

WILLIAM THOMPSON

(1805 – 1848)

William Thompson was the youngest child and believed to be the only son of Alexander Thompson and Margaret Ritchie Thompson, as named in the will of his father, Alexander Thompson, probated March 30, 1814, St. Louis County, Missouri. He was born in Lincoln County, Kentucky about 1805. He moved with this family about 1810/11 to Bon Homme Township, St. Louis County, somewhere near the present town of Chesterfield, Missouri.

Little information remains about William Thompson. He was a minor child at the time of his father's death in March of 1814. When the Will of Alexander Thompson was closed in August of 1819, William was still a minor child with his mother, Margaret, and his sister, Jane Thompson Ritchie, appointed as his guardians. He apparently received a fair education for his time. His signature shows handwriting quite like that of George Washington and much the same Spencerian styles so popular among the elite of the time.

About 1825 he married Nancy Bacon, daughter of Nathaniel Bacon, a neighbor to the Thompson family. Mormon records indicate the marriage of William Thompson and Nancy Bacon was in Missouri in 1825. She would have been about 16 and he would have been about 20. [IGI Record (film number 1903857).] William is found in the U.S. census records of 1830 and 1840 living in St. Louis County, Missouri. This is the same general area where we find Nathaniel Bacon, Langston Bacon, and Fielding Bacon, the latter being Nancy's brother.

We have several notes from Collet's Index to Grantors, 1804 to 1834 in St. Louis Court Records, which shows land transactions between William and Nancy Thompson and others. Among those to whom they sell land are: Zachary M. Taylor, (The) Trustees of Sister of Charity Hospital, James Ritchie (presumably husband of Jane Thompson, William's older sister), Thomas Ferguson (wife was a Bacon) and William Bacon, Nancy's older brother. Also land transactions with Nathaniel Bacon, Nancy's father.

According to the obituary for William and Nancy Thompson's son Pleasant Thompson (1907), he was raised in St. Louis County. but later moved to Franklin County, Missouri for a short time. It isn't clear whether the family actually moved to Franklin County or the place they lived in St. Louis County became Franklin County, which was formed out of the western portion of St. Louis County.

It is believed that most of these land transactions took place as preparation for the family's move to Texas. We do not know the reasons for the move, but there are a couple of possibilities, only speculation. First, during this time we know that Fielding Bacon, Nancy's brother, moved to Texas where he supported and supposedly fought in the Mexican War. I cannot verify that he actually fought in the war but he was in

Texas by 1846. General Kearney was in the St. Louis area about this time drumming up support for the Mexican War and urging people to go west and settle in Texas. This may have been the underlying reason for the proposed move.

Another possible reason would be for health. A proclivity for Consumption or Tuberculosis is known to have run in the Thompson family. During this era it was probably one of the major contributing factors to death. One of the so-called "cures" for this condition was to go to a warm, dry climate. Sherman County, Texas certainly fits that description. We shall probably never know the real reasons for the move. The family did start for Texas in 1846.

Elizabeth Thompson, youngest child of William and Nancy Thompson was born in November 1845. According to census records her birth occurred in "CN", or Cherokee Nation, which would have been on the trail to Texas. So it is estimated that the family arrived about 1845 but most certainly by 1846.

Oral family history says that William Thompson died enroute to Texas and was buried "on the plains." Recent developments have uncovered probate records of Grayson County, Texas for William Thompson who died in November 1848. The probate was opened on January 29, 1849 with Nancy (Bacon) Thompson and Alexander Thompson (his eldest son) as Administrators and John Deaver and Joseph W. Deaver as sureties for the estate. Inventory of the estate was submitted on February 26, 1849 with John Deaver, B. Hombright, and F. Bacon as appraisers. A bill was submitted from T. J. Shannon dated November 1848 for a "plank coffin for William Thompson" and signed (accepted) by Alexander Thompson. Nancy states that she was a widow with seven children in 1849.

Alexander Thompson, eldest son of William and Nancy, appears to have died sometime before April 30, 1850. Records indicate he died of "a chronic condition for several years." Could his death have been a result of Tuberculosis? Was William Thompson also affected with this disease?

Probably the reason for settling here was the fact that Fielding Bacon, Nancy's brother, had settled here earlier. It is also noted that William Thompson was given 640 acres of land in Grayson County, but this was received after his death and records indicate that his widow, Mrs. William Thompson, was the assignee. Could it be that William, too, fought in the War with Mexico and received this land as his payment? I am currently pursuing this avenue of investigation.

In February 1850, Nancy married Uriah Burns in Sherman, Grayson County, Texas. (*See separate biography for Nancy Bacon Thompson Burns, Chapter 14.*)

William Thompson and Nancy Bacon had seven known children; six of whom are named in the Probate records of Grayson County, Texas on April 12, 1853. Alexander Thompson is not named but that is because he died before probate was completed and therefore was not an heir to the estate. The heirs to the estate as listed were: **CYRENE THOMPSON CATVILLE**, wife of **SIMON COTRAL COTREEL/COTTRELL/COTRIL/ COTTERELL**), **PLEASANT THOMPSON**, **LUCRETIA THOMPSON GROVES** (wife of **AUSTIN GROVES**), **ZACHARIAH THOMPSON** (minor), **HARVEY (HARDY) THOMPSON** (minor), **ELIZABETH THOMPSON** (minor).

Nancy Bacon Thompson Burns received 260 acres of land and the heirs each received 60 acres of land.

The State of Texas issued Certificate Number 55 on the 23rd of April 1850 to Nancy Burns, alias Nancy Thompson, the widow of William Thompson, deceased. She claimed 640 acres of land for the Heirs of said William Thompson "...that he entered as a colonist previous to July 1848 with his family consisting of his wife and children." The land was surveyed in May of 1850, and it is noted that Pleasant Thompson and William Deavers were the "chainmen" on the survey.

Children of WILLIAM THOMPSON and NANCY BACON are:

- i. **ALEXANDER⁴ THOMPSON**, b. About 1827, probably St. Louis Co., MO.; d. before April 30, 1850, Grayson County, Texas.

Alexander Thompson really is the son of William and Nancy Thompson, though it had been merely speculation on my part for a long time. But he was in the right place at the right time. He died in Grayson County in 1850 at the age of 23. He was born in Missouri (record doesn't state where) and died of a chronic condition, possibly "consumption". He fits into the right age group to be the eldest child, though no one in our family has ever heard of *this* Alexander Thompson. It seems plausible that William would name his first born son Alexander after his own deceased father. It is interesting to note that Pleasant Thompson named his first son Alexander Thompson ... after this, his dead brother?

The other Thompson family in Grayson County, James G. Thompson, did not come from Missouri, so I have discounted this family being related to Alexander Thompson.

Finding the Probate records of William Thompson in Grayson County recently confirms my suspicion that Alexander was, indeed, the son of William Thompson and Nancy Bacon. He was named as an Administrator of the Estate of William Thompson, along with his mother in January 1849, but he died before Probate was closed and division and distribution of his father's estate was made.

He died some time before April 30, 1850, which is the date that Uriah Burns (Alexander's stepfather) resigned as Administrator of his Estate. On June 24, 1850, Felan (Fielding) Bacon was made administrator of the Estate of Alexander Thompson. To the best of my knowledge, he was never married.

- ii. **PLEASANT THOMPSON**, b. December 26, 1830, St. Louis Co., MO; d. February 19, 1907, King City, CA.; m. **SARAH ANN HAMILTON**, June 14, 1851, Sherman, Grayson Co., TX; b. July 14, 1836, St. Joseph, MO.; d. July 19, 1919, Salinas, CA. (*See separate biography of Pleasant Thompson, Chapter 4.*)

- iii. **WILLIAM THOMPSON**, b. About 1832.

Walter Coke Thompson wrote in his memoir about "Uncle Billy" "...The family went to the Salinas Valley (after coming from Texas in 1856), and most of them spent the rest of their lives there or near there. But Uncle Billy went up around Marysville, someplace where he raised something of a family, and the rest of the family didn't see him much after that ..."

I have searched the Census records of 1860 and 1870 in Sacramento, Nevada, Sutter, Yolo and Yuba Counties (Marysville is in Yuba County) and find

several William Thompsons but find none that seem to fit what would be our "Billy Thompson." I have also searched the Census records of 1850 in Texas and cannot find a William Thompson that would fit into our family.

I recently discovered the Probate records of William Thompson (who died in 1848 in Grayson County, Texas in which Nancy Bacon Thompson Burns states that she "...was a widow with seven children." Later, the probate records name six of the heirs of William Thompson, deceased, and there is no William "Billy" Thompson named as a son. The seventh child would have been Alexander Thompson who died in 1850 before the heirs of William Thompson were named.

I cannot account for the person that Walter Coke Thompson calls "Uncle Billy." He may have been confused with his older cousin, William Robert Thompson, son of Pleasant Thompson. The Pleasant Thompson family referred to him as "Billy Thompson." Perhaps it was William Grigsby, who was married to Pleasant's daughter, Martha Ellen. Or perhaps this "Uncle Billy" was not really a close family member but may have been a distant cousin. Even so, I cannot place him as a family member at this time. Because Walter Coke Thompson names "Uncle Billy" as his uncle, I am leaving William Thompson as a son of William Thompson and Nancy Bacon. Even so, I suspect he was not.

- iv. **ZACHARIAH THOMPSON**, b. About 1834, St. Louis Co., MO; d. December 1882, Salinas, CA; m. **ISABELLA RICHARDSON**, Probably Salinas, CA; b. About 1846, "Los Coches" Soledad, CA.; d. 1939, Salinas, CA. (*See separate biography of Zacariah Thompson, Chapter 7.*)
- v. **LUCRETIA THOMPSON**, b. 1836, St. Louis Co., MO; m. **AUSTIN W. GROVES**, June 9, 1853, Sherman, Grayson Co., TX; b. About 1833, Indiana. Lucretia Thompson was probably born while the family lived in St. Louis County, MO about 1836. She married Austin Groves on June 9, 1853 in Sherman, Grayson County, TX. It is assumed that Austin and Lucretia came to California with the rest of the family in 1856 settling in the Salinas area of Monterey County. They are found in the 1860 Federal Census for Monterey County.

What little I know about this couple comes from the book, *A Thompson Chronicle*, a family history based on the memoirs of Walter Coke Thompson. Austin Groves was born in 1833/34 in Illinois or Indiana. Census records indicate the latter. He married Lucretia Thompson. There were two sons, Erastus and Lee. Apparently raised two other children ... they were Ada Thompson and Mary Thompson, the daughters of Hardy Thompson (Lucretia's younger brother) and his first wife who was the sister of Austin Groves. I still have not found the mother's name ... except the surname of Groves.

- vi. **SIRENA THOMPSON**, b. About 1838, probably St. Louis Co., MO; m. **SI COTTERELL**, June 2, 1851, Sherman, Grayson Co., TX. Records differ on the spelling of the name for this woman. I find it spelled Serina, Cyrena, and Syerna but I believe this to be the daughter of William Thompson and Nancy Bacon.

Oral family history related that there was a younger sister who married and remained in Texas when the family came to California, but beyond that, nothing much was known. I didn't know her name until I read the memoirs of Walter Coke Thompson. He stated that "Sirena" (he wasn't sure of the spelling) or

"Sirenne" had been mentioned and there was a letter from Aunt Julia Burns, wife of Thomas Coke Burns, who remembered the family talking about a sister remaining in Texas. Serina apparently married young to a Si Cotterell who it was said, was not very kind to her.

Research has turned up some interesting data making this lady very mysterious indeed. The data is very confusing and leads to a great deal of speculation on my part. It appears there is an interesting story here.

I could never find a marriage in Texas for Si Cotterell, to Sirena Thompson. But what I did find was a marriage on June 2, 1851 of a Cyrenie Deavers to a Si Cotril in Grayson County, Texas. But was Cyrenie Deavers actually our Sirena Thompson? I suspect so!

In the 1850 Census of Grayson County, Texas living in the household of Uriah Burns and his wife, Nancy (Thompson) Burns, are the following people; P. Thompson, S. Thompson, Z. Thompson, H. Thompson, E. Thompson, S. Deavers (male, aged 22 years), Mary Ann Deavers (aged 4 years, b. TX), and C.A. Deavers (aged 10 months, b. TX). Also listed in another section of this Census of Grayson County is the family of John A. Deaver. John Deaver and his son, Joseph Deaver were sureties on the Probate records of William Thompson in 1849. So obviously the Thompson family and the Deaver family were well acquainted. On the land survey of the property of William Thompson, deceased, dated May of 1850, Pleasant Thompson and William A. Deavers were listed as chainmen.

I further noted from the Wills and Probate records of Grayson County that Cyrenie Deaver was the widow of Joseph Deaver. Is this Cyrenie Deavers, the same person who married Si Cotril in Grayson County? If so, then it appears that our Sirena Thompson was married twice and at a very young age. As I said, there is a story here, if only I could unravel it!

- vii. **HARDY THOMPSON**, b. 1840, St. Louis Co., MO.; d. June 14, 1880, Towne Creek, San Luis Obispo Co., CA; m. (1) **GROVES**; m. (2) **MARY EMERINE HENDRIX**, June 14, 1874, at the residence of Pleasant Thompson in Thompson Canyon, near King City, CA. She was born on March 4, 1853 at Skipanon (a small trading post) Astoria Co., OR; d. March 19, 1927, Milwaukie, OR. For the story of Hardy Thompson, read *A Thompson Chronicle*, a family history based on the memoirs of Walter Coke Thompson, compiled and edited by Sue Nickum, 1996.
- viii. **ELIZABETH THOMPSON**, b. November 7, 1845, Cherokee Nation; d. Aft. 1897; m. **SAMUEL BURNES**, 1862. Elizabeth Thompson was born on 7th of November 1845, and according to the 1850 Census of Grayson Co., TX she is identified as being born in "CN", which has been interpreted as "Cherokee Nation". It is believed that she was born while the Thompson family was migrating to Texas.

She is found in the 1860 Census living in the Salinas area of Monterey Co., CA in the household of Uriah Burns (her stepfather) and Nancy Bacon Thompson Burns. According to Walter Coke Thompson, "...Aunt Lizzie married Samuel Burnes in 1862. He was a good deal older than she and had been a soldier in the Mexican War."

William Thompson

THE STATE OF TEXAS, } N. 55
County of Grayson } To ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

BE IT REMEMBERED, That, on the 23rd day of April A. D., 1850, Nancy Burns, alias Nancy Thompson, and widow of William Thompson deceased, and claimed six hundred and forty acres of land for the Heirs of the said Thompson deceased, he having been a settler in the Colony granted to Peters and others. Whereupon the foresaid Nancy took and subscribed the following oath, viz:

I, Nancy Burns, alias Nancy Thompson, and widow of William Thompson deceased, do solemnly swear, that to the best of my knowledge and belief, the said Thompson never received any land from the State of Coahuila and Texas, nor from the Republic or State of Texas, and that he emigrated to Texas and entered the Colony which was granted to Peters and others, as a Colonist, on the previous to July 1848 with his family, consisting of his wife and children and that he continued and remained a settler in said Colony to the time of his decease, and performed all the duties required of him as a good citizen. So help me God.

Nancy x Burns
mark

BE IT FURTHER REMEMBERED. The facts set forth in the foregoing affidavit are fully corroborated by testimony given on oath by the persons who herewith sign their names.

M. J. Sitch
Jeptha S. Burns

A declaration that the Peters Colony is giving the 640 acres even though there is no existing map and the property has not been surveyed. It was surveyed in May of 1850, and Pleasant Thompson was one of the chainmen. Note that this document had Nancy's "X", her mark, and is also signed by Jephtha S. Burns, Nancy's stepson who was married to Amanda Bacon, Fielding Bacon's daughter.

THE PETERS COLONY

The Peters Colony was the name commonly applied to a North Texas impresario grant made in 1841 by the Republic of Texas to a group of twenty investors (both English and American) led by William S. Peters. The Company was head quartered in Lexington, Kentucky. It was founded as a business venture but due to the influence of the philanthropic ideas of William Godwin and Thomas Paine, the colony was envisioned by some as providing new opportunities for the English industrial Middle Class. Trips were made to both England and France to try to get settlers into the colony.

The boundaries of the grant were: starting on the Red River at the mouth of Big Mineral Creek, running south for sixty miles, then west for twenty-two miles, north to the Red River and then east with the river to the point of origin. According to the terms of the contract with the Republic of Texas, the company had to recruit settlers from outside the Republic at a rate of 200 families in three years. In return the colonists were to be granted 320 acres per single man and a maximum of 640 acres per family. The impresarios were allowed to retain up to half of a colonist's grant as payment for services rendered, including land surveys and title applications. The impresarios provided powder, shot and seed and in some cases built settlers' cabins. The impresarios also received ten sections of premium land from the Republic for each 100 families.

The first settlement came in December of 1841, but difficulties in attracting and keeping people in the colony caused the company to request an extension of time and another adjustment of the boundaries. There were three more extensions given, and finally the company was reorganized in 1842 and the final contract with the Republic of Texas was made in January of 1843. This final contract gave an extension of time to July 1, 1848 to the company. But the reorganization caused concern among the existing colonists about land ownership and discouraged those thinking of settling within the colony. According to the company's agent, Ralph Barsdale, there were only 197 families and 184 single men in the colony by July 1, 1844.

In 1845 the company brought in another agent named Henry O. Hedgecoxe, whose foreign and officious manners irritated the colonist and reinforced a commonly held suspicion that the company was merely a land speculator. An influx of squatters also complicated the company's task of administrating the colony.

Expiration of the contract on July 1, 1848 further complicated matters. Now all remaining land was legally open for settlement and it was easy for these new settlers to obtain 640 acres of land from the State of Texas*. Litigation followed for a number of years between the company and settlers, both old and new. Finally in 1852 the Texas Legislature passed what was called a "compromise" to settle the questions of land ownership. The colonists would have until July 1, 1852 to establish their claims. Further violence and disruption eventually caused another settlement compromise. The settlers would have until May 7, 1853 to file their claims and receive title to their lands.

SHERMAN, GRAYSON COUNTY, TEXAS

The creation of Grayson County in 1846 called for the location of the county seat to be within four miles of the geographic center of the new county. It was named after Peter W. Grayson who held various offices under the Republic of Texas, including the office of Attorney General under Presidents David Burner and Sam Houston. Peter Grayson committed suicide in 1838 while on a trip to Tennessee, probably as a result of recurring bouts of insanity.

The naming of the county seat was political, for Sidney Sherman was probably one of the most versatile of the leaders of the Republic of Texas. He was one of Sam

* *Texas officially became a state of the Union on December 29, 1845.*

Houston's staunchest political and personal foes. Sidney Sherman is perhaps best remembered in history for being a hero of the Battle of San Jacinto in which the Texas troops won over the superior Mexican troops led by General Santa Ana. It is said by some that he was the real hero of that battle, not Sam Houston. It was during that battle that Sherman used the expression "Remember the Alamo; remember Goliad*". Sherman and Houston fought over many things in establishing the Republic of Texas, and by the time Sherman died in 1873, he was all but lost to history, almost penniless in Galveston. The only tribute to Sidney Sherman was the naming of the town in his honor, a town he never visited.

In the original enactment establishing Grayson County, James G. Thompson (no relation to our family that I can see), James B. Shannon, George C. Dugan, Richard McIntyre, and Micajah Davis were appointed commissioners to determine the location of the new county seat. The new town was required to be within three miles of the geographical center of the county. The spot determined was located on the hill west of the present site of Sherman, near the present site of the Woodman's Circle Home. On December 1, 1846, Uriah Burns auctioned off the lots of the new city. Purchasers were Robert Atchison, Joseph B. Earheart, J.G. Thompson, George Shield, James H. Mars, Joshua West, J. Martin, M.C. Davis, James Miller, James B. Shannon, J. Gaskins, M. Hardaway, J.M. Bonds, Joshua Trieste, John Hendricks and J. Cronister.

The first Chief Justice of the newly formed Grayson County was James G. Thompson, and one of his first acts seems to have been the issuance of an order to build a courthouse building. It was completed and a gathering on July 4, 1847 celebrated the opening of the new courthouse as well as the birthday of the nation.

There is a persistent tradition that the location of Sherman was moved from its original site due to lack of water. But it was more likely the doings of James B. Shannon who, having been elected to the state legislature, secured a bill to move the town. Shannon actually owned the land on which the new town site was to be built, but quickly transferred his interest in the land to Sam Blagg, his personal friend. Sam Blagg was a surveyor in Grayson County and had laid out the new town. Blagg and Shannon owned all the surrounding land and expected, with the growth of the new town site, that they would make a lot of money.

Those people who had bought lots and built homes on the original town site were most unhappy with the situation. But in time, they accepted it and moved to the new town site. J. B. Shannon took on some of the expense of moving the buildings to the new location, bought the courthouse building, and moved it to his ranch and to use as a barn.

DOCUMENTATION

Grayson County, *An Illustrated History of Grayson County, Texas*, by Graham Landrum and Allan Smith.

* *Goliad is a phonetic anagram of Hidalgo, the name of the activist priest who became a hero during the Mexican Revolution, known now as the Father of Mexican Independence. Mexican soldiers occupied Presidio La Bahia (officially renamed Goliad in 1829) from 1821 to 1825.*