

Williamson W. Milburn 1808 - 1863

On March 30th, 1808, only 32 years after the Declaration of Independence was signed, in Jackson County Georgia, Williamson W. Milburn was born. In all our research, we * haven't been able to find any verifiable record of Williamson's parents or siblings. We do have lots of stories, and even his own children went on hearsay.

Joshua G., his first son with his second wife Mary, leaves in a letter dated, June 15, 1910 the following story. "I know nothing of my father's ancestors and could learn nothing of them as he was left an orphan very young. I have often heard of him being bound out to an old Quaker family and being separated from his only brother who was also bound to another family, and they grew to manhood without knowing anything about each other. Ever afterwards I have heard him say he was sixteen years old before he ever wore a pair of shoes, and being mistreated and growing without any restraint thrown around him and without any education."

On a photocopy of his obituary, there is a handwritten notation written much later in 1988 by either Louise Milburn Simpson or her father Lee Milburn that states, "Parents of Williamson and his brothers died in Yellow Fever epidemic in New Orleans and the two boys were separated and lost track of each other."

Mode Milburn (grandson of Williamson, son of Adoniram) in his Memoirs written between 1955 and 1964, leaves this information. "Williamson Milburn was born March 29, 1808. His Father was an Irish rebel, purportedly having abandoned a large estate when he left Ireland for America during the rebellion. His family consisted of a wife and two sons (half brothers) one of whom left home soon after arriving in America and was never heard from afterward." On Nov. 10, 1966, Mode made this correction notation to his son, Jud. "As originally written, it is my memory of what papa had told me; I even remember his telling me of a monument that had been erected somewhere back East-- probably on some battlefield-- containing the names of some Heroes including one by the name of Milburn, and he was just wondering if that, by any chance at all, might be his uncle whom he had never seen.....Papa was next to the youngest of the children- five years, nine months, and sixteen days old when his father was killed, and not so concerned or inquisitive as were the older ones about the life-history of their father, and his mother died when he was only about fourteen years old. Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that papa's knowledge of his father was indefinite and that some of the things he told me about him were erroneous impressions."

This is what we* who have researched his history believe to be closer to the truth. Williamson's father left Ireland around the late 1700's, (From 1780 until 1819, 250,000 immigrants came to the U.S. The most numerous group of people to arrive was the Scotch Irish, marrying and eventually ending up in Jackson County, Georgia. They lived next door to the Joseph Yarbrough family who had come to Georgia from North Carolina in 1802. There are no records found of Williamson's parents going to, living in

or dying in Louisiana. The 1810 Georgia census was burned in the war of 1812, so his childhood and parent's demise remain a mystery.

The state of Georgia distributed land inhabited by the Creek and Cherokee Indians in seven different land lotteries. The next documented event was a land lottery drawing in Jackson County in 1820 in which William B. Melburn and the Yarbrough families participated. Since Williamson was only 12, this must have been his father.

Williamson married Prucy Yarbrough, daughter of Joseph and Elizabeth on January 6, 1829. Prucy was about 22 years old, and Williamson was 21. Their first child was Joseph E. born October 4, 1829 in Georgia.

(Andrew Jackson was President of the United States, and the New York Workman's Party demanded a reduction of the work day to ten hours!)

In the 1830 census, Williamson, Prucy, a male child between 5 and 10 years old (possibly a relative) and Joseph were living alongside 4 families of Yarbroughs. Amon, Ambrose, Elizabeth, John, and Josiah. Also listed was Gideon Welborn. (Melborn??)

M. J. Milburn was born about 1831, and was known as Mack.

William Milborn of Jackson Co, GA was involved in a land transaction, and their third child, a girl, Maryann was born.

On Jan 12, 1835, Williamson, Prucy and their 3 children moved to and purchased land in Marengo Co. Alabama. It wasn't only Williamson's family that moved to Alabama, but so did lots of Yarbroughs. It was also about this time that the Seale family came to Alabama from Mississippi and bought land in Sumter Co. AL.

Williamson sold the land he had owned less than 18 months in Marengo Co on Aug 22, 1836 and moved to Sumter Co. Alabama to begin his calling as a Baptist minister at the Harmony Church. A year later the church was thriving with 56 members including some slaves who sat in the church balcony. Also serving in the church as the first church clerk was a Mr. A.(Ambrose) Yarbrough who was ordained into the ministry in October, 1839. Harmony church dissolved in 1853 and did not function for 9 years, then reorganized and became Zion Church in 1871.

Julia Milburn, their fourth child was born in 1836. Number five, William T. was born in 1838.

His wife, Prucy Yarbrough Milburn died in March of 1838 leaving Williamson with 5 children, the youngest an infant.

(The first covered wagon train went from Kansas to California.)

In January 1839, Williamson married Mary Ann Leticia Seale the daughter of Joshua (British decent) and Ellender Haseltine (German decent) Seale. She was born October 11, 1821,(only 8 years older than Joseph, Williamson's oldest son) and spent her childhood in Hinds Co. Ms. She is listed in the Mississippi Revolutionary Soldiers, Family Records, pg. 267 as "Morgan" but she signed her name in documents as "Mary A. L. Seale."

In 1839, Williamson changed churches, becoming Pastor of Siloam Baptist Church. In 1840, Williamson proposed establishing a church library.

In the 1840 census, the Ambrose and Hardy Yarbrough families along with Williamson Milburn lived next to each other, and all were owners of slaves. Williamson owned 4 male and 5 female slaves.

In March of 1841, a building committee including Louis P. Seale and Joe B. Yarbrough was chosen to raise funds and design the Siloam Church library. In Sept. 1841, the church accepted 4 slaves belonging to L. P. Seale.

Williamson performed weddings between June 21, 1836 and Aug.8, 1837 and witnessed wills in 1841.

Mary and Williamson had their first child together on April 3, 1842, a boy named after her father, Joshua Gracie Milburn. Her first child, and Williamson's 6th. In 1843, Mary gave birth to another son, James, and in 1844 they welcomed baby Nancy Ellen.

In 1844, Williamson, Mary, their children and Mary's family the Seales, moved to Union Parish Louisiana. Mary gave birth to her 4th child, George, then in 1848, along came Susannah E.

(These are some prices of items Williamson and Mary might have paid on a trip to the local drygoods store in 1844. Coffee, 10-11 cents per pound with tea being more expensive and less popular at 25 cents per quart. Salt by the sack was 2 cents per pound; pepper, 25 cents ; sugar, 12.5 cents per pound. Corn Whiskey was 50 cents per gallon and was consumed by most members of the family at every meal. It was also used as a remedy for chills, fever and snake bite. Butter (6-1/4 cents per pound) and feathers (25 cents per pound) were the most frequently tendered items. The feathers, probably goose were used for bedding, a considerable improvement over straw "tick". No store would be complete without candy for the children. "stick twist" was 6-1/4 cents per stick.)

In 1841 the "Preemption Act" gave squatters in New Orleans , who had improved their land the right to be the sole purchaser of that land for \$1.25 an acre (up to 160 acres).

In 1850, Williamson bought 80 acres of land next door to the Levi Seales who had the land in Union Parish since the 1820's. The land the Milburns bought was also close to the Norsworthy family, that becomes important to Williamson's 3 oldest children who marry into the Norsworthy family during the Civil War. Mary had her 6th child, (Williamson's 11th,) Martha Ann on March 11, 1850.

Williamson, his father-in-law Joshua and brother-in-law Lewis P. Seale sold slaves. In the book, "Some Slaveholders and Their Slaves Union Parish Louisiana 1839-1865" by Harry F. Dill and William Simpson, Heritage Books, Inc. 1997, on page 86, book D., p 483, it states;

"Know ye all men that, I Williamson Milburn, have this date sold to Elias George a negro woman named Rachel, 25, for \$1200.

7 Aug 1851 (s) Williamson Milburn

(s) Elias George

Witnesses: John Marsh, William Merrill

Recorded 7 Aug 1851"

*The anti-slavery movement was gaining speed. In 1851, Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote, "Uncle Tom's Cabin".

In 1850 and 1851, Williamson and Mary lost 2 of their children to Scarlet Fever, James, age 8 and George, an infant. They sold their 80 acres in Union Parish, and in 1851, moved to Starrville, Texas. Williamson's older children, Joseph, Mack and Maryann stayed in Louisiana and married Norsworthys. Julia married George Powell in Smith County Texas, and died after giving birth to Prucy Lu on Sept.17, 1856 in Bosque. TX. William married in about 1865 in TX., but was not with Williamson and Mary in 1850, according to the census of Union Parish, or in the 1860 census of Smith Co. Texas.

According to a letter written in 1988 by E. Irene Milburn Anderson, J.G.'s granddaughter, she adds insight to the move to Starrville. "When Mary Ann Leticia & Williamson Milburn moved from Louisiana to Starrville, Texas about 1853, they brought with them Tully Choice, Dr. Tully Choice. He was a tutor for the children and lived with the Milburns until his death. At the time, my grandfather was about 11 years old.....When Dr. Choice died, George W. Gracie became the tutor.(The oldest son of J G. Milburn was given the name Tully Choice, and the youngest was named Gracie. I have a very old copy of 'Boccaccio's Decameron' with the signature of ' Geog Gracie 1852' Mr. Gracie gave the book to J.G. before the Civil War. Anyhow, that suggests to me that Mary Ann Leticia and Williamson were determined to give their children good educations and in the process, exposed them to some independent, rather liberal thinking. I'd say that Mr. Gracie was pretty sophisticated for that day and time. I know that JG read Greek. How often did one meet a rather poor farmer-preacher whose children had tutors and could read Greek? Strange."

Now in Texas, Mary gives birth to Major Moore on Jan.29, 1852. and Sarah Milburn follows in 1853.

In 1854, Williamson began his pastoring again in Gum Springs -Starrville. In 1855 he built a home "of hand-picked lumber free of any knotholes with the walls of solid oak." The foundation was built with wooden pegs, strong enough to last 140 years when in 1996, it was moved to Texas Highway 69 just south of I-20 near Tyler, and became a Visitor Center. It was declared a National Historic Site, and was awarded a Texas Historical Medallion in 1963.

Adoniram Judson was born in 1857 in the house his father built. On Valentines Day, 1859, Mary gave birth to her last children, twin boys; John Roland and a baby who died that very day. A total of 16 children for Williamson; thirteen who lived to adulthood.

According to Glen Howard , a submitter to <http://www.ghosttowns.com/states/tx/starrville.html> , Starrville was located at the intersection of FM757 and 16. It was founded in 1853 on the Dallas-Shreveport Road and was first called Gum Springs. The community had a post office from 1857 to 1907. The businesses included a hotel, gristmills, sawmill, foundries, wagon makers, a dentist, a doctor, and was on the stage line from Starrville to Tyler. By the 1870's the community had begun to decline, when the Cotton Belt Railroad built through the Winona community. What remains of the town is a Church, city well, cotton gin and cemetery.

The 1860 Smith Co.Tx census lists the following - Aug 15 pg.121

W. Melborn	52	m	Mnstr Baptist	Miss	4200	5000	GA
Ann Melborn	39	f		MS			
Joshua Melborn	19	m	Farm Laboror	AL	x		
Susan Melborn	12	f		LA	x		
Martha Melborn	10	f		LA	x		
Moore Melborn	8	m		LA	x		
Sarah Melborn	7	f		TX			
Judson Melborn	3	m		TX			
John Melborn	1	m		TX			
John Wilcoxen	21	m	Farm Laborer	GA			X

The " X " denotes that he or she attended school within that year.

In 1860, Williamson owned 6 slaves. The 1860 Slave Schedule For Smith County Texas page 41- column 2 -Starrville Beat shows the following;

#	Slave Owner	No	Age	Sex	Color	Fug.	Man	DDBll	Houses
19	W. Melburn	1	50	M	B				
20	W. Melburn	2	50	F	B				
21	W. Melborn	3	40	F	B				
22	W. Melburn	4	7	F	B				
23	W. Melburn	5	5	M	B				
24	W. Melburn	6	2	F	B				

1860 -1862

Before the Civil War broke out on April 11, 1861 at Fort Sumpter, Rev. Williamson Milburn preached from North Texas to Dallas as a Missionary Baptist. In a letter written by his son Joshua in 1910, he says this about his father. "Politically he was a Democrat, and I think it would be the truth to say he was an extremist in both his religion and politics, but I believe he was honest, but honesty never did and never will change the truth. At the beginning of the war, he espoused the cause of the secession and took an active part in inducing young men to enlist in the army and helped one company in Smith County, Texas, and was elected first Lieut, which company was made part of the 3rd Texas Cavalry and was Co. K of that Regiment and was mustered into service at Dallas, Texas June 13, 1861, it was known as "Greer's Regiment ".

Not only was Williamsons name on the Muster Roll, but so was Joseph his oldest son who also became licensed to preach as a Missionary Baptist during the first year of the war.

Another son, Joshua G. was also on the Muster Roll. Joshua's entry into the war was against his fathers wishes. He relates the story like this. "I was in school at Bellview, Rusk County, Texas when father enlisted. He wrote me from Dallas not to enlist in the Army but instead to go after the school was out to Murfreesboro, Tennessee and complete my education, but instead of taking his advice I quit school and told mother that I would go to Dallas and see father and return home, which I knew at the time was falsehood,This was my first experience in actual warfare and how I did regret the

mistake that I made when I quit school and refused to take my father's advice and enlisted, but this is the history of the human family."

M. J. or Mack as he was called, also enlisted in the Confederate Army in the Second Texas Lancers on April 26, 1862. He listed his age as 32. His brother Joseph's wife, Mary M. Norsworthy had a brother named James who was in the same Cavalry company as Mack. Mack was captured on Jan 11, 1863 (2 days before his father's death) and died at Camp Butler in March.

*Doug Hale wrote a book about Colonel Elkanah Greer's Regiment, and in 1993 published it in Norman Oklahoma. "The Third Texas Cavalry in the Civil War" is about the regiment that was recruited from 26 counties in NE Texas. It contains photos and maps of the Cavalry that fought for the Confederacy on battlefields from the Great Plains to the Appalachian Mountains from 1861-1865. Williamson and his boys are included. The book is available through Amazon.

From the Memoirs of Mode Milburn... "In the wave of patriotic enthusiasm which swept across the south in the wake of the fall of Fort Sumpter in April, 1861, Company G was formed when Texas Governor Edward Clark issued a call for 8000 volunteers for the Confederate Army. Within two weeks of this appeal, a company of 84 Smith County men who called themselves "The Ed Clark Invincibles" was formed. Among the members of this company was The Reverend Williamson Milburn. At age 53, he was the oldest member of the company. He was appointed Chaplain. The company marched off to war on June 8, 1861." "After many battles in Mississippi, Tennessee and Georgia, Rev. Milburn took a furlough in January, 1863, to take care of family affairs. Only three days after returning to his home he was on his way to the blacksmith shop to get some plow points sharpened when he met a man named Jess Butler who was a Northern sympathizer. Mr. Butler engaged Williamson in a conversation which led to a fist-to-cuff. A fight ensued where Milburn was the victor. A few minutes later, Butler killed Milburn by a gunshot through the hinged crack of an open store door to the head as Milburn started to enter. He died instantly. His wife, Mary Seale, was left with a large family, a 371 acre plantation north of Tyler, and a few slaves."

Record shows she was left with 420 acres, 4 slaves, livestock AND a large family.

In another writing of Mode's he added the following to the story. 'When Jess Butler met Williamson, there was an argument over Butler's dog attacking Milburn's horse every time the horse and the dog met. Williamson told Butler that if his dog did it again, he would shoot the dog. That was the catalyst for Butler to hide behind in the store and shoot Williamson in the head through the crack of the door.'

In the letters of childhood memories written in 1941 by Lee (Leonidas Judson) Milburn, son of Joshua, the oldest son of Williamson and Mary, he writes, "although he was over age...he was a very rabid Secessionist.....and he (Williamson) and a Union sympathizer by the name of Butler, engaged in an argument over the war situation and Butler shot and killed him."

Erin Archambeault, great-great- great granddaughter of Williamson Milburn found a more detailed account of Williamson's death in "Born in Dixie" by James Smallwood, but it is heavily slanted in favor of Williamson's killer, Jess Butler. It appears that the Butler boys were infamous and are ranked among the top 3 families who changed Smith County. The following is an excerpt from "Born in Dixie"

"Meanwhile, Jesse joined Company G of the 11th Texas Infantry on February 10, 1862. The young man was apparently popular with his infantry cohorts, for on June 23, 1862, the men elected him second lieutenant. However, January of 1863 found Jesse back home on his farm. In and around Starrville, he was heard to make Unionist or "submissionist" statements. Had he deserted? Was he on furlough? What explained his inconsistent behavior? Whatever the case, he soon ran afoul of a Starrville vigilante group that was led by the local preacher, Williamson Milburn, who had served with Company K in the Third Texas Cavalry. The vigilantes' self-imposed task was to roam the country to ferret out Unionists and force them to join the Confederate army to prove their loyalty. Butler now made a good target because he was most vocal. Repeatedly, Milburn and others threatened to kill not only Jesse but also his elderly father, William. On January 10, 1863, Milburn confronted Jesse in the middle of the main street in Starrville. They exchanged heated words, after which Milburn ducked into Gill's Tavern, and Butler headed for the downtown store that housed the post office. Apparently, Jesse had threatened to shoot his persecutor, for the preacher came out of the inn brandishing a shotgun. With his gun pointed at the post office's front door, he yelled: "Now you said you would shoot, so shoot."

Apparently unarmed when Milburn bellowed, Butler soon found a gun. Quickly, Jesse hefted it and aimed it through the open door. He shot the preacher, who died instantly. Milburn did not even get a shot off. One of several people who witnessed the shooting, W. H. Rossen approached the dead man and retrieved the shotgun to return it to the tavern keeper. The hammer was cocked. Rossen tried to put the hammer down, but it would not go. The faulty gun was the probable reason that Milburn died and Butler lived. Although the latter had apparently acted in self-defense, he ran. He did not believe that he could receive justice in a county controlled by Confederates. He escaped into Arkansas, got behind Federal lines, and Volunteered for military service. He remained with his unit until Dixie's surrender. After the war, a county grand jury investigated the wartime shooting and declared that Butler had acted in self-defense." Smallwood, James. The History of Smith County, Texas, Volume 1: Born in Dixie: Smith County Origins to 1875. Austin: Eakin Press. Pp232-233.

Jesse Butler was later killed by his own brother-in-law.

Williamson died about 5 months before the Battle of Gettysburg.

Lt. Milburn's Obituary

DIED at 12:0'clock January 13th,1863, in Starrville, Smith County, Texas, Elder Williamson Milburn, aged 54 years, 9 months and 14 days.

The deceased was born in the State of Georgia, emigrated to Alabama, thence to Louisiana, and was a citizen of Texas twelve years prior to his death. A great and good man has fallen. Truly we may say death comes on every breeze, and manifests himself in many a horrible way. It was not the privilege of our brother to die in his own house, surrounded by friends and family-to enjoy their words of comfort and sympathizing tears, and to express to them his dying wishes. But at a moment when he did not expect to die, a well-aimed shot took effect in his head and he died without a word.

Early in life he became a member of the Baptist church, and for thirty years was a minister of the Gospel. It was not his fortune to enjoy the benefits of an early education, but being a man of great natural powers, he acquired a large store of information, principally drawn from the Bible, and eloquently did he tell the story of the cross; often have congregations remain spell-bound at his burning words and felt as they went away that surely "he had been with Jesus." But they will hear him no more; his spirit rests with the Savior he loved.

At the commencement of our difficulties he took the ground that secession was the south's only hope and was strong and uncompromising in his opinions. A purer patriot we believe has never lived nor died. He not only spoke but acted for his country, and his country's honor. Though at an advanced age in life, he firmly took his stand in one of the first regiments that left the state, committing his wife and children to the mercies of God, and leaving for Arkansas and Missouri with the brave members of the 3rd Texas Cavalry, who can tell the tale of his devotion to his country. For twelve months he bravely stood between the enemy and his home. Four sons in the meantime had entered the service, and duty called him home to provide for his family.

When he fell, society lost a good citizen, the country a brave soldier and the church a useful minister. A wife and nine children mourn his loss. Though he cannot come to them, they can go to him. While we say farewell, we feel that it is not forever. His grave to-night is a lonely spot, visited only by the mournful winds. But when Jesus comes the jewel will not be forgotten.

M. Starrville, July 22nd, 1863

In the abstracts of the Smith Co, Tx Probate records 1846-1880(Andrew I. Leath)-----

Williamson W. Milburn, dec'd

Mary Ann L. Milburn, surviving wf., pet. for appt. of appr. of com. prop.
1/29/1863. Appr.; Andrew Baxter, John H. Rowland, William W. Hall. Inv., 420 acres \$5050, 4 slaves \$3050, 3 horses \$230, 2 mules \$300, 24 cattle \$144, hogs \$125, etc. W.W. Milburn d. Jan. 1863

(file: 57 PMB: C-471,475. C-1/114, 122 123. D/162, 189.)

The historic research on Williamson was found by several recent "sleuth" ancestors. * Linda Kelley McNiel , Nancy Kelley Hargesheimer, Al and Mike Foster, Annette Mitchell Halden, * Lynn Milburn Lansford and June Milburn Pritchard. The majority of the information has been verified by many independent sources and can be obtained by contacting one of the researchers. Other details of his life were taken directly out of the personal letters and written memories from the following descendents. Joshua Gracie Milburn, Frances (Mode) Milburn, Louise Milburn Simpson, Ethel Irene Milburn Anderson, W.J. (William Joshua) Milburn, Leonidas (Lee) Milburn and Daniel Judson Milburn.

My many thanks for all the hard work and communication done in this Family and Historical effort by Linda K. McNiel , and Nancy K. Hargesheimer. Without their years of work, Williamson's life would still be an unsolved mystery to all of his descendants and to the states of Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana and Texas to whom he was an early pioneer.

Lynn Milburn Lansford
April 24, 2006