 60 and Wiley, aged 23 completed the household. Wiley was working as a carpenter.

Wiley was arrested on June 30, 1902 when police broke up a crap game on Spring Street near the lower Red River Bridge³. He was arrested again on December 22, 1902 when police broke up a crap game in Gallows' Hollow⁴ and was fined \$6. This is the last time he is mentioned in the local paper until they printed his obituary.

By 1910, Susan Rogers apparently died. The 1910 census shows Benjamin and Carrie living at 114 St John Street with 4 children: Laurena, aged 14; Lillie, aged 12; Webster, aged 10; and Benjamin Jr, aged 4. Wiley, now aged 34 according to the census, was working as a carpenter.

On April 15, 1910 Ben, as executor of Andrew Roger's estate, petitioned to sell the plot of land Andrew bought for his first wife. At this point only 4 of Andrew Rogers children were living: Ben, Wiley, Eubay (living in St Louis) and Frank (living in Chicago). The land sold for \$52 with costs of the sale at \$13. This meant each of the siblings received \$9.75 which in today's money would equal \$305.85.

On January 29, 1918 Wiley Rogers was found dead on the floor of the 11th Street house Susan Rogers had deeded to him. Apparently, sometime after the 1910 census, he moved from his brother's house to live on his own. He was found by his cousin Annie Moore who was probably taking care of him. A coroner's jury determined he died of natural causes. He was buried in Mt Olive on January 30, 1918.

Ben became the administrator of Wiley's estate and on February 20, 1918 petitioned the county court to sell Wiley's 11th Street house and the lot on Baseball Hill. He had sold Wiley's household goods for \$26.40 and presented an estate bill to the court of \$141.54. When the land went up for auction, Ben bought the 11th Street property for \$230 and the lot on Baseball Hill for \$22. After paying the estate bill, each of the remaining siblings received \$34.21 which in today's dollars would equal \$675.16.

At this time, it is unknown when Andrew, Susan, or Andrew Jr died or where they were buried. Wiley's Roger's estate did not buy a headstone to mark his grave.

³ Probably near the current bridge over the Red River on New Providence Boulevard.

⁴ Valleybrook Park on Crossland Avenue is in this area.

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