

ANCESTORS

A HISTORY OF THE BURKETT FAMILY
OF
TENNESSE AND TEXAS

1962

Prepared by

Descendants of Joseph Lafayette Burkett

PREFACE

At the annual reunion of the Joe L . Burkett family on the first Sunday in August, 1961, at Lake Merrett between Mullin and Goldthwaite, Texas, someone suggested a written history of our family for the benefit of younger and the future relatives. This history records both past and present events among members of the Joseph Lafayette Burkett Family.

We realize this history may not be interesting to everyone; but to those who are interested we heartily and willingly give the information which we have obtained orally from our parents, Joe and Della Burkett; also from other relatives and friends. We are aware of the fact that we do not have as much information about some of the uncles, aunts, and cousins as we do about others. That explains why this history contains more details about some relatives than it does about others. We do not intend to show partiality or favor to certain relatives by the amount of information recorded in this family history.

This book may be subject to some criticism because its contents are not based entirely on written records. It is compiled largely from memories of various people. The book is not written for personal gain of any individual or family. It is presented specifically for those seeking facts and related knowledge about the lives, traditions, customs, personality traits, and characters of Joseph Lafayette Burkett; his wife, Della Catherine (Pycatte) Burkett; their ten children: Annie, George, Stella, Edgar, Floyd, Lee, Birdie, May Delle, Gladys, John.

ANCESTORS OF JOE AND DELLA PYEATTE BURKETT

Tradition handed down orally is to the effect that three bachelor brothers named Burkett landed in Pennsylvania soon after the American Revolutionary War --- having been expelled from Holland on account of their religious beliefs. After leaving Holland, they lived awhile in Germany before coming to America. From Pennsylvania one of the brothers went to Illinois; another to Kentucky; the third one to North Carolina.

Our Burkett family descended from the one who went to North Carolina. Joseph Lafayette Burkett's great grandfather married an Epley in North Carolina and emigrated to Middle Tennessee years before the Civil War. Joe's grandparents were Henry and Mary Burkett. To them were born ten children: Mary, Martha, John, James, George, David, Nathan, Jobe, Jacob L., and Tolbert. We do not know their birth dates. Mary married a man named Brown; Martha married Bob Young. One of the boys, George emigrated to Missouri; James, to Arkansas; David to Kansas. We are descendants of Jacob L.

Jacob Lorenza Burkett married Lavina Burnet whose father was Major Burnet. Our family is related to David G. Burnet, first president of the Texas Republic. At this time we do not know the exact relationship.

Seven children were born to Jacob Lorenza and Lavina Burnet Burkett --- all in Tennessee before the family moved to Texas in 1865. The children were George W., Joe L., Mary, Sarah, James H. and his twin sister Jane and Fannie. After the close of the Civil War, 1865, Reverend Ike Hoover of Burnet county, Texas, visiting his old home state of Tennessee, caused the Jacob L. Burkett and Dave Epley families to migrate to Texas. Dave Epley was an uncle of Jacob L. Burkett. Starting near Nashville, they went to Memphis, Tennessee, then by boat on the Mississippi river to New Orleans, Louisiana. There they took passage on a ship sailing to Galveston, Texas. After landing safely at Galveston, the Burketts and Epleys rode a train to Branham, Texas, at that time the terminus of the railroad. At Branham they transferred to ox wagons for the last part of the trip and arrived in Hoover Valley, Burnet County, Texas, Christmas Day 1865.

Upon their arrival in Burnet county Jacob and Lavina Burkett became home owners until her death probably in 1866 or 1867. She was buried in Cummings cemetery at Hoover Valley. In a letter written by Jim Burkett, brother of Joe, he made some very impressive remarks about their mother Lavina. One of the remarks is: "I remember seeing my mother lying in a winding sheet on

that bed with what looked like a little doll in her arms. They told me she was dead." After Lavina's death Jacob Lorenza broke up housekeeping and placed the younger children with kind-hearted neighbors. Jim and Jane (twins) and Fannie were placed with the Elkins family; Sarah with Reverend Jack Mabry; Mary with the John Davis family --- all living in Hoover Valley.

About two years later Jacob Lorenza Burkett married Miss Matilda Reed and she assumed the responsibility for mothering his children. They were brought together again under the same roof; at first living for a short while at Rose Mill, McCullough county. Returning soon to Burnet county, they lived on the John Davis farm. There Ellen the first of the half sisters was born. Laura the second half sister was born also in Burnet county. The family moved to Lone Grove, Llano county and lived on the D.H. Trent farm. They then moved to San Saba county where Reverend John Reed lived and located on the Vest farm. From there they moved to Big Valley, Mills county where the third half sister, Lavina, was born. In Big Valley, Jacob pre-empted a small place which he later sold to Dave Farley. The Burketts located next on a place near the Colorado river in Mills county, having bought the place from 'Uncle John' Conner. Later Jacob sold that place to Abe Ezzell father of Henry Ezzell. Then Jacob bought a place on Prescoat creek one-half mile below Prescoat's old home place. It was part of the old Murrah ranch four and a half miles south of Goldthwaite, Texas. At that farm Jacob Lorenza Burkett died in December, 1875. He was buried in the nearby Joy cemetery on the place now owned by J.R. Parks. Two months after Jacob's death his youngest daughter, Virginia (Mrs. Jennie Godfrey, Sweetwater, Texas) was born. She was the last of the four half sisters: Ellen, Laura, Lavina and Virginia --- children of Jacob Lorenza Burkett and his second wife, Matilda Reed Burkett.

While the Burketts were living in Burnet county, the Indian massacre of the Whitlock family occurred December 7, 1870 on a farm adjoining the Burkett farm.

Jacob Lorenza Burkett returned to Tennessee, probably in 1873 or 1874, for the purpose of closing the estate of his father, Henry Burkett, who had died. When Jacob came back to Texas, he brought his mother, Mary Burkett, and his two sisters, Martha Young, Mary Brown and their children. Later Aunt Martha Young moved to Oklahoma. At the time Jacob brought his mother and sisters from Tennessee, his home was located near the Colorado river and included the Little Pecan Bayou. His house was just above the bayou and about fifty yards from the river. His mother, Mary Burkett, is buried in Williams Ranch cemetery. In order to clarify our ancestry, may we explain that she was the grandmother of Joseph Lafayette Burkett.

The following paragraphs give the limited information we have about the brothers and sisters of our father, Joseph Lafayette Burkett:

George Washington Burkett, oldest brother, was born in 1851. He married Mary Ezzell, daughter of Abe Ezzell. To George and Mary were born three children: a daughter, Salena, who married Eph Guthrie; a son, John who married Zona _____; another daughter, Archie, who married a man named Heard.

Joseph Lafayette was the second child of Jacob and Lavina Burkett. Details about his life are given in another chapter of this book.

Mary, the third child, married John Clark. They had two children, Albert and Ida. Albert married Alice Ray. They had two girls, Alta and Vern; two boys, --- ---. Ida Clark married James Box. They had several children who are all well educated and hold good, well-salaried positions in various towns. The Box family lived at Lone Grove, Llano county, Texas for a number of years. After Mr. Clark's death, Aunt Mary (Burkett) married Jim Templeton. To them were born three children: Alice 'Cricket', Ora 'Fraud', and Fred. 'Cricket' married Elza Sullivan; 'Fraud' married Jim Borden. Fred married but his wife died in a short while. He still lives in Llano.

Sarah, the fourth child of Jacob and Lavina Burkett, married Arch Murray. They had four children: Will, Georgia, Asa, and Ezra. Mr. Murray died while the children were very young; so Aunt Sarah and the four children lived several years with her brother Joe and his family at Mullin, Texas. Then she married Ole Storehoff, a Norwegian Shoemaker, who lived, also, in the Joe Burkett Home. Aunt Sarah and Mr. Storehoff had two daughters. The Storehoffs moved to Oklahoma. Aunt Sarah and some of her children and grandchildren came back later to visit the Burketts at Mullin.

The next children of Jacob and Lavina were twins, Jim and Jane, born in 1862. After the Burketts moved to Texas from Tennessee, Jane married John Pavy. they had one daughter, Ollie. Later Aunt Jane married John Cox and moved to Chichasha, Oklahoma, where she died about 1956. Jim (James Henry) married Samantha Nolley, a widow with three children: Sallie, Jennie, and Sam. Some of the Nolley descendants now live in Fort Worth, Texas. Sam Nolley (Uncle Jim Burkett's stepson) has lived in Gaines county Texas, several years.

Jim and Samantha Burkett had four children: Omar, Joe, Iru, and Kate. All of them except Omar have died. He lives between Eastland and Cisco, Texas. He was Texas (State)

Representative for several years. He also worked for the Texas Land Department for many years. Joe was county judge of Eastland county before moving to San Antonio where he was district judge. Kate Burkett married Carl Grubbs. She became a medical doctor.

Uncle Jim Burkett was a pecan expert. Having become interested in pecans in his youth, he learned the art of budding, grafting and growing them. The Burkett pecan is still regarded as the best produced in West Texas. In recognition of his work in developing pecans, Uncle Jim served several years in the Texas Department of Agriculture as Chief of the Department of Edible Nuts. He wrote four pamphlets on pecan culture, all accepted as authoritative. He was presented a plaque in 1929 by the Brazos Valley Pecan Association for "outstanding service in the pecan industry."

Uncle Jim Burkett died in 1945 at the age of 83 at his home in Clyde, Texas.

Fannie, the seventh child of Jacob and Lavina Burkett, married a Mr. McCall. They moved to California.

ANCESTORS and OTHER RELATIVES of DELLA PYEATT BURKETT

The Forsythe Families

This information about the Forsythe families is included in the Burkett history because Emmaline Forsythe was the mother of Della Catherine Pyeatt Burkett. According to recent information obtained from Miss Edna Marrs, Della's niece in Missouri, a Mr. Henderson Pyeatt went from Prairie Grove, Arkansas, to Ellis county, Texas, in the 1850's and married Emmaline Forsythe Marrs. She had first married Aaron Marrs of Prairie Grove. After Aaron's death, she came to Texas with her parents, the Thomas Jefferson Forsythe's. She later returned to Arkansas with her second husband Henderson Pyeatt and their son Jesse Newton Pyeatt. Their daughter, Della Catherine, was born in Arkansas. Other details of her life are given in a separate chapter.

Della Pyeatt Burkett's maternal grandfather, Thomas Jefferson Forsythe, was among the first settlers in Mills county, locating at Williams Ranch about 1866. At that time Della was living in Arkansas with her Aunt Mary Cox. We are inclined to believe that Della never saw her Grandfather Forsythe because she did not come to Texas until after his death. T.J. (Jeff) Forsythe first brought his family from Polk county, Arkansas to Ellis county, Texas, in 1851. His children were: Emmaline, William 'Bud', R.D. 'Bob', Newton, Mary, and Elizabeth Jackson 'Aunt Jackie'. Mary married a Mr. Cox. Jackie married George Williams whose father, John Williams, founded Williams Ranch. It may be pertinent to remember that George Williams was a second cousin to Joe Burkett through the Epley family: George's mother was an Epley --- sister of David, Daniel, and Bill Epley. Aunt Jackie and Uncle George Williams often visited in the Joe and Della Burkett home. Uncle Bob (R.D.) Forsythe married Betty Vann. He was a well-known highly respected rancher with part of his ranch in Brown county and part of it in Mills county. His ranch house was in Mills county near Blanket creek. In 1917 he moved to Zepher in Brown county and lived there until his death October 6, 1933, at the age of eighty-six. Our maternal grandfather, Thomas Jefferson Forsythe, died about 1872 at the home of his son Bill in Brown county, Texas.

The Pyeatt Families

This information is about the Pyeatt families was dictated by Jesse Newton Pyeatt to his niece, Anna Burkett Jackson, at Mullin, Texas, August 1, 1940.

Jesse Newton Pyeatt and his younger sister, Della Catherine, are children of Henderson and Emmaline (Forsythe) Pyeatt. Newton "Uncle Newt" was born in Ellis county, Texas, May 14, 1859. Della Catherine was born in Polk county, Arkansas, November 14, 1861. Newton and Della had a half brother, Martin L. Marrs, because their mother, Emmaline, had been married earlier to Aaron Marrs who died, leaving the son, Martin L., born in 1855, in Washington county, Arkansas. After the death of his mother and step father, Martin was reared by the Marrs relatives. He died in 1927 at Jane, Missouri, where his daughter Edna still lives.

Emmaline Forsythe Pyeatt died in 1864; her husband, Henderson Pyeatt, died in 1865. Their children, Jesse Newton and Della Catherine, went to live with their Aunt Mary Forsythe Cox. She brought them to Texas in 1873. The first year they lived in Hill county. Then they lived awhile in Brown county; later they moved to Old Fort Chadbourne, Coke county, Texas. Uncle Newt came to what is now Mills county, Texas, but at that time was part of Brown county in 1877. He worked for his uncle, Bill Forsythe, in Chesser Valley. The following year, 1878, Uncle Newt went back to Coke county to get his sister, Della, who was still living with their Aunt Mary Cox. Returning to Brown county Newt and Della lived and worked with their Uncle Bill Forsythe. Part of the time Della worked for other people. She was staying a 'Uncle' Bill Williams, a second cousin to Joe Burkett, when Uncle Bill Forsythe move to Oklahoma. Della continued staying with the Bill Williams family until she married Joe Burkett June 11, 1882.

Jesse Newton Pyeatt married Miss Nancy Epley on February 23, 1881. She was a second cousin to Joe Burkett and came from Tennessee to Texas in 1865 at the same time as the Burketts. Newt and Nancy Pyeatt moved to New Mexico in 1882, but stayed only six months ten returned to Mills county, Texas, where he and his brother-in-law, Joe Burkett, owned and operated a blacksmith shop at the Williams Ranch until 1885. Then the moved the shop to Mullin, Texas, and operated it until 1889 when Newt sold his interest to George W. Burkett, a brother to Joe.

The Newt Pyeatt family moved to Callahan county in 1889.

Several children were born to Uncle Newt and Aunt Nancy Pyeatt. All those living are Christians. Their oldest child, a girl, born at Williams Ranch, lived only a few days. The next

child, also a girl, born in New Mexico, lived six months. Dollie Pyeatt was born at Williams Ranch, September 6, 1884; Oscar Pyeatt, at Mullin, November 25, 1886; Callie Pyeatt, at Mullin, September 1, 1889; Russell Pyeatt, at Cottonwood, Texas, August 17, 1891. Another baby --- was born at Putnam, Texas but did not survive.

Dollie Pyeatt married Erry McCollum. Their three children are Acton, Velma, Pyeatt. The McCollums married November 8, 1903.

Oscar Pyeatt married Miss Beulah Merrick, April 11, 1906. Their three sons are ----.

Callie Pyeatt married Roy Marshall, June 19, 1910. Their daughter is Mary Maude.

Russell Pyeatt married Zada --- . They had three sons: Jesse Mack, Bobby, and --- who died after he was grown.

The Pyeatts are Scotch-Irish. One very important fact to be remembered is that no Pyeatt was ever connected with any crime.

May 28, 1962

Uncle Newt and aunt Nancy Pyeatt have both been dead several years now. Their son Russell is dead. Oscar and Dollie live at Clyde, Texas; Callie lives in El Paso.

Several of our Pyeatt ancestors and their relatives live at Prairie Grove, Arkansas.

CHILDREN OF JACOB LORENZA AND LAVINA BURNETT BURKETT

All born in Tennessee

George Washington Burkett, 1851 - 1927

Joseph Lafayette Burkett, 1853 - 1920

Mary Burkett, 1855 ? - ?

Sarah Burkett, 1856 ? - ?

Fannie Burkett, 1860 ? - ?

Malinda Jane Burkett, 1862 - 1952. Her obituary gave birthdate 1858.
(I don't know which date is correct.)

James Henry Burkett, 1862 - 1945 (Twin brother of Malinda Jane Burkett)
(Uncle Jim)

Jacob and Lavina Burkett brought their family to Texas in 1865. Lavina died about 1866 or 1867. Some two years later Jacob married Miss Matilda Reed.

CHILDREN OF JACOB LORENZA AND MATILDA REED BURKETT

Born in Texas

Ellen Burkett, 1870 ? -- ?

Laura Burkett, 1872 ? -- ?

Lavina Burkett, 1874 ? -- ?

Jennie Burkett, 1876 ? -- ? (Jan. or Feb.) -- died in ??
(Virginia)

END

The following three pages were stapled to the end of the copy of the following document:

ANCESTORS

A HISTORY OF THE BURKETT FAMILY OF TENNESSEE AND TEXAS.

I do not know what it is from or where it is supposed to be located. I decided to leave it for others to read as I did.

Bill Huckaby

Burketts located next on a place near the Colorado River in Mills County, having bought the place from 'Uncle' John Conner. Later Jacob sold that place to Abe Ezzell, father of Henry, Will, and Mary Ezzell. Then Jacob bought a place on Prescoat creek one-half mile below Prescoat's old home place, It was part of the old Murrah ranch four and a half miles from Goldthwaite, Texas. At that farm Jacob Lorenza Burkett died in December, 1875. He was buried in the nearby Joy cemetery on the farm now owned by J.R. Parker.

Two months after Jacob's death his youngest daughter Virginia was born. She was the last of the four half-sisters: Ellen, Laura, Lavina, Virginia --- the children of Jacob Lorenza Burkett and his second wife, Matilda Reed Burkett.

While the Burketts were living in Burnet county, the Indian massacre of the Whitlock family occurred December 7, 1870, on a farm next to the Burkett farm.

Jacob Lorenza Burkett returned to Tennessee, probably in 1873 or 1874, for the purpose of closing the estate of his father, Henry Burkett, who had died. When Jacob came back to Texas, he brought his mother, Mary Epley Burkett, and his two sisters, Mary Brown and Martha Young, and their children. Later Aunt Martha young moved to Oklahoma taking with her the old family Bible which contained valuable records pertaining to our ancestors. That information has not been available to us, but we hope it will be some day.

At the time Jacob Burkett brought his mother and sisters from Tennessee, his home was located near the Colorado river and included the Little Pecan Bayou. His house was just above the bayou and about fifty yards from the river. His mother, Mary Epley Burkett, is thought to have stayed part of the time among relatives at Williams Ranch. She is buried in the cemetery there.

The following paragraphs give the limited information that we have about the brothers and sisters of our father, Joseph Lafayette Burkett:

George Washington Burkett, first child of Jacob Lorenza and Lavina Burnet Burkett was born in 1851, in Tennessee, came to Texas with his parents in 1865. After living a few years in Burnet county, the located at Big Valley, now in Mills county, but at that time part of Lampasas county.

As a young man, George W. Burkett, with other cowboys, drove large herds of cattle to markets in Kansas and farther to the north. An interesting romantic incident occurred on one of

those cattle drives to Kansas. The cowboys met a wagon-train of people moving from Missouri to Texas. Members of the wagon-train stopped the trail drivers in North Central Texas and inquired about suitable camping places. After the travelers resumed their journey, the cowboys talking among themselves jokingly claimed various items on the wagon train. One boy mentioned a certain mule and said, "That's my mule." Another boy mentioned a fine team of horses and said, "This is mine." As the conversation continued, George W. Burkett said, "Well, boys, you may have the mules, horses and other things you have claimed; but that little 'gal' in the front wagon is mine."

After delivering the cattle to a Kansas market, the trail drivers returned to their homes in Texas, riding horse back all the way, and the trip required two or three months. When George rode up to his father's home at Big Valley, he saw a tent in the yard. He soon learned that living in it was the Abe Ezzell family who had been in the front wagon of the wagon train which the cowboys had met on their drive to Kansas. Mr. Ezzell had bought the Jacob Burkett farm as was to get possession as soon as the crop was harvested. "The little gal in the front wagon" was Mary Ezzell, the 'gal' that George W. Burkett married. They had three children: Salena, John, Archie. Archie married Eph Guthrie. Two of them were born two children, a son Fay, and a daughter June. Salena was killed in a car wreck about 1947. Archie married V.W. Heard. They had one son, Vernon Price. Archie, a widow since 1961, lives alone in Big Spring, Texas, one block from her son.

John, the only son of George and Mary Ezzell Burkett, married Zona Albright. They had eight children, five boys and three girls. John, Zona, and every child were fine singers. The boys, all good musicians, could play any and all of several musical instruments. They played for many radio and television programs. John and all of his sons, except one, are elders in the Church of Christ in their various home congregations. They are active leaders in church affairs, song leaders, and Sunday School teachers. Elmo, the oldest son, is a minister as well as a song leader for the Church of Christ. He was leading the song service in church when he was only nine years old.

While we are thinking about religious activities, we are reminded that Floyd E. Burkett told us that Uncle George Burkett taught him a lesson he never would forget. While Uncle George was visiting in Floyd's home near O'Donnell, Texas, they attended church services. On their way home they were discussing the sermon and Floyd remarked that it was surely a fine sermon and he liked it; but the preacher had ruined the influence of the lesson for him (Floyd) by begging too long for the listeners to accept the invitation to obey the gospel. Floyd said he would not want anyone to beg him; when he was ready, he would hunt up the preacher and tell him. Uncle George explained to Floyd: "I know how you feel. You are a Burkett and they are that way; but everybody else is not. It requires more begging and pleading for some people than it does for others. The

minister was not pushing you only; he was preaching to other people, too, as well as you. Remember that you are not the only pebble on the beach."

Uncle George was truly a devout and consecrated Christian. When he was a young man, stout and healthy, he could outwalk a horse pulling a plow and would have to stop at times to rest the horse. During those intervals Uncle George took his testament from his shirt pocket, sat on the plow and read the scriptures. George Washington Burkett died in 1927 at the age of 76.

Joseph Lafayette Burkett was the second child of Jacob and Lavina Burkett. Details about his life are given in a separate chapter of this book.

Mary, the third child, married John Clark. They had two children, Albert and Ida. Albert married Alice Ray. They four children: two girls, Alta and Vern; two boys, --- ---. Ida Clark married James Box. They had several children, all of whom are well educated and hold good, well-salaried positions in various towns. The Box family lived at Lone Grove, Llano county, Texas, for a number of years. After the death of Uncle John Clark, Aunt Mary (Burkett) married Jim Templeton. To them were born three children: Alice, Ora, Fred.