

## **The Family of the Reverend McKinley Jones**

McKinley Jones was born in 1923. He is the son of McKinley Jones (birth date 1893) and Mary Lou Lanier Jones (birth date 1906). McKinley Jones stated that his great grandfather, Ben Lanier, was bought at the slave market in Mobile, Alabama and brought to Madison County by the Laniers to work on their plantation. A map drawn in 1875 shows thwhoe Laniers owning an extensive amount of land on what is now Redstone Arsenal as well as other areas of Madison County. Further information on the family of the Laniers (White) can be found in Madison, Alabama's sesquicentennial book written by John Rankin (*Memories of Madison: A Connected Community, 1857-2007*, The Donning Co., Virginia Beach, VA, 2007).

To supplement the oral history passed down to him about his Lanier ancestors, McKinley Jones researched the Laniers (White) who had purchased his great grandfather. Jones looked to census information and perused wills and other archival records of the Lanier family. In doing this, he located a list of Lanier slaves, and from it learned the names of his great grandfather's siblings. The records indicated his great grandfather, Ben Lanier, was born in 1840 and had married a woman named Edna (born in 1851), who was a house slave of the Laniers. The brothers of Ben were Davey (Crockett), Jerry Lanier, and Robert Lanier.

McKinley Jones visited the office of Mr. Pete Lanier, who was a well-known, elderly Huntsville attorney. Pete Lanier's grandfather had also been a prominent attorney in Huntsville. He was admitted to the Bar in Alabama in 1899 and served terms as City Attorney, City Commissioner, and Mayor of Huntsville. Jones said Pete Lanier (now deceased) seemed reluctant (perhaps felt awkward) in discussing this part of his family history.

Milton Lanier, Sr. was born in 1878, the third son of Burwell Lanier, who was the son of Isaac Lanier, an early settler of Huntsville. The Laniers began holding land in the area of Madison and the area that is now Redstone Arsenal as early as 1836. They owned many slaves. The Lanier family not only represents the earliest settlers of the land but also figures substantially in shaping the population of the land. The slaves who were owned by the Laniers took the Lanier name when they were freed. The name is well represented in the Black population of Madison County and elsewhere in Alabama today.

In 2005, the researcher contacted the daughter of John Lanier, who lives in the historic home in Madison that was passed down through the Lanier family. She was too young to have personal recollections about the Lanier holdings on the arsenal.

The family charts presented on the following pages were compiled by McKinley Jones. He has traced his lineage from his maternal great grandparents, Ben Lanier and Edna Lanier and his paternal great grandparents, Paul L. Jones, Sr. and Lucy Ann Jones, all of whom were born in slavery.