



# THE BURKETT FAMILY

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*StellaB "Nita" Jackson Jaynes*

*Born October 8, 1907  
near Goldthwaite, Texas*

*Died June 18, 1996  
in Goldthwaite, Texas*

It is with a great deal of sadness that I report the loss of our relative, Nita Jackson Jaynes. Nita not only provided the bulk of the information which we now have about our family but gave clues which helped lead to additional information.

Nita was born near Goldthwaite, Texas and it was there she died as a result of a fall. She had moved back to Goldthwaite after the death of her second husband, Willard Jaynes, and was a resident of a nursing home where the fall took place. One of our relatives, Sid Huggins, had been in touch with Nita for nearly 25 years and he sent me a FAX on June 6 about the accident but I was already in Huntsville at that time and did not learn of the fall until Sid arrived in Huntsville for the reunion. I quote in part from the FAX which Sid sent: "About three to four weeks ago our dear cousin Nita had a fall (perhaps a slight stroke) and fractured several ribs plus a bad laceration on the back of her head. She was hospitalized in Brownwood,

Texas. She was somewhat disoriented there but seemed to get better. She subsequently returned to the Nursing home in Goldthwaite but was very feeble and somewhat disoriented. More recently she had a very bad cerebral stroke and is completely comatose. My information is that her chances for survival are not very good. My prayers are for her to pass on while in the peaceful twilight of being comatose. The Lord threw away the mold when she was conceived. She has been my supporting rock for nearly 25 years and I will miss her terribly much." So will I, Sid . . . so will I.

Nita's parents were William L. "Will" Jackson and Anna Louisa Burkett. Her father came to Texas from Cherokee County Alabama when he was about 20 years old. He and her mother were married when he was about 24 and she was 18. She had 4 brothers and 1 sister. Two of the brothers died at a fairly young age.

Nita's first husband was Minnis McMichael and they had two children, a son and daughter both of whom died many years ago. Some years after Mr. McMichael died, Nita married Willard Jaynes who also preceeded her in death. It was after Mr. Jayne's death that Nita moved back to Goldthwaite.

Nita received a college education and spent most of her adult life as a librarian. Her mother had gotten interested in the family history and Nita continued with that and became very active in her pursuit of family information after she retired. She and Mr. Jaynes traveled extensively and spent a lot of their time seeking information about and meeting other family members.

Although Nita did not tell me this, I assumed that her name, StellaB, came about by her being named after an Aunt Stella, one of her mother's sisters. Needing to distinguish between them, I simply guessed they named her StellaB. It would have been awkward to say "Stella Number 2" so they chose the second letter of the alphabet to indicate there was another Stella in the family and she was the second one. This was one of the questions I planned to ask her when I got the chance to go to Texas again.

I wrote in previous issues about my frustration in not locating her when I was in Goldthwaite in 1994 because it did not occur to me to check the Nursing Homes. I would have really enjoyed that because I could have spent several days with her. As it turned out, I never got to meet her but talked with her on the phone a few times. To do that, I had to call the Nursing Home and ask them to give me a time when it would be convenient because they would have to get her and bring her to the telephone in her wheel chair.

I am glad she knew we were carrying on the work she had started and that the information she had worked so hard to accumulate and record would not be lost. She wrote me several times and each time she expressed her delight about the Newsletters and our efforts to expand the work she had done.

I think the best way to describe her life is to include in this issue the autobiography of her Mother, Anna Louisa Burkett Jackson. This excellent writing not only describes their lives but provides a good description of living conditions and some of the ways folks made their living back then. ■

## ***THE BURKETT FAMILY***

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We wish to acknowledge the contributions made by StellaB 'Nita' Jackson Jaynes in compiling the initial data about our family. Without her efforts, much of the information we have would probably never have been located.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF  
ANNA LOUISA BURKETT JACKSON

*I recommend that you do not start reading this article  
unless you have the time to read it all the way through.  
Once you start, I don't believe you will not want to stop.*

I am the oldest child of the late Joseph Lafayette and Della Catherine Pyeatt Burkett. I was born April 24, 1883 near the town of Williams Ranch on Mullin creek about three miles south of Mullin, Texas. I have lived in Texas all my life.

We (my parents and their first three children Annie, George, Stella) moved to the new town of Mullin about 1888. I remember the old logs and rawhide oak lumber of the house that was torn down, moved to Mullin and rebuilt for our home there. Later, two rooms of new lumber were added to the old house when Dad brought his widowed sister, Mrs. Sarah Murray, and her small children to live with us. A few years later the old log house was torn down and a house of new lumber was built on to the two good rooms after Aunt Sarah married Mr. Ole Storehoff and moved away.

I attended my first school in the home of Mrs. Eli Fairman at Williams Ranch. She taught me and her own children. My first school building was a log house with dirt floors and puncheon<sup>1</sup> seats made of long logs split into halves with the flat sides turned up to sit on. Later a new building was constructed of lumber. It was used by the various church groups for their services, each taking its turn. Political and other public meetings were held sometimes in the school building. Some of my early teachers in the Mullin school were 'Professors' Sharp, Sibley, Doyle, McAndrews, Alvis (he came from Big Valley) and Miss Dollie Burton. I received a solid gold medal for perfect attendance one year when I was neither tardy nor absent; I still have the medal. A new rock school building was erected at Mullin in 1895. Dad was a member of the Board of Trustees. The superintendent, 'Professor' Merchant received seventy dollars per month; the First Assistant 'Professor' Warren received forty-five dollars per month; the Second Assistant, Miss Mary Anderson

<sup>1</sup> puncheon - a split log or heavy slab with the face smoothed

received thirty-five dollars per month. 'Miss Mary' was the best loved teacher who ever taught in Mullin.

Schools at that time were not divided into grades. We spoke of different classes as being in first, third, or fifth reader; or in Texas history; or in United States history, or in another subject. Reading, writing, arithmetic and spelling were stressed, especially spelling. Our favorite entertainment at school were spelling matches. On Friday afternoons 'after recess' we had Literary Society Meetings during which we gave speeches, recited poetry that we had memorized, and sometimes debated. One debate I remember better than others concerned Pleas Hulsey's argument against going to school. While Pleas (maybe in third reader) read his reasons for not wanting to attend school, he used the words 'get a whipping' in almost every line for 3 pages. If he were late to school, did not obey the teacher, had a fight with another boy - - and for many other reasons - - he would 'get a whipping'. His argument continued until every one else was laughing.

My last year in Mullin Public School was 1899-1900. I 'finished' in the spring of 1900. We did not have 'graduation'. I never heard of the word graduation until several years later. During my senior year in high school I studied general history, physics, geology, civics, Latin and trigonometry. I took private lessons in German from Mrs. Price Stephenson at her home. Her husband was the superintendent of Mullin school. My cousin, Salena Burkett, and I were the only ones studying German lessons. Salena was a daughter of my Uncle, George W. Burkett.

In the spring of 1900 I took the Mills County examination in the courthouse at Goldthwaite, Texas, for a teacher's certificate. I was barely seventeen years old. The following winter I taught Williams Ranch School which lasted three months for twenty-five dollars per month. I paid five dollars per month for room and board in the 'Shorty' Marion Williams home about one-half mile from the school building. Sometimes after school hours on Friday afternoon, I walked three miles to my parents' home in Mullin when my brothers Edgar and Floyd were at Williams Ranch to walk with me.

In the summer of 1901 our cousin Dollie Pyeatt came to visit us. Later that summer, Mother with all of us children (Mae Delle, the baby at that time, about 2 months old) went in a covered wagon to take Dollie home and visit her family at Clyde, Texas. Her father was my uncle, Jessie Newton Pyeatt, a brother to my mother; and her mother Nancy Epley Pyeatt was a second cousin (Epley kin) to my father Joe Burkett. It took us two days to travel the seventy or eighty miles from Mullin to Clyde; we felt very brave making that trip without a man. My brother George did the driving and caring for the horses. When we camped that night, Mother went to a nearby farmhouse and bought hot biscuits at a price per 'bakers dozen' explaining to us that bakers dozen meant thirteen instead of twelve — an extra one for good measure.

After we returned from our visit with the Pyeatt family, I married that same summer. On July 2, 1901, William L. "Will" Jackson and I were married in my parents home at Mullin. Will had come from Cherokee County, Alabama to Texas when he was about twenty years old. At the time of our marriage, I was eighteen and Will twenty-four years old. We lived on a farm in Miller Grove community of Mills County, Texas, the first two years after our marriage. The first winter I taught Miller Grove School about two miles from our house if I went on the road; but only a little over a mile if I walked across the pasture. I did walk that way sometimes being very careful to hold up my long skirt to prevent its getting wet from dew on the grass. It was stylish in those days for ladies to wear dresses to their ankles or even touching the ground beneath their feet. The Miller Grove School lasted eight months that year. I received forty dollars per month, the highest salary paid at that time.

During the Christmas holidays in 1903, my brother Floyd went to a party. Attending the same party were Fayette Stark's daughters who already had fever with measles. Ten days later Floyd took the measles; in a few more days our brother Lee and sisters Birdie and Mae Delle had measles. On January 1, 1904, Will and I moved into my parents' home at Mullin to stay until our first son

JW Jackson was born February 14, 1904. I took the flu about mid January while my younger brothers and sisters still had the measles. I felt very wretched and barely able to move (I thought) but Mae Delle, quite ill with high fever and measles refused to let anyone else wait on her and it seemed that she wanted a drink or needed something every few minutes. When I became a bed patient, Mae Delle, then able to be up, ran her little legs off trying to do something for me - - offering me food, drinks, or something to look at. Her sincere interest in my comfort made me regret very much the unpleasant way I had felt about waiting on her when she had the measles. I never can repay her for the many kind things she did.

In early spring of 1904, Will, JW and I moved to Dad and Mother's farm near Mullin. We stayed there until July 4 that same year when we moved to Mercury, McCullough County, Texas. We took twenty head of fine red cows we owned. Bryan Smith went with us and drove the cows to the pasture we had rented near Mercury. ( Seventy-one years later I was pleasantly surprised to see Bryan at a memorial celebration of Williams Ranch cemetery.) Will worked for his older brother John Jackson, a building contractor, in Mercury. We lived in a lumber shack with dirt floors until we could build a large two-room house.

While living on Dad's farm just before moving to Mercury, we planted cotton; later Dad had the cotton harvested and sent me the money to buy my first sewing machine. Words do not adequately describe my pride and joy over that new machine. I sewed for my family and for the public.

We lived at Mercury one year then moved in summer of 1905 to the South Plains region of West Texas where we bought a place near the present town of O'Donnell. It had taken us eight days to make the trip in a covered wagon. Shortly after buying the place we learned the title was not good but we were fortunate enough to get our money refunded. We went to Big Springs, Texas and lived a few months in a hotel owned and operated by Will's parents, William A. and Nancy (Cothran) Jackson. I helped with the hotel work and Will

drove a dray (delivery) wagon for a lumber yard. In February, 1906, we bought a farm three miles north of Big Springs and built a large one-room house on it, lived there six months, sold it for one thousand dollars profit and moved back to Mills County. There we purchased the Bob Webb farm in Rock Springs community about four miles west of Goldwaithe, Texas in the Fall of 1906 but did not get possession or move to the farm until January 1, 1907. All of our other children were born on that place: StellaB on 8 October 1907; Lawrence Herman on Nov-1911; Callie Lee on August 10, 1913; Addison Hilton 15 July 1915; Arthur Dale on 7 August 1918. Death took two of those, Lawrence Herman in December, 1911; Addison Hilton in April, 1925.

We lived sixteen years on that farm, worked very hard for a meager living and had very little money for pleasure. We raised cotton and feed crops to provide winter income; fruits and vegetables to provide our summer income and most of our food the entire year. During the seasons for melons, cantelopes, fruits and vegetables we got up early each day, placed the most desirable produce in a buggy or wagon and drove to Goldthwaite where we sold the produce to grocery stores or to private homes. After the best fruits and vegetables were sold, I selected those next in quality for canning and proudly showed off the attractively canned items. My children still laugh and tease me about refusing to let them eat the biggest, finest vegetables and fruits. StellaB particularly enjoys telling of the time she and JW slipped into the orchard and pulled some extra large white, juicy peaches that I wanted to can in glass jars. In order to hide from me while eating the peaches, StellaB and JW climbed upon the lumber platform of an overhead water tank and sat down with the tank between them and the house, forgetting their feet could be seen hanging below the platform. I missed the children but soon saw their feet. Having told them many times not to climb the tower, I rushed madly out there to punish them for disobedience - - yes, the whipping was much more severe after I saw them eating those large, fine, rosy-white peaches.

Sometimes on Saturday evenings in summer

months, neighbors came to our house or we went to theirs and made two or three large freezers of ice cream. While ladies prepared the ice cream mixture and men turned the hand-crank wooden freezers, children played all over the yard and house. One of the neighbors, 'Grandpa' Hendricks always wanted hot biscuits with his ice cream. About once a month in summer, we took lunch and attended all day singings or preaching services.

After crops were "laid by" in mid-summer, our favorite diversion was the camping trip and stay of two or three days in a nice, shady place near the Colorado river just a few miles west of our home. Sometimes other kin went with us. One rather exciting event occurred one afternoon about the time for JW, StellaB, Callie Lee, and Addison to be coming home from school in Goldthwaite. They rode in our buggy to and from school. That particular afternoon I heard a loud clattering noise and rushed outside to see what caused it. There to my horror came 'Whitefoot' - - the little bay pony they drove to school - - in a hard run with only the front wheels of the buggy. I started screaming and running along the road toward Goldthwaite; but suddenly realizing that I could not go very far, I returned to the house, telephoned my sister-in-law Mrs. John Hendricks whose house was next on the road, and asked her whether she had seen the children. She said, "Yes, and they're all right". She and her family just happened to be watching my children riding along as usual when suddenly the front wheels went on with the horse and the back wheels quickly dropped to the ground. The horse ran away and the children fell with the buggy. They were not hurt and laughed as they walked home - - I was too frightened to think the incident funny.

One of our tragic experiences happened one night when we lost three hundred baby turkeys during a rain storm. High school graduation services at Goldthwaite in the spring of 1922 were held that night; JW and Gladys (my youngest sister) were graduating. Mother, Birdie, John, StellaB and I attended the program while Will stayed at home with our younger children.. When a bad cloud

started coming toward the house, he placed the baby turkeys in tubs and put them inside a building. That night big rats killed all three hundred small turkeys.

In March , 1923 we sold the farm to Floyd and Maud Burkett, and moved to Lubbock, Texas where better school and college facilities would be available for the children. JW was already attending Abilene Christian College but transferred. Moving nearly three hundred miles to Lubbock was quite an undertaking. We chartered a railroad freight car with Albert Wright for shipment of livestock and household goods. Will rode with them. A few nights later the children and I rode a passenger train from Mullin to Lubbock. During the exciting rush to get on the train, we lost Arthur Dale's cap. Thinking we would be socially disgraced if he had to travel bareheaded, I borrowed a cap from my brother John for Arthur Dale to wear. The cap was too large but it permitted us to travel in style. I sent the cap back by return mail. I'll never forget that cold, windy, dusty. March day of 1923 when we arrived at the Santa Fe depot in Lubbock, a western thriving town of about eight thousand people. During the next two years we lived two miles west of Lubbock on a farm rented from a Kelly family who moved back to their old home in Indiana. We really enjoyed living in the large, two-story, well-built white frame house with its own Carbide light system, ample supply of running water piped into bath rooms, kitchen, and other places; beautiful shade trees - - While on the Kelly farm, we bought our first Model T car. Driving it to Mills County required one and a half days, much of it done at night to avoid the hot weather of summer time.

StellaB graduated from Lubbock High School in May, 1925. Caps and gowns had not become traditional for high school graduates so we bought two 'ready made' silk crepe dresses, one white and one medium dark purple (school colors) for StellaB to wear at baccalaureate services and graduation (diploma-awarding services). Her corsage of cape jasmine and magnolia blossoms with their rich, sweet fragrance added much pride and joy to that memorable occasion.

StellaB enrolled as a freshman student in Texas Technological University in the Fall of 1925.

That same year Mr. Kelly sold his farm where we lived. The next twelve years, 1925 - 1937, we continued living a few miles west of Lubbock while renting farms that belonged to the college (as it was called then). We had a very hard struggle earning our living and educational expenses. Besides doing the farm work, we milked fifteen to eighteen cows and sold milk which we delivered both wholesale and retail. Will and JW also worked for the college while StellaB and Callie Lee clerked in department stores and Arthur Dale worked in large, chain grocery stores. I must explain that all the children attended school regularly but worked after school hours, on Saturdays and during the Summers. All of them became high school and college graduates with Master or other high degrees. JW became a Professor of government in Texas Tech; StellaB a high school and city librarian and newspaper journalist; Callie Lee, a teacher of home economics and grade school subjects; Arthur Dale was a secretary for U.S. Senator Morris Sheppard until the senator died then Arthur Dale graduated from Harvard Law School and joined an international law firm in New York City. JW and Arthur Dale both served as Officers in World War II.

While we lived on the college farms, I enrolled in the college and received my B.A. degree in 1930. I enjoyed my college classes more than words can tell. Part of the time JW, StellaB and I were in the same classes.

In January, 1937 we moved to this farm where I am still living; on Acuff Road seven miles east of Lubbock Courthouse. JW bought the farm so that Will and I would not have to move from place to place in our declining years. By that time or soon after, all four children had good jobs away from home but usually came during vacations and helped with the farm chores. Will and I continued several years of hard work on the farm. Since Will's death in January, 1954, I have lived here alone except 1962 - 1964 when StellaB stayed with me. Her first husband Minnis McMichael had died in April, 1961. I have been very active raising turkeys, chickens, gardens to sell or use at home. I also sold

milk, butter and eggs - - delivering them myself in the Ford automobile Will and I owned. After I became too old (so JW thought) to drive on the highway or in town, customers came to my house for their produce many years. That helped me financially but most of all to pass very lonely times, and I really missed those nice people who no longer came to chat or buy fresh farm food. I still do all my own sewing and some for my children; as well as the Mexican family living on this farm since 1954. I keep house and cook for myself, watch TV and read. The children keep me well supplied with various magazines, books and newspapers. I attended services every Sunday (until physical disabilities interfered) in Roadway Church of Christ where I have been a member since transferring from the Church at Goldthwaite, Texas in 1923.

Thinking back over my long, active life I am aware of many interesting changes especially in fashions, education, medicine, entertainment and transportation. Although I have 'kept up with the times in many ways', I still flatly refuse to ride in an airplane. All four of my children and five grand children have traveled on airplanes for several years and think no more than I do about riding in an automobile, bus or train.

In recent years, my brothers and sisters and I have been researching and writing our family history and heritage. StellaB, also very interested in it, has provided many significant items of information for us. Some of my nieces and nephews have provided a number of interesting items. Every year we have one or more 'brother & sister meetings' to visit with one another and talk family history. Those happy moments dwell in our memories to comfort and help us pass many lonely hours. ■



Anna Louisa Burkett Jackson

Born: April 24, 1883

Died: Nov. 26, 1977  
at age of 94

[Date of picture is unknown]

### *Some comments on the Autobiography*

One thing that seems to stand out is the grit and determination displayed by StellaB's mother along with her brothers and sisters. In fact, it seems to be true of almost all of the Burketts but is revealed here because she took the time to write about her life.

On page 3 in the last paragraph, she writes about teaching school at the Williams Ranch and boarding at the 'Shorty' Marion Williams home which was about a half mile from the school when she was barely 17 years old!( Later in this issue you will find a map of the Williams Ranch which shows where she boarded and the school location.) She also talks about walking about three miles to visit her parents on the weekend *when her brothers, Edgar and Floyd, were at the Ranch to walk home with her.* This tells me there were weekends when she wasn't able to go home. What she didn't point out though was that *Edgar was only 11 and Floyd was only 9 at that time!*

On page 4 in the first paragraph, she talks about a visit from her cousin, Dollie Pyeatt, and then about her mother gathering up all the children along with Dollie and making a 2 day trip in a covered wagon to take Dollie back home. Again, what she didn't point out was the age of the children which was as follows: Anna was 18; George was 17; Stella was 14; Edgar was 12; Floyd was 10; Lee was 6; Birdie was 3; and MaeDelle was 2 months. Her cousin Dollie's age is unknown. This means there were 10 of them in this covered wagon on a 2 day trip of 70 to 80 miles! And, of course, there was the return trip without Dollie.

In a couple of places she writes about "a large two room house" and "a large one room house". With everything we have today, this might be a little hard to imagine that someone could write about things this way. She also wrote about living in a "lumber shack with a dirt floor" which is something I don't believe any of us reading this can even relate to.

I don't have the date when she wrote this auto

biography but, on page 4, she writes about attending a memorial celebration at the Williams Ranch and seeing Bryan Smith *71 years after moving to Mercury in 1904! In 1904 she was 21 so this would have made her 92 when she made this trip from Lubbock to Williams Ranch in 1975 and she was still writing at that time!*

And finally, on page 6, she writes about receiving her B.A. degree from college in 1930. Again, she neglected to state her age but she was 47!

As I have strived to do in the past, I have copied this writing as nearly exact as possible - and I want to tell you that this is the writing of someone with a pretty good education, even at today's standards. And it becomes even more impressive when you read and realize what she had to do to get this education. She was a remarkable person and I am proud that I am related to her - she was my second cousin, twice removed.

Although this was written by StellaB's mother and is about her own life, it paints a pretty good picture of what life was like for StellaB. ■

## ***The Williams Ranch -***

*by StellaB "Nita" Jackson Jaynes*

A history of Williams Ranch certainly deserves a place in the chronicles of the Joe and Della Burkett family, other relatives, and friends. At one time or another many of these people lived in or very near that pioneer town; others were there for various reasons from time to time. All of that has made Williams Ranch with its heritage of frontier courage, community builders, homemakers, and western hospitality an interesting part of our heritage.

This early day town in central Texas was started in 1855 by John Williams, a North Carolinian who had come to (Brown County) Texas by way of Tennessee and Missouri. Traveling through Texas, Williams found some 'great springs' of good water near a running stream later known as Herd Pen Branch of Mullin Creek. He camped for the night and went to bed thinking he would continue traveling next day, but during the night decided to stay and build his home there. (His wife Annie and some of their children probably

were with him; if not, they came soon.) Within a few years Williams sons John (Jr.?), W.L. "Bill", James D. "Jim", and George W. had settled at the town of Williams Ranch or near by.

W.L. 'Bill' Williams formed a wagon train in middle Tennessee in 1857 and brought it to Williams Ranch. His own family and some of their **Epley** kin came with the train. George Williams came from **Cannon County in middle Tennessee to Williams Ranch in 1864.** (Bold emphasis added by me.) Two years later he married Miss Elizabeth Jackson Forsythe 'Aunt Jackie', the youngest daughter of Thomas Jefferson Forsythe, maternal grandfather of Della C. Pyeatt Burkett. The Forsythe family had come to Williams Ranch from Arkansas about 1865 by way of Ellis County, Texas.

The Williams settlement grew as more people came, and for about thirty years was an important trade center on cross-country routes, a major stop on the stagecoach line from Austin to Brownwood, and it had an office for the telegraph line from Austin to Fort Concho (now San Angelo). By 1876, Williams Ranch had a school, a mill, blacksmith shop, two saloons, a hotel, and three general stores. The stores were owned and operated by George Williams and his brothers; B. F. Ware and sons; Bill & Bob Forsythe, sons of Thomas Jefferson Forsythe. Most supplies came by ox wagons from Austin and Round Rock, Texas; some came from old Mexico. Most of the residences and business buildings were constructed of logs and rawhide lumber; two or three were of native stone (rocks).

In 1876 a telegraph line was built from Austin to Fort Concho. It came through Williams Ranch and a telegraph office was established in the Florida Hotel, a two story, log building of several rooms. The telegraph operator was Hallie Hutchinson, *nine year old daughter of Captain Hutchinson, owner of the hotel.* (emphasis added)

A Masonic Lodge was organized at Williams Ranch in 1876.

Williams Ranch Post Office was established January 16, 1877 with James D. Williams as first postmaster.

The big mill erected at Williams Ranch in 1877 by James D. Williams was a two-story building of native stone with hand hewn beams. The mill was equipped to grind grain and gin cotton. Steam power was furnished by an engine housed in a rawhide lumber building east of the stone (rock) building. Water was obtained from Herd Pen Branch (creek) which ran along by the mill on the northwest edge of town. Grain was ground on the first floor of the stone building then elevated to the second floor and separated into flour, bran, shorts, and other products including cornmeal.

Livestock owners carved their brands on the walls of the stone building because in those days they were required to post their brands in a public place. The mill was considered a suitable place, and many of the brands were visible when the old mill was torn down after 1910.

Williams Ranch was laid out in square blocks - having forty or more blocks. Most of the blocks were numbered, but not always in orderly arrangement; for example, Block 18 was next to Block 23 (as shown on an old map). The Public Square occupied Block 6 near the center of town. Florida Hotel was on Block 35 (?) at the east edge of town. The tabernacle on Block 20 and Burkett-Pyeatt Blacksmith Shop on Block 22 in the south part of town were not far north of the cemetery. The school and church building was in the southeast corner of town and just across the old "Wire Road" from the cemetery.

The "Wire Road" received that name when telegraph wires were strung along there. The road was a busy thoroughfare several years. It is the same road this writer and her relatives traveled from the Rock Springs community to Williams Ranch and on to Mullin in the years 1907 to 1925.

Some of the Williams Ranch citizens later known personally to this writer were the Clements, Dews, Fairmans, and Trents at Goldthwaite, Texas.

Williams Ranch reached its peak as a commercial center between 1878 and 1885 with several business establishments, school, resident doctors and preachers, and a population of about 250 people. When the G.C. & S.F. railroad came through Mills County in 1887, it missed Williams Ranch by two or three miles. Soon most of the

people and business firms moved to the nearby towns of Goldthwaite, Mullin and others. Within a few years Williams Ranch dwindled away until it was just a scattered rural community with a one-room wooden school and church building in the early 1900's. That building has been dismantled long since.

For the benefit of interested readers not familiar with the location of the old town Williams Ranch, it was in the southeast part of Brown County until 1887 then transferred to Mills County which was created and organized that same year.

As noted at the beginning of this article, it was written by Nita Jaynes but the date is unknown. Those of you who have followed all of the issues of this Newsletter will recall the speculation in the past as to how Jacob Lorenza Burkett knew where he was going when he left Cannon County, Tennessee. The first speculation was that he heard about the area through his Mother's relatives - the Epleys. And then the next was that he heard about the area from a Reverend Hoover. Now you will note in the third paragraph of the above article that I placed in bold print the fact that George Williams went from Cannon County, Tennessee to the Williams Ranch in 1864. So it could have been a combination of all these sources since several people seem to have known about or had already been to the area. On the next page is a map of the Williams Ranch and below is a picture of the cemetery published in a previous issue.



Picture made by Oliver Webb during a visit August 9, 1994



## *Some Texas history and trivia -*

No discussion about Texas, no matter how condensed, would be complete without mention of the Alamo. Texas was originally owned by Mexico and known as Tejas with the residents being known as Texicans. In 1836, the Mexican General Santa Anna arrived with several thousand troops to teach the Texicans a lesson. He immediately flew a large blood red flag from a flagpole which could be seen from within the Alamo. Everyone knew that this was the red flag of death; it meant that, if the Alamo defenders did not surrender before fighting started, there would be no clemency and no prisoners would be taken. True to his word, when the Alamo defenders were overwhelmed, those still alive were killed, burned and buried in a common grave, including two of the most famous, Jim Bowie and Davy Crockett. Women and children were spared and released to tell the story. Thirty-two volunteers from Gonzales were among those killed. (When I made my trip around Texas in 1994, I had heard about a monument to a David Burkett in Gonzales and went there to find this monument. I published a picture of the monument in Volume 4 1994 and repeat that picture below.)



San Houston eventually defeated Santa Anna and led Texas into joining the Union.  
Because of the large number of southerners

who migrated to Texas, traditions of the south were dominant. For example, where food was concerned, okra, corn bread and iced tea were among the favorites along with 'dirty rice'. For those not familiar with dirty rice, it was rice steamed in bouillon with chicken giblets, chopped onions and peppers.

Texas was truly a frontier but residents developed ingenious ways of coping. An example of that was the 'dog run' house built to cope with heat and visitors. Basically, it consisted of two single room houses built 15 to 20 feet apart but having a common roof which left an open space between the rooms. One room was for living and the other was for sleeping. The open space was for sitting and enjoying the cooling breeze plus serving as a sleeping area for folks passing through.

Another example of coping and adapting was the 'chuck' wagon. 'Chuck' was the slang word for food and in the early days of cattle drives each trail hand carried his own provisions in a sack. However, in 1866 a cattleman bought a surplus army wagon which had sturdy iron axles and converted it into a 'chuckwagon' which had a storage cabinet with a door that folded down to make a worktable for the cook. Many of these had water barrels and a tarpaulin to cover the cooking area plus a sling for carrying a day's worth of 'prairie coal' (dried cow chips). Even though the menu was monotonous - coffee, biscuits, red beans (prairie strawberries), steak and a concoction known as "son-of-a-bitch stew" made of cow innards - complaints were not tolerated. Cooks worked long hours and were well paid to have the meals on time. But cooks were tough and ruled with an iron hand. The cowboy who rode in from upwind creating dust which settled on a meal was in for a rough time. The cook was relied on to not only fix meals but cut hair, mend clothes, bandage injuries and dose them with whiskey for snakebite. So the trail hands put up with the cook to the extent a piece of old-time trail wisdom was "Only a fool argues with a skunk, a mule, or a cook."

Through these years Texas was 'open range' with cattle roaming pretty much wherever they wanted and all herds shared water wherever it was

and no matter who owned the land. However, in early 1880, barbed wire was invented. It was called 'bob wahr' by Texans and led to deadly gun fights and turned neighbors into enemies when water was fenced in and when fences closed off what had once been roads used by everybody. Somebody invented long handled cutters that could lay long stretches of wire flat in no time. Trail drivers would shoot cattle inside the fences and set pastures on fire. Ranchers posted trigger-happy ranch hands in hiding places and left the newfangled wire cutters hanging on the fence beside the corpses. It was a bitter time and tired the patience of the best of men until they gradually worked out agreements on sharing water and roadways.

Since our relative, Jacob Lorenza Burkett, went to Texas in 1865, he and his family were there when it was open range and his family saw the newfangled 'bob wahr' become commonplace; Jacob died in 1875. By then, the Indians had been moved to west Texas and the threat of raids was pretty much absent from the area where our Burketts settled. However, the threat was not entirely missing. In a biography of his father, Edgar Lorenza Burkett, one of the sons of Joseph Lafayette Burkett (StellaB's grandfather), writes that his father was one of the men who brought the body of John Morris to the home of John Dan Chesser after Mr. Morris was killed by Indians between Williams Ranch and Center City and another of his father's experiences was his participation in the last Indian fight in Mills County. According to Edgar Burkett, his father also highly valued a post-oak tree which stood in their front yard in Mullin because it was the tree Big Foot Wallace used as an arm rest when he killed an Indian about two blocks away, near the present school building in Mullin. And Edgar also wrote about the many long, lonely hours his father spent on horseback to find his cattle and horses which had strayed because there were no fences around pastures and fields.

The vastness and population of Texas were such that it was not until 1905 or thereabouts that even half the state could be referred to as settled. And this was the appeal which drew men - the opportunity to own large tracts of land and to be fiercely independent. It didn't occur to early settlers

that their definition of independence and freedom excluded blacks, Indians and Mexicans and, if it did, it didn't matter - they were Texans!

And in keeping with everything being bigger in Texas, the same applies to their weather. There really is a Tornado Alley running from Abilene northeast through Larkin and Wichita Falls. And the worst natural disaster to ever strike America took place September 8, 1900 when a hurricane hit Galveston with the loss of 6,000 lives in one night. Texas is also famous for 'blue northers' which is a huge drop in temperature. The daddy of them all hit on February 3, 1899 when the temperature at noon in many parts of the state stood at 101 but not long after stood at *minus 3 - a preposterous drop of 104 degrees!* ■

*Never talk about rope in a house  
where there's been a hanging.*

### ***The Bogle reunion -***

This year the reunion is scheduled for Saturday, October 12 so make your plans now to attend. It will be held at the same place - the basement of the Bank on the square in Woodbury, Tennessee. For those of you who have just joined our family group, this is for the descendents of Nancy Caldonia Bogle Burkett, the wife of Almon Lee Burkett but everyone is welcome! ■

### ***The 1996 Burkett Reunion -***

We had another great and fun-filled reunion this year - they just don't seem long enough! I know the kids get tired and some have to drive a long distance to get there and then return home that same day but I still wish it was possible for the reunion to last longer. I don't have enough time to visit with everyone and there are so many of us that I can't drive around to visit. But I'm thankful that we at least have the time we do get.

This year Sid Huggins and wife Evelyn attended from Mandeville, Louisiana which is near New Orleans. Sid is my second cousin, once

removed. He has been engaged in our family research for many years and was acquainted with StellaB for about 25 years as I pointed out earlier in this issue. Although I had spoken with Sid a few times on the phone, none of us had met him and Evelyn although he had visited with Gentry J.B. Burkett a few years back. Needless to say, we were all happy to meet them. Also from out of town after having missed last year was Jimmie Lois Williams, husband Fred and daughter India who came down from Nashville. And also from the Nashville area came Bob Preston Burkett, Jr. with his excellent collection of pictures and remembrances. From the Birmingham area came the children and grandchildren of Leva Joanne Burkett Carroll who have attended every reunion so far. Missing this year was the family of Kenneth and Jamie Burkett of Jasper, Alabama due to the death of Jamie's mother and her funeral the day of the reunion Kenneth was able to come by for a short while since the funeral was not too far away. We also missed having Bill and Alma Edgemon from Jasper who were unable to attend due to Alma's health.

As of now, our plans are to have the reunion next year at the same place plus doing some things differently which, hopefully, will give me more time to visit. ■

## *The Historians Corner*



This issue is dedicated to StellaB 'Nita' Jackson Jaynes in appreciation of all the work she did and passed on to us. Sid Huggins is attempting to get copies of any Burkett related documents she had at the time of her death so it may be there is still more information to come. This issue is primarily about Texas because of this work she did.

While in Huntsville for the reunion, I made two trips to Tennessee seeking information about

the location of Henry Burkett's grave. Herman Chisholm went with me on the first trip and Audy Majors on the second. But again we were unable to even locate where the last farm was. It may be that Sid Huggins will have some information about the farm and we plan to get together before the Bogle reunion to go over what he has.

I had a phone call and letter from Mrs. W.J. "Frances" Burkett in Graham, Texas inquiring about the possibility of being related. She forwarded some information and I am in the process of sending her some additional forms for more detailed information. There doesn't appear to be a connection that jumps right out at me but one of their ancestors, Joseph 'Joe' Burkett, arrived in Texas from Tennessee about 1865. She thinks he came from the vicinity of Memphis. I will keep working with her on this.

I recently spoke with Mr. Kingsley Taft, Jr. of Knoxville, Tennessee. His wife was Eileen Burkett and they have done quite a bit of research about Burketts. His wife died about two years ago but he has kept up with the search and attends about 10 reunions a year! We spoke at length but, as in the case of Mrs. Burkett above, did not find an immediate connection between the Burkett families he knows about and ours. However, he and his wife had published two books and I have sent him the money to purchase a copy of each. Perhaps at that time I can find something.

I have also corresponded with a Bill Burkett of Sun City, Arizona who was referred to me by Bob Preston Burkett, Jr. Bill has relatives who lived in Kentucky just north of the Tennessee line and he was also inquiring as to the possibility of our being related. He also says they had relatives who lived in Jellico, Tennessee during his father's childhood which was in the 1920s - 1930s. Jellico is just north of Knoxville and Oak Ridge.

In addition to information in this issue which had been prepared and/or collected by Nita Jaynes, I have still more for future use. We have this because they took the time to write it down. I know that many of you also have stories and information which will interest future generations so won't you please take time and write it and send it to me? ■