

## Sarah's Quilts

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The will of Sarah Halligan written on the 24th of June in 1899, in Nelson County, Kentucky, directs that all her debts and funeral expenses be paid first and after that she made a bequest to Mary Beam, of color, all of her clothes along with 2 quilts, one being described as a calico called "Jackson's Wreath". The other, a worsted quilt, she called "Sun Shine and Shade". She then directs that a cemetery lot be purchased so that she could be buried at Saint Joseph's Catholic Cemetery, on consecrated ground, South of the cross, near the gate, and as near the lot of Mrs. Elizabeth Higgins as possible.

The balance of proceeds from her estate were to be given to Father O'Connell for masses said for the repose of her soul and that of her late husband, James Halligan.

This will was probated 14 May 1900.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Will of Sarah Halligan. Nelson County, Kentucky Will Book 19, pp 531-532, Digitized. Repository, Genealogy Room of Nelson County Public Library.

Quilts, counterpanes, and other bedding items can be found in many Nelson County settlement papers along with specific pieces of jewelry and clothing such as handkerchiefs. These bequests mentioned in wills and other probate records of women, infer devotion or affection from the testatrix to the person receiving the bequest, but what is uncommon, in Nelson County at least, are bequests of specific quilts with fibers and patterns named. Quilts, jewelry, clothing, and accessories were personal items of the women who gave them away.

The quilts named above would be considered vintage or traditional so any photos of quilts with the same names may or may not be identical to what Sarah Halligan had.

The specific fibers mentioned in both quilts were calico, inferring cotton with small floral designs on them and a worsted quilt which was most likely a quilt made from worsted wool, possibly with some felting affecting the texture.

Quilts and the interpretation of some patterns leave creative licensure to the maker of the quilt. For example, the Jackson's Wreath quilt made by Sarah Halligan may have only had the large wreath in the center without the extra designs in the photo found online. Time and place, as well as available resources would dictate the individual quilt maker's creation.

These quilts were left to Mary Beam. Mary, of color, was a grown woman by the time Sarah died as evidenced on the 1870 and 1880 Federal Census for Nelson County, Ky. In 1870, Mary Bean, age 16, female, Mulatto, was attending school. Mary would have been in her late 30s or early 40s at the time of Sarah's death. Mary was living in Bardstown with the Head of Household, Eliza Rawls, age 60, who was working as a Laundress. Also in the home were Charles Bean, age 21, male, Mulatto, Laborer; and Daniel Bean, 14, male, Black, attending school.<sup>2</sup> The spelling of Bean and Beam in Sarah Halligan's will indicate the same person. Mary was on the same page of the 1870 Census as Sarah Halligan. In the 1870 Federal Census of Nelson County, Ky., Sarah, age 46, female, White, born in Pennsylvania, was living with head of household and husband, James Halligan, born in Ireland, a Shoemaker by trade. Also in the home was Ellen Summers, age 28, female, White, Servant, and George Summers, male, white, age 3.<sup>3</sup>

The burial record for Sarah was found on Find-A-Grave.com, Memorial #68221810. It shows her stone as photographed by Heather Jo Clark. Sarah was buried in the St. Joseph Cemetery, Bardstown, Kentucky, near Mrs. Elizabeth Higgins, as she requested in her will. Sarah's stone can be found in Section B., row 8, Grave 41. A photo of the stone is on [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com). The memorial shows her last name spelled Haligan and her birthdate

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<sup>2</sup> 1870 Federal Census, Nelson County, Kentucky. Ancestry.com.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

as 10 Nov. 1819 in Pennsylvania. Her death date was written as 17 May 1900<sup>4</sup> on the stone, eleven months after she wrote her will. Her will was probated on 14 May 1900 so the date on the stone is probably date of burial as the probate document states that she was deceased.<sup>5</sup> Since Sarah only left her mark (X) on the will, we cannot verify that the correct spelling of Halligan was with one “l” or two.<sup>6</sup>

Sarah’s wish to have her husband’s remains disinterred and reburied beside her, may not have been honored as no memorial for a James Haligan/Halligan can be found in the St. Joseph Cemetery. James was still living in the 1880 Census with Sarah, so he died sometime after that. His appearance with Sarah on the 1880 census shows their ages do not correspond with how old they should be, based on the 1860 and 1870 census records. Either a huge mistake was made or there were 2 couples of the same names and of the same occupation living in Bardstown. It is my idea that these two couples are the same people. Neither a will nor a grave could be found for James. Currently known information would put the couple in Bardstown as early as 1860. For now, James’ death and burial is an unsolved mystery.

Elizabeth Higgins was buried at St. Joseph Cemetery in 1893 in Section B, Row 10, Grave 40, two rows away from Sarah.<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth’s likely husband was Richard Higgins, born in Ireland and buried in Section B., Row 10, Grave 41.<sup>8</sup>

The following page shows two images of quilts, Sun Shine & Shade and Jackson’s Wreath, were found online using AI (artificial intelligence) with the iOS version of the ChatGpt app. These patterns may or may not be the same as Sarah’s but this is the only image of a Jackson’s Wreath found online using traditional searches.

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<sup>4</sup> *Find a Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/68221810/sarah-haligan>: accessed January 23, 2025), memorial page for Sarah Haligan (10 Nov 1819–7 May 1900), Find a Grave Memorial ID [68221810](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/68221810), citing Saint Joseph Cemetery, Bardstown, Nelson County, Kentucky, USA; Maintained by RhondaPattonWathen and children (contributor [46879360](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/46879360)).

<sup>5</sup> The Will of Sarah Halligan. Nelson County, Kentucky Will Book 19, pg.532, Digitized. Repository, Genealogy Room of Nelson County Public Library.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Find a Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/78555294/elizabeth-higgins>: accessed January 23, 2025), memorial page for Elizabeth Higgins (25 Mar 1818–19 Mar 1883), Find a Grave Memorial ID [78555294](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/78555294), citing Saint Joseph Cemetery, Bardstown, Nelson County, Kentucky, USA; Maintained by RhondaPattonWathen and children (contributor [46879360](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/46879360)).

<sup>8</sup> *Find a Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/78555319/richard-higgins>: accessed January 23, 2025), memorial page for Richard Higgins (1812–1879), Find a Grave Memorial ID [78555319](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/78555319), citing Saint Joseph Cemetery, Bardstown, Nelson County, Kentucky, USA; Maintained by RhondaPattonWathen and children (contributor [46879360](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/46879360)).

## Sun Shine and Shade



These images of quilts are only a guess at what Sarah's may have looked like.

Hopefully, someone has inherited Sarah's quilts.

the Sun Shine and Shade pattern here looks different than others of the same name which have been found online.

More research into quilt patterns of this name, location, and era is needed to be more certain.

In any case, these are beautiful!

## Jackson's Wreath Quilt



<sup>9</sup> Image from ChatGpt Image Creation Request for Sunshine and Shade Quilt.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. Jackson's Wreath Quilt.