

## **Darden, Mills (or Miles)** <sup>[1]</sup>

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## **Darden, Mills (or Miles)**

by H. G. Jones, 1986

**7 Oct. 1799–23 Jan. 1857**

Mills (or Miles) Darden, innkeeper and farmer, was reputed to be the heaviest human on record until the twentieth century. He was born on a farm near Rich Square in [Northampton County](#) <sup>[2]</sup> but moved to Madison County, Tenn., about 1829. By 1840 he was living in [Henderson County](#) <sup>[3]</sup>, Tenn.; ten years later he was operating a hotel on the square in Lexington, the seat of Henderson County. He also owned a farm in the county.

Darden's first wife, Mary, died in 1837 and was buried on his farm in the Chapel Hill community of Henderson County. The name of his second wife was given in the census as Tameria. In 1850 the household included Tameria, age thirty-eight, and seven children whose ages ranged from one to twenty-one.

Although Darden apparently refused to be weighed after moving to Tennessee, his neighbors, by testing the tension on his ox wagon springs while he was aboard and then piling on rocks for a corresponding tension, estimated his weight to be a little over 1,000 pounds. The *Guinness Book of World Records* <sup>[4]</sup> (1977 ed.) accepts his weight as 1,020 pounds, second only to that of [Robert Earl Hughes](#) <sup>[5]</sup> of Illinois, who died in 1958.

Darden's height was 7 feet, 6 inches; his waist measurement was 6 feet, 4 inches. The records of William Brooks indicate that he furnished 16 yards of cambric for Darden's shroud. The coffin required 156 feet of lumber, 3 pounds of nails, 4 boxes of tacks, 17 yards of flannel lining, and 44 feet of trimming ribbon. Seventeen men were required to put the body in the coffin. Darden was buried on his farm beside his first wife.

### **References:**

Darden documents (in possession of William L. Barry, Lexington, Ky.).

### **Additional Resources:**

*Forgotten North Carolina*. The History Press, 2006. [http://books.google.com/books?id=yBV71HswmfgC&dq=miles+darden+1799&source=gbs\\_navlinks\\_s&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=yBV71HswmfgC&dq=miles+darden+1799&source=gbs_navlinks_s&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false) <sup>[6]</sup> (accessed May 10, 2013).

### **Subjects:**

[Biographies](#) <sup>[7]</sup>

[Farmers](#) <sup>[8]</sup>

### **Authors:**

[Jones, H. G.](#) <sup>[9]</sup>

### **Origin - location:**

[Northampton County](#) <sup>[10]</sup>

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[Dictionary of North Carolina Biography](#). University of North Carolina Press. <sup>[11]</sup>

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