Moses Rozier

(1839/1852–aft. 1900)

Enslaved Man, Freedman, & Farmer

of

Pulaski County, Georgia

by Timothy Dean Hudson

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Introduction

Moses Rozier [Mose] (1839/1852–aft. 1900) was born along Gum Swamp Creek in what was then northern Pulaski County, Georgia. That region was put into Bleckley County in 1912. He was of African descent and born enslaved on one of the farms along the creek.

Based on their very close connection illustrated by the surviving records, Moses Rozier must have been either the son or younger brother of Jonas Rozier (c1812–1890s), an enslaved man who grew up as the property of John Rozar Sr. Jonas' mother, Winn, had no children born between 1825 and 1829 that survived early childhood, for her children listed on the 1829 inventory of Rozar's estate matched those he listed in his 1825 will [1]. However, Winn might have had additional children born during the 1830s.

If Moses were born about 1839 or in the early 1840s, he could have been Winn's son, making him Jonas' younger brother. In this case, Moses would have grown up as an enslaved man belonging to one of John Rozar's elder sons, Seaborn Rozar and John Rozar Jr. Alternatively, Moses could have been Jonas' son, although the records do not give any indication that Moses was the son of either of Jonas' two known wives, Jane or Lydia. These possibilities frame the kinship conundrum that shapes Moses Rozier's early life.

Moses Rozier has only been located on two federal census records, and these give contradictory information regarding his approximate year of birth. His age given on the 1880 federal census places his birth in about 1852 [2], while the 1900 federal census records his birth in February 1839 [3]. Neither he nor his wife have been located on any census record after 1900. A record described below suggests that Moses was at least eighteen years old by January 1867, so he was probably born no later than about 1849.

Moses' close connections to Jonas Rozier and his sister, Jinny Rozier, place him into the relatively small Rozar–Regan enslaved community along Gum Swamp Creek. After emancipation, most adopted the surname *"Rozier"* or county officials assigned it to them. Although the white Rozar families consistently signed their name as *"Rozar,"* court officials used the *"Rozier"* spelling for black families after emancipation. As bureaucratic systems expanded between 1880 and 1930, they increasingly enforced standardized surname spellings. By the early twentieth century, both white and black family members primarily used *"Rozier."*

Together, these records situate Moses within an interrelated enslaved family network whose relationships shaped his movements during and after slavery.

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Reconstruction Labor Contract

The first known record of Moses Rozier dates to the latter portion of 1866, when he, Jonas Rozier, and Jacob Rozier had settled in Houston County near the county seat of Perry. Houston lay along the western side of Pulaski County, with Hawkinsville, the county seat of Pulaski, lying just a few miles east of the Houston County line. Along with them was Lucinda Rozier, a former enslaved woman who was possibly Jacob's wife, and Meady P. Rozar, the middle son of their former owner, John Rozar Jr.

Jacob Rozier and the other former slaves settled on the farm of John Faulk, an exceedingly wealthy farmer who apparently split his time between his plantations in Houston County and those further north near Macon, in neighboring Bibb County [1]. On 18 January 1867, Jacob Rozier and the others, all described as a *"freedmen,"* entered into a contract with Faulk in Houston County for the ensuing year. Faulk promised to supply the former slaves with *"mules, land and working utensils, quarters and fuel."* In exchange for their labor on his land, he also promised to give them one third of the *"corn, cotton, peas and potatoes raised upon the place."*

For their part, Jacob Rozier and the other freedmen agreed to cultivate all the land that Faulk *"set apart for them to cultivate,"* and to grow the type of produce directed by him and *"under his supervision and instructions, or that of his agent."* They promised to *"keep the fences in good repair,"* to perform other labor requested by Faulk, and to *"be responsible for all damage done to Stock while in our possession."* At the end of the growing season, they agreed *"to gather the crop and deliver the cotton at the depot on the Macon & Brunswick Rail Road or in Macon."* Rozier and the other freedmen also agreed:

> *…to conduct ourselves in an honorable, peaceable, and obedient manner towards said Faulk, his family or agent, and not allow his Stock or property of any kind to be injured or destroyed if in our power to prevent it. We further agree to pay the said Faulk for all demands he may have against us for provisions or other indebtedness. We further agree that if one, or any of us, fail to comply with the above contract, the one so failing Shall forfeit his, her, or their part of the crop. We also agree, that we or either of us voluntarily leave the plantation of said Faulk during working hours we forfeit two dollars (2^{00}) per day, or any fractional part thereof.*

Jacob Rozier and the others made their marks to the document. To ensure that it was properly read to them, two witnesses certified that they heard the contract read to the freedmen and saw them make their marks to it. One of the witnesses was Meady Rozar, the third son of John Rozar Jr. As Jacob was previously enslaved by either Seaborn or John Rozar Jr., then he would have known Meady Rozar from the time of his birth in the mid-1830s [2].

Jonas moved into southwestern Pulaski County about 1868, but Moses' whereabouts between 1868 and 1875 are unclear. He is not listed on the Pulaski County tax digests during that interval, nor was he enumerated on the 1870 federal census of Pulaski County. Young freedmen often moved frequently during Reconstruction, and his absence may indicate he worked as an itinerate farm laborer.

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Moses Rozier's Connections to Jonas & Jinny Rozier

In 1875, Jonas Rozier's sister, Jane Rozier (Jinny), paid taxes on her 435 acres of farmland in the Salem Militia District in northeastern Pulaski County, with her sons, William A., James O., and Ephraim Rozier listed after her. Since they cultivated their mother's land, Jinny's sons were identified as freedmen without a white employer. The only other Rozier in the Salem Militia District was Jacob Rozier Jr., listed immediately before Jinny. Unlike her and her sons, Jacob had a white employer, indicating that he cultivated a different tract of land [1].

In late 1875 or early 1876, Moses Rozier joined Jinny and her sons on her farm in the Salem Militia District. His absence from the 1875 tax record indicates that he must have lived elsewhere in the years prior to 1876.

On the 1876 tax record, Moses was listed between Jinny and her three grown sons, William A., James O., and Ephraim Rozier. They all paid taxes on household and kitchen furniture, farming tools, and their poll tax, but Moses was only assessed a poll tax [2]. Moses Rozier continued to pay taxes as a freedman living in the Salem Militia District near Jinny's sons through 1884 [3]. On the 1880 federal census, Moses and his family were listed as living among Jinny Rozier's family, enumerated between her sons Ephraim and Thomas [4].

In 1884, Moses paid taxes on household and kitchen furniture valued at $10 and his poll tax.

Also in 1884, Moses Rozier is listed next to Jonas Rozier in the Whitfield Militia District in southwestern Pulaski County, but he was assessed only a poll tax. This indicates that during 1884, Moses left the old Rozar farm now cultivated by Jinny's sons and settled near Jonas in southwestern Pulaski.

In 1885, Moses was listed next to Jonas on the tax digest of the Blue Spring Militia District. While Jonas owned livestock, household furniture, and farming tools more valuable than any other black farmer in the area, Moses was only assessed his poll tax [5]. On 27 April 1885, Moses and Jonas Rozier both mortgaged property to Richard Henry Vaughn to secure their repayment of supplies he furnished for that growing season [6].

In 1886, Moses was listed by himself in the Blue Spring District, assessed only for household and kitchen furniture valued at $8 and his poll tax. Meanwhile, Jonas was listed in the adjoining Whitfield District. On the 1887 tax digest, *"Mose"* and Jonas Rozier were both assessed taxes in the Whitfield District, with Moses assessed for his poll tax and household and kitchen furniture valued at $15 [7]. On 1 August 1887, to secure payment of several promissory notes, Moses and Jonas jointly mortgaged *"Our entire Crop of Corn and Cotton now growing on land cultivated by and for us on* [the] *R. G. Fulghum place in this Pulaski County"* [8].

Moses' residence on the old Rozar farm in the Salem District with Jinny and her sons during the 1876–1884 period, together with the joint activities with Jonas in the Whitfield District in 1885–1887 suggest a very close familial relationship between Jonas and Moses Rozier. Unfortunately, these records do not clearly indicate their precise connection.

The federal marshal who visited the Salem District to enumerate the 1880 census recorded a stark difference between Moses and Jinny's sons. Her sons were mixed-race, as their father was Seaborn Rozar, a white man. The marshal recorded them and their children as *"mulatto,"* while Moses and his family were described as *"black."*

While certainly not definitive, this suggests that Moses was not Jinny's son. This would imply that his direct connection was to Jonas rather than Jinny. Unfortunately, no evidence has been located to help determine whether Moses were Jonas Rozier's son or younger brother.

Another tie between Moses and Jonas Rozier is a statement made on the death certificate of Mariah Rozier, Moses and Julia's second surviving daughter. Born in 1886, Mariah married James Miller [Jim] in about 1904, although no record of their marriage has been located. In 1910, they lived in the Finleyson Militia District of southern Pulaski County with their two young children.

On 26 May 1919, Mariah gave birth to a stillborn baby in what must have been a difficult birth. At 8:00 a.m., she died of *"Hemorages caused by childbirth."* Jim Miller provided the information for Mariah's death certificate, and he identified Mariah's father as *"Jonas Rozier."*

This reference underscores a close family connection between Moses and Jonas. When Mariah was born in 1886, Jonas was an elderly man, and the 1900 federal census identifies Mariah as Moses and Julia's daughter. Jonas was more likely Mariah's grandfather or uncle rather than her father.

Mariah Miller was buried in the Mount Air Baptist Church Cemetery, the same cemetery in which Jonas' wife and daughter are buried [9].

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Pulaski County, Georgia Sharecropper

Like most freedmen, Moses Rozier earned his living by farming. He was a sharecropper, growing cotton as his cash crop. He does not appear to have purchased land, meaning he continually had to negotiate tenancy arrangements with local landowners.

Moses married Julia Ann (Feb 1850–aft. 1900) about 1872, Her maiden name is unknown since no official record of their marriage has been located in either Pulaski or in the surrounding region. In 1880, they only had one child, whose birth was recorded as April 1880. On 2 May 1888, *"Julia Ann Rozar"* mortgaged

> *My entire Crop of Cotton & Cotton seed now growing and to be grown by me this year said Crop consisting 8 acres of land more or less on the Plantation Known as the Burrows place in Pulaski County Georgia.*

to R. H. Vaughn to secure payment of $25 due 1 October 1888 [1]. It is unclear why Julia made the mortgage instead of Moses, though such arrangements were not uncommon when husbands were indebted or temporarily absent.

As described earlier, in 1890, Moses and Jonas Rozier paid their taxes in the Whitfield Militia District. There are no additional recorded mortgages for Moses or Julia Rozier in Pulaski County, but they continued farming in Whitfield through 1900, when she was listed as having a total of fifteen children, only eight of whom were then alive [2]. There is no known record of either of them after 1900, so it is unclear whether they died in Pulaski County or moved elsewhere with their children.

Moses and Julia Ann Rozier's third daughter, Ellen Rozier, married Daniel Fitzgerald on 6 July 1906 [3]. Ellen and Dan Fitzgerald are also not found on the 1910 federal census in Georgia, but between 1920 and 1950, they lived in Wilcox County, Georgia. It is possible that Moses and Julia Rozier followed them to Wilcox County and died there. Such movements were typical among freedmen families as they sought better tenancy terms or proximity to adult children.

In the end, Moses Rozier's life trajectory—from enslavement along Gum Swamp Creek to decades of tenancy in Pulaski County—embodies the broader experience of freedmen navigating shifting labor systems and fragile economic footholds to sustain family and community after emancipation.

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Notes

Introduction

1. Pulaski County GA Will Book A (1817–1854), pp. 108–110: Will of John Rozar, written 12 August 1825, recorded by Pulaski County Clerk on 25 March 1830. Pulaski County GA Record of Sales (1825–1836), pp. 164–165: *"We the subscribers being pinted* [appointed] *by an order of Court to appraise the property of John Rozar deceased as folars* [follows]*, December 24th 1829."*
2. 1880 Pulaski County GA Federal Census, G.M.Dist 386, ED #56, p. 384a/62, Dwelling #648, line #2: *"Moses Rozer"*–age: 28; color: black; occupation: *"Farm Hand."*
3. 1900 Pulaski County GA Federal Census, Militia District 764 (Whitfield Mills), ED #103, p. 113a/6, Dwelling #105, line #59: *"Moses Rozier"*–age: 61; born: Feb 1839; color or race: black; occupation: Farmer.

Reconstruction Labor Contract

1. 1870 Houston County GA Federal Census, Post Office: Perry, p. 203a/404, Dwelling #3512: John Faulk–age: 39; Farmer; real estate: $30,000; personal estate: $8500; born: Georgia. 1870 Bibb County GA Federal Census, Macon, p. 875b/259, Dwelling #1841, John Faulk–age: 40; Planter; real estate: $45,000; personal estate: $10,000; born: *"Ga."*
2. National Archives Microfilm Publication M1903, Records of the Field Offices for the State of Georgia, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1872; Roll 74; Freedmen's Bureau Subordinate Field Offices, Perry (Agent) letters, endorsements, reports, labor contracts and miscellaneous court papers, 1866–1868. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. LDS Film #4139859, Images #854–857: *"Contract John Faulk, Approved Jany 18th 1867."* The contract was between John Faulk and *"Jonus Rosier," "Jacob Rosier," "Moses Rosier," "Lucinda Rosier,"* and other freedmen. *"Meady Rosier"* served as a witness.

Moses Rozier's Connections to Jonas & Jinny Rozier

1. 1872–1877 Pulaski County GA Tax Digest Book, Images:
   #547: 1875 tax digest.
   #739: Salem Militia District;
   #26: Employer: *"--Heirson;"* Freedmen: *"Jacob Rosier Jr.;"*
   #27: Freedman: *"Jennie Rosier;"* 435 acres valued @ $652; Lots #120, 121, 91, District 22; other property: $187; total: $839;
   #28: Freedman: *"Wm Rosier;"* 1 poll tax; property value: $169;
   #29: Freedman: *"James Rosier;"* 1 poll tax; property value: $116;
   #28: Freedman: *"Ephraim Rosier;"* property: $316.
   Georgia Tax Digest Index, LDS Film #8188331, Image #138: Pulaski County Tax Digests, 1872–1877 (1 Vol.). LDS records show one volume for 1872–1877, but the actual volume is currently only available through Ancestry.com.
2. 1872–1877 Pulaski County GA Tax Digest Book, Images:
   #759: 1876 tax digest.
   #933: Salem Militia District #348;
   #27: Employer: *"--lliford;"* Freedman: *"Jacob Roser;"*
   #34: Freedman: *"William Roser;"* 1 poll tax, household and kitchen furniture: $10; plantation and mechanical tools: $5; all other property: $107; total: $122;
   #35: Freedman: *"James Roser;"* 1 poll tax, household and kitchen furniture: $10; plantation and mechanical tools: $5; all other property: $98; total: $113.
   #36: Freedman: *"Ephraim Roser;"* 1 poll tax, household and kitchen furniture: $10; plantation and mechanical tools: $5; all other property: $218; total: $233.
   #37: Freedman: *"Moses Roser;"* 1 poll tax;
   #37: Freedman: *"Jerry Love;"* 1 poll tax; [no known connection]
   #39: Freedman: *"Jenny Roser;"* 435 acres valued @ $544; Lots #220 [sic], 221 [sic], 91, District 22; household and kitchen furniture: $15; all other property: $47; total: $606.
3. 1872–1877 Pulaski County GA Tax Digest Book, Images:
   #943: 1877 tax digest.
   #1150: Salem Militia District #346 [sic–348];
   #22: Freedman: *"William Rozar;"*
   #23: Freedman: *"James Rozar;"*
   #24–25: Freedman: *"William Rozar Agt. for Charles Mullis;"* 430 acres valued @ $645; Lots #20 [sic], 21 [sic], 119 [sic], District 22;
   #26: Freedman: *"Ephram Rozar;"*
   #27: Employer: *"C. Mullis;"* Freedman: *"Moses Rozer;"*

#28: Employer: *"C. Mullis;"* Freedman: *"Jerry Love."*

1878–1882 Pulaski County GA Tax Digest Book, Images:

#9: 1878 tax digest.

#229: Salem Militia District #348;

#35: Freedman: *"Moses Rozar,"* 1 poll tax.

#241: 1879 tax digest.

#424: Salem Militia District #348;

#21: Freedman: *"Mose Rozar."*

#437: 1880 tax digest.

#589: Salem Militia District #348;

#10: Freedman: *"Moses Rozar,"* 1 poll tax.

#599: 1881 tax digest.

#766: Salem Militia District #348, Post Office: *"Goldsborrough"* [sic];

#3: Freedman: *"Moses Rozar,"* 1 poll tax.

#785: 1882 tax digest.

#951: Salem Militia District #348, Post Office: *"Goldsboro;"*

#3: Freedman: *"Moses Rozar,"* 1 poll tax; livestock: $50; household and kitchen furniture: $10; plantation and mechanical tools: $5; total assessment: $65.

4. 1880 Pulaski County GA Federal Census, ED #56:

p. 383b/61; *"388 & 386 G. M. Dist;"* 28 June 1880, Dwellings:

#644, line #26: *"William Rozer"*–age: 46; race: *"Mu"* [mulatto]; occupation: Farmer;

#645, line #38: *"Ephraim Rozer"* –age: 22; race: *"Mu"* [mulatto]; occupation: *"Farm Work;"*

#646, line #40: *"James Rozer"* –age: 44; race: *"Mu"* [mulatto]; occupation: Farmer;

: #647, line #45: *"Ephraim Rozer"* –age: 41; race: *"Mu"* [mulatto]; occupation: Farmer.

p. 384a/62; *"386 G. M. Dist;"* 28th & 29 June 1880, Dwellings:

#648, lines:

#2: *"Moses Rozer"*–age: 28; race: *"B"* [black]; occupation: *"Farm Hand;"*

#3: *"Julia Rozer"*–age: 22; race: *"B"* [black]; Wife;

#4: *"Laura Rozer"*–age: 2/12; race: *"B;"* born: *"Apr;"* relationship: *"Dgh"* [daughter];

#649, lines:

#35: *"Thomas Rozer"*–age: 24; race: *"Mu"* [mulatto]; occupation: *"Farm Hand;"*

#6: *"Laura Rozer"*–age: 20; race: *"Mu"* [mulatto]; relationship: Wife;

#7: *"Jane Rozer"*–age: 65; race: *"B;"* relationship: Mother.

5. 1883–1887 Pulaski County GA Tax Digest Book, Images:

#179: 1884 tax digest.

#230: Salem Militia District #348, Post Office: *"Goldsborough;"*

#7: Freedman: *"Moses Rozar,"* 1 poll tax, household and kitchen furniture: $10; total assessment: $10.

#471: Whitfield Militia District #764, Post Office: *"Hawkinsville;"*

#15: Freedman: *"Jonas Rozar agt,"* no poll tax, livestock: $131; household and kitchen furniture: $12; plantation and mechanical tools: $50; total assessment: $193.

#16: Freedman: *"Moses Rozar,"* 1 poll tax.

#503: 1885 tax digest.

#696: Blue Spring Militia District #1236, Post Office: *"Hawkinsville;"*

#31: Freedman: *"Jonas Rozar,"* no poll tax, livestock: $80; household and kitchen furniture: $15; plantation and mechanical tools: $30; total assessment: $125.

#32: Freedman: *"Moses Rozar,"* 1 poll tax.

6. Pulaski County GA Mortgages Book D (1884–1886), pp. 318–319: Jonas Rozier mortgages to secure payment of promissory note to R. H. Vaughn, 27 April 1885; p. 319: Moses Rozar mortgage to R. H. Vaughn, 27 April 1885.
7. 1883–1887 Pulaski County GA Tax Digest Book, Images:

#749: 1886 tax digest.

#943: Blue Spring Militia District #1236, Post Office: *"Hawkinsville;"*

#17: Freedman: *"Moses Rozar,"* 1 poll tax, household and kitchen furniture: $8; total assessment: $8.

#983: Whitfield's Militia District #764, Post Office: *"Hawkinsville;"*

#25: Freedman: *"Jonas Rozar,"* no poll tax, livestock: $82; household and kitchen furniture: $25; plantation and mechanical tools: $10; other property: $25; total assessment: $142.

#1003: 1887 tax digest.

#1245: Whitfield's Militia District #764, Post Office: *"Hawkinsville;"*

#24: Freedman: *"Jonas Rozar,"* no poll tax, livestock: $35; household and kitchen furniture: $20; plantation and mechanical tools: $15; total assessment: $70;

#26: Freedman: *"Mose Rozar,"* 1 poll tax, household and kitchen furniture: $15; total assessment: $15.

8. Pulaski County GA Mortgages Book E (1886–1888), p. 586: Mose and Jonas Rozier mortgage to secure payment of promissory note for $50 to J. O. Jelks & Co.; Jonas Rozier mortgage to secure payment of promissory note for $30 to J. O. Jelks & Co., both dated 1 August 1887.
9. Certificate of Death, Georgia State Board of Health, #6090, 1919; LDS Film #4176440, Image #233. Name: *"Mariah Miller."* Place of Death: Pulaski County, Militia District: Finleyson. Personal/Statistical: female, *"Negro,"* married. Date of death: 26 May 1919. Age: 35 years. Cause of Death: *"Hemorages caused by Childbirth."* Occupation: *"Farmer's wife."* Birthplace: Pulaski County. Father: *"Jonas Rozier."* Father's birthplace: Laurens County. Mother: *"Don't know."* Informant: Jim Miller, *"Husband."* Burial: *"Mt. Air Church."* Date of burial: 27 May 1919.

Pulaski County, Georgia Sharecropper

1. Pulaski County GA Mortgages Book F (1887–1890), p. 251: *"Julia Ann Rozar"* mortgage to R. H. Vaughn, 2 May 1888.
2. 1900 Pulaski County GA Federal Census, *"Militia District 764 (Whitfield Mills),"* ED #103, p. 143b/6, Dwelling #105, lines:

   #59: *"Moses Rozier"*–born: Feb 1839; age: 61; color: black; married 28 years; occupation: Farmer; home rented;

   #60: *"Julia A. Rozier"*–born: Feb 1850; age: 49; black; Wife; 15 children; 8 living children;

   #62: *"Mariah Rozier"*–born: Feb 1886; age: 14; black; daughter;

   #63; *"Ellen Rozier"*–born: Mar 1889; age: 11; black; daughter.
3. Pulaski County GA Colored Marriage Book K (1903–1910), p. 306: *"Dan Fitsgerald Col^{d}"* to *"Ellen Rozier Col^{d},"* 6 July 1906.

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