



# THE BURKETT FAMILY

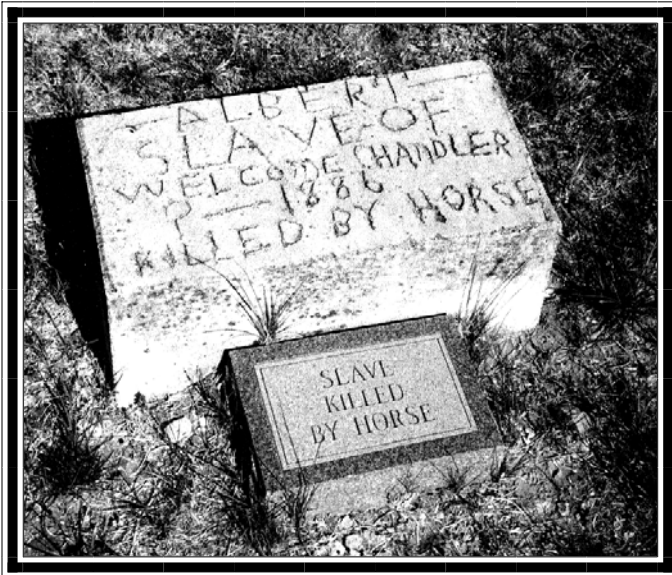
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## Continuation of Texas Trip and Much, Much More!

### An Ex-Slave - Albert Chandler

This story began with my first trip to Texas in 1994. Using the information which had been prepared by StellaB Jaynes and passed on to me by relatives, I knew about Williams Ranch and the cemetery there. However, the visit to the Williams Ranch Cemetery turned up only a few relatives so I went back to Mullin and learned about the Oakview Cemetery. There at Oakview I found many of our relatives.

However, I also found and photographed the marker below and included it in Volume 4 1994. Preceding the photo, I wrote, "This next marker has absolutely nothing to do with our family but it caught my eye and I couldn't help but wonder about the story behind it. This was a slave buried to the best of my knowledge in an all-white cemetery." I went on to wonder how he came to be buried there and who placed the marker. I closed by saying, "To me it's an intriguing situation but, obviously, one which will never be



answered."

I had not been working on our family research too long at the time and this was the beginning of my education about research and the mistake of saying things like, "It has absolutely nothing to do with our family," and, "Obviously, it will never be answered." Both turned out to be wrong.

The next development about Albert Chandler was a letter from StellaB Jaynes who was in a Nursing Home in Goldthwaite, Texas at the time she wrote. This letter was filed but surfaced in early 1998 and, in Volume 2 1998, I included an article written by StellaB Jaynes and entitled, "Joe Burkett's Responsibility for Burial of Negro Ex-Slave in

White Folks Cemetery, Williams Ranch, Texas." In this letter StellaB explained that Albert Chandler sometimes worked for Joe (Joseph Lafayette) Burkett and other white men and that Albert was pawed to death by an unruly stallion at the Burkett farm. She went on to say that Joe Burkett talked with other men and they agreed to bury Albert in the *white folks cemetery at Williams Ranch* because he was an exemplary citizen. (I added the italics because, as I learned and you will see, that statement about a 'white folks cemetery' was incorrect.) With the publishing of this article by StellaB, I concluded that was the end of the story about Albert. Not so.

In our last issue, Volume 3 1998, I included an article about Williams Ranch written by Luther L. Williams which was given to me by Helen Mayr when we were in Goldthwaite for the September 12, 1998 reunion. In that article there is a description of the men of Williams Ranch chasing Comanche Indians. Included in that article on page 11 is the statement, "Albert Chandler, the negro, rode with the whites carrying a huge Civil War six shooter." This would seem to indicate that Albert was an accepted member of the community as indicated in StellaB's article. Again, I thought this was the end of the story about Albert Chandler. And again, not so.

Also in Volume 3 1998 is another article given to me by Helen Mayr and written by Luther L. Jackson entitled, "The Cemetery, Williams Ranch, Mills County, Texas." In this article Mr. Jackson writes, "Williams Ranch Cemetery was probably one of the first and certainly one of the few cemeteries in this part of Texas where graves are *those of an integrated mixture* of persons. In addition to the white frontiersmen buried there, graves also include *native Indians, citizens of Mexico, and black pioneers.*" Obviously, StellaB was not aware of this mixture or she would not have referred to Williams Ranch as a 'White Folks Cemetery' — nor would I. Once again I thought this was the end of the story about Albert Chandler and, once again, I was wrong.

I recently received a letter from Juanelle Burkett Curtis who lives in Goliad, Texas and who was at the reunion in Goldthwaite this year. (Those of you who received the last issue will recall she was the person who came up to me, Audy, and Sid at our motel and asked, "Are you the out-of-town Burketts?")

In her letter Juanelle writes, "I want to add a P.S. to the story on page 11 with the negro man - Albert Chandler. Albert was *breaking horses* for my grandfather, Joe. L. Burkett, at Williams Ranch where he was thrown off the wild horse and killed. (Until now, all we had was he was killed by an unruly stallion.) Grandfather helped bury him there. Before Grandfather died, he took his son, Edgar, to Albert's grave and said, 'Son, I've cleaned this grave all these years. After I die, I want you to continue to clean this good man's grave'. Later, Edgar, my Dad, made the tombstone and wrote Albert's name

on it. When my 2 boys were rather young and we went to visit my dad and mother, daddy always took us to the Williams Ranch Cemetery. Once when we were at negro Alberts' grave and daddy was telling the story of Albert, daddy said, 'Now boys, Jerry and Burkett, after I die, will ya'll take on the responsibility of taking care of negro Alberts' grave?'

I believe the above *almost* puts the end to the story about Albert Chandler. However, I may have gotten my pictures mixed up and need help from our relatives. I stated that Albert's grave had been moved from Williams Ranch to Oakview Cemetery in Mullin and that the new marker was made at that time. Is that correct or did I get my pictures mixed up and Albert is still buried at the Williams Ranch but with the added marker? ■

*Footnote: Some of you may wonder why I have devoted so much time and detail to this story about someone who is not a relative. I did so because I think it speaks to the character of our ancestors - and what a fine statement it makes - about their sense of obligation and their willingness to fulfill that obligation. It also gives an indication of the high degree of respect they had for Albert Chandler — a man who took his last name from the family who owned him as a slave.*

## ***Dance at the Florida Hotel -***

***by Edgar Lorenza Burkett (1889 - 1978)***

In its early days, Mullin was quite a lively little town with entertainment of different kinds. One of the liveliest entertainments was dancing; hardly a week passed without a dance in the neighborhood. My favorite story tells about a certain dance. In 1889 the town of Williams Ranch was dying. The main hotel there, known as the Florida Hotel, a log structure *two stories high*, was torn down and moved to Mullin and re-assembled on the lot just behind where Phillips Grocery now stands. The hotel faced west. When it was ready for occupancy, the occasion was celebrated with a dance in *the upper story*. *Stairs leading up there were on the outside of the building* and a long front porch on each story. ( I added the italics because it's important that you remember the dance was on the second floor and the stairs were on the outside.)



Hard feelings had arisen between country boys and town boys. At this particular dance, town boys decided not to let girls dance with country boys. After about two hours of dancing, the country boys became unruly and demanded permission to dance with town girls or break up the dance. Another hour of arguing went on then the country boys demanded, "Let the girls dance with us or else !!"

At that point, town boys sent a messenger about two blocks to where my father Joe (Joseph Lafayette) Burkett lived and requested his presence as a peace officer. He replied, "My wife is sick, I cannot leave home". The messenger returned to the dance and gave Dad's answer to the town boys. By that time things were getting much hotter, the country boys uncontrollable. The messenger was ordered back to my father saying his presence was imperative and his presence demanded at the dance. With persuasion of my mother and Dr. W.D. Kirkpatrick (father of young Dr. Jimmy Kirkpatrick), Dad buckled his guns on and headed for the dance. He ascended the stairs quickly, entered the dance hall, and found several fights

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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.

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already in progress. Immediately, Dad deputized several visiting men, appointing each a certain man to arrest, saying, "I will keep the most dangerous one for myself". He ordered the deputies to start making arrests; action began at once. Several country boys were knocked to the floor and handcuffed. One deputy, of small stature, named Horace Butts had been assigned to a two-hundred-pounder who had Horace down and was sitting on him pounding him with his fists. One of the other deputies had his man handcuffed and asked Horace if he needed help. Horace replied, "No, I think he will soon get off". About that time some of the girls screamed and fainted as they pointed to the floor where blood was flowing freely as Horace had been stabbing the big man in the back — and, sure enough, he did get off. All that time my father was going around and around with his man. About that moment a pistol shot was heard. Dad went to the floor and the pistol was fired several times through the top of the house. A bullet had grazed Dad in the temple and passed through his hat at the top of his ear. Led by girls, the crowd ran for the door to go down the stairs — *but prankster boys had removed the stairs*. Needless to say, the whole bunch piled on the ground several feet below. Dr. Jimmy Kirkpatrick had brought two girls and Sammie and Bill Hutchinson to the dance. Starting for the door, Jimmy got between the two girls taking each by her arm. When they stepped on the first step, it was not there and they went to the ground with the rest of the crowd. Jimmy, a man with a cool head, raised up, looked around a dark corner of the building and saw a prankster named Will Cox enjoying a good laugh. Dr. Jimmy reached for his pistol only to find he had left it at home. He remarked, "I hope you get sick tomorrow and call me to attend you. There is a certain kind of medicine you will get".

After the arrested men were subdued, hysterical women and angry men went home. Dad returned to his home to see how his sick wife was and found that she had brought him a new son — which happened to be me ! !

I hope all of you enjoy this true story. Not many people have such an exciting celebration to mark their entry into this world. ■

*Don't know when Edgar wrote this but he was a good story teller and, to me, that's one funny story!*

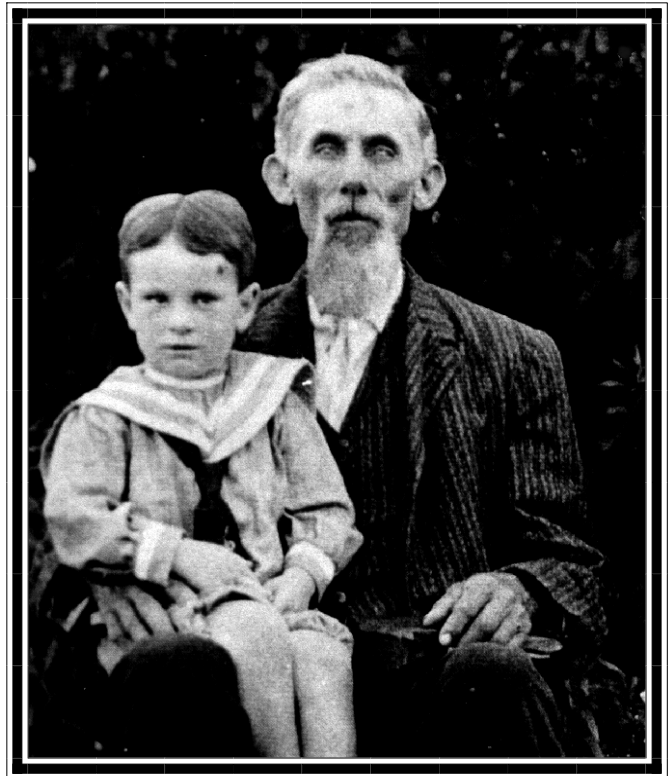
### ***Uncle Jim's Letter -***

In reviewing the information we received from Helen Mayr, I found a copy of a letter written by James Henry Burkett to an unknown niece or nephew and identified as "Uncle Jim's letter". I thought I had found either another letter or a longer version of the one we had and which I had published in Volume 2 1998. However, as has happened before and probably will again, I was mistaken.

I read this letter after we had received and looked at the full page picture of Henry, Sr. and Polly Burkett. In the letter, James Henry writes, "I recall also that my Grandfather visited us, I presume as a parting adieu to my father. **Grandfather had lost all his fingers of his left hand. I noticed he held his fork with his thumb and the stub of his hand**". I found that I had commented on this in Volume 2 1998 by saying, "This is the only record we have about the loss of fingers but seems like something a young boy would remember". Frankly, I had

forgotten this until I looked at the large picture of Henry, Sr. and Polly in the last Issue and it came back to me because it was obvious in the big picture that Henry, Sr. had all the fingers of his left hand. This indicates that, if James Henry's memory is correct, the picture was made *prior to the time in 1865 when Jacob Lorenza took his family and headed for Texas*. (See Henry, Sr.'s left hand below)

We have no reason to doubt James Henry. In fact, that would seem to be something which would stick in a young boy's mind. Therefore, we are assuming the picture was taken in 1865 or earlier. To me, since both Henry and Polly appear to



be at least in their sixties, it appears probable that the picture was taken somewhere in the early 1860's. As to who the children are, we have no idea at this time but we are trying to narrow it down by reviewing the birth dates of all children and grandchildren. ■

### ***Wise and Witty Sayings -***

*(from the collection by descendants of Joseph L. Burkett)*

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This world that we're living in  
Is mighty hard to beat;  
You get a thorn with every rose,  
But ain't the roses sweet?  
— Staton

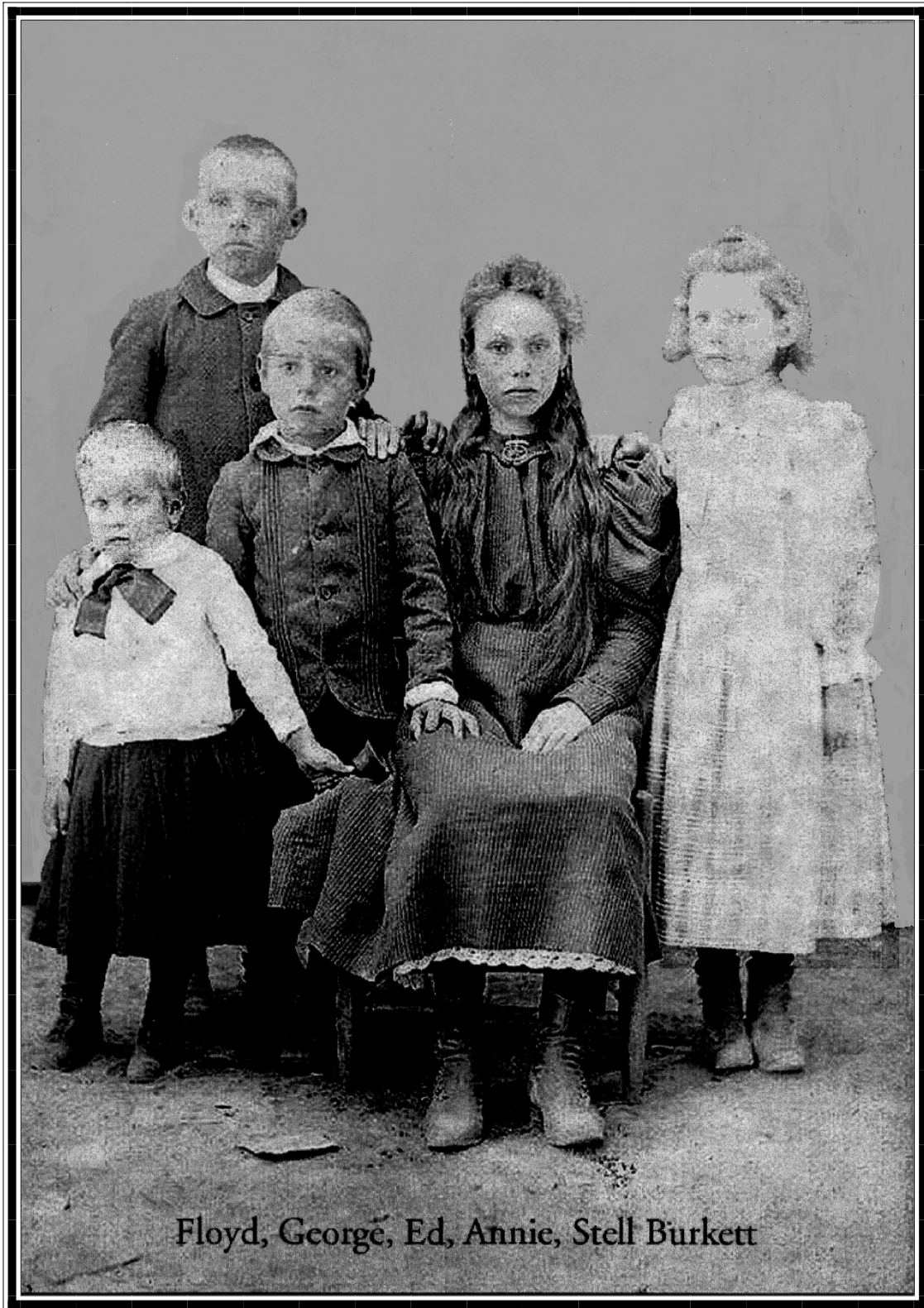
The above was selected by Mae Delle Burkett Goodwin

*Mary 'Polly' Epley Burkett  
and friend*

The date is unknown but here she is obviously much, much younger than in the picture in the previous Issue.



As you can see, the above picture was damaged at some point in time in the area between Polly's right hand and the dog. Someone apparently made repairs to it by drawing in the leash to the dog. I have chosen not to attempt any further repairs since the main part is undamaged. My guess is that she is at least ten (10) years younger than in the picture in the last issue. If so, and if the other picture was made in the early 1860's, then this picture was made sometime in the early 1850's.



Floyd, George, Ed, Annie, Stell Burkett

*A n d*

*The first five children of Joseph Lafayette Burkett and Adela "Della" Catherine Pyeatt Burkett*  
 From left to right: Floyd Eli Burkett born October 3, 1891; George Newton Burkett born September 5, 1884; Edgar Lorenza Burkett born May 28, 1889; Anna Louisa Burkett born April 24, 1883; and Stella Mae Burkett born January 5, 1887. Estimated date for this picture is around late 1894 or early 1895 based on Floyd's birthday of October 1891. (Picture provided by Helen Mayr.)

Anna Louisa "Annie" Burkett married William L. Jackson and they became the parents of StellaB Jackson Jaynes who researched and compiled the beginning of our family history.

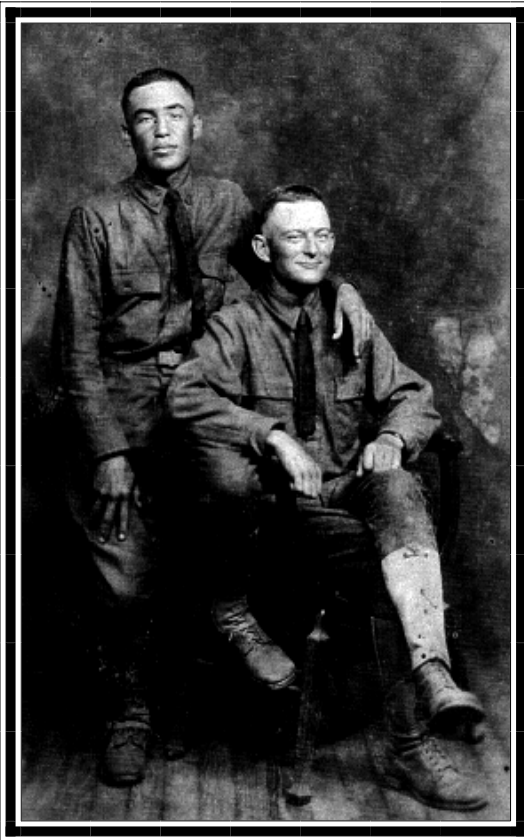


### *Speaking of StellaB -*

Here she is below with her brother and sister. That's StellaB on the left, her brother J.W. Jackson and her sister Callie Ree Jackson Cooper.



Here again I do not know the date of the picture.



Lee Pyeatt Burkett and friend in France during WWI  
(Lee is standing)

### *The Grave of Lavina Burkett -*

After my visit to Texas in 1994, I wrote of my frustration at not being able to locate the grave of Lavina Burnett Burkett who was Jacob Lorenza Burkett's first wife. She had died apparently during child birth as did the infant. In a letter James Henry 'Jim' Burkett wrote, "The last time that I recall my mother's face was when she lay in a winding sheet, still, eyes closed, and they told me that she was dead." He was only 5.

Now thanks to Helen Mayr of Goldthwaite, we have a picture of the markers in Hoover's Valley Cemetery for Lavina and Burkett Baby as shown below.



The top marker reads "Burkett Baby and" The bottom



marker reads "Lavina Burnett Burkett 1833 (1866 - 1867) Wife of Jacob L. Burkett.

**Working the fields**

Don't know who the young boys are but that's Edgar Lorenza Burkett on the left, Joseph Lafayette Burkett in the middle and Lee Pyeatt Burkett on the right.

Take a good look at that wagon. Looks like a pretty good one with a canvas cover and what appears to be a metal cover for the driver although it could be cloth of a darker color.

And what are they gathering? Tomatoes? Are those cantaloupe in the box on the wagon? Joseph Lafayette is holding something. What??



**THE EMPTY BARN -**

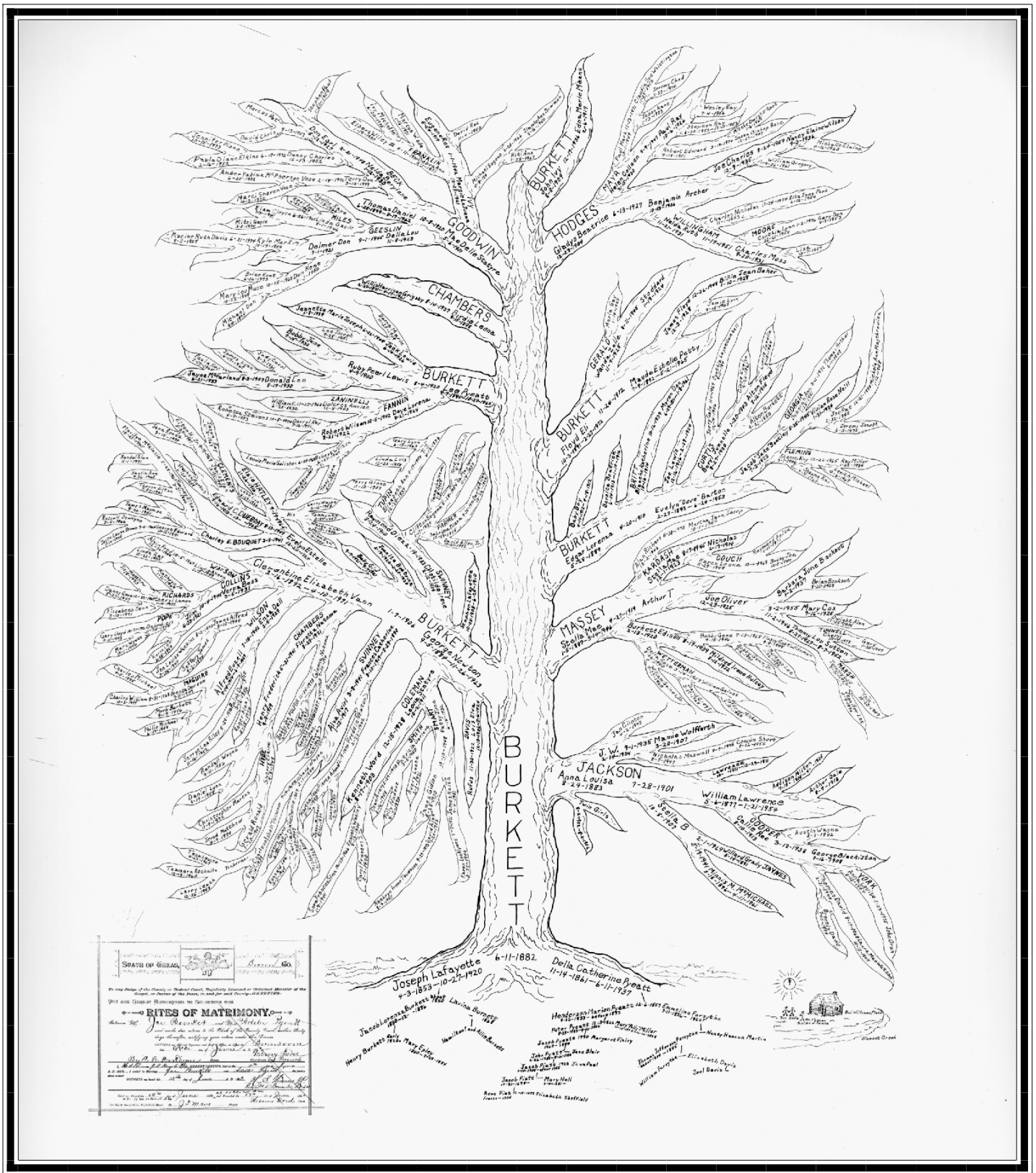
It stands forlorn, no children shout, or laugh, while turning cattle out;  
 Or climb the rafters just to see the pigeons, cute and wee.  
 No little calf to suck a thumb, or wag his tail when feed time's come.  
 No newborn kittens in the hay; no darling pups to romp and play.  
 No pony with a prancing gait, to whinny when the oats come late.  
 No cats in proud impressive row, awaiting milk as white as snow.  
 No cows to moo — no cattle call; just worn out ropes upon the wall.  
 No stamping hoofs, no smell of hay, no oats to feed at close of day.  
 No friendly nicker from a stall, no gentle eyes — no sound at all.  
 A barn is such a sad, sad place, with not one eager friendly face.  
 Just cobwebs hanging on the beams, an end to life — an end to dreams.  
 Time slipped away, and stole all these, but years and years of memories  
 No time can steal.

We lost our grandmother. Will you please send us a copy?

The wife of #22 could not be found; I have worked on her for 30 years without success. Now see what you can do.

Further research will be necessary to eliminate one of my parents.

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relatives or ancestors in my family.



Here is a project to challenge those of you who are artistically inclined as is Helen Mayr who prepared the above Family Tree on the Joseph Lafayette Burkett family. Her copy is much larger than this and is very legible. You will notice at the base of the tree the names of Joseph Lafayette and his wife Della Catherine Pyeatt Burkett. The main trunk is entitled "Burkett" and there are ten (10) main branches representing their ten (10) children. Dates listed are birth, death, and marriage. In the lower left corner is a copy of their marriage license. Below Joseph Lafayette are his ancestors and the same for his wife. All in all, an excellent and interesting rendering of the family.