

# PLEASANT THOMPSON (DECEMBER 26, 1830 – FEBRUARY 19, 1907)

P leasant Thompson, the son of William Thompson and Nancy Bacon, was born in St. Louis County, Missouri on December 26, 1830. According to his obituary (see the text of that obituary at the end of this Biography), he was raised in St. Louis County and moved to Franklin County when he was 15 years old (1845). After a short stay there he moved to Texas. At the age of 18 he volunteered as a (Texas) Ranger in the Mexican-American War, but he was never called to serve as the war ended six months later.

The census of 1850 lists Pleasant Thompson living with his stepfather and his mother, Uriah and Nancy Burns, in Sherman, Grayson County, Texas. According to that census, he owned 160 acres of land and listed his occupation as a farmer.



Pleasant Thompson



Sarah Ann Hamilton Thompson

On June 12, 1851 Pleasant married Sarah Ann Hamilton who was only 15 years old at the time of their marriage. They were married in Sherman, Grayson County, Texas.

In May of 1856, Pleasant, Sarah, and their two infant sons, Alexander ("Alec") and William ("Billy"), started across the plains to California by ox team. They arrived in the fall of 1856 and spent the winter in the Los Angeles area, possibly staying with Pleasant's uncle, Fielding Bacon, who had come to California in 1853 and established a farming operation in the El Monte area. In the spring of 1857 they moved north to the Salinas Valley, settling for about 13 years on property located just west of what is today Salinas, California.

There is an unconfirmed story that Pleasant was addicted to horse racing. Seems he made a bet with Claus Spreckles (owner of Spreckles Sugar) that his horse could win a certain race. Since Pleasant had little money, he put his farm up as collateral on the bet. Of course he lost and Claus Spreckles took the farm, part of which would later become Spreckles, California near Salinas.

The original Pleasant Thompson house was still standing in 1997, just south of the Salinas/Monterey Road about a mile west of Romey Lane. I'm not sure just when it was built, but I do know that my grandfather, Martin L. Thompson, was born in the

house in October of 1867<sup>\*</sup>. (This area was known during the Civil War as "Confederate Corners", since most people living there were Confederate supporters.)

One neighbor to Pleasant and Sarah Thompson was Daniel K. McDougal, who married Sarah's sister, Lydia Hamilton. President Lincoln appointed Daniel McDougal (for services to the Union Army during the Civil War) to be the assistant customs inspector at the Old Customs House in Monterey. Daniel and Lydia lived upstairs in the Old Customs House during his tenure, and at least one or two of their children were born there. When Customs moved to San Francisco in 1876, Daniel and Lydia moved to Salinas where they spent the remainder of their lives. The Louis E. Fenton family and the George Van Soosten family of Salinas and the Pfeiffer family of Big Sur are all a part of this family.

After the loss of the Salinas property, Pleasant moved his family south to the San Antonio area of Monterey County where he engaged in raising cattle and farming. Eventually he moved to an area west of King City, California. To this day, that area is known as Thompson Canyon and Thompson Gulch. It is interesting to note that the U.S. Geological Survey Maps show this area as "Thompson Canyon Quadrangle". While

living on this property, Pleasant and Sarah operated a stagecoach stop known as "The Last Chance".

During the 1870s the railroad only ran as far south as Gilroy from San Francisco. It wasn't until the late 1870s that the railroad reached Salinas. For a person wanting to travel between San Francisco and Los Angeles it meant part of the trip had to be done by stagecoach. (Actually, the railroad didn't complete the coastal route until the early 1900s.) In Salinas during this time, Nancy and her sons Hardy Thompson and Thomas Coke Burns, operated hotels in Salinas. Farther south at Salinas River in Soledad was the stagecoach stop called "Los Coches", which was



Nancy Bacon Thompson Burns



Hardy Thompson



Coke Burns

operated by the Richardson family. Pleasant's brother Zack Thompson had married Isabella Richardson, daughter of William Brenner Richardson who owned "Los Coches".

I just recently discovered that the house was razed in 1999 [NHA].

### LOS COCHES, SOLEDAD, CALIFORNIA







These three pictures are of the childhood home of Isabella (also known as Elizabeth) Richardson. Isabella married Zachariah Thompson in the mid 1860s. Isabella's mother, Josepha Soberanes, was given a land grant from her father, Feliciano Soberanes in 1841.

The grant was known as Los Cochinos, which translates to mean "the pigs." Later it appears as Los Coches, which means "the coaches" in Spanish. This latter name probably comes from a mistranslation when it was a stagecoach stop on the Coast route. Feliciano Soberanes was a soldier who came to California with the Anza party in 1775. After his retirement he was given a substantial amount of land in the Salinas Valley surrounding Mission Soledad.

In 1843, Josepha and her husband, William Brenner Richardson, an American adventurer who had come to California some years earlier, began building their home. It is an adobe structure typical of those homes built at the time of Mexican period. It had four rooms but was later expanded when it became a stagecoach stop in the 1860s and 1870s.

A wooden exterior was put over most of the original adobe structure to protect it from the elements, and a shake roof was added later. In 1846 several black locust trees were planted along the front portico and are still thriving today.

The building was a home, a post office, a general store and a stagecoach stop on the Coastal Stage Route. The next stage stop to the south was the Last Chance, owned by Pleasant Thompson. Even though the building is a State Historical Monument, it has been deserted for several years and is in a sad state of repair. Los Coches can be seen today as you are heading south from the town of Soledad, California on Highway 101, just after you cross over the Salinas River Bridge. There is an offramp to a road leading to Arroyo Seco. Almost hidden from view by overgrowth is the original building.



This is a picture I took a few years ago when my mother and I took a drive just before she died (1983). I am sitting on the north bound lanes of Highway 101 looking north. The area with the Eucalyptus trees is the approximate location of where the Last Chance stood.

Pleasant Thompson owned all this land, and to the west (left - not seen) is Thompson Canyon. Their home sat up there.

Next stop on the stage route was "The Last Chance," and the following stop was at San Antonio, which was the old Dutton Hotel. Some of the Thompson family later married into the family that operated that hotel. George Thompson married Myrno Dutton. You might say the family certainly had that area tied up insofar as travel accommodations were concerned.

In 1882 Pleasant Thompson sold most of the Thompson Canyon property to William Dumphy and moved to Watsonville, where he lived for two years. While in Watsonville, he was known to have been a member of the Masonic Lodge. Apparently a fellow lodge member had some sort of financial problem. Pleasant got very upset with his fellow lodge members when they wouldn't help the fellow in distress, and he left the Masonic Lodge.

One of the interesting family stories that comes from the operation of the "Last Chance" was that a frequent guest was the Mexican bandido, Tubercio Vasquez. He apparently liked Sarah Thompson very much. Pleasant was requested to always have his horse saddled and ready in case the sheriff should suddenly arrive on the scene. At the head of Thompson Canyon is an area referred to as "The Rocks". This is an outcropping of volcanic rocks, which had many caves where Vasquez could hide. Years before, it was a popular place for local Indians. Vasquez never gave the family any trouble and was always considered to be a "complete gentleman".

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### HISTORY OF THE DUTTON HOTEL





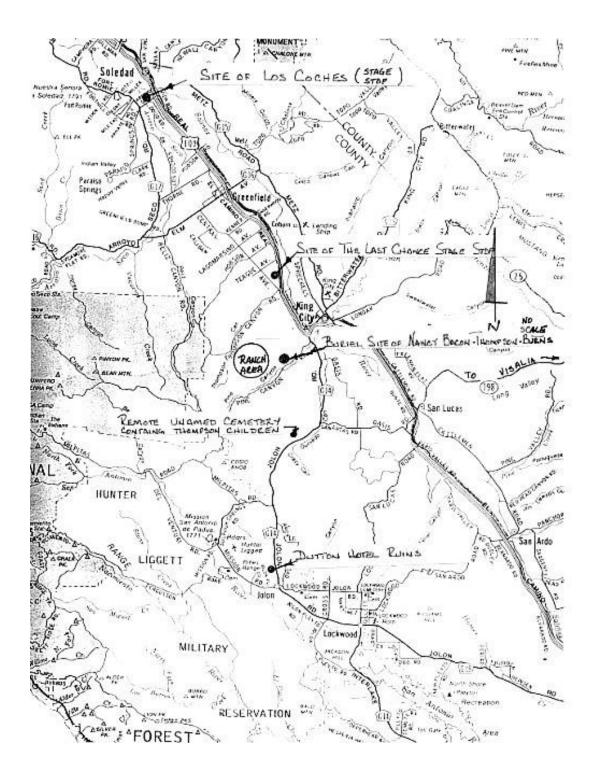
The Dutton Hotel ruins (Jolon, California) in the year 2000. Text of the plaque is transcribed below.

In 1849, Antonio Ramirez built a small adobe on the El Camino Real, near the site of the ancient Indian village, Hotamna. As a main artery to California's gold fields, the El Camino Real brought many travelers past Ramirez's place. He transformed his adobe into an inn and stage stop and soon enjoyed a brisk business.

Eventually, the Inn became the nucleus of the town of Jolon. Ramirez sold the building in 1871 and it changed hands three more times before it was purchased by Lt. George Dutton and Capt. Thomas Tidball in 1876. Dutton, who became the sole owner in 1878, added a second story of adobe and wood frame structures at either end. Jolon's first post office was located at the Inn, and Dutton added a store and saloon. The saloon boasted a huge fireplace, 6 or 8 poker tables, and an ornate bar which came around the ... [text unreadable in photo].

By 1879, Jolon had grown into a thriving town serving the Los Barros Mines, surrounding ranchers, and many travelers. However, when the railroad came to King City in 1886, traffic followed the railroad and the El Camino Real fell into disuse. Soon after, the Los Barros Mines gave out as well, and business at the Dutton died down.

William Randolph Hearst pruchased the property in 1929 and removed the Dutton's outbuildings as well as many other Jolon structures. In 1940, the U.S. Army acquired the property, and the adobe was used as a bivouac area. Vandalism and exposure to the elements finally destroyed the building, leaving only an adobe ruin. The building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976.



Map is one of Monterey County running from Soledad south to the San Antonio Valley. I have marked it up showing Los Coches, Thompson Canyon, the ranch, Nancy Bacon Thompson-Burns burial place (see chapter 14 for photo of gravesite), another small cemetery where Thompsons are buried near Jolon and the old ruins of the Dutton Hotel.

This time frame was important in the history of my family, in that William "Billy" Thompson met and married Kate Raymond and the Thompson family became acquainted with the Louis Hushbeck family of Watsonville. Important because after Kate Raymond died, William married Joanna Hushbeck. When William died in 1891, Joanna was left with three small children to raise. Pleasant Thompson then sent his younger son, Martin L. Thompson, to Watsonville to help Joanna manage the ranch that she and William had in the Green Valley area. Joanna later (1898) married Martin and they in turn had three children.

In 1884 Pleasant Thompson moved back to the King City area, settling in Pine Canyon where he stayed until 1904 when he bought seven acres of land about half a mile west of King City. This is the area just west of where the current cemetery is today (1998). As I understand it, the house stood near the bridge crossing the Salinas River. Today, this would be the northbound bridge on U.S. Highway 101.

An interesting article from the newspaper, dated some time after 1894, showed that the Thompsons loved to have a good time. We know that Pleasant's sons William and Martin both played the fiddle, and it was well know that dancing was an accepted pleasure in the family. Following is the article titled: "An Enjoyable Evening."

On Friday evening, March 12, the young folks of Pine Canyon reveled in the pleasures of a social hop at the residence of Mr. P. Thompson. At midnight a splendid supper was served after which dancing was resumed and kept up until 6 o'clock in the morning. Music was furnished by George Thompson, John Farrell and others."

Among those present were the following: Mr. & Mrs. P. Thompson, Mr. & Mrs. John Kent, Mr. And Mrs. F. Sturzenegger, Mr. & Mrs. H. Fancher, Mr. And Mrs. A. Easton, Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Weaver, Misses, Kate Stephens, Percy Kent, Adelaide Leese, Eva Sturzenegger, Mattie Kennedy, Frances Thompson, Arabella McLeod, Clara Thompson, Angie Crette, Ethel Bacon, Susie Brown, Ida Swansor, Pearl Kent, Carrie Dressner, Amelia Marketti, Messrs, John Morss, Bert Butler, Will Sturzenegger, A. McDermott, A. Avilla, Fred Kent, Howard Bacon, Francis Francher, Arthur Kent, Burt Leese, Frank Butler, Tom Ellis, Sid Ulrey, John Farrell, Fred Butler, A. Kalquest, Frank



Pleasant Thompson

McDermott, Ernest Long, Ed. Mansfield, John Thompson, Will Curran and Ernest Brown."

Pleasant Thompson did not drink or smoke tobacco, even though it is known that his mother, Nancy smoked a corn cob pipe. I know that neither of Pleasant's sons, William and Martin, smoked or drank, and I think this was true of most of his family.

Pleasant Thompson died of "bronchitis chronic for several years" on February 19, 1907 at his King City residence and was buried in the King City Cemetery. Sarah Ann Hamilton Thompson died at the home of her daughter, Jane Thompson Weaver, in King City on July 19, 1919 and is buried next to her husband in the Thompson family plot of the King City Cemetery.

Refer to the Table of Contents for biographies of William Robert Thompson and Martin L. Thompson.

Pleasant's and Sarah's graves are located at King City, California Cemetary



Pleasant Thompson Monument



Headstones beneath the monument for Pleasant and Sarah Ann Thompson

### PLEASANT and SARAH ANN HAMILTON THOMPSON had 12 children:

1. ALEXANDER PLEASANTON THOMPSON was born in Grayson County, Texas on September 22, 1853 and came to California with his parents in 1856. He grew up in the Salinas area and married his childhood playmate, Ida Mae Johnson, on June 29, 1873. They made their home on the Torro Ranch near Salinas and then moved to King City area where they lived the rest of their lives. Alexander died in 1936, and Ida died in 1945. They had six children: E. J. Thompson, Charles Thompson, William Thompson, Clara Thompson (m. Forbes), George Thompson and Alexander E. Thompson.



Alexander P. and Ida Mae Thompson

- 2. WILLIAM ROBERT THOMPSON 1855-1891 (See Chapter 5 for a separate biography.)
- 3. MARTHA ELLEN THOMPSON was born on September 3, 1859 in Salinas and married William J. Grigsby on October 18, 1874 at the home of Pleasant Thompson. After their marriage they moved to Trinity County, California where they lived for about twenty years. About 1894 they moved to the San Diego area. Martha suffered from "dropsy" the last years of her life. She and her husband had six sons: Robert Lee Grigsby, Pleasant Grigsby, William Grigsby, Albert Grigsby, Calvin Grigsby, and Francis Grigsby. Martha died in San Diego, California in December, 1902.
- 4. MARY ELVIRA THOMPSON (b. 1857 d. 1862)\*
- 5. ELIZABETH ANN THOMPSON (1861 -1862)\*

Grigsby

The circumstances that might have caused both of these deaths in the same year are unknown. However, Joseph Hushbeck died of smallpox in 1861, and there was a smallpox epidemic in 1862, so this might be a possible explanation.

6. SARAH SOPHRONIA THOMPSON was born in Salinas on August 10, 1863 and married John Harris at the home of Pleasant Thompson on December 1, 1880. John and "Fronie" lived in the Paso Robles area for several years. Members of the Harris family told me that John Harris was mean to "Fronie" and beat her, so she left him. Eventually divorced, she later married a Mr. Bancroft. She died in San Diego in 1942. Fronie and husband John Harris had three known children: Mamie Ellen Harris, Hattie Belle, and Gordon Lee Harris. Family of Gordon Harris still lives in Atascadero (1999).



John and Sarah Sophronia Thompson Harris

7. NANCY THOMPSON was born in Salinas on November 10, 1865. "Nan", as she



was known, married James Marston on December 12, 1886 at the home of Pleasant Thompson, and they lived in the Paso Robles area for many years. Nan and James had at least seven known children: Belva, Charles, Elsie, twins – Lawrence and Clarence, Frank and Marguerite.

Nancy Thompson Marston

- 8. MARTIN LEE THOMPSON (b. 10-27-1867 d. 01-11-1955) (See Chapter 8 for a separate biography.)
- 9. **Nellie Thompson** (1869 1881)

- 10. JOHN FRANKLIN THOMPSON was born in the King City area of Monterey County on March 10, 1873. John never married. He died at thirty years of age on (September 14, 1903) from "Typhoid Pneumonia" while working in Rocky Ford, Colorado. John had left King City a few months earlier to take a foreman's job for some sort of sugar refining company in Rocky Ford. His brother, Martin Thompson went to Colorado by train to get the body and brought it back to King City for burial at the King City Cemetery. There was a rumor that John was killed in some sort of "gunfight" in Colorado, but I haven't found anything to substantiate that story.
- 11. **JANE THOMPSON** was born in the King City area on May 10, 1875. Jane married William Weaver on September 27, 1894 at the residence of Pleasant Thompson. Jane and William lived all their lives in King City. Jane died of cancer on October 26, 1932. They had a daughter, Edith Weaver, who married Frank Lillard. Descendants of this family still live in King City.



Jane Thompson Weaver



William & Jane Weaver

12. FRANCES THOMPSON was born on February 7, 1878 near King City. She married first W.H. Lawrie of Watsonville on September 12, 1900 at the residence of the Rev. C.R. Knodell in Santa Cruz, California. They had at least one child: Mary Elizabeth. Frances divorced and later married Dr. J.D. Mazza a wellknown veterinarian, and they lived in San Luis Obispo, California.



Frances Thompson as a child.

## PLEASANT THOMPSON OBITUARY

Following is a representation of a newspaper obituary from an unidentified newspaper — known only as "The Journal" (assumed to be a King City paper). Obituary probably was printed about Feb. 20, 1907 or shortly thereafter.

### **PASSING OF A PIONEER**

#### Pleasant Thompson, one of Salinas Valley's earliest pioneers, joins the silent majority

The Journal regrets to chronicle the passing of Pleasant Thompson, one of the earliest pioneers of the Salinas Valley, whose death occured at 2:30 Tuesday afternoon (Feb. 19,1907), at his home near King City. He had been ill since Thanksgiving, but bore his suffereing uncomplainingly to the end. He was a good citizen, kind hearted and true to his friends and always ready to relieve distress to the extent of his ability.

Pleasant Thompson was born December 26, 1830 in St. Louis County, Missouri. He lived in St. Louis county with his father (William Thompson) until about 15 years of age, then moved into Franklin county, Missouri. In 1845, he moved to Texas. At the age of 18 years he volunteered as a Ranger in the Mexican war. He was never called on to serve and in six months the war closed.

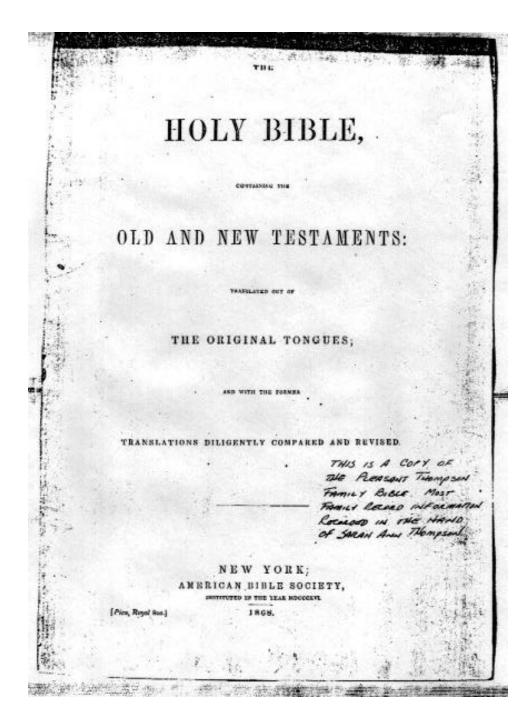
In 1846 his father died, and in 1848 (Feb. 1850) his mother (Nancy Bacon Thompson) married a man by the name of (Uriah) Burns. At 18 years of age , he started to do for himself. Before he was 21 years old, he was married to Sarah Ann Hamilton, aged 15, in Sherman, Grayson County, Texas on June 12, 1851.

Note: I have added parentheses to clarify known errors or to add names. INHA1. In May 1856, with his family, wife and two small children, Alex and William, he started across the plains, by ox team, for California. In the fall of '56 they arrived in Los Angeles and spent the winter there. In the spring of '57 they came to Salinas Valley, and settled near the present site of Salinas. In 1870 he moved to San Antonio, Monterey county and engaged in farming and stock raising. Several years later he went into the hotel (The Last Chance Stage stop) and food yard business at the place now called "Thompson Gulch".

In 1882 he sold his estate to the late William Dumphy and moved to Watsonville. After remaining there two years, he came back to Pine Canyon near King City and remained there several years. Three years ago he bought seven acres of land from Charles Bischoff, half a mile from King City, where he made his home up to the time of his death.

Their union was blessed with twelve children — eight girls and four boys. Six children, four girls and two boys, are dead, Viz: W.R. Thompson, Mrs. W.J. (Martha) Grigsby, Nellie, John Franklin, Elizabeth and Mary Thompson. The six surviving children are Alexander and Martin Thompson of King City, Mrs. J.N. (Nancy) Marston of Paso Robles, Mrs. Fronie S. Harris of Pemena, Cal., Mrs. W.H. (Frances) Lawrie of Watsonville, and Mrs. W. H. (Jane) Weaver of King City, all of whom, with their aged mother, were at his bedside when he passed away.

## PLEASANT THOMPSON FAMILY BIBLE PAGES



On this and the following 3 pages are copies from the Pleasant Thompson Family Bible showing family records as they were written down. They are not clear, and they did not reproduce well. The Bible itself is now lost! Or it's location is not known. My late cousin, Winifred Thompson Ames told me she got these copies from a distant cousin who lived in Medford, Oregon. Please contact me if you need help reading any of them. [NHA]

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