

A collection of works on the Thomas Family  
Compiled by Sam Thomas

“What's past is prologue.”  
— William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

# Introduction

I am writing this introduction to this collection of works for a few particular and a few potential people: the particulars are my father William Thomas, his siblings, Ron, Libby, and Suzanne, and my Grandfather, Wilton Thomas. I hope that this collection will be of interest to them, and that they will feel like they have more of an idea about the Thomas family after they've read the materials included here.

I am also writing this letter as a bookmark for myself, in the future, should I stop doing family research now and take it up at a later date. There is a lot of information still to be gathered on the history of the Thomas family, especially as it relates to Shadrach, Samuel Brown, and William Clayborn Thomas. Shadrach has an extensive history as a sheriff that is largely documented still only in the court cases he participated in, and I would be very interested in learning more about Samuel Brown's time in California during the gold rush and as a Captain in the Confederate Army.

The third person, or persons, I am writing this introduction for is any Thomases who come after me who are interested in their family history. I hope this collection serves as a useful starting point in exploring your family history, and I hope you feel, like I do, that through these stories you can connect to your past.

This document exclusively contains secondary sources that I have found in my research on the Thomas family. They do not include any of the primary documents that I have found, mostly for the practical reason of keeping this collection brief and easy to navigate. Thomas family deeds, wills, and letters are in another collection that I am maintaining. I also do not include any corrections, though there are various minor disagreements in the texts contained herein. That, too, is beyond the scope of this collection.

Most of the research to find these books and excerpts was made possible by: the Texas state archives; Google Books; World Cat; the Mormon archives of family research information; ancestry.com; and the Family Search networks. Of these, the most useful was ancestry.com, though Google Books helped me find many of the biographical notes.

The collection starts with an excerpt on the legendary history of the Thomas in Wales, from *The Thomas book* (L. B. Thomas (1896)). This history is only tenuously connected to our family - the theory is that the first recorded Thomas in the British colonies is a member of the Thomas family mentioned in the book. That does make some sense, as the first Thomas in Virginia was from Carmarthenshire, in Wales (or, was probably from there), but a direct line cannot be drawn. There is also a reference to the Thomases of Kentucky using the same coat of arms as the welsh Thomases, but, again, that is unverified. It is not unlikely that we are from those Thomases - there weren't an infinite amount of welsh Thomases around at the time. I choose to think that the connection is probable, and that I believe it is likely that we are related to this Thomas family. If you also choose to accept the premise, then the family genealogy can be traced to Urien, 6th-century king of Rheged. Urien was the legendary welsh King who, along with his son Owain, were incorporated into Arthurian Legend as the characters Urien, married to Morgan Le Fey, and Ywain, his son, who was immortalised in Chrétien de Troyes's *Yvain, the Knight of the Lion*. Are we those Thomases? Maybe. Believe it, or not.

It is likely that the first John Thomas (1585 (1606) - 1650s) came to America in 1610. This isn't universally agreed upon either, though I am inclined to side with *The Thomas and Bridges Story* (the second book excerpted) over *The Thomas Family in 300 years in American History* (the third book excerpted). I haven't chased down all of the citations in *The Thomas Family in 300 years in American History*, but the citation in *The Thomas and Bridges Story* - that William Sharpe payed for a John Thomas to come to Jamestown - was reported, and so I go with it until other evidence is found.

From his arrival in the early 1600s in Virginia, the excerpts from the two books then trace the family moves to North Carolina in the 1700s and their final, two part move to newer farm lands in Alabama in the 1810s and Texas in the early 1820s. The family has remained in Texas on and off ever since.

Neither book is an exact genealogy of our branch of the Thomas family. *The Thomas and Bridges Story* overlaps with our genealogy through John Thomas (1668 -1706), son of Richard Thomas. Their Thomas branch continues through Joseph Thomas, while ours continues through the Reverend John Thomas. *The Thomas Family in 300 years in*

*American History* diverges much closer to the present day, with our last common ancestor in that volume being Benjamin Thomas (1778 - 1834). The book does, however, contain information about Shadrach Thomas (1800 - 1872).

This collection ends with four biographical notes from various volumes on the Revered John Thomas, Benjamin Thomas, Shadrach Thomas, and Samuel Brown Thomas (October 7th, 1831 - 4th January 1911), followed by a works cited.

I hope you find something useful and enlightening in this collection. It was a pleasure to compile. Hopefully, in the future, I'll have the chance to add my own contribution to the story of the Thomas family in America.

Sam Thomas  
London, England  
21st of January, 2019

## **A Thomas Genealogy (subject to change, likely to contain errors)**

1. John Thomas, and wife Dorothy, of Wales.  
1585 (1606) - 1650s
2. John Thomas, Jr, who married Elinor Montigue, of Virginia.  
1620s -1650s.
3. Richard Thomas, who married Elizabeth Marshall (Sanders?), of Virginia.  
1648 - 1687.
4. John Thomas, who married Mary Lawrence, of Virginia.  
1668 -1706.
5. Reverend John Thomas, who married Christenator Roberts (1732), of North Carolina.  
1706 -1788.
6. Major Theophilus Thomas, married Mary Rodgers, of North Carolina.  
1740-1803
7. Benjamin Thomas, married Marry Ann Dickinson, of North Carolina and Texas.  
1778 - 1834.
8. Shadrach Dickinson Thomas, married Sarah Holman, of Texas.  
1800 - 1872.
9. Samuel Brown Thomas, married Marry Garrett, of Texas.  
October 7th, 1831 - 4th January 1911
10. William Clayborn “Bee” Thomas, married Vera Lee Miller (1911), of Texas.  
26th May 1879 - 16 December 1960.
11. Wilton Earl Thomas, married Catherine Austin (1948), of Texas.  
29th November, 1922.
12. William Austin Thomas, married Angela Thomas (1976), of Texas.  
1 August 1953.
13. Samuel Fuller Thomas, of Pennsylvania.  
April 14, 1989.

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Works cited

The Thomas Book  
By Lawrence Buckley Thomas

The Thomas Book  
giving the Genealogies of Sir  
Rhys ap Thomas, K.G., the  
Thomas Family descended from  
him, and of some Allied Families

1896.

By

Lawrence Buckley Thomas, D.D.



Imprinted at New York City by The  
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JUN 28 1930

WIS. HIST. SOCETY



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## INTRODUCTORY

EDWARD GIBBON somewhere wrote: "A lively desire of knowing and recording our ancestors so generally prevails, that it must depend on the influence of some common principle in the minds of men."

Doubtless in many cases the feeling is similar to that which led Darius the Great to inscribe upon the rock of Behistun his proud boast: "From ancient time our family have been kings. I am the ninth king by lineal descent." But family pride is not the only reason for these records; historians quite generally elucidate their annals by genealogical tables, and scientists like Dr. Francis Galton testify to their utility in the study of heredity and of social science. A recent writer wisely declares that "the day has gone by when self-respecting men may boast of ignorance of those who bore their name before them."

On the other hand there is profound truth in the remark of a speaker at a recent banquet of the Society of Colonial Wars in New York City, that "the man who does not respect his ancestors is unlikely to do deeds for which posterity will respect him." It is therefore well that this society and others organized in late years to honour the memory of the men who fought the battles of the Revolution, or of their descendants who by their swords in the field or in other ways defended the supremacy of the Government then established, have greatly increased the interest in the whole subject of genealogy and family history, and given a stimulus to the compiling and printing of pedigrees. There is in this neither arrogance nor pride unfitting to the citizens of a republic. For, despite the sonorous

periods of the Declaration of Independence, we do not need the teachings of modern science to convince us that men are *not* "born equal."

The inheritance of a good name and the memory of the noble deeds of our forefathers, or merely of their simple honesty and their self-respecting labour for daily bread, must have its influence on our lives. *Noblesse oblige*, if not misapplied, is a true principle, and one of special value to our American civilization, which is too apt to measure every thing by the yardstick of commerce, and to value a man by his present possession of material wealth, quite irrespective of his antecedents. These cannot be known unless they have been recorded in some permanent shape. Left to be handed down by tradition or popular report, they will soon be forgotten.

"Time," says Sir Thomas Browne in his *Hydriotaphia*, "which antiquates the erections of man's hands, hath yet an art to make dust of all things, and oblivion blindly scatters her poppy, and deals with the memory of men without any distinction to the merit of perpetuity. There is no antidote against the opium of Time! Our fathers find their graves in our short memories, and sadly tell us how we may be buried in those of our survivors. Even our gravestones tell truth scarcely forty years—generations pass while some trees stand, and old families last not three hardy oaks." How much then does it become us to guard against this "eating tooth of time," by recording in permanent form that which we know of the history and fortunes of our own families; each one, in the language of the Book of Nehemiah, "doing the work over against his own house."

The process is not so difficult as it seems at first sight, and there are few families but can trace their ancestry back to the emigrant progenitor if they set about it in the right way. One important preliminary, in most cases, is to put out of consideration the accepted family tradition; for, as the historian Freeman wrote in his entertaining essay on "Pedigrees and Pedigree-Making": "The family tree, the family tradition, the roll of Battle Abbey, are simply so many forms of sheer falsehood." Descents may be proven, but it must be by something very different from all these.

Public records and documents, wills which give the names of the testator's family and state their relationship, deeds which convey particular estates in land, church and court records, the entries in the family Bible so far as they state facts within the writer's personal knowledge, the names of parents, the births of children, etc., all are of value in compiling a genealogy.

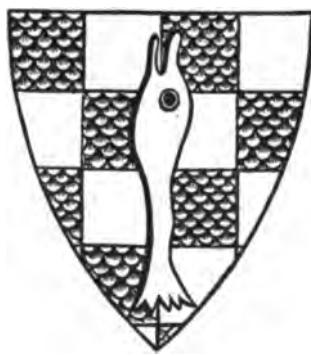
The first step is to set down, as far as possible, all the known facts, with exact dates of births, marriages, deaths, and other noteworthy events, and then to follow out the traces pointing in one direction or another, until the evidence of records either confirms them and gives the investigator clues to a further extension of the genealogy, or directs attention to a fresh line of research. It would also be well to write to other members of the family and enlist as many as possible in the subject, that all branches may receive due attention and the genealogy be complete. If the ancestors of one individual merely are to be recorded, Mr. William H. Whitmore's ancestral tablets furnish a most convenient method and place of registration. A last recommendation, and one of great importance, is to print, in however inexpensive form, the result of your investigations, so that copies may be multiplied sufficiently to secure its permanent preservation ; and also to deposit it in more than one library, thereby giving students an opportunity to make use of your labours, for of all men the genealogist, who works for others, should be most generous in contributing his knowledge to the common stock. The history of few families of fair social position can be written without touching others at many points and often casting unexpected light upon the dark places in their pedigrees.

Each compiler of a genealogy must confess his deep obligation to those who have gone over the field before him, as well as to those who have responded to his direct requests for information. It would be impossible to name all to whom the author of this volume is indebted for assistance, but he would mention as deserving of especial gratitude, the late Messrs. Samuel Chew, of Germantown, Pennsylvania ; William G. Thomas, of Yonkers, New York, and his father,

Philip E. Thomas, of Baltimore, the compiler of the first Thomas Tree ; Messrs. Beverly Chew and John C. Chew, of New York ; Dr. Francis Thomas, of Sandy Spring, Maryland, and others of his family ; Mr. Charles P. Keith, of Philadelphia, author of the "Provincial Councillors of Pennsylvania;" Dr. A. R. Thomas, of the same city, author of "The Thomas Family of Hardwick, Massachusetts;" Messrs. Charles W. Evans, of Buffalo, author of a "History of the Fox, Ellicott and Evans Families;" John D. Crosfield, of Forest Hey, near Northwich, England ; Nicholas Brewer, genealogist, Annapolis, Maryland ; and notably the Librarians of the Historical Societies of Pennsylvania and Long Island, and Mr. John G. Gatchell, Assistant Librarian of the Maryland Historical Society.

LAWRENCE BUCKLEY THOMAS

S. THOMAS'S DAY, 1895



ARMS DE DOUVRES

## EXPLANATORY NOTE

IN this book the attempt has been made to give the records of as many branches of the Thomas family as are accessible, and to furnish in the Appendix a brief biographical sketch of every notable person of the name not found in the genealogies. A number of allied families have also been included.

The genealogies, excepting those that give the book its title and are placed first, appear in alphabetical order. References to principal authorities are somewhat liberally made, and an adequate Index is added. Where exact dates confirm a statement, accuracy may be assumed ; in all other cases the effort has been made so to word the language that the weight of authority may be determined by the reader, and the author must not be held responsible for anything more than he distinctly says.

The genealogies are written, as far as possible, in historical form, proceeding directly down the line of descent. Where, however, the record of the issue of any one child would occupy so large a space as to confuse the reader, it is transferred below, and a new series begun. In all cases these are placed in the order of their dates, the record of the eldest son immediately following that of his parents, and each new line is completed before another is taken up. Surnames of children are not given, except in cases where they differ from the main line.

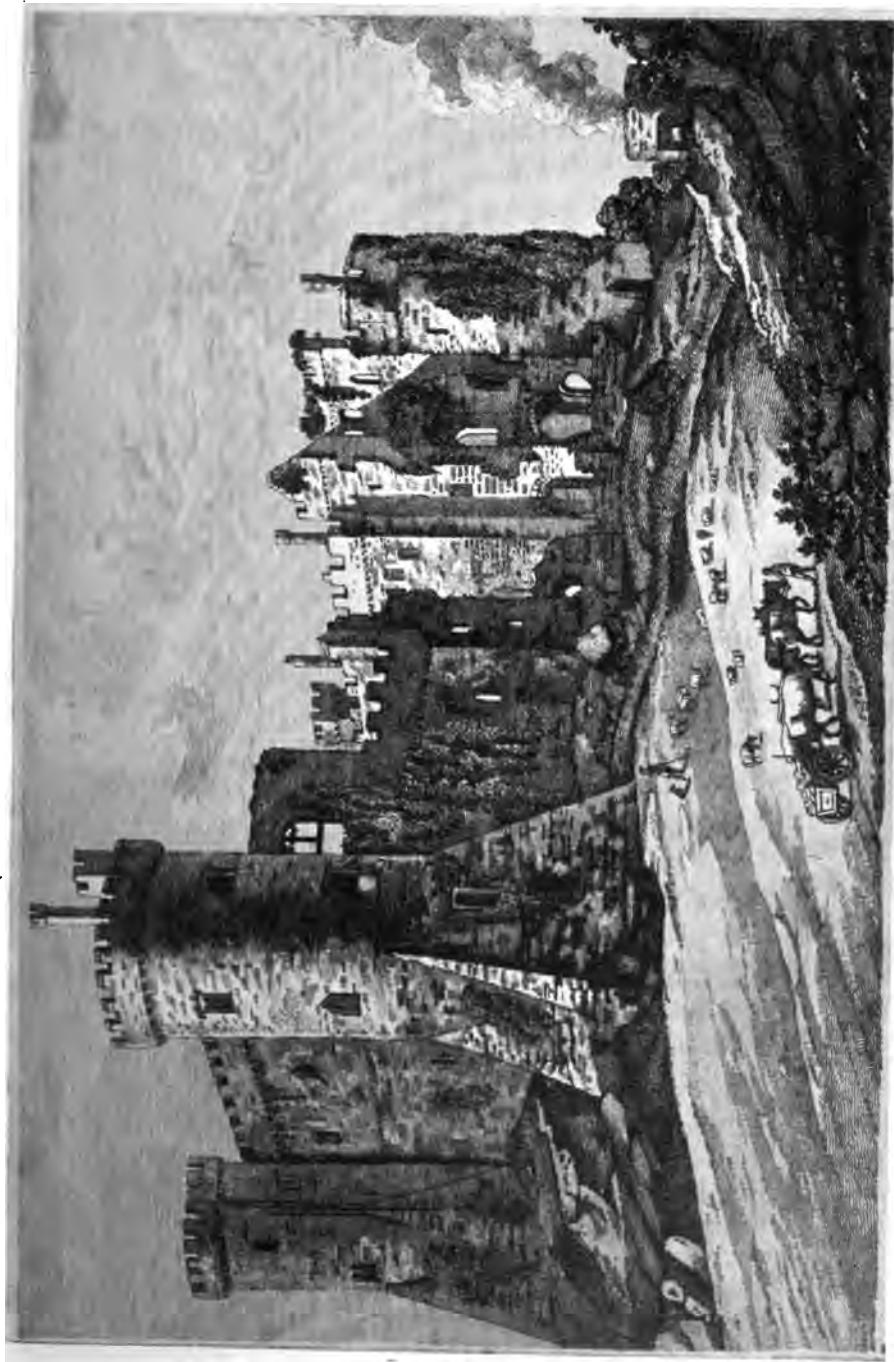
The generations upon a page are usually distinguished by different styles of type, according to a system easily understood.\*

Everything has been done with a view to making the subject matter of the book clear to others besides professional genealogists, rather than technically and scientifically correct in form.

All dates before A.D. 1752 are Old Style, the year beginning on March 25 ; therefore dates between that day and the previous December are written as of both years, e.g., February 7, 1701, New Style, would appear as February 7, 1700-1. (It should be remembered that in Quaker phraseology March was known as First Month.) Great care has been taken in reducing such dates to a uniform system.

- \* In each paragraph the first generation is in this type: **THOMAS m. MARTHA.**
- The second in this: **JOSEPH m. GRACE DESHON.**
- The third in this: **FRANCES m. GABRIEL SISTARE.**
- The fourth in this: **Joseph m. Mary Christophers.**
- The fifth in this: **Charles m. — Bassett.**

CAREW CASTLE, PEMBROKESHIRE  
SEAT OF SIR RHYS AP THOMAS





## SIR RHYS AP THOMAS, K.G.

SIR RHYS AP THOMAS, K.G., in the reigns of Henry the Seventh and Henry the Eighth of England, according to the Welsh antiquaries and historians, had an extant pedigree<sup>1</sup> going back to Adam; but the historical part probably begins with Urien Rheged, a British prince, living, according to the best authorities,<sup>2</sup> in the sixth century after Christ. Possibly the links that connect him with Sir Rhys may not all be of equal certainty, but that the latter was descended from Urien is the uniform judgment of all writers upon Welsh history and genealogy. Urien is called the son of Cynvarch Oer ap Meirchion Gul, a prince of the North Britons in Cumbria, on the borders of the kingdom of Strath Clyde. Driven out by the invading Saxons in the sixth century of our era, Cynvarch took refuge in Wales and entered the ranks of the clergy, founding the church of Llangynvarch or S. Kinemark's, Maelor in Flintshire.<sup>3</sup> His name is on the pillar of Eliseg near Llangollen. He m. Nevyn, daughter of Brychan, who likewise entered religion and founded the church of

<sup>1</sup> Manuscript copy in the possession of the author.

<sup>2</sup> See Professor Rhys: Celtic Britain, pp. 142-251; Grant Allen: Anglo-Saxon Britain, p. 52; Babcock: Two Lost Centuries of Britain, p. 176; Iolo Morganwg's Welsh MSS., 457, 520, 653; Lappenberg's England, by Thorpe, p. xxvi; Price's *Hanes Cymri* (1842), p. 284; and S. H. Gurteen, the Arthurian Epic (1895), p. 94.

<sup>3</sup> Smith and Wace: Dictionary of Christian Biography, i., 737.

S. Nevyn, Caernarvonshire. By her he had issue :<sup>1</sup> Urien ; Eurddyl, his twin sister, who *m.* Elider of the numerous clan ; Aron, who was one of Arthur's "knights of counsel, so wise and prudent that no one could at any time defeat him ;" and Llew or Llewellyn, who *m.*, according to the Romances, Anna, sister of King Arthur, and had two sons, Gwalchmai and Medrawd or Mordred, the traitor, one of the three royal knights, "whom neither king nor emperor could vanquish ; if they could not succeed by fair means, they would by foul and disgraceful ones." Gwalchmai, Walweyn, or Gawain, the other son, is by some authorities described as the son of Anna and a second husband, Gwyar. He is celebrated as one of the three golden-tongued knights, and such was their eloquence "that no one could refuse whatever they asked." Other Triads call him "one of the three most courteous men of Britain," and one of the "three scientific ones of the Isle, to whom there was nothing of which the elements were not known." William of Malmesbury states that in the year 1086 his tomb was discovered on the seashore of Rhos on Pembrokeshire, where there is a district called Walwen's castle.

Urien, the eldest son of Cynvarch, was a great patron of the bards, by whom he is called "brave as a lion and gentle as a maid." The Welsh Triads name him as one of "the three Bulls of Conflict" and "the three pillars of battle." In the Arthurian romances he appears as Sir Urience. All the authorities agree in representing Urien and his sons as strenuously opposing the Saxon advance, and fighting, Taliesin declares, as many as ten battles against Ida and Deoric of Northumbria.<sup>2</sup> His greatest exploit was the expulsion of the Goideles, Gwyddelians, or Irish Scots, from the territory lying between the Tawe and Tavy rivers, and comprising Gowerland, Cydweli, Iscenen, Carnwallon, and Cantrev Bychan, to which was given the name of his father's northern principality, Rheged. About 567 he was treacherously slain by Llovan Llawdivo, while besieging Ida's son Deoric in the island of "Medcant," possibly Lindisfarne. Llywarch Hen, one of the greatest of the bards and the son of his father's younger brother, Elider Lydanwyn, in a long elegy celebrates his prowess and bewails his death.<sup>3</sup> The Welsh pedigrees marry

<sup>1</sup> Myvyrian Archaiology, ii., 49 ; Owen's Heroic Elegies of Llywarch Hen., p. vii.

<sup>2</sup> Palgrave's Anglo-Saxons, pp. 47, 48 ; Babcock : Lost Centuries, pp. 206-211 ; Iolo Morganwg's Welsh MSS., p. 457. Recently Professor Rhys, in The Arthurian Legend, pp. 238 to 272, adopting the theory of Sir G. W. Cox, calls Urien Rheged a mythical divinity—lord of the evening and the dusk, the twilight realm of illusion and glamour—and identifies him with Bran the Blessed.

<sup>3</sup> Owen's Llywarch Hen, pp. 23-43.



**URIEN RHEGED**  
**PRINCE OF THE NORTH BRITONS**

him to Modron, *dau.* of Avallech, but the family history and other authorities<sup>1</sup> say he *m.* Morgaine Le Faye, of Castle "La Belle Regard," *dau.* of Gorlois, Duke or Lord of Cornwall, and Igerne, who bore King Arthur to Uther Pendragon through the device of Merlin. His children were Pasgen, *of whom presently*; Elwri, who *m.* Morgan Morganwdd; Rhun, or Rum,<sup>2</sup> who is said to have preached Christianity in Northumbria before the mission of Paulinus; Rhiwallon, Elphin, Garth, and Cadell, who died fighting against the Saxons; Morvydd, a *dau.*, and Owaine or Ewaine, Knight of the Round Table,<sup>3</sup> called by the Triads one of the "three blessed princes of Britain," also with Lancelot du Lac and Cadwr of Cornwall the "three knights of battle of Arthur's Court," because they would not retreat either for spear, for arrow, or for sword, and the King never had shame in battle the day he saw their faces there. He is said to have slain Ida of Northumbria, and himself been killed in battle by Ida's son Deoric, Flamdwyn or flame-bearer, as the bards call him. Taliesin the Bard laments his death in the following lines:<sup>4</sup>

"The soul of Owain the son of Urien; may the Lord consider its need,  
 The Chief of Reged the heavy sward conceals him;  
 His knowledge was not shallow.  
 A low cell contains the renowned protector of bards.  
 The wings of dawn were the flowing of his lances,  
 For there will not be found a match for the chief of the glittering West;  
 The reaper of tenacious foes;  
 The offspring of his father and grandfather  
 When Flamdwyn killed Owain there was not one greater than he sleeping.  
 A wide number of Lloegr went to sleep with the light in their eyes."

Owain *m.* Dwynwen, *dau.* of Llewddyn Lueddag, of Dinas Eiddyn (Edinburgh), and was the father of Cyndeyrn<sup>5</sup> (S. Kentigern or Mungo), who is said to have been *b.* at Culross, in Perthshire, and arriving at manhood went to Cathures, now Glasgow, founded a monastery and was made Bishop there. The increasing

<sup>1</sup> All the Peerages, Morte d'Arthur, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Hinde's History of Northumberland, p. 77, suggests that Rhun, after the fall of Urien, went to Rome, and changing his name at ordination (which was not uncommon), became Paulinus. See also Smith and Wace's Dictionary, iv., 248.

<sup>3</sup> Clark's Orders of Knighthood, i., 160.

<sup>4</sup> Babcock, as above, p. 199; Skene's Ancient Books of Wales, ii., pp. 189, 199; Lady Guest's Mabinogion, i., 88; Williams's Enwogion Cymru, 366.

<sup>5</sup> Rees: Welsh Saints; Smith and Wace: Dictionary, iii., pp. 603, 604; Rhys: Celtic Britain, p. 243; Bishop Forbes: Vita Kentigerni, pp. 29-119, etc.

power of the pagans caused him to go into Wales, where he settled in Flintshire and built a church on the site of what is now S. Asaph's, named from his disciple, whom he left in charge when he returned to the North. After the battle of Ardderyd, in 573, when Rhydderch Hael defeated the heathen party under Guendolen, Cyndeyrn was recalled to Strathclyde and *d.* there in A.D. 603.

Some authorities derive Sir Rhys ap Thomas from Owain through S. Kentigern, but the family history and the Welsh annalists usually make Pasgen the eldest son of Urien, his ancestor. He succeeded his father in the principality of Rheged, but was deposed for his cruelty, his sister's husband, Morgan Morganwdd, being put in his place. The Triads called Pasgen one of the "three haughty chiefs of Britain." He had issue : Mor,<sup>1</sup> who became a saint, *i.e.*, a Celtic monk, and is *bu.* at Enlli or Bardsey Island ; Nidiaw,<sup>1</sup> also an anchorite ; and Gwrwyn,<sup>1</sup> who founded a church in Anglesey and had a son, Nidan,<sup>2</sup> Confessor to the monastic community of Pennion, in Anglesey. Mor was the lineal ancestor of Rhys ap Goronwy, ap Einion, ap Lloarch, ap Kymbathwye, ap Gurwared, ap Syssylt, ap Rhyne, ap Llarch, ap Mor, ap Pasgen, of whom nothing more than their names<sup>1</sup> has descended to posterity. Rhys ap Goronwy *m.* Margaret, *dau.* and *heir.* of Griffin ap Kiddy, Lord of Gwynvey, and had a son, Elider ap Rhys, *m.* Gladwys, *dau.* of Philip ap Bah ap Gwathvoed. Gwathvoed was possibly the Gwathvoed Vawr who *m.* Morfyd, *dau.* and *heir.* of Ynys Ddu, King of Gwent, and refused to be one of the subject princes who rowed King Edgar, the Saxon, in his boat upon the River Dee, in 973, bidding the King in reply to his threats, rather "*ofner na ofni angau*"—"fear him who fears not death." Another Gwathvoed lived a century later and was Prince of Ceredigion and Lord of Cilwyr. Some say Gladwys who *m.* Elider ap Rhys was his descendant ; Philip ap Bah, Lord of Esginbrath, being his grandson. Elider and Gladwys had a son, Sir Elidur Ddu, Knight of the Holy Sepulchre, who *m.* Cecily, *dau.* of Syssilt ap Llewelyn, Lord of Cantrescliffe, and had issue : Katherine, *m.* David Morthy, Lord of Odyn Castle and Fountain Gate ; and Philip, *m.* Gladys, *dau.* of David Vras, and was the father of Philip, who had issue : Crisley, *m.* Richard Aubrey ; Gwylliam (ancestor of Captain John Vonderhorst Rees, of Killymaenllwyd, J. P., in 1872) ; and Nicholas his eldest son, who *m.* Janet, *dau.* and *heir.* of Gruffyd ap Llewelyn Voethes, descended from Elystan Gloddryd, Prince of

<sup>1</sup> See Williams's *Enwogion Cymru*, under their various names.

<sup>2</sup> Smith and Wace : *Dictionary*, iv., 43.

Ferlys, sometimes called Ethelystan. He was a godson of King Athelstane, of England, and son of Cuhelyn ap Ivor, Lord of Builth, descended in the seventh generation from Teon, Bishop of Gloucester, who had Cassibelaunus as his ancestor. Elystan was Lord of Caermarthen and Prince of Ferlys between the Wye and Severn rivers, *m.* Gladys, *dau.* of Rhun ap Ednowen, or Gwenllian, *dau.* of Einion ap Howel Dda, and *d.* about the year 1000, founding one of the Royal tribes of Wales.

Nicholas ap Philip and Janet ap Gruffyd had an only son and heir, Gruffyd ap Nicholas, who was a remarkable and most ingenious gentleman. The possessor of an ample fortune and allied by marriage with some of the principal families both in North and South Wales, his power and influence in Caermarthenshire were very great. He appears to have had property in Caermarthen town, for his mother *d.* there, and was *bu.* at Whitland.

His hasty spirit and violence of temper often involved him in complications with his neighbours, from which it required the exercise of all his ingenuity to extricate himself. He even incurred the enmity of no less a personage than Richard, Duke of York, by withholding from him a piece of land in Herefordshire, and he insolently and peremptorily refused to obey the summons of the Sheriff to answer for his conduct. At the head of a numerous and warlike clan, which was strongly attached to him, he gave shelter and encouragement to innumerable Welsh thieves, who were in the constant habit of plundering and ravaging the English border. The frequency and severity of these predatory incursions raised against him a host of enemies, the most powerful of whom, Humphrey, Duke of Buckingham, Richard of York, Jasper Tudor, Earl of Pembroke, and the Earl of Warwick, made such representations to the King, Henry VI., accusing him of being an encourager and harbourer of thieves, that he was deprived of the Commission of the Peace and Captaincy of Kilgarran Castle, which that sovereign had granted him. It is alleged that his hatred of the English was Gruffyd's reason for harbouring those who ravaged their territory. A Commission was finally appointed by the King in 1441 to arrest the accused and investigate the charges against him, at the head of which was placed Lord Whitney.<sup>1</sup> Gruffyd, who had heard of the Commission, but was not informed of its precise object, laid his plans with the craftiness and exe-

<sup>1</sup> Probably Sir Eustace Whitney, Knt., "Lord" of the Manor of Whitney. See Cooke's Visit of Herefordshire, p. 75.

cuted them with the boldness peculiar to his character. He met the Commissioners on their entry into Caermarthenshire, himself meanly dressed, and accompanied only by four or five attendants raggedly attired, and as miserably mounted. Right glad was Lord Whitney to find the truculent Welshman apparently in his power, and he was not a little astonished also to hear him offer his services to guide him to Caermarthen, the place of his destination. Their road followed the windings of the Bran to where that river unites with the Gwydderig in its confluence with the Towey. On the western bank, on a rocky eminence, was Gruffyd's Castle of Abermarlais, hidden from the Commissioners by the thick woods which lined the shores of the river. A graceful curve of the road, however, brought them to the foot of the gentle eminence on which the castle stood, and then Gruffyd, turning to the surprised Commissioners and pointing to the open postern, invited them, with a smile, to enter and refresh themselves. They were received with demonstrations of extreme respect by Gruffyd's son Thomas, at the head of one hundred horsemen handsomely dressed and gallantly mounted, and began to open their eyes to the real power and consequence of their companion. After having well refreshed themselves, the whole party, including Thomas ap Gruffyd and his armed retinue, left the castle. A little farther on their way they came to the ancient fortress of Dineawr, not far from the town of Llandeilo Fawr, then the stronghold of Owen, Gruffyd's son. He received them at the head of a chosen body of two hundred armed horsemen, and played the part of host with such address that he contrived to draw from his guests the secret of their commission. The whole party then proceeded on their way, leaving the mountains for the plain where the Towey meets the Gwili, at the little village of Abergwili. Here they were met by a splendid body of five hundred "tall men" on foot, well armed and accoutred, and led by Gruffyd's eldest son. Thus magnificently attended the Commissioners entered Caermarthen, then the capital of South Wales. Gruffyd now excused himself from attendance on the Commissioners and committed to his sons the care of entertaining them at the banquet prepared in their honour at the Guild Hall. Lord Whitney privately sent for the Mayor, Stephen Griffith, and the Sheriff, and showing his commission, demanded their assistance to arrest Gruffyd, which it was determined should be done on the following morning.

The banquet was now prepared, and the Commissioners were escorted to it with much pomp by the sons of Gruffyd. The tables

had been arranged along the centre of the floor, and according to the architecture of the time a row of pillars separated the upper end of the room, which was slightly elevated, from that part which was assigned to the less distinguished members of the assembly. Lord Whitney was conducted to a seat on the dais, splendidly hung with cloth of gold, and Owen placed himself upon his right hand. On either side of this elevated dais galleries had been raised, in which were placed the bards of that land of minstrelsy. The guests took themselves with right good-will to the noble cheer provided, and Owen in particular plied them with Ypocras, Garhiofilac, and other delicate and precious drinks, which soon produced the desired effect upon the Commissioners. Lord Whitney after his conference with the authorities, and exhibiting to them his commission, carelessly placed it in his sleeve, which was made very wide after the fashion of the time, and often used for such purposes. During the revel, Owen abstracted it from its hiding-place, while Lord Whitney was in such a state of mental obscuration from the strong potations that had been pressed upon him, that he not only did not notice its loss at the time but retired to bed without doing so. Owen communicated to his father the success of their plans, but Gruffyd abated nothing of his formal courtesy to the Commissioners, and the next morning presented himself before them in the Guild Hall, splendidly dressed and attended by his sons and armed retainers. He was immediately arrested by the officers of the Court, to whom he made no resistance, but with an air of great humility requested that the proceedings against him might be conducted according to law, and asked to see their commission. Lord Whitney readily assented to his request, but upon putting his hand into his sleeve and finding the warrant gone, his consternation may be easily imagined. "Methinks Lord Whitney," said Gruffyd, "if he comes here, as he says, by the King's grace, must have valued his commission too highly to have committed it to the safe-keeping of that ruffle or carelessly to have lost it." Then dropping his assumed deference, clapping his hat upon his head, and turning to his friends and followers, he exclaimed : "What ! have we cozeners and cheaters come hither to abuse the King's Majesty's power and to disquiet his true-hearted subjects?" Then looking on the Commissioners with a bitter frown, he said, "By the mass, before the next day come to an end, I will hang up all your bodies for traitors and impostors." The Commissioners were panic-stricken, and entreated for their lives ; which Gruffyd at last granted on condition

that Lord Whitney should put on his livery coat of blue and wear his cognizance, and be bound by an oath to go to the King so arrayed, acknowledge his own offences, and justify the Welshman's proceedings.

In 1451 a great eistedfodd was held at Caermarthen under the patronage of Gruffyd ap Nicholas, at which the rules of the Welsh metres *Dosbarth Caerfyrddin* were determined. Gruffyd continuing his depredations upon the Lords Marchers was at length found guilty of felony on an indictment preferred against him in the Co. of Salop. This decision at once illumined his mind as to the rival claims of the Houses of York and Lancaster. A Lancastrian King had adjudged him a felon, the Duke of York was therefore of necessity the champion of a good cause and him he would support. He joined Edward of March, the Duke's son, at Gloucester, with eight hundred men well armed and provisioned, and marched with him to Mortimer's Cross, in Herefordshire. Here on February 2, 1461, a battle was fought between the Yorkists and the Lancastrians under Jasper, Earl of Pembroke, in which Gruffyd was mortally wounded, surviving only long enough to know that his friends were victorious.

**GRUFFYD AP NICHOLAS**, *m.* 1st, Mabel, *dau.* of Meredith ap Henry Donne, of Kidwelly Castle, by whom he had a son and heir, Thomas; he *m.* 2d, a *dau.* of Sir John Perrott of Pembroke, by whom he had a *dau.* Maud, *m.* Sir John Scudamore, of Kentchurch, *q. v.*, and 3d, Joan, *dau.* and *co-h.* of Jenken ap Rees ap David of Gilvach Wen, by whom he had Mabel, *m.* Philip Mansel. He also had younger sons Owen, *m.* Olive, heiress of Henry Maliphant of Upton Castle, Pembroke, whose line ended in heiresses in 1760, and Thomas, junior. He was succeeded by his son Thomas ap Gruffyd, who is described as a man of a character very different from his turbulent father, and one of the most accomplished gentlemen of the age, with a mildness of disposition and elegance of manners rarely found in those cruel times of civil warfare. To avoid taking part in the contests of the rival houses of York and Lancaster he withdrew to the accomplished Court of Burgundy, then ruled over by Philip the Good, in whose service he enrolled himself. There he became famous for his boldness and skill in the tilt and tourney, and in single combat. After the death of his first wife, Elizabeth Griffith, his gallantry and gracious disposition are said to have won the affections of a near relative of the Duke, and Thomas, having probably offended by his presumption the Duke's heir, the Count of Charolois (afterward so well known

as Charles the Bold) was compelled to return to Wales. There he had constant encounters with his neighbours, particularly Henry ap Gwilym of Court Henry in the Vale of Towey, between whose family and his there seems to have existed an ancient feud. His last duel took place some time toward the end of Henry the Sixth's reign, or the beginning of that of Edward the Fourth, when he fought with David Gough somewhere in Merionethshire and killed him. Having laid aside his armour and thrown himself upon the ground to rest after the combat, he was treacherously run through the body and killed by one of Gough's retainers. He was buried in the Abbey of Bardsey, Caernarvonshire.

He was *m.* to Elizabeth, *dau.* and heiress of Sir John Griffith of Abermarlais, and possibly<sup>1</sup> to another Elizabeth, *dau.* of James de Burgoigne, natural son of Philip, Duke of Burgundy, or herself a natural *dau.* of the Duke; from her descended the great clan of Johnes of Abermarlais, Dolau Cothy, Llanbadarnfawr, and Hafod. It has given ten high sheriffs to Cardigan, Caermarthen, and Pembroke; numbered among its members Thomas Johnes, the translator of Froissart, and was represented by John Johnes, Esq., of Dolau Cothy, J. P. and D. L. for Caermarthen in 1872. By his first wife Thomas ap Gruffyd had issue:

- i. MORGAN, killed in the Civil Wars.
- ii. DAVID, killed in the Civil Wars.
- iii. A *dau.*, *m.* GRIFFITH AP HOWELL, issue.  
JAMES AP GRIFFITH (*q. v.*).
- iv. MARGARET, *m.* SIR RICHARD HERBERT, of Coldbrook (*q. v.*).
- v. RHYS or REES, his heir, *of whom presently.*
- vi. Another *dau.*, *m.* JOHN, 4th son of WILLIAM HERBERT, Earl of Pembroke (*q. v.*).
- vii. DAVID 2d.
- viii. JOHN.
- ix. Possibly a second MARGARET, *m.* JOHN HERLE, of Brecknock.

Thomas ap Gruffydd's two elder sons, Morgan and David, became, immediately on their father's decease, warm partizans, on opposite sides, of the houses of York and Lancaster. When Jasper, Earl of Pembroke, after the overthrow of Queen Margaret at Tewkesbury, retired to Pembroke, accompanied by his nephew, Henry, Earl of Richmond, Morgan ap Thomas invested the castle, in order to prevent their escaping out of the country. Upon this David ap Thomas hastily collected together about two thousand men, armed any way,

<sup>1</sup> Reusenes says: "One such daughter married *apud Britones.*"

fell on the besiegers by surprise, obliged them to retire, and gave the Earl and his young charge an opportunity to escape to Tenby, whence they immediately sailed to Brittany. This is nearly all that is recorded of these two brothers. But both are said to have lost their lives in the Wars of the Roses.

**RHYS AP THOMAS**, his favorite son and eventual heir, was b. in 1449, and was educated at the Court of Burgundy, where he held a post of honour in the Duke's household. This he relinquished to accompany his father on his banishment to Wales. His bravery was so noted that after his death one of the Welsh bards lamented that a "drum had not been covered with his skin ; the sound of which alone," he assures us, "would have always ensured the victory to the British." He seems to have been as wise and politic as brave. He put an end to the long-established feud between his own family and that of Court Henry by marrying Eva, the only dau. and heiress of Henry ap Gwilym, the head of that house. By this marriage he added to his possessions a property not much inferior to his original patrimony, and became one of the most opulent subjects of the realm.

The anonymous author of his life, exalting the family of his hero, quotes Mr. Camden, the Herald, as saying "that they were the best born gentlemen in Wales, and furthest spread in their branches of any family in England, being allied with the Houses of Northfolk, Worcester, Pembroke, Bullinbrooke, and Barkley."

His establishment and hospitality were in every respect suitable to his immense wealth, and indeed displayed the magnificence of a prince, rather than of a private gentleman. He acquired unbounded popularity, and by degrees very formidable power, by re-establishing the games of his country on his estates, and by training the young men to the use of arms, under the guise of sham fights and spectacles. It is stated that he had nineteen hundred tenants bound by their leases to attend him at the shortest call, and that brief warning having been given, he could bring into the field five thousand disciplined men, mounted and armed. He was a great builder and enlarger of castles, built New Castle Emlyn, and greatly added to Carew Castle, which came into his possession by a forfeited mortgage from Sir Edmund Carew, erecting the magnificent state apartments there and making it his favourite residence. He was proprietor of the Lordships of Dinefawr, Carew, Llansadyrn, Cilsane, Emlyn, Cilcenin, Aberayron, Llanrystyd, Narberth, Llangybi, and several others, as

records an old list of his possessions. Fuller writes of him, "though never more than a knight, he was little less than a prince in his native country." Ocland called him "Flos Cambro Britanicum," and a poet of those days wrote :

" Y Brenin bia'r Ynys  
Ond sy o ran i Syr Rhys."

"The King owns the island except what pertains to Sir Rhys." Every effort was made to interest him in the cause of Henry of Richmond, with whom he was connected in blood by their common descent from Rhys ap Tewdwr of the Royal House of South Wales.<sup>1</sup>

By the Earl of Richmond, Rhys ap Thomas's assistance was regarded as of great consequence ; especially as Milford Haven was the safest, if not the only place at which the Earl could land, and here Rhys was completely master ; his friendship was therefore most essential, and consequently a reconciliation was effected between him and the Duke of Buckingham. Enmity having existed between the families since the time of Gruffydd ap Nicholas, at about this period Buckingham had sent Rhys a message to say that unless he gave him satisfaction for a certain injury he would come shortly and cudgel him out of his castle of Caermarthen. Rhys coolly answered that the roads being hilly and rough, his highness might spare himself the trouble of the journey, for he intended waiting upon him shortly at Brecknock, to receive his commands.



CHAIR OF SIR RHYS AP THOMAS, K.G.

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Thomas: *Memoirs of Owen Glendower*, 1822, p. 187, and the tabular pedigree of Sir Rhys.

The mission from the Lancastrians to Rhys was entrusted to Dr. Lewis, a former tutor of Rhys and now physician to the Countess of Richmond. Dr. Lewis found Rhys at Abermarlais, preparing for the expedition to Breconshire, and succeeded in obtaining Rhys's consent to make up his difference with Buckingham. Rhys and Buckingham, soon after this, met at Trecastle, where they agreed to bury all past animosities in oblivion ; but Rhys's views on the main question—Red or White Rose—were not then ascertained. Richard being apprised that a plot was hatching, demanded distinct assurances and hostages from those whose fidelity he doubted. Among others, Commissioners were sent to Rhys ap Thomas at Caermarthen, to administer to him the oaths of fidelity and to require his only son, Gruffydd, five years of age, as an hostage. Rhys took the oath without hesitation, but wrote a letter to the King, praying to be excused from parting with his son, on account of his tender age. He expressed indignation at the suspicion of his loyalty, observing that such suspicion might read to some of fickle minds and unstable thoughts, evil lessons against themselves. He made, however, the following voluntary protestation : “Whoever, ill-affected to the State, shall dare to land in those ports of Wales where I have anie employments under your Majestie, must resolve with himself to make his entrance and irruption over my bellie.” The general opinion is that Rhys was perfectly sincere in his declarations in this celebrated letter, “which is a very able composition,” drawn up by the Abbot of Talley, a zealous—though, to Rhys, concealed—Lancastrian. It is filled with such expressions of loyalty as were likely to satisfy Richard, but, at the same time, couched in such equivocal terms as might leave Rhys (under the guidance of his spiritual counsellors, the Abbot of Talley and the Bishop of S. David's) at liberty to break with the King, with what he might deem a safe conscience, should he afterward see cause to do so. Finally, becoming offended at the King's suspicions and moved by a letter from Richmond, in which it was stated that all his fortunes hung on Rhys ap Thomas's decision, the chieftain called a council of his most trusty friends to consider the question. At this were present the Abbot of Talley, the Bishop of S. David's, several of the more influential gentry, and two of his father's veteran officers in whom he had great confidence. They advised his aiding Henry, and when he spoke of his oath, the Churchmen silenced his scruples and one of them proposed a method by which he might keep its letter while evading its spirit. Still he hesitated, and it was not

until he had consulted his soothsayer or prophet that he sent a messenger to Henry assuring him of his assistance. This prophet, by name Robert of the Dale, answered his first inquiry as to the success of the enterprise quite plainly :

“ Full well I wend  
That is the end ;  
Richmond, sprung from British race,  
From out this land the Boar shall chase.”

But Sir Rhys was not satisfied. Richmond might indeed win the crown and dispossess the Boar of Gloucester, but unless he did this by the help of the Knight of Carew and entered Britain over his territory, what opportunity would there be for his action and what hope of reward ? So by the threat of death he forced the prophet, after a day's delay, in order to learn the will of Heaven, to declare the future more exactly, which he did in the following verse :

“ Hie thee to the dale. I'll to the vale  
To drink gude ale and soe I pre have a care of us all,”

which was understood to mean that Richmond would land at Dale in Milford Haven, and being successful, the lives and fortunes of the people were to be the care of Sir Rhys.

This being deemed sufficient encouragement, the knight consented to join the conspiracy on condition that he be made Justiciary of Wales. Henry immediately set sail for England and directed his course for Milford Haven, where he was met upon landing by Rhys ap Thomas at the head of two thousand picked men. It is said that he carried out the suggestion of the Bishop of S. David's by crouching under one of the arches of a bridge over which the Earl rode, thus “ passing over his bellie.” Henry appointed Shrewsbury as the place of rendezvous for his friends and divided his army into two bodies, one of which he led himself by way of Cardiganshire and the other he committed to Rhys ap Thomas. On the march the chieftain's army was augmented by vast numbers of the Welsh, from whom he made a selection of two thousand horse, the flower of his attendants, and five hundred foot, dismissing the rest to their homes. The infantry he placed under the command of his younger brothers, David and John, and left in the principality to secure it for Henry. The horse he led himself to Long Mountain, on the borders of Shropshire, and there joined the Earl.

King Richard, though taken by surprise, rose to the occasion, and hastily gathering an army, marched to meet them. The hostile forces came in sight of each other on the field of Bosworth, near Leicester, August 22, 1485. The events of the battle are familiar and need not be described here.

Richard, toward its end, made a desperate plunge at the Earl of Richmond; he killed with his own hands the Earl's standard-bearer, Sir William Brandon, and dismounted Sir John Cheyney and many a high-born gentleman who attempted to stay him in his career. He had nearly reached the spot where Henry stood, when Rhys ap Thomas perceived the Earl's danger, and mounting his favourite charger, "Llwyd y Bacse," or Grey Fetterlocks, with Sir William Stanley bore down between. The Welsh tradition asserts that it was Rhys who slew King Richard, fighting with him hand to hand. Whatever may be the foundation for this story, his conduct on that day was so distinguished that Richmond ascribed to it the issue of the battle and in gratitude ever after applied to him the title of "Father Rhys." He also knighted him on the field after the victory. The spoils of King Richard's tent were shared by Rhys and Sir William Stanley. Other honours were subsequently heaped upon him by the grateful monarch when established on the throne. He was appointed a member of the King's Council, and it is said that he declined the Earldom of Pembroke or Essex, alleging that knighthood was the greatest honour that could be conferred on a soldier. November 3, 1485, he received a grant for life of the offices of Constable, Lieutenant, and Steward of Brecknock. November 6th, of the same year, he was appointed Chamberlain of Caermarthen and Cardigan and Steward of the Lordship of Builth. February 26, 1485-1486, he was appointed one of the Commissioners of the King's Mines. Loaded with these marks of the King's gratitude and friendship, Sir Rhys was sent to South Wales to heal the disorders which had arisen from the distracted state of the supreme government, and to restore the authority of the laws, a task which he appears to have executed with great judgment and success. Sir Rhys's next appearance on the public theatre was during the attempt of Lambert Simnel to impose himself on the country as the young Duke of York. Samuel brought to the field a considerable force of Irish recruits, and encamped at Stoke. Henry, wishing to crush the plot in its infancy, marched against him with the utmost expedition. As Sir Rhys had not time to collect his Welsh followers, the King gave him a troop of

DEATH OF RICHARD THE THIRD ON BOSWORTH FIELD

*From an English History published in the Eighteenth Century*



English horse. The eager valour of our hero had nearly cost him his life in this engagement, June 16, 1487 ; for, being imperceptibly drawn forward from his men, in an encounter with one of the Irish commanders he was suddenly beset by several of the enemy, and only escaped destruction by the timely succour of the Earl of Shrewsbury. Henry, hearing of his narrow escape, addressed him jocularly, " How now, Father Rhys ? how likest thou of the entertainment here ? Whether is better, eating leeks in Wales or shamrock among the Irish ? " " Both certainly, but coarse fare," replied Rhys ; " yet either would seem a feast with such a companion," pointing to the Earl who had rescued him.

In 1492 he accompanied Henry in his French expedition, and the military appearance and handsome equipment of the soldiers of " Richard Thomas," as he calls him, is spoken of by Bacon in his " History of the Reign of Henry VII."

August 6, 1494, " Res ap Thom's Knyghte " executes a deed to his (step) son, Edward Stradlyng, on the latter's coming of age, and seals it with a square seal bearing a raven between two flowering plants, over the Raven the letter R.<sup>1</sup>

June 22, 1497, with fifteen hundred horse, he was at the battle of Blackheath, fought between the King's forces and the revolted Cornishmen under Lord Audley, and after a fierce conflict took the latter prisoner, and totally defeated his followers. The leaders in the revolt were immediately executed, but the bulk of the insurgents returned home and shortly afterward joined Perkin Warbeck, when he landed on their coast at the head of an Irish army. Failing to take Exeter at the first attack his courage left him, and taking sanctuary at Beaulieu Abbey he finally surrendered himself to Henry, and, it is said, afterward attempting to escape from confinement, was executed. April 22, 1505, Sir Rhys was elected a Knight Companion of the most noble Order of the Garter, and occupied the twelfth stall of the sovereign's side in S. George's Chapel, Windsor, where his Garter plate still remains.<sup>2</sup> The motto, " *Secret et Hardi*," and his badge of a raven, is a boss in the vaulting of the choir.<sup>3</sup> He was

<sup>1</sup> Topographer and Genealogist, 1846, vol. i., p. 562.

<sup>2</sup> Quarterly of 4. 1. Paternal. *Ar.* a chevron sable between 3 ravens *ppr.* 2. Llewellyn ap Voethes. *Ar.* on a cross sable, 5 crescents *or.* 3. Einon clud (?) *Gu.* a lion rampant *ar.* 4. A rose seeded, between 3 bears' or wolves' heads. Crest : A raven *ppr.* between 2 spears' shafts *or.* blades *ar.* points imbrued *gw.* Supporters : 2 Griffins per fesse *or* and *ar.*

<sup>3</sup> Anstis's Memorials of the Garter, vol. i., pp. 237, 247, 279, 369, etc. Notes and Queries, 4th Series, xi., 245. See also Ashmole's Institution, etc., of the Order of the Garter, folio 713, for his arms.

frequently employed by King Henry in negotiations on the Continent, and the records of the Garter show that he was excused from attendance at several Chapters of the Order "as being absent on the King's business." In 1507 he gave a tournament at Carew Castle in honour of his admission to the Order, which "The Beauties of England and Wales," 1812, describes as "the most magnificent spectacle that was ever perhaps exhibited by a private individual at his own charge."

Sir Rhys having announced his intention of holding this solemn joust and tournament, with other martial exercises, the gentry of the different counties of the Principality, to the number of five or six hundred, exclusive of their attendants, assembled.<sup>1</sup> Every necessary accommodation was made for their entertainment. "Tentes and pavilions were pitched in the parke, near to the castle, wheare they quartered all the time, everie man according to his qualitie, the place being furnished beforehand with all sortes of provisions for that purpose. This festival and time of jollitie continued the space of five days," beginning on the day before S. George's Eve (April 21st), when Sir Rhys viewed the company and selected five hundred of "the properest and tallest men of their hands from amongst them." These he divided into five bands under captains. The second day was spent in exercising these chosen troops in all points, as if they were to go on service. The third day the drums beat, the trumpets sounded, and the martial host, armed at all points, as in battle array, proceeded to Lanphey, the palace of the Bishop of S. David's, about a mile from Carew Castle. At their coming thither they bade good morrow to the Bishop, in the language of soldiers, with arquebuses, muskets, and calivers, and then dividing themselves made a lane for Sir Rhys to pass to the gate. After a parley with the Bishop's officer, in which the Knight assured him that although in arms on S. George's Day in honour of the Martial Saint, his errand was peaceful, to pray for the rest and peace of S. George's soul, in which he would have the Bishop's assistance. Sir Rhys then arrayed himself in "S. George his livery," and the Bishop coming forth with the Abbot of Talley and the Prior of Caermarthen, all vested in rich copes, they proceeded to the chapel and the Bishop sang a mass; whereupon the whole party returned to Carew. After a dumb show of serving the (absent) King at a high table with all due ceremony, a rich feast was served to all present, Sir Griffith Rhys, as having more courtly accomplishments than the other youth, acting as Server. Before

<sup>1</sup> Rees: South Wales, ii., 791, etc., from which this account is abridged.

separating for the night, Sir William Herbert stepped forth before the company and challenged all comers, four to four, at jousts and tournament the next morning. This was instantly accepted and Sir Rhys appointed judge. Arrayed in fair gilt armour, two pages on horseback before him, a herald and two trumpeters and four footmen in attendance, while two hundred tall men in blue coats went before and after, he presided at the lists. After gallant deeds performed, and sundry tilts run and the tourney fought, supper was served, and so ended the fourth day of the festival ; Sir Griffith ap Rhys having made challenge to Sir William Herbert to tilt with him, four to four, in the ring next morning, the losers to pay for a supper at Caermarthen "for theyre farewell at parting." The next morning they ran their six courses, and as had been agreed between them, "Sir Rhys gave sentence against his son, that he might show his friends what entertainment the place was able to afford." After a dinner, as formal as before, Sir Rhys gave a hunting party in his park, where they killed divers bucks, bestowed upon them for their supper at night. That feast over, a comedy was acted by some of Sir Rhys's own servants, with which, says the annalist, "these majesticall sights and triumphs were concluded." He thinks it noteworthy, that for the space of five days, among not less than one thousand people, "there was not one quarrel, cross word, or unkind look that happened among them."

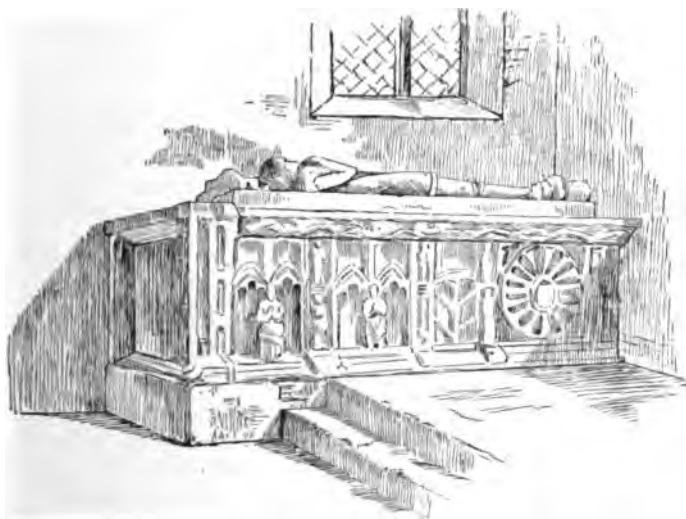
November 7, 1509, Sir Rhys was appointed Justiciary for South Wales. May 12, 1510, he was made Chamberlain of the same District. In a list of the Vanguard retinue of Henry in his French expedition, dated May 15, 1513, appears Sir Ryce ap Thomas with captains and petty captains, foot-soldiers, demi-lances, in all 2,993. The MSS. diary of John Taylor, Clerk of Parliament, under June 25th, of the same year, says : "The French fled before Sir Rice ap Thomas ;" June 29th, "Sir Rice recaptured one of the King's great guns which had been taken by the French." At the battle of Guinegate or Spurs he took four French standards, and was instrumental in the capture of the Duke of Longueville. August 22d, he was present at the siege of Therouenne, and September 9th at that of Tournay. June 4, 1515, there is recorded a confirmation and quit-claim from the King to "Sir Rhesus ap Thomas son and heir of Thomas son and heir of Griffin Nicholas, of the Castle and Lordship of Trayne March, and third part of the Ville of St. Clair in Caermarthen." May 16, 1517, he was granted the offices of Steward and Chancellor, in survivorship with his son, Sir Griffith, of Haverford West and Rowse in the Marches

of Wales. July 5th, of the same year, he was one of the witnesses to a treaty executed between Henry, Maximilian, and Charles. In a list of the persons who should accompany the King to the Field of the Cloth of Gold, drawn up March 12, 1518-19, Sir Rhys was one of the four Knights of the Order, *i.e.*, the Garter, who were to go, each having 22 servants, 2 to be chaplains, and 2 gentlemen, with 48 horses. In 1520, Henry, writing to Thomas, Earl of Surrey, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, says that he has "writen to our trusty and right welbeloved Sir Rice ap Thomas to putt the nomber of fifte horsemen of Walys in arredinesse for the Irish wars." May 27, 1522, he was appointed to attend the King at the visit of Charles the Fifth,<sup>1</sup> the first Knight on the list. He was Mayor of Caermarthen in 1488, 1494, and 1500. The exact date of his death I have not been able to ascertain, but it is on record that February 2, 1524-5, he made his will, and died that year, the will being probated July 5, 1525. (Appendix II.) He was buried in the Church of the Grey Friars at Caermarthen; but his body was afterwards removed to the eastern aisle of S. Peter's Church, in the same town, where his monument, a sculptured marble block, surmounted by recumbent figures of Sir Rhys and his wife, Elizabeth Herbert, is the most remarkable which the church contains.<sup>2</sup> After remaining for three hundred years, unskillfully put together in the northeast corner of the chancel, this monument was, in September and October, 1865, restored to its original form and removed to a position under the arch between the chancel and the consistory court, by the fourth Lord Dynevor. The effigy of Sir Rhys and the slab on which it lies consists of one piece of the stone called *clunch*, 10 feet long by about 3 feet wide and 2 feet thick. The Knight is lying in the attitude of prayer, clothed in mail and chain armour, armorial bearings on the breast, with the cloak and collar of the Garter, head resting on a pillow, shield, helmet, and lambrequin; his hair is flowing in ringlets over his shoulders; the crest is broken off just above the wreath. The pillow, etc., is curiously supported by the Dragon of Wales, lying on its back clasping the shield, its head issuing out of the wreath. At each top corner of the slab the arms are repeated. The feet rest against a couchant lion with his head twisted back. The figure of Lady Rhys is of small size, in the act of prayer, cap almost square, a necklace, a tucker above her gown, which is short, showing the petticoat beneath;

<sup>1</sup> See a full account of the proceedings in Rutland Papers, pp. 59-100.

<sup>2</sup> Topographer and Genealogist for 1846, pt. 562.

around the waist a gold cord ending in tassels; over all, a flowing robe with large sleeves, no animal at her feet. Sir Rhys was married more than once, and it is difficult to state with absolute certainty his marriage relations. His first wife would appear to have been Eva,<sup>1</sup> *dau.* of Henry ap Gwilym of Court Henry, derived from Elystan Gloddryd, by whom he had a son, Sir Griffith ap Rhys, K.B., *b.* 1478, (*of whom presently*). There seems to be no question that he also married Elizabeth,<sup>2</sup> sister of William Herbert, first Earl of Pembroke of



TOMB OF SIR RHYS AP THOMAS, K.G.

that family, and *dau.* of Sir William ap Thomas, Knight of Ragland Castle by Gwladys, *dau.* of Sir Davy Gam. She was the widow of Sir Harry Stradling, Knight, of St. Donat's Castle, Glamorganshire, *d.* at Picton in Pembrokeshire, February 5, 1535, and is *bu.* with Sir Rhys at Caermarthen. Although the union was apparently unblessed by the sacrament of the Church, and she was not recognized as such by the English law, there would seem little doubt that in his active middle life, Gwenllian, sister of his intimate friend and counse-

<sup>1</sup> Cambrian Register, vol. i., pp. 49-145; MS. history of the family, about 1600; Brydges: Collins Peerage, vol. vii., 504; Ralph Brooke's pedigree of 1600; Rees: South Wales, 298, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Collins's Peerage, Pedigree of Herbert and Dinevor; several pedigrees of Herbert in G. T. Clark's Genealogies of Morgan and Glamorgan; the numerous books upon the Antiquities of South Wales, and the inscription upon the tomb of her first husband.

for Robert ap Gwylim Harry ap Jevan Gwyn, of Mydhifinych, Abbot of Talley, was his real wife;<sup>1</sup> Eva ap Gwylim probably dying young, and Elizabeth Herbert being the wife of his old age, as she certainly survived him. By Gwenllian he had issue :

- i. **MARGARET**, *m.* 1st, **HARRY JOHN**; *m.* 2d, **ROBERT GRIF-FITH**; *m.* 3d, **PHILIP MORGAN**, of Cydwellyn.
- ii. **ELLEN**, the elder, *m.* 1st, **RHYDDERCH AP JEVAN LLWYD** of Builth; *m.* 2d, **JENKIN LLWYD**, of Llanstephan.
- iii. **ELLEN**, the younger.
- iv. **MARGARET**, the younger.
- v. **WILLIAM AP RICE**, of Sandy Haven, Sheriff of Pembrokeshire 1557.
- vi. **DAVID**, the elder, *m.* **ALSON**, heiress of Arnold Martin, of Richardston or Richeston, Pembrokeshire, and had a son,  
**JOHN**, Sheriff in 1582 and 1593. *m.* **CATHARINE**, heiress of **Sir John Perrott**, of Scotsborough, near Tenby.<sup>2</sup> Sheriff in 1550.
- vii. **DAVID**, the younger, *m.* **dau.** and *co-h.* of John ap Rhys David Thomas of Blaenrûn, and founded the house of Gwynn, of Taliaris, in Caermarthenshire, extinct about 1650, in the seventh generation.
- viii. **THOMAS AP RHYS**, ancestor of **THOMAS FAMILY OF WEST RIVER** (*q.v.*).
- ix. **PHILIP**, Mayor of Caermarthen in 1522.

Sir Rhys is also said to have married Jenet, *dau.* of Thomas Matthews, whose rights are reserved in the attainder of Rice Griffith,<sup>3</sup> and the *dau.* and heiress of Sir John Ellis descended from Sir Henry Elys, of Yorkshire, *temp.* Richard I.<sup>4</sup> He had illegitimate issue : by Elizabeth, *dau.* of John Mortimer, Lord of Coedmor, near Cardigan, a *dau.* Jane ; by Alice Kyffin, of Montgomeryshire, he had a *dau.* *d. y.*; and by a *dau.* of Howell ap Jenkin of Ynys y Maen-Gwyn, he had his favourite *dau.*, Anne or Catherine, *m.* Henry Wirron, Esq., of Orielton, High Sheriff of Pembrokeshire, 1547, whose heiress *m.* Sir Hugh Owen, of Bedowen, in Anglesea, ancestor of the Owens of Orielton, whose line ended in Sir Hugh Owen, Bart., Sheriff 1804, *d. u.*, 1809.

In the eye of the English law, Sir Rhys would appear to have had only one legitimate son, Sir Griffith ap Rhys, whose son was his heir, but in Wales it must have been otherwise, judging from the position and marriages of his other children.

<sup>1</sup> Cambrian Register, vol. i., pp. 49 to 145; the MS. history of the family written about 1600. Reprinted in abstract, Retrospective Review, vol. xi., quoted and endorsed as authentic history in James Gairdner's Life of Richard III.

<sup>2</sup> Cliffe's Book of South Wales, 1848, p. 266, notices the tomb of Thomas ap Rhys, of Scotsborough, his wife and family, in the massive style of James the First's era, as standing in Tenby Church. He was son of John ap David Rhys Thomas, and was Sheriff 1610.

<sup>3</sup> Statutes of the Realm, vol. iii., p. 415.

<sup>4</sup> Nichols's Herald and Genealogist, vol. iv., p. 526, article by W. S. Ellis.

As Mr. G. T. Clark, in his "Genealogies of Morgan and Glamorgan," notes : "The Welsh squires of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries paid but little attention to the sacrament of marriage, and even after the Reformation continued to form unions of a patriarchal character, which though regularly recognized and recorded, had not the sanction of the Church."<sup>1</sup> In a case occurring at Builth, 27th, Edward I. (1299) the jurors report "that they say in these parts both legitimate and illegitimate succeed to the heritage of their ancestors, and that such has always been the custom."

A noteworthy instance of this is the noble family of Herbert. The proud Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery descend illegitimately from its founder, a contemporary of Sir Rhys ap Thomas. Indeed, Henry VII., the king whom Sir Rhys seated on the throne of England, apart from the fact that there is no *evidence* existing to prove a marriage between Katherine of France and his grandfather Owen Tudor,<sup>2</sup> derived his royal Lancastrian blood illegitimately. His mother, Margaret of Richmond, being a granddaughter of John Beaufort, eldest *natural* son of John of Gaunt, by Catharine Roet or Swinford (sister-in-law to the poet Chaucer), who afterward became his third wife.

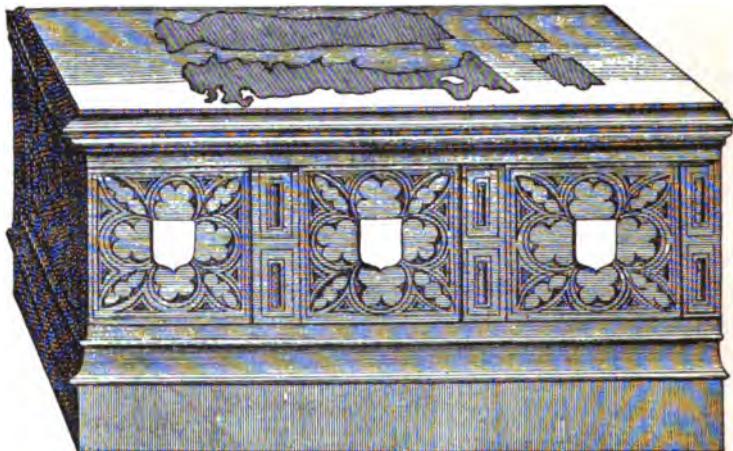
**GRIFFITH AP RHYS**, the only son of Sir Rhys ap Thomas by his first wife Eva, of Court Henry, b. 1478, was once nominated as a candidate for the Garter, but failed to secure an election. When Henry VII. revived the Order of the Bath, November 17, 1501, on the marriage of his son, Prince Arthur, to Katherine of Aragon, Griffith ap Rhys was created a knight of that ancient order. He was a favourite companion of the Prince, and as such gave some curious testimony at the proceedings in reference to the divorce of Queen Katherine. In April, 1502, at the funeral of Prince Arthur, a contemporary account (printed in Grose's Antiquarian Repertory, ii., 327-330) says "Sir Griffith Vap Sr. Ris rode before the corpse in mornynge Abitt on a courser trapped with black, bearing banner of Prince's arms." And at the interment in Worcester Cathedral, April 27th, "Sir Griffith Vap Rise Thomas offered at the Gospel the rich embroidered banner of my Lord's Armes." The standard of Sir Griffith ap Rhys, K.B., was : per fess murrey and blue ; device repeated twice, a trefoil slipped and barbed *ar.* charged with a raven *ppr.* Motto, Psalm cxlvii. 9, "*Puluis (sic.) corvorum invocantibus cum.*"

<sup>1</sup> This irregularity was largely owing to the canonical restrictions enacted by the mediæval authorities, one suspects for venal reasons, dispensations being readily furnished for a money payment.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. C. E. Moberly : Early Tudors, p. 14.

At his father's tournament at Carew, 1507, he was one of the principal challengers. He was Mayor of Caermarthen, 1504-5-11-13.

The Rutland list of those at the Field of the Cloth of Gold notes Sir Griffith Rice, with two other knights, as in command of a body of one hundred light horsemen "for scurriers." Lady Rice was also in attendance on the Queen. He *m.* about 1504, Katherine, *dau.* of Sir John St. John, and aunt of the first Lord St. John of Bletshoe, from whom descended Pope's friend, Lord Boling-



TOMB OF SIR GRIFFITH AP RHYS, K.B.

broke. After Sir Griffith's death she *m.* Sir Piers Edgecombe, ancestor of the present Earl of Mount Edgecombe. She made her will at Cothele, in Cornwall, December 4, 1553, *d.* that month and is *bu.* with her first husband in Worcester Cathedral.<sup>1</sup> Sir Griffith ap Rhys *d.* September 29, 1521. Issue :

- i. RICE, his heir (*of whom presently*).
- ii AGNES, *m.* 1st, WILLIAM, 6th LORD STOURTON, and 2d, SIR EDWARD BAYNTON, KNT., of Rowden, in Hertfordshire. She *d.* August 19, 1574, and is *bu.* with her 2d husband in Bromham Church, Wilts.<sup>2</sup> Their quaint epitaph runs thus :

<sup>1</sup> Notices of Sir Griffith ap Rhys will be found in Calendar of State Papers, reign of Henry VIII., vol. ii., pp. 69, 193, 235, 1489, etc. A view of the tomb of Sir Griffith ap Rhys may be seen in Thomas's Worcester, opposite p. 71, which quotes the inscription; and also in Wild's Worcester, plate viii., and Dingley, ii., plate cclxxxv.

<sup>2</sup> Dingley's History from Marble, part i., plate xxxiii., gives drawings and epitaph from the tomb.

Here lieth Syr Edward Baynton Knyght within this marble clad,  
 By Agnes Ryce his firste trew wyfe Yt thrytyn chydrene had  
 Whearof she left alye with him at his departure thre  
 Henery, Anne and Elyzabeth whose pictures here you see.  
 The XIX daye of Auguste she decessed of Christe the yere  
 These little figures standing bie present ye number here. 1574.

- iii. **MARY, m. SIR JOHN LUTTERELL, KNT.**, before 1553, when she is mentioned as his wife in her mother's will.
- iv. **ELIZABETH**, the only sister of **RICE AP GRIFFITH** named in his grandfather's will.

**RICE AP GRIFFITH**, the only son of Sir Griffith ap Rhys and Lady Katherine St. John, was the heir of his grandfather, Sir Rhys ap Thomas, K.G., and as such succeeded to a position of high rank and large possessions. A true Celt, he was a gallant youth, fond of splendour and display. Brought up with a knowledge of his great wealth and position, and *m.* to a *dau.* of the proud Duke of Norfolk, he seems to have shown an arrogant disposition, which made him dangerous enemies. With a numerous and devoted tenantry he felt secure and able to defy them ; but in the end, by obtaining the ear of the jealous King, they effected his ruin. The history of his fall is brief, though tragic. In July, 1528, we find him at the height of his power, and in his loyalty writing from Caermarthen to Cardinal Wolsey to complain of the numbers of Irish rebels from Desmond's country, who came into Pembrokeshire, and that the Mayor and Council of Tenby encourage them. March 3, 1528-9, he writes to Wolsey, complaining that his tenants are disturbed by persons under Lord Ferrars, the King's Justiciary for South Wales ; and reminding the Cardinal that he encouraged him to declare any grievance of himself or tenants, asks to be Lord Ferrars's Deputy. "Would be content to give my Lord such sum as Wolsey thought convenient for it."

The eleventh of the same month he notifies Wolsey that he has taken a pirate vessel, and thanks the Cardinal for his continued goodness. July 8th, he writes again, giving an account of the trial of the master of the pirate vessel, one William Hughes. Whether this is the same person afterward concerned in Rice ap Griffith's treason, I do not know. Between these two dates occurred an event which was probably the cause of Rice ap Griffith's conspiracy. June 16th of this year, Walter Devereux, Lord Ferrars, writes from "Kermarthen" to Wolsey, "that during his sessions in that town, Rece Grif-

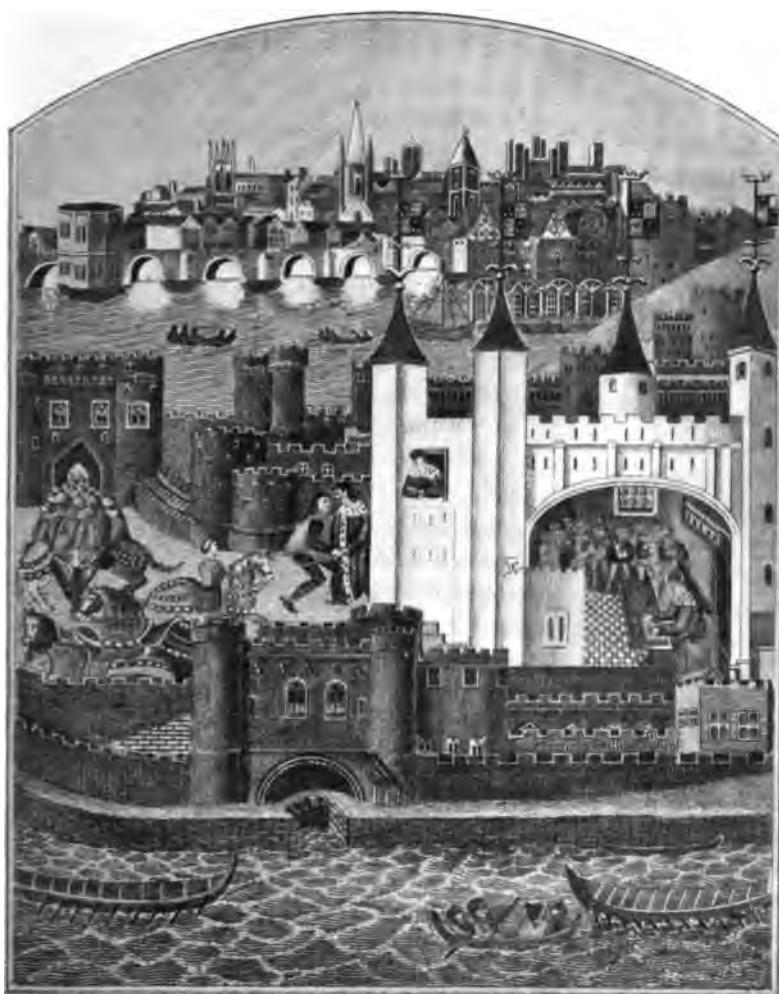
fith, Esq., encouraged the malefactors by causing proclamation to be made in divers churches to induce the people to attend upon him, instead of the Justiciary, and by making quarrels in Kermarden. On Tuesday, June 15th, he came to the Castle with his armed servants, where I was with other gentlemen, and picked a quarrel with me about Thomas ap Howen,<sup>1</sup> his kinsman, who was in ward for various misdemeanours, and hurting the people when they came to complain of him. Rece drew his dagger on me, and I took it from him and put him in ward. His friends stir up the people to rebellion, but he shall not be let out until he find security." The next day Lady Katherine Ryx writes Wolsey, reminding him of his friendship for her family, and telling him that "his servant, master Ryx Griffith, is in Caermarthen Castle on false surmise of desiring Thomas ap Owen, servant to the King, then in ward, to take out of the constable's hands one Jankyn, servant to Ryx, upon which Ferrers drew his dagger, and Ryx his also in self-defence. No harm was done except that Ryx was hurt in his arm and arrested, at which the county is greatly discontented. Great dissatisfaction has prevailed ever since Ferrers' coming to Caermarthen. Ryx would have written, but is kept from pen and ink." In conclusion she begs that Wolsey "will not allow them to have shame and rebuke."

The arrest seems to have caused a great disturbance among the people ; and Lady Ryx and her friends seem to have tried to release her husband by force without waiting for Wolsey's action, as we find Ferrars writing, June 18th, to Wolsey, about "the great insurrection in these parts at the instigation of Rece Griffith and Lady Haward. There has not been such in Wales in anyone's memory. Everything is now quiet, and the captains and ringleaders have returned home."

From the fact of his presiding at the trial of William Hughes, master of the pirate vessel, Rice ap Griffith appears to have given the necessary security and been released by the Justiciary. The insult, however, no doubt rankled in his memory ; and two years after, when he went up to London, predisposed him to listen to the proposals of some of the papal emissaries.

"The history of his conspiracy is a very mysterious one," says the historian Froude, and my investigations have enabled me to throw very little additional light on the subject. William Hughes, called

<sup>1</sup> Thomas ap Owen, Sewer of the Chamber, who was appointed Constable of Builth Castle, vice Sir Rhys ap Thomas, September 10, 1525, and was Mayor of Caermarthen the same year.



TOWER OF LONDON IN 1530

*After an Old Engraving*

in the act of attainder, "gentleman of London," who was his partner in the plot, was actively engaged in behalf of Queen Katherine of Aragon at the time of the proceedings in regard to her divorce. From a conversation between two friars after the execution of Rice ap Griffith, reported in Froude's second volume, from the testimony of one who overheard them, it would appear that the unfortunate youth was in reality innocent of the crime charged against him. It is doubtful if he committed any fault other than offending the jealous susceptibilities of the King by adding "Fitz Uryan" to his name, which is complained of in the plea against him,<sup>1</sup> as implying an intention of making himself an independent Prince of Wales. The case of his wife's nephew, the chivalrous Earl of Surrey, was not dissimilar. The conspiracy itself was probably part of the great Papal movement against England which was carried on all through the sixteenth century. The intention seems to have been to assassinate the King, and in the uncertainty with regard to the succession, Rice ap Griffith may have been persuaded to think that his claim as a descendant of the British and Welsh princes might be sufficient to give him the throne of Wales at least. An old prophecy that "James of Scotland, with the bloody hand, and the Raven" (Rice's crest), should conquer England, was also brought to mind to encourage him. Probably Rice was not guilty of doing more than listening to their treasonable propositions, but that was sufficient to ruin him. Some time in the autumn of 1531, probably October 2d, he was arrested. His friends in Wales broke out in open insurrection, and we find that a warrant was addressed to Lord Ferrars, dated October 7, 1531, directing the arrest of James ap Griffith ap Howell, sister's son to Sir Rhys ap Thomas, who had fortified himself in the Castle of Emlyn. He seems to have directed the revolt, and probably was the last of Rice's adherents to surrender. At its session of January 15, 1531-2, Parliament passed an act<sup>2</sup> for sequestering "Rychard ap Gruffyth late of London Esquire, otherwise Rice ap Griffith of Carewe and William Hughes late of London gentleman, as indicted and convicted in the Court of the King's Bench

<sup>1</sup> Mich. 23, Henry VIII., Rot. 6, *Inter Placita Regis*: "Quod præfatus Ricæus ap Griffith novum nomen. Videat Rice ap Griffith Fitz Urian in se prædictorie assumpsit hac intentione videat quod in se statum et honorem dictæ principalitatis Walliæ—dignius et sub pretenso tituli colore prædiorie obtinere poterat et habere."

<sup>2</sup> Statutes of the Realm, vol. iii., p. 415. Spurrell's Caermarthen, ad edition, p. 113, says, "Besides his large estates, £30,000 worth of jewels and plate were confiscated to the crown," which must greatly exaggerate the value of his personal property, although the statement is confirmed by the Life of Sir Rhys ap Thomas, p. 56.

of having at Iseldon (or Islington) in Middlesex, on August 28, 1531, and elsewhere compassed, &c. the death of our Lord the King."

January 4, 1531-2, Carlo Capello, their English Agent, writes as follows to the Signory of Venice : "The heretic friar was burnt alive ; and, three days ago, they sentenced to death Master Ris, who had been put in the Tower before October 3, 1531, and this morning, on Tower Hill, he was beheaded in public, and one of his servants (presumably William Hughes) was hanged and quartered."<sup>1</sup>

In the act of forfeiture the rights of Lady Katherine Rice were scrupulously reserved, but uselessly ; for in the Parliamentary Session of 1541-2 we find her name, Katherine, Countess of Bridgewater (she had m. 2d Sir Henry Daubeney, Earl of Bridgewater), among others, as attainted of misprision of treason, along with Queen Katherine Howard.

March 26th, of uncertain year, but apparently after the attainder, William Brabazon and Hugh Whalley write from Carew that they are there, preparing for the safe conducting of the King's stuff. "A chaplain of my Lady Howard's (Rice's wife) came with the King's command about her jointure, and asked leave to lie in the castle, that he might have the rooms cleaned. Suspected and searched his room, and found four boxes of evidences belonging to Narberth, Carew, and Kidwelly. Among other things a silver raven worth £40."

Rice ap Griffith m. Lady Katherine Howard, the sixth *dau.* of Thomas, second Duke of Norfolk, of that family, by his second wife, Agnes, *dau.* of Hugh Tilney, and sister and heiress of Sir Philip Tilney, Knight, of Boston (Doyle's Baronage calls her *dau.* of Sir Philip Tilney), by whom he left issue : Griffith, his heir, and Agnes.

Griffith Rice (g. r.) was restored in blood, though not to the estates of his father, in the reign of Queen Mary, is said to have m. Eleanor, *dau.* of Sir Thomas Jones, Knight, and is the lineal ancestor of the present Lord Dynevor, of Dynevor Castle, Caermarthenshire.

<sup>1</sup> State Papers, Foreign, Venetian under the year; Wriothesley's Chronicle, 17; Calendar of State Papers, Henry VIII., vol. iv., 232. Other notices of Rice ap Griffith may be found at 196a, 202, 231a, 239a, 251a, 252a, 262, 264.

# The Thomas and Bridges story

## By Edison H. Thomas

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The  
THOMAS and BRIDGES  
STORY

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**Edison H. Thomas**

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*To my wife, Thelma,  
who became a Thomas  
by choice.*

## FOREWORD

This attempt to trace the ancestry of the Thomas and Bridges families has been put together after more than four years of frequently interesting, sometimes fascinating and often frustrating research. During that time I have pored over many pages of court records, most of them painstakingly hand written on paper now yellowed with age, as well as checked many volumes of historical and genealogical references in libraries and state archives in several parts of Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina and Virginia. I have also corresponded with numerous relatives, near relatives and kinfolk I previously didn't know I had. I also have corresponded with many complete but sympathetic strangers from various parts of the United States.

More specifically, the search for information about our ancestors led me to historic Jamestown, Virginia, where John Thomas, the emigrant who started it all, arrived to become the first Thomas in America. It also led me to nearby Williamsburg, in York County, where, on the shore by the murky waters of Queens Creek, that same ancestor, after a storm interrupted trip across the Atlantic, settled and raised his family. While in Virginia, I also criss-crossed Nansemond County, early-day "Thomas Country" where John Thomas's descendants settled, and historic Isle of Wight County where Joseph, our Bridger emigrant ancestor, lived and died. Also in Virginia, near Smithfield, I reverently inspected St. Luke's, the "Old Brick Church," said to have been built under supervision of a member of the Bridger family, where many Bridger descendants worshipped, and where, in front of the chancel, is buried the remains of Joseph Bridger.

In North Carolina, I walked along sandy trails in Chowan County where Joseph Thomas lived for a time during his migration from Nansemond County, Virginia, to Bertie County, North Carolina, where he lived and died. In the latter county, I roamed along both sides of the brackish waters of the Cashie River where, with a certain feeling of awe, I walked where our Thomas ancestors had walked over a century and a half ago. In this area, too, lived the Barnes and Standley families to whom we also have ancestral roots. Farther north I walked along the Meherrin River where once lived William Bridger. It was he who, following a precedent set by his father, Joseph Bridger, Jr., changed the spelling of the family name to Bridgers, beginning a progression that in time became Bridges, the way it is spelled in Kentucky today.

Descendants of William Bridgers moved eventually, to a site on Fishing Creek in Edgecombe County, and later, to Tyancoca Swamp in the same county, where lived our Kentucky ancestor, Drury Bridgers, and his father William. This area, called simply Cokey Swamp today, is only a few miles from the present day city of Rocky Mount. There too lived the Cohoon (later spelled Calhoun) and Flowers families, also a branch of our ancestral chart. Thanks to a Bridgers descendant in Tarboro, N. C., who also traces his ancestry back to Joseph Bridger, I was able to walk where Drury and his family walked in the late 1700's before they left North Carolina for Kentucky.

Then, to make it complete, I traveled over practically every mile of the way from Cashie River, Fishing Creek and Cokey Swamp Country in North Carolina, to Donaldson and Beechy Fork creeks in Kentucky, in order to look, marvel and wonder how James Thomas and Drury Bridges and their families ever made it to Kentucky at all.

In my research I found that the trails of our Thomas and Bridges lines crossed many times in Virginia and North Carolina. Both families were active in the affairs of the Old Brick Church near Smithfield, and graves of Thomas and Bridger members can be found in the adjacent cemetery. William Bridgers and Joseph Thomas lived not very far apart in Bertie County, but amazingly enough, I found no indication that the two ever knew each other.

John Thomas, emigrant, came to Virginia in 1610; Joseph Bridger came more than 40 years later. The Thomas line originated in Wales; the Bridger line came from England. The ancestry of both families reaches back into the dim recesses of British history, traced with reasonable accuracy beyond the mid 1500's.

There are many questions yet to be answered about the life and times of the Thomas and Bridges families prior to their arrival in Kentucky. Research is complicated by the fact that other Thomas lines soon followed ours to America. One came to Plymouth, Massachusetts in the 1620's, and descendants scattered throughout New England. Others came to Virginia and the Carolinas. A Bridges line settled in Virginia several years before Joseph Bridger came, and those descendants also migrated to North Carolina.

It is only fitting at this point to give credit to those who helped and otherwise encouraged me in the compilation of this material. Without their substantial assistance, it would not be nearly as complete.

My thanks go especially to Captain Henry C. Bridgers, Jr., Tarboro, N. C., and to Miss Mary Hamilton, Bessemer, Ala., for taking time to check much of this manuscript, as well as for supplying many important bits of information; Mrs. Adam Koch, Akron, Ohio; Mrs. Herbert Sumner, Mrs. John Hughes, Mrs. John Alex Thomas, Mrs. Eugene Sumner, Mrs. Rumsey Alexander, all of Cadiz, Ky., Olen Ray Thomas, Mayfield, Ky., Thomas Jones, Edwardsville, Ill.; H. M. Thomas, Grundy, Va., Robert M. Thomas, Salem, Va., Allison W. Thomas, Louisville, Ky., all Thomas and/or Bridges descendants of varying degrees; my sister, Mrs. Ruby T. Hinson, LaVerne, California, upon whose memory, family picture collection and scrapbook I have heavily relied; John S. Thomas, Cadiz Ky., grandson of Perry Thomas, whose family records and relics are a veritable Thomas museum; Hugh Johnston, Wilson, N. C., genealogist and Thomas family descendant; Joseph Inman, Richmond, Va., genealogist and president, The Jamestowne Society; Mrs. M. B. Gilliam, Windsor, N. C., attorney and authority on land titles; and Miss Evelyn Dale, assistant curator, The Filson Club, Louisville, Ky., who located the first reference book to start me on the right track.

For technical assistance in production of this book, I wish to thank Don E. MacGregor, William C. Tayse, C. Norman Beasley, William R. Heffren and M. J. RoBards, all of Louisville, Ky.

Most of all, I want to thank my wife, Thelma, for her patience, understanding and encouragement during the past four years.

—Edison H. Thomas  
Louisville, Ky.

## COATS OF ARMS

The Thomas and Bridger Coats of Arms, reproduced in this book have been carefully researched. The Thomas Arms is that of the Thomas family of Wales. Numerous other branches of the Thomas family have Coat of Arms resembling it. This is the most widely used of all Thomas Coats of Arms, and "The Thomas Book," published in New York in 1896, records it as the Arms of Sir Rhys ap Thomas, Knight of the Garter. Many Thomases of America descended from him as did numerous allied lines. This Arms has been used for generations by other American branches of the Thomas family including descendants of the Thomas families of Virginia, North Carolina and Kentucky.

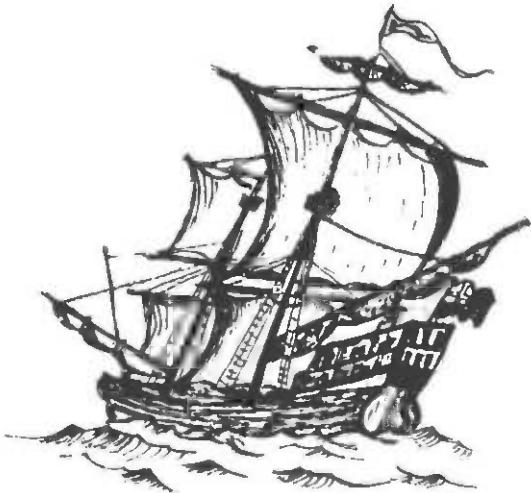
The Bridger Coat of Arms is also very old and was brought to America by Joseph Bridger when he came in 1653. It was used by the family in Gloucester, England. Just what the crabs represent, or, for that matter, what the crows represent on the Thomas Arms, is not known. Crests of both Arms are available, however the Thomas crest varies. Some have the bird standing on a small section of tree branch with wings outspread. Other do not include the branch. The Bridger crest also includes a ducal coronet – gold crown with a crab above.

These Arms are described in Burke's General Armory, Burke's Landed Gentry, Burke's Peerage and Baronetage, and other reliable works on heraldry, in some cases accompanied by illustrations and pedigrees.



SECRET ET HARDI

Thomas



## CHAPTER V

The James Thomas family line in Trigg County, Kentucky descends from John Thomas, who, from all available records was the first Thomas to arrive in America. He landed at Jamestown, Virginia, on May 24, 1610.<sup>1</sup>

Jamestown was the first permanent English settlement in America, its settlers having arrived there on May 13, 1607 in three small ships, in all, 144 passengers. They landed on the following day, went ashore and set to work to build a fort.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the first permanent English settlement was begun on the shores of the James River in Virginia about 20 years after Sir Walter Raleigh's ill-fated attempts to establish a colony on Roanoke Island and 13 years before the Pilgrims made their historic landing at Plymouth Rock.

John Thomas left England in 1609 aboard the ship Sea Venture. He was one of nine men aboard whose fare had been paid by Sergeant William Sharpe.<sup>3</sup> In addition to John Thomas, the others were: Richard Vase, Lewis Jones, Leon Laughton, Willi. Cooke, Peter Whadsey, Edward Jones, Jon. Ward and Wm. Wooley. The group had boarded the Sea Venture either at Woolwick, a port area on the outskirts of London where the ship began its journey, or they joined the immigrants at Plymouth, England. There is no documentary proof as to just which place John Thomas boarded the ship. In any event, the Sea Venture sailed from Plymouth, England, June 2, 1609, bound for Virginia. It was the flagship of a fleet of seven vessels and two pinnaces. Admiral of the Fleet was Captain Christopher Newport

**GENEALOGICAL DEPARTMENT**  
**CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF**  
**LATTER-DAY SAINTS**

and aboard the Sea Venture were Sir Thomas Gates and Sir George Somers, the latter of whom had joined the Sea Venture during its stop at Plymouth.

The fleet of ships, called the Third Supply by the Virginia Company, sailed in what today would be called a convoy. On July 24, 1609, in the latitude of 27 degrees (no longitude given) about eight days out of Virginia, the fleet was engulfed in a terrific storm. Today storms of such proportions are called hurricanes, named for women, and they are patiently charted by man's most modern methods. In 1609 however, there was no warning, thus, when the storm struck, the fleet of small ships was suddenly tossed and scattered about by the wind and waves. Passengers cringed in terror.

William Strachey, secretary-elect of the new Virginia colony, who later wrote a most compelling account of the journey, said: "A dreadful storme and hideous began to blow from out of the north-east, which swelling, and roaring as it were by fits, some hours with more violence than others, at length did bete all light from heaven, which like an hell of darkenesse turned blacke upon us, so much the more fuller of horror . . ."<sup>4</sup>

Mr. Strachey, said to have been a friend of William Shakespeare, apparently sent a copy of his account back to England which the playwright must have read in time. Most students of Shakespeare agree that his play, "The Tempest," is based upon the harrowing experiences of those aboard the Sea Venture, and much of the dialogue in the play parallels that contained in Mr. Strachey's account.<sup>5</sup>

As the violent storm continued to toss the fleet about, those aboard the Sea Venture lost sight of the other ships. Soon it was only the Sea Venture against the elements. Timbers of the tiny vessel twisted and groaned. Numerous leaks sprung up in the hold and of the 150 people aboard, practically everyone set to work throwing overboard as much of their possessions as they could spare. Many of the settlers were taking with them all their worldly goods and deciding which of their belongings to throw overboard was not an easy task.

Strachey's account continues: "...Waters like whole rivers did flood in the ayre (air). The glut of water was no sooner a little emptied and qualified, but instantly the winds (as having gotten their mouths now free, and at liberty) spake more loud and grew more tumultuous and malignant."

Soon the ship began to lose its caulking between the plank joints and everyone who was able, took a candle and went below to look for leaks. Pumps were manned night and day, but they eventually became choked with bread and other items of food and personal property that had been scattered due to flooding of the ship. With

the pumps failing, bucket brigades were organized then the bailing was resumed by hand. Water continued to rise in the hold however, and in some areas it was waist deep, but the crews continued to fight to save the ship and their lives.

Three days later, after superhuman struggles to keep the ship afloat, Sir George Somers, who was standing watch on deck, spied land. The ship was headed directly into it, but as the sails and controls had been lost in the storm, all they could do was to stand helplessly by and let the vessel land where it would.

The rapidly dying wind swept the Sea Venture, its crew and passengers onward toward the shore. Accordingly to Strachey, the ship was jammed "...between two rockes, where she was fast lodged and locked." The men, though bone tired from days and nights of struggle against the storm, hove to the "boate and skiffe" to take the women and children to the shore about three quarters of a mile away. They also were able to save most of their provisions, all the tackling of the ship and much of the iron.

After all had been landed safely ashore, those in charge of the ship began to take stock of their whereabouts. It was discovered that they had landed on the Isles of Bermuda, commonly called the Devils Islands. These islands had been avoided for many years by sailors because of the many superstitions about them.

With these superstitions in mind, the crew and passengers began a fearful exploration of the immediate area where they landed. They knew nothing of the remainder of the Third Supply fleet, and many hoped they would find some of those ships at least, possibly beached somewhere along the nearby coast. They found nothing however, but there was little time for them to mourn the loss of the other ships. Their own lives were now of first concern.

If there was a passenger list on the Sea Venture it can be presumed lost in the storm. Possibly such a list is in the records of the Virginia Company somewhere in England, but exploratory searches have not located one. Thus, names of only about half of those 150 people aboard the Sea Venture are known. Among them were: Sir Thomas Gates, Captain Christopher Newport, Admiral Sir George Somers; John Rolfe and wife (Mrs. Rolfe gave birth to a baby daughter on the island and named her Bermuda. It died there. John Rolfe later was to marry the Indian princess, Pocohontas); William Strachey, who wrote the only known eye-witness account of the storm; William Sharpe, who had paid the fare of John Thomas, and less than 50 others whose names are not known.<sup>6</sup>

Superstition or not, the party could not have purposely been marooned on a better island. Food was in abundance, both fish and fowl, and the climate was ideal. There were no human inhabitants. True to the pioneering spirit of the immigrants however, the one

thought of those who were shipwrecked was to continue their journey to Virginia as soon as possible. With this thought uppermost in their minds, they set to work to build two boats which could be used to accommodate the entire party the remainder of the way. Construction of the two vessels was begun. Remains of the Sea Venture and timbers hewed from sturdy cedar trees that grew in profusion on the islands, were used as building materials. The work however, was frequently brought to standstill in order to settle petty differences among the immigrants. By the end of their stay on Bermuda, one man had committed murder; four, including the infant daughter of the John Rolfes, had died from other causes; there was one marriage; one man had deserted and was left behind; eight men were lost at sea in a small boat en route to Virginia for help, and one was added to the party — a baby boy born to Mr. and Mrs. Edward Eason,<sup>7</sup> descendants of whom over 100 years later would settle in the same Cashie River area of Bertie County, North Carolina, as would the descendants of John Thomas.

By April 1610, the two small boats, called pinnaces, were completed. The larger one was 40 feet long with a 19 foot beam and a rake of 14 feet. She weighed as best as could be estimated, about 80 tons. It was named Deliverance. The other boat was 29 feet long and 15 1/2 feet at the beam, weighed about 30 tons and drew six feet of water. It was called Patience. Material — beams, timbers and other

**REPLICA of the Deliverance is on display today at Olde Towne of St. George, Bermuda. The original, built in 1609-1610 by survivors of the shipwrecked Sea Venture, took them to Virginia. The trip required 10 days.**

*Picture courtesy Mrs. Erwin Williams.*





### WHERE THEY CAME FROM

MAP shows places of origin of ancestors of the Thomas and Bridges families of Trigg County, Ky. The Thomas line apparently originated in Carmarthen, Wales. In 1609, John Thomas, the emigrant, traveled either to London or to Plymouth to board ship for Virginia. The Bridger line originated at Godalming in Surrey and Slimbridge in Gloucestershire. Joseph Bridger sailed for Virginia about 1653, probably boarding his ship at Gloucester. Dotted lines indicate route of ships to the Colonies.



**JAMESTOWN FORT**, in Virginia. This replica shows fort as it looked in 1607 when the original was built by the first settlers. John Thomas, ancestor of the Kentucky line, arrived at Jamestown in 1610 and later settled in the nearby area of York County.

vital parts — from the Sea Venture served the purpose well. However, most of the Sea Venture was intact and it still remained jammed between the two rocks where it had been driven by the hurricane.

By May 1610 everything was in readiness for the continuation of the journey to Virginia. Quoting again from William Strachey's account: "...We sailed on May 10 (1610) for Virginia. The Deliverance struck (a reef) going out, but mercifully was not damaged. On the 20th at midnight we had a marvellous sweet smell from the shore which did a little glad us. We were near Cape Henry (Virginia). We reached Jamestown on the 24th..."

Scarcely had they dropped anchor and landed when most of those aboard began to wish they were back on Bermuda. The settlers at Jamestown had just experienced what they called the "Starving Time." A population of some 500 people had shrunk to about 60 due to disease, sickness, Indian raids and malnutrition. It had destroyed morale and reduced the population to little more than selfish scavengers who stalked the area in search of any kind of food.

Upon arrival too, those who had been aboard the Sea Venture discovered that all but one small ship of their original fleet of nine, except of course, their own, had arrived safely after the storm, and had long since returned to England.

After distributing what little provisions they had, Sir Thomas Gates felt that it was useless to attempt to remain at Jamestown. He packed everyone aboard the remaining ships and on June 7, 1610, left the stricken city and started down the James River toward the ocean

with the thought of heading for an English settlement on Newfoundland. En route down the river the group met Lord De la Warr and a fleet of ships bringing supplies along with 150 new settlers. Jamestown was saved.

John Thomas and the eight others whose fare had been paid by William Sharpe, apparently remained with Mr. Sharpe for a time to help him stake out his claim for land. This amounted to 50 acres for each of the headrights of those whose passage Sharpe had paid, a total of 450 acres plus 50 acres for himself — 500 acres in all. These headrights were used a number of times later, including at least twice by William Sharpe's widow, Elizabeth, who later married a Packer (Parker), to patent land in Henrico County, Virginia in 1636<sup>8</sup> and again in 1673.

There are several references to John Thomas in various land patents but I have not found a land patent issued directly to him earlier than 1649. Such records could well have been lost as one patent issued October 23, 1637 mentions property "upon the Baye S. into the woods & W. upon land of John Thomas." In view of this, apparently John Thomas was living on his own land at that time. In February 1638 he was living near Henry Marshall on the York River, apparently on adjoining property. Later records indicate that John's grandson married a granddaughter of Henry Marshall.

#### FOOTNOTES, CHAPTER V

1. "Old Albemarle," by Worth S. Ray, page 623.
2. "Jamestown, Virginia, The Townsite and Its Story," by Charles E. Hatch, Jr., National Park Service, 1957; page 13.
3. "Abstracts of Virginia Land Patents and Grants, 1623-1666," by Nell Marlan Nugent, page 45.
4. "A Voyage to Virginia in 1609," edited by Louis B. Wright, page 8.
5. *Ibid.* Intro. ix.
6. *Bermuda Historical Quarterly*, Hamilton Bermuda, "Cast Away on Bermuda," by W. E. S. Zull, Summer 1959 Issue, pages 49-67.
7. *Ibid.* Summer 1963 Issue, page 56.
8. Nugent, Pages 45, 65.

NOTE — Other accounts of the Sea Venture: "Memories of the Discovery and Early Settlement of the Bermudas or Somers Islands, 1515-1685," by Major General J. H. Lefroy, 1877. "The Adventurers of Bermuda," by Henry Wilkinson, Oxford University Press, London, 1933.

"Sea Venture," fictionalized version, by Wililoughby Patton, Longman's Green & Co., N. Y. 1959.

NOTE 2 — In response to an inquiry in February 1969 to the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C., pertaining to the finding of the wreck of the Sea Venture, M. L. Peterson, chairman, Department of Armed Forces History, wrote: "...(Wreck of) the Sea Venture was discovered by a young American in Bermuda in 1958. I have dived on the wreck and I am convinced the identification is correct. The Bermuda government has not yet made plans to salvage the ship and preserve it but the site has been declared off limits to divers and is protected."



## CHAPTER VI

After a safe arrival in Virginia following his experience during the wreck of the Sea Venture, apparently John Thomas set to work in earnest in order to redeem his own headright and, if possible, acquire others so he could patent land for himself. On October 7, 1649 he was granted a land patent by Sir William Berkeley, the governor of Virginia. The patent contained 350 acres of land on Queens Creek in York County, Virginia.<sup>1</sup>

The patent reads, with original spelling:

"To all ct. whereas ct. now know yee that I, the said Sir William Berkeley doo with the consent of the council of State — accordingly give and grant unto John Thomas, three hundred and fifty acres of land lyeing on the north side of Queens Creeke and in the County of Yorke bounded vizi: north by west upon the land of Joseph Croshaw south by east upon Queens Creeke, west by south upon a little creek and swamp leading to the Indian cabin and east by north upon the land of M. Jernew, three hundred acres of the said land being granted formerly unto John Broach and by the said Broach assigned to Anthony Barckurst, and purchased of the said Barckurst by the said John Thomas and fifty acres the residue being due unto ye sd John Thomas by and for the transportation of one person into the Colony whose name is in records mentioned under this patent to have and to hold ct. to behold ct. yielding ct which payment to be made seven years after ye first ec grant or sealing of the lawe ct. Dated ye 7th 8ber (October) 1649. Dorothy wife."<sup>2</sup>

John Thomas and his wife Dorothy settled on his 350 acres of land which was located near what is now the city of Williamsburg,



QUEENS CREEK, Virginia, near Williamsburg, where, in an area beyond the trees to the right, John Thomas patented land in 1649. Below, reproduction of original patent of John Thomas for 350 acres of land on Queens Creek for himself and his wife Dorothy. Copy of land patent is from Virginia State Archives.

To all & whom it shall concern know ye that I the R. d. William Berkeley doe will & command the Councille of Rale  
According to give and grant unto John Thomas three  
hundred and fifty acres of Land lying on the North side  
of Queens Creek and in the County of York bounded  
on the North by west upon the land of Joseph Coskaw South  
by East upon Queens Creek west by South upon a Little Creek  
and Swamp leading to the Indian Cabin and east by  
North upon the Land of and James three hundred acres  
the said Land being granted formerly unto John Brook  
and by the said Brook assigned to Anthony Barfurst  
and purchased of the said Barfurst by the said John  
Thomas and fifty acres the payment being due unto y<sup>r</sup> d<sup>r</sup>  
John Thomas by and for the transportation of our men  
into the Colonie w<sup>ch</sup> No man is in regard therof consider  
this patent to have and to hold at. to be held & yielding at  
which payment is to be made seven years after of first  
Ex grant for Sealing of the same at Rale, the 27<sup>th</sup> day of 1649  
Dorothy wife

Virginia. Today it is a part of a military reservation and not accessible to the public. However, the general area can be plainly seen from a concrete bridge that carries State Road No. 132 across Queens Creek. The area lies on the east or right side of the creek as one looks upstream.<sup>3</sup>

Understandably, we know very few vital statistics about John Thomas. He was born about 1585, certainly not later than 1590, probably in Carmarthenshire, Wales. He died before 1653 in York County, Virginia, having lived approximately four years on the land he had patented on Queens Creek. He and his wife Dorothy had five sons all of whom settled in the area around John's original land patent.<sup>4</sup> Available records do not disclose whether John and Dorothy Thomas were married in Wales or England before they came to Virginia, whether they were married in Virginia, or whether perhaps Dorothy came later with the children. The time element involved leaves it open for question in either instance.

Sons of John and Dorothy Thomas were:

A. *John Jr.*: (it is through John Jr., the Trigg County Thomas line descends); B. Phillip, m. Sarah McKennie; C. Richard; D. William. (one source indicates another son, Marke.) These sons each grew up and settled in the area on Queens Creek but later migrated to Isle of Wight and Nansemond counties.<sup>5</sup> All of the sons married and raised families.

A. John Jr., married, wife's name not recorded. They had six children:

1. *Richard*, born about 1629, married Elizabeth Marshall about 1647. The Trigg County line descends through Richard.
2. William, married twice. His first wife's name was Christian, and his second wife was Priscilla Jordan. He died Feb. 17, 1719.
3. John, Esq., married, had a son John Jr., who married Hannah Dawson.
4. Elizabeth, married John Sanders.
5. Sarah, married Jonathan Robinson in 1681.
6. Katherine, married Thomas Oglethorpe who died 1687. They had three children — Katherine, Sarah and Margaret.

B. Phillip, who probably married Sarah McKennie, had eight children: Evan, Joseph, Michael, Robert, John, Phillip, Jr., Mourning and Priscilla.

C. Richard, had three children: Richard Jr., John and William.

D. William, had eight children: William Jr., married Elizabeth Hill, daughter of Major Nicholas and Sylvester (Bennett) Hill; Humphrey; Simon; Gabriel; John; Priscilla, who married Humphrey Marshall; Rebecca, who married William Harrison, and Elizabeth, who married Thomas Hill.

While John and Dorothy Thomas' sons were growing up, life moved leisurely along at the Jamestown settlement. The people dealt with the Indians, made friends with Chief Powhatan, and found the tribes around them to be rather friendly but unpredictable. It was while on a trading expedition along the Potomac River that Captain Samuel Argall captured Powhatan's daughter, Pocahontas, and brought her back to Jamestown as a prisoner. Pocahontas was no stranger to the people at Jamestown as she had visited there many times. Her father refused to pay the ransom price for her release, so she was detained at Jamestown. Later she decided that she liked the English and expressed a desire to live with them instead of returning to her native village.<sup>6</sup>

She was instructed in the religious faith and eventually baptized. On April 5, 1614 some 200 years before John Thomas's descendants would organize a church on Donaldson Creek in Christian County, Ky., Pocahontas and John Rolfe were married in the Jamestown church by Rev. Alexander Whittaker. The event was of such widespread interest that just about everyone in the little colony turned out for it, including, in all probability, John and Dorothy Thomas.

Tobacco soon became the principal crop in the Jamestown settlement and the immigrants began to expand their plantations to take care of this new and strange plant they could sell for cash. Clearing land on the banks of Queens Creek, John Thomas began raising tobacco, and perfected a system that has been handed down through his descendants to those now living in Trigg County, Kentucky.

By 1630 when Sir John Harvey returned to Jamestown as Royal governor, the third generation of Thomases was being born in Virginia.

By 1647, just two years before his great grandfather John Thomas patented his own land on the York River, Richard Thomas, son of John Jr., married Elizabeth Marshall, daughter of Humphrey Marshall. This is evident from his own will dated April 8, 1687, and the will of his father-in-law, Humphrey Marshall in 1711, in which Marshall leaves a bequest to his daughter Elizabeth and to her son John Thomas.<sup>7</sup> Humphrey Marshall owned property in York County adjoining John Thomas, Jr., and in the same general area where lived John Thomas, Sr., the original emigrant.

The children of Richard Thomas (son of John Thomas, Jr., grandson of John Thomas of Wales) and Elizabeth (Marshall) Thomas, were:

1. *John*, born about 1648; married twice. The Trigg County line descends through John.

2. Phoebe, married John Winborn.
3. Sarah, likely died young.
4. Elizabeth, never married.

John Thomas, the only son of Richard and Elizabeth (Marshall) Thomas, was about 28 years of age during the time of Bacon's Rebellion (1676). I found nothing to indicate whether or not he participated in that Rebellion, although Joseph Bridger, Jr., ancestor of Drury Bridges did. (See Chap. 14). However, as the result of it, the original settlement at Jamestown was burned in the summer of 1676. John lived to see the city rebuilt however, but one can imagine the shock that the entire community felt when the state house was burned October 31, 1698, taking with it in the flames, the few remaining records of the early settlement.

After that, the seat of government was moved to Middle Plantation (later named Williamsburg) and before many years the first permanent English settlement in America was only a memory. It had lasted approximately 90 years.

John Thomas was married twice. First time, prior to Bacon's Rebellion, in 1673, was to Susannah (Portis) Frizzell, daughter of John Portis, who died April 7, 1703. John Thomas' second wife was Mary Lawrence, daughter of John Lawrence, ancestor of the Lawrence family line that later settled in Trigg County, Ky.<sup>8</sup>

John Thomas had the following children, probably by his first wife:

1. John Jr., married Elizabeth Kearney.
2. Richard, married daughter of Michael Rogers; their children were: John, Mary, Elizabeth and Richard.
3. William, married Martha Robinson.
4. Joseph, born about 1680; married (1) Elizabeth \_\_\_\_ ; (2) Alice Spivey. The Trigg County line descends through Joseph and his second wife.
5. Phillip, married Ann \_\_\_\_ .
6. Barnaby, married Sarah Dawson; they had a son Elisha. He died Oct. 5, 1735, she died that same year.
7. Elizabeth, married (1) John Boddie; (2) John Dawson, son of Henry and Martha (Martin) Dawson.

John Thomas and his family moved to Nansemond County, Virginia, probably from Isle of Wight, as both he and John Jr., were on the Quit Rent rolls for Nansemond County in 1704.<sup>9</sup>

Reviewing at this point, the Thomas line, from the arrival of John Thomas at Jamestown, Virginia in 1610, to Joseph Thomas, who settled in Bertie County, North Carolina in 1729, we find:

*John Thomas* of Wales, and wife Dorothy, had at least four sons, one of whom was John Jr.

*John Thomas, Jr.*, married, wife's name not known. They had six

children, three sons, including Richard, and three daughters.

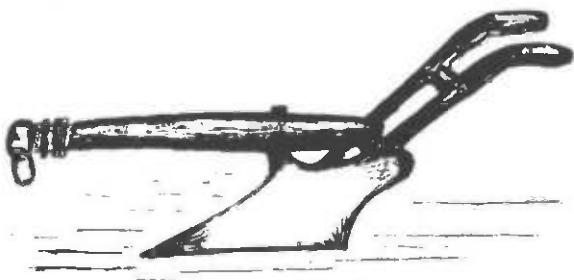
*Richard Thomas* married Elizabeth Marshall. They had four children, one son, John, and three daughters.

*John Thomas* was married twice. His first wife was Susannah (Portis) Frizzell; his second was Mary Lawrence. He was the father of seven children, probably by his first wife. His family included six sons, one of whom was Joseph, and one daughter.

*Joseph Thomas* moved from Nansemond County, Virginia and settled in Bertie County, North Carolina in 1729.<sup>10</sup>

#### FOOTNOTES, CHAPTER VI

1. Nugent, page 185.
2. Virginia Land Patents, Book 2, page 188.
3. Excerpt, letter from Joseph F. Inman, genealogist, Richmond, Va.: "...on map of York County, Va., I have indicated location of the land patented by John Thomas in 1649. The location is a matter of judgement to some extent since 'a creek that leads to the Indian cabin' is indefinite. By checking the compass and considering that no other creek without a name shows on the map, I believe the site marked is the right one. . ."
4. Nugent, Pages: 45, 73, 128, 144, 171, 185, 186, 220, 267.
5. Fleet's Abstracts, Vols. 24-25.
6. "Jamestown and Its Story," page 17.
7. Isle of Wight County, Va., deed book 2, page 533. According to the book, "Bible Records of Early Edgecombe, N. C.," by Ruth Smith Williams and Margarete Glenn Griffen, Dixie Letter Service, Rocky Mount, N.C., 1958, John Thomas instead of Richard was the husband of Elizabeth Marshall.
8. "Thomas & Bridges History, 1968," by Gilbert N. Bridges, Uniontown, Ky., page 428, et seq.
9. Virginia Historical Magazine, 1921, Vol. 29, page 402. The Quilt Rent roll, as explained in "The Thomas Book," page 587 et seq, method of acquiring land in Colonial Virginia was: "by one of the ordinances adopted by the Virginia Company which was continued in force by the Crown, after the revocation of the charter every person removing to Virginia at his own expense with the intention to settle and remain there was entitled to 50 acres of land. The same rule extended also to every member of his family and a husband was entitled to the same number of acres for his wife and children." All of these rights were called "headrights" and were assignable. A patent, or land so obtained, gave the grantee a fee simple estate in the land conveyed upon condition of paying an annual "quilt rent" of one shilling for every 50 acres and of planting and seeding thereon within three years from the date of the grant.
10. The family charts included in this chapter, with corrections added, are based on information found in the book, "Old Albemarle and Its Absentee Landlords," by Worth S. Ray, and Isle of Wight County, Va., records.



## CHAPTER VII

Very few records exist pertaining to the early days of Nansemond County, Virginia, thus more than one researcher has hit a blank attempting to trace his family line through that particular county. The Thomas line is no exception.

The first disaster was in 1734 when the house of Christopher Jackson, the county clerk "was burned where the records of said county were kept."<sup>1</sup> Another fire in 1866 destroyed most of those from 1734 to that date, thus data on John Thomas or his son Joseph — deeds, wills, marriage bonds — are not available.

Fragments of records have been found in some church books and a few items have turned up in Virginia Company records in England,<sup>2</sup> but scarcely enough for use as documentary proof.

Joseph Thomas first patented land in the Upper Parish of Nansemond County on January 16, 1714.<sup>3</sup> Patentees in addition to Joseph Thomas, were his wife Elizabeth, and Michael Thomas and his wife.<sup>4</sup>

After the death of his first wife, Elizabeth, Joseph Thomas married Alice Spivey. She was the daughter of either George, James or Thomas Spivey, the families of whom lived in the general area of where Joseph Thomas lived. These three Spiveys were on the Quit Rent roll of Nansemond County in 1704.<sup>5</sup> Later some of the Spivey families moved into Chowan and Bertie counties, North Carolina, just south of the state line and in the same area as did the Joseph Thomas family.

About 1727, possibly earlier, Joseph Thomas left Nansemond County, Virginia, and moved south to Chowan County, North Carolina, a distance of some 50 miles. On March 23, 1729, Joseph Thomas purchased 200 acres of land on the south side of the Kesai (Cashie) Swamp in Bertie County, North Carolina, from Samuel Bass, for which he paid 36 pounds current money. The property was adjoining that of William Williams.<sup>6</sup>

On that same date it was recorded<sup>7</sup> in adjoining Chowan County,

that Joseph Thomas sold to Samuel Bass, 6,000 pounds of tobacco and 175 acres of land on the south side of Oropeak Swamp, plus 14 acres on nearby Sand Hill Swamp, that Joseph had purchased from Elizabeth Parker and her son John. Anderson Sugg and John Perry witnessed both transactions.

From these two land deals it may be safely assumed that Joseph Thomas had been in Chowan County for at least a year in order to produce his tobacco crop, cure and prepare it for market.

With these land transfers, Joseph Thomas moved from Chowan County, North Carolina, to the property he had purchased on the south side of the Cashie Swamp in Bertie County, where he lived for the remainder of his life.

Joseph Thomas and Alice (Spivey) Thomas had eight children probably all of whom were born in Virginia. They were:

1. Joseph Jr., wife's name was Ann. He died Bertie County 1758.
2. Michael, married twice. First wife's name unknown; second wife was Elizabeth Station, married 1792. Died in Virginia, 1802.
3. Luke, never married. Died in July, 1751, Edgecombe County, N.C.
4. *James I*, born about 1714. Married Sarah Barnes. Died Bertie County, N. C. The Trigg County line descends through him.
5. Jacob, moved to Edgecombe County, N. C. Died there.
6. Jonas, no data.
7. Charity, no data.
8. Mary, no data.

The area south of the Cashie (pronounced Cash-i) Swamp (now called Cashie River) where Joseph Thomas settled, lies between that stream and the Roanoke River. The site is southeast of Windsor, seat of Bertie County. In that area and in a sector on the north side of the Cashie, also lived the Barnes, Spivey, Standley, Pugh, Sholar, Eason and other families prominent in early Bertie County history. All except the Pugh and Eason families intermarried with the Thomas family. Some of these names are familiar today in Tennessee and Kentucky where descendants of these families migrated after the Revolutionary War.

Two trails led from Windsor to that area along the Cashie, one south of the river and one north of it. Today two paved roads lead along the site of the same trails. In those days however, most travel to the county seat was done by boat along the Cashie.

Joseph Thomas' original plantation consisted of 200 acres of land he had purchased from Samuel Bass. Six years later, May 12, 1735, he paid 92 pounds, 2 shillings continental money for an additional 640 acres of land on the north side of the Roanoke River adjoining property of John Blount, Thomas Busby and Richard Melton.<sup>8</sup> This

was purchased from Henry Avery and his wife Mary. Likely this property was adjacent to property he already owned on the south side of the Cashie.

About six months after this transaction, Joseph Thomas, Sr., died. He had made his will December 10, 1735, and it was probated February 6, 1736.<sup>9</sup>

Copy of Joseph Thomas' will, hand written and recorded in ink in the Bertie County will book, reads, with original spelling unchanged:

"In the name of God, amen, I Joseph Tomas of North Carolina of Bertie pre sink being very sick and weake in body but of proper mind and memory thanks be to God for it knowing it is apernt for all men once to die doe make this my last will and testament. First I commend my body to the Earth to be buried in a christian like manor and my sole into the Hand Almighty God that gave it. I give and bequeath as follows:

Item — I give and bequeath to my well beloved wife Eales (Alice) Tomas my plantation that I now live upon at her own disposal during her life and like wise all my stock and moveables.

Item — I give and bequeath to my son Joseph Tomas the above mentioned plantation after my wife's de cease and the previldge of sum part of it in her lifetime provided he does not trouble her upon any ac (account).

Item — I give and bequeath to my son Mikell Tomas and my son Luke Tomas and my son James Tomas one tract of land six hundred and forty acirs lying upon to be equilyly devided amontgh the three and my son Mikell to have the first choice.

And likewise if my wife doeth by a negro woman with the estate and she bred for them, to be one to Jacob Tomas and one to Jonas Tomas and if the said negro woman has any more children besides these two to the next children corse and likewise after my wifes decase, of the two negroes I give my son Mikell his choice of the two him and his heirs and if Joseph Tomas or Luke Tomas or James Tomas should die, ether one of them without heirs, I dr that the land that I left them shall be to Jacob and Jonas and like wise after my wife decase all the estate to be equally devided amongst my children. One shilling I leave to my datter Charity Tomas and likewise I appoint my son Mikell Tomas and John Spivey to be my sole executors of this my last will and testament as witness Hand.

The image shows two handwritten signatures. The signature on the left is "Joseph" and the signature on the right is "F. Thomas". Both signatures are in cursive script.

Desember the 10th 1735  
Francis Hobson, Wm. Summers, jurats."

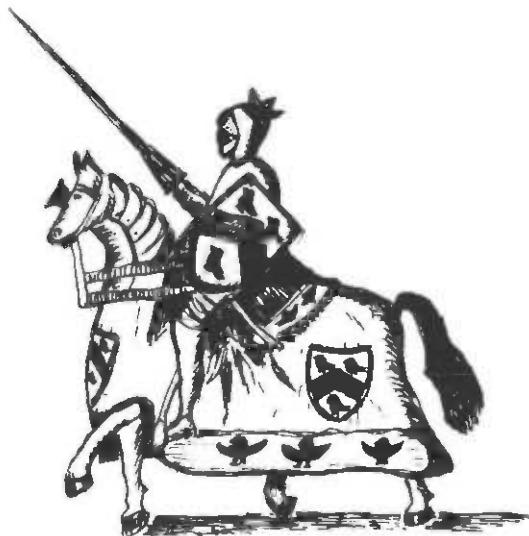
On the opposite side of the document was this inscription:

"Bertie Prect. so Febry Court, 1735. The written will of Joseph Thomas was proved by the oaths of Francis Hobson and William Summers. The two subscribing witnesses thereto and heir Michael Thomas one of the Extrs therein named took the oath of an extr by law required. Test John Wynns. Recorded February 6, 1736."

The John Spivey mentioned as executor was probably a brother of Joseph's wife Alice.

#### FOOTNOTES, CHAPTER VII

1. Virginia Historical Magazine, Vol. 56, page 130.
2. "English Duplicates of Lost Virginia Records," by Louis des Cognets, Jr., 1958, contains some information on Quit Rent rolls in Nansemond County.
3. Virginia Land patents, Book No. 10, page 140.
4. Worth S. Ray in his book "Old Albemarle and Its Absentee Landlords," page 631, indicates that the Michael Thomas and his wife listed as patentee with Joseph Thomas and his first wife, Elizabeth, was the son of William Thomas, Joseph's brother. He also mentions that "one writer says this Michael was the son of Joseph Thomas." Hugh Johnston, genealogist, Wilson, North Carolina, says he sees our Thomas line circumstantially proven to Michael Thomas who patented land in Nansemond County, Virginia, in 1686, and who was born obviously before 1665. He also says this Michael apparently is the father of Michael Thomas who died in 1730 in Chowan County, and of Joseph Thomas, ancestor of the Thomases of Trigg County. This differs, of course, from that arrived at in this book.
5. Virginia Historical Magazine, Vol. 29, page 402.
6. Bertie County deed book C, page 212.
7. Chowan County, N. C., deed book H, page 15.
8. Bertie County deed book D, page 191.
9. Bertie County will book G; State Archives, Raleigh, N. C., Wills, Vol. XXXI, page 53.



## CHAPTER XII

Even with an American family line that goes back nearly 370 years, one still wonders where the Thomas family originated. It came to America with John Thomas in 1610, but where did John Thomas come from?

It is recorded that he boarded the sailing ship, Sea Venture, in England, either at Wootwick, near London, the Port of Embarkation, or at Plymouth where the ship docked to take on the last of its 150 passengers and join the fleet of the "Third Supply" before sailing for Jamestown, Virginia, on June 2, 1609. But moving back into history from that date, we have no documented proof of John Thomas' lineage.

Preliminary research in England a few years ago<sup>1</sup> in an attempt to trace the Thomas line, indicated a Thomas connection in Radnorshire, Wales. This research, however, did not delve deeply enough into old records, and failed to reveal anything significant.

The most comprehensive documentation of the Thomas family line that I have been able to find is contained in a massive volume of several hundred pages called, appropriately enough, "The Thomas Book." by Lawrence Buckley Thomas, D.D.<sup>2</sup> Written in 1896, Dr. Thomas has traced the genealogy of Sir Rhys ap Thomas, Knight of the Garter, the various Thomas families that descended from him, and some of the allied families.

Needless to say, Dr. Thomas dug deep into the past to follow the

lineage of the family that eventually originated the surname Thomas. He picked up the line about the year 500 A.D., with a British Prince named Urien Rheged. The author pointed out that the links connecting him with Sir Rhys ap Thomas, the Welsh ancestor of the American Thomases "...may not all be of equal certainty, but such conclusion is the uniform judgement of all writers upon Welsh history and genealogy."<sup>3</sup>

The author goes into considerable detail about the genealogy of Urien Rheged, quoting as his source material, British and Welsh genealogical records, thus one need not question the authenticity of his research. Certainly it would take many months just to run down the footnotes he has used as references, even if one had access to these ancient Welsh and English records. Needless to say, the descendants of Urien Rheged, son of Cynvarch Oer (who was the son of Meirchion Gul), were active in Welsh history down through the centuries.<sup>4</sup>

One descendant of Urien Rheged, named Nicholas ap Philip, who lived in Caermarthenshire, Wales, was said to have possessed an ample fortune and appeared to have owned considerable property in Caermarthen town.<sup>5</sup> He was described as being "...of hasty spirit and violent temper, that often involved him in complications with his neighbors, from which it required the exercise of all his ingenuity to extricate himself..." Certainly those of us who know our Thomas line well, can see some of our own traits in this brief description.

The surname Thomas as it affects the Thomases of Trigg County, did not emerge until about the year 1400 A.D. However, it had been popular as a given name since the Battle of Hastings in 1066 A.D. The above-mentioned Nicholas ap Philip, had a son named Gruffyd ap Nicholas. He in turn has a son which he named Thomas ap Gruffyd, and who succeeded his father as head of the household and became the first of the family to bear the given name Thomas. He was described as a man with a character very different from his turbulent father, and one of the most accomplished gentleman of the age. It was said that his mild disposition and elegance of manners was rarely found in those cruel times of civil warfare. Certainly many of us today would like to think that we too inherited some of his good traits. He was very proficient however, as a participant in various tournaments so prevalent in those days when men gathered and demonstrated their prowess with various implements of war. Thomas' strong point was dueling with the sword. While resting after a duel in which he had slain his opponent, he was treacherously run through the body and killed by one of his victim's seconds. Thomas ap Gruffyd was buried in the Abbey of Bardsey, Caermarthenshire, Wales.

Thomas ap Gruffyd married Elizabeth, daughter of Sir John

Griffith. His second wife was another Elizabeth. He had nine children by his first wife, the fifth of whom was a son, Rhys or Rees, who eventually became his father's favorite and heir.

Rhys ap Thomas was born in 1449, over 40 years before Columbus discovered America. He was educated at the Court of Burgundy where he held a post of honor in the Duke's household. When his father was banished to Wales, however, he gave up that post and went with his father. An anonymous author of a biography of Rhys ap Thomas, who seemed to have become carried away by his enthusiasm, said of the family: ". . . they were the best born gentlemen in Wales, and furtherest spread in their branches of any family in England. . . . His home and hospitality were in every respect suitable to his immense wealth and displayed the magnificence of a prince rather than of a private gentleman." This trait, except the wealth, remains true among the Thomas descendants today, and the sharing of hearth and home of the Thomases of Trigg County, has been recalled by many from the pioneer days of 1806 to the present.

Rhys ap Thomas figured in a number of historic battles while playing his part against the broad backdrop of the history of Wales. One of these battles took place August 22, 1485 on the field of Bosworth near Leicester, and included as opponents, King Richard III and the Earl of Richmond.<sup>6</sup> According to tradition, Rhys ap Thomas slew King Richard just as the latter was closing in to slay the Earl of Richmond. The Earl was so grateful to Rhys ap Thomas for saving his life that he knighted him on the field after the victory. After further engagements over the next 20 years, during which time he displayed his courage and loyalty, Sir Rhys ap Thomas was, on April 22, 1505, elected a Knight Companion of the most noble Order of the Garter and occupied the 12th stall of the sovereign's side in St. George's Chapel, Windsor, where his Garter plate still remains.

During those years, Sir Rhys (sometimes spelled Ryce or Rice) held various official positions and appointments and had served as mayor of Caermarthen in 1488, 1494 and 1500.

He made his will February 2, 1524-25, and died that year at the age of 76, the will being probated July 5, 1525. He was buried in the Church of the Grey Friars at Caermarthen, but his body was afterwards removed to the eastern aisle of St. Peter's Church in the same town. His monument, a sculptured block, surmounted by recumbent figures of Sir Rhys and his last wife, Elizabeth Herbert, is said to be the most remarkable the church contains. This monument, restored in 1865, was moved to a position under the arch between the chancel and the consistory court, and contains the effigy of Sir Rhys and Elizabeth on a slab 10 feet long by three feet wide by two inches thick. He is shown lying in an attitude of prayer, clothed in mail and chain armor.

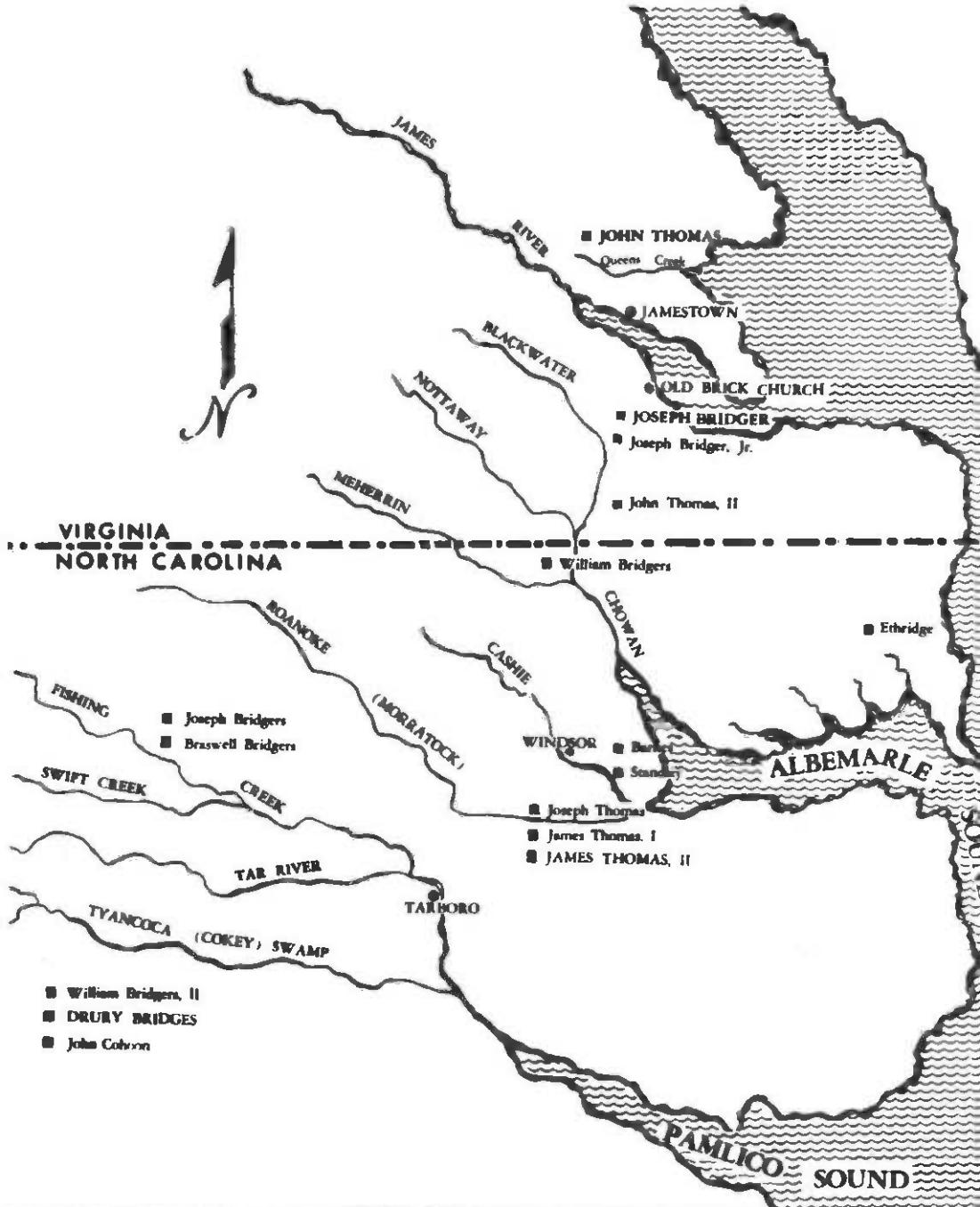
According to Dr. Thomas, Sir Rhys ap Thomas was married more than once, and it is difficult to state with absolute certainty his marriage relations. His first wife, Eva, already mentioned, bore him a son. She apparently died young and his second wife, Gwenllian, was the sister of an intimate friend, Robert ap Gwylim. She was mother of nine of his children and descendants of some of them migrated to America in the 1600's, among them, John Thomas, ancestor of the Thomases of Trigg County. Third wife was Jenet, daughter of Thomas Matthews. She too was mother of several of his children. His fourth and perhaps his last wife, was Elizabeth Herbert, sister of William Herbert, first Earl of Pembroke.

By the time Sir Rhys ap Thomas died in 1525, his descendants had already adopted Thomas as their surname and it had become quite prevalent in Wales. It is this reason among many others, that tracing in detail the line of John Thomas, who emigrated to Virginia in 1610 would be an enormous and time consuming task. It has been estimated that John Thomas was born about 1585 or 1590. Thus, in descending from Sir Rhys ap Thomas, he likely would have been either a grandson or a great grandson. The fact that Sir Rhys' Coat of Arms was brought to America by the very first Thomases certainly indicates a lineal connection.

Although the exact genealogical line may never be completely documented, the Thomases of Trigg County can look back with pride upon a line of descent that spans nearly 1500 years.

#### FOOTNOTES, CHAPTER XII

1. Correspondence between H. M. Thomas, Grundy, Va., and G. P. Willson, 64 Princess Way, London, England.
2. Published by Henry T. Thomas Co., New York City, 1896. Copy in Library of Congress, Washington, D. C., and Tennessee State Library, Nashville, Tenn.
3. References to Dr. Thomas' account used throughout this chapter can be found in the first 29 pages of his book.
4. To clarify the use of the Welsh word "ap" one should remember that it means "son of." If the reader will use it in this sense, he will be able to follow the line and see how the surname Thomas came into being. Even after surnames were accepted as permanent, the word "ap" continued to be used in many instances after some of the Thomas family came to Virginia. Eventually it was dropped by all U.S. descendants.
5. Caermarthen in Caermarthenshire is on the north side of the Bristol Channel in the southern part of Wales. Across that channel is Devonshire, England, in which is located Plymouth, the port of embarkation of the Sea Venture when it left for Virginia in 1609. Nearness of Caermarthen to Plymouth — only a few days journey by boat around Land's End — lends strength to the theory that John Thomas left from there instead of London.
6. The Earl of Richmond became Henry VII and succeeded Richard III as King of England. His accession to the throne marked the end of the War of Roses and the beginning of what is considered the modern period of English history. —The Columbia Encyclopedia, page 882.



### THOMAS AND BRIDGER COUNTRY

MAP showing area covered by York, Surry, Nansemond and Isle of Wight counties, Virginia, and Bertie, Northampton, Nash, Halifax and Edgecombe counties, North Carolina. Squares indicate where various Thomas and Bridges ancestors lived during nearly 200 years from 1610, when the first of the families arrived in America, to the time James Thomas and Drury Bridges left for Kentucky in the early 1800's. Many descendants still live in both states.

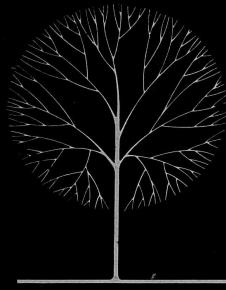


*Photo by C.N. Beasley*

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Edison H. Thomas, a native of Trigg County, Ky., was born and reared in the Donaldson community where his ancestors lived for four generations before him. He was educated at Upper Donaldson School, Cadiz High School, Western Kentucky State University and University of Louisville. He began his long journalistic and writing career on the Cadiz, Ky., **Record**, and for the past 25 years has been in press and public relations work. He is married, has four step-children and eight grandchildren.

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in 300 Years of American History  
by Robert E. Thomas



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The author was born in Sulphur Springs, Texas. He was graduated from Southern Methodist University and took a graduate degree at the University of Texas at Austin. He was married in 1936 to Hazel Taylor of Houston, Texas. Most of his career was with the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare - 21 years in Washington, D. C. and the remaining 13 years in Dallas, Texas. After retiring in 1971, he served four years on the faculty of the University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas. His children and grandchildren are listed in Appendix A.

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## FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I started work on this History in May, 1975, shortly after my retirement. As a retirement project, genealogy and family history have been for me an engrossing study, particularly so during the Bicentennial Year when there was so much emphasis on the history and heritage of our Nation.

The audience for this History are my grandchildren and those of my brothers, my sister, and all my first cousins on the Thomas side. Buck and Susan Thomas had 31 grandchildren and they in turn had 50 children and 98 grandchildren. It is my hope that this story of the Thomas ancestors in American history will reach the hands of most of the living descendants of Buck and Susan Thomas. In short, this History covers the life and times of the first ten generations of the Hopkins County Thomas line; it is written by a member of the 11th generation and for the following generations.

Readers should bear in mind that this is a history of one Thomas family, not of the whole Thomas family. I have made no great effort to trace the descendants of Reverend John Thomas, Jr., or of Reverend Jonathan who were the brothers of Major Theophilus Thomas; nor the descendants of Ichabod, Theophilus, Jr., Micajah, and John Rogers, who were the brothers of Benjamin; nor of Shadrach, Benjamin R., Wiley, Theophilus, and Jackson, who were the brothers of Iredell. Learning more about them and their sisters, and their descendants, remains a future project for the author.

Many family histories concentrate narrowly on family descent, on births, marriages, deaths, and names of children, with a limited number of family anecdotes and some mention of occupation. My interest centers more on the life of our Nation as seen through the activities of our Thomas ancestors. The most interesting part of my work has been the effort to understand how each ancestor fitted into the economic, political, religious, and social milieu of his time.

I hope the reader can get some understanding of how the Reverend John Thomas was affected by the revolutionary movements in the quarter century preceding the American Revolution, why Benjamin Thomas made the long migration to Texas and how he lived in those difficult days before the Texas War of Independence, and how Buck Thomas sorted out the claims on his

life and developed a life style that suited him. The conclusions I have drawn or suggested may not be completely accurate. The reader may have a different opinion, based on the evidence I have given. Or, better still, he may undertake further research, leading to more acceptable conclusions.

My aim has been to understand and portray the family, not to glorify it. Therefore, I have not omitted from the story those persons or events that might detract from the prestige or social standing of the family. The real strength of a family, as of an individual, comes from the crises of life. When an individual takes an unpopular stand, bucks a strongly entrenched power group, or runs foul of the law, he engenders a crisis that tests the fiber of a family. I have tried to show the family crises in this light.

Perhaps the story of Monroe Edwards may be an exception to this approach. I could have omitted his story, or certainly could have shortened it, especially since we are not directly descended from him. His story is included, however, because it is interesting and because a full account has been set forth by earlier historians. Although he was a scoundrel, he was also a patriot; although from a rough frontier society, he was polished and urbane and at home in the drawing rooms of aristocracy. And finally, because in frontier Texas, as in all societies, there occasionally were tragic figures whose downfall came from a lack of moral strength.

None of our immediate ancestors accumulated great wealth or attained high public office. However, the entire three-hundred-year Thomas history shines bright with close-knit family relationships, patriotism, high educational attainment, productivity and reasonable affluence in the economic sphere, community respect and leadership, and perhaps most of all, devotion to the Christian religion and the spread of the Protestant Church through the South from Virginia to Texas.

Without much help, I would never have written this History. During my early years, I did not know much about my family background. I knew that my grandfather had been born and reared in San Augustine, but I wasn't sure where on the east coast his father had come from. My own father died in 1918 when I was only eleven years old, so I did not remember any family stories that he may have told. I left home to attend college when only seventeen, and therefore spent little time with my grandparents or uncles.

My first detailed information on our family came from a cousin, Madeline (Thomas) Nolen of Wichita Falls, Texas. She

had been in touch with a distant cousin in North Carolina who had written earlier to her father because of his interest in genealogy and family history. My interest was heightened in April, 1970 when my wife and I made a week-end pilgrimage to San Augustine and Nacogdoches, Texas. There we met five second cousins, all descended from I.D. Thomas. They showed us around the town, pointing out some homes of the early settlers. We visited the Thomas Cemetery where so many of the early members of the family are buried, and then went to Nacogdoches to visit the Old Stone Fort from where my great-grandfather stole away his bride-to-be back in 1830, and to the Oak Grove Cemetery in Nacogdoches where one of the writer's great-grandfathers and other heroes of the Republic of Texas are buried.

In April, 1975, it was my good fortune to become acquainted with Hugh B. Johnston, Jr., of Wilson, North Carolina. Mr. Johnston is a direct descendant of Reverend Jonathan Thomas, a brother of Major Theophilus Thomas. His mother, who was Ruth (Thomas) Johnston, was a fifth cousin of the author. Mr. Johnston is a veritable gold mine of information on the Thomas family. He still owns—lives on and farms—a 90-acre tract that was originally bought by Reverend John Thomas in 1747. This land has been owned by the direct descendants of the original owner for 230 years.

Mr. Johnston lives a few miles from the center of the town of Wilson, North Carolina. His home is on State Highway 42, exactly  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles east of its intersection with Federal highway 301. Immediately in front of his house stands an historical marker, titled "Thomas Farms", which gives the beginning of the farm as March 6, 1741. Nearby is a state marker which indicates the original site of the Toisnot Baptist Church which was established in 1756. Mr. Johnston's nineteenth-century home is framed by tremendous oak trees which were planted by his grandfather about 85 years ago. Two hundred yards behind his house, in the shade of the pine trees, is the family cemetery. Attractive headstones mark the graves of Rev. John Thomas, Sr., and his son, Major Theophilus Thomas.

Hugh Johnston is an interesting and informed individual. In addition to being a tobacco farmer and a professor of Spanish at the local college, he is a well-known genealogist and the official historian for his County. He has many historical items such as the family Bible that belonged first to Rev. John Thomas and later to Major Theophilus Thomas. He has checked the official records of the family in the State archives of Virginia and North Carolina and in the Court Houses of the appropriate counties in both States.

All the basic genealogical material in my first two chapters, covering the first six generations of the family in Virginia and North Carolina, is based on the work of Mr. Johnston. His basic data on family composition and descent are verifiable from U.S. Census Reports and published volumes of genealogical data which are available in the genealogical section of libraries in Dallas and elsewhere. These works have been consulted and are listed in the bibliography. Beyond the genealogical data, my principal effort has been to record the involvement of our ancestors in the economic, social, and political movements of their day.

In tracing the family's history in the early Texas period, two valuable works were available, both having been published about forty years ago. They are Two Centuries in East Texas by Crockett and Four Families by Emily G. Roberts. Crocket's work provides a scholarly and accurate history of San Augustine County. The two-volume work by Mrs. Roberts provides a wealth of data, but much of the material is based on family tradition rather than on official documents. As indicated by my references for each chapter, I have checked as much of the material as possible by using both published and unpublished official records from those early days.

I have not burdened the text with a multitude of footnotes. Although the sources of my material are completely set forth in the footnotes and the bibliography, I have not quoted chapter and verse for every statement. Even though I want my work to be scholarly, I am not writing for historians or genealogists. I am writing primarily for the descendants and my chief aim has been to make my account interesting to them. In a few instances, I have used dialogue. Although these passages are fictional in form, they are strictly historical, based on reliable family tradition, newspaper reports, etc.

Each reference work has been footnoted only once. I have used four works which might have been footnoted many times. These four works are the following: newspaper articles, published by Mr. Hugh Johnston, summarizing the life of our Thomas ancestors during the early years in Virginia and during the 1740-1800 period in North Carolina; the two works cited above by George Crocket and Emily Roberts, covering the San Augustine period; and the historical articles on Hopkins County published in the Sulphur Springs News Telegram by Kenneth and Sidney Brice.

The final chapter, tracing the lives of the seven sons

of Buck and Susan Thomas, is based both on personal recollections and published information. I am especially grateful to John W. Thomas, Jr., W.B. Thomas, Jr., H. Bascom Thomas, Jr., Madeline (Thomas) Nolen, and Rose (Thomas) Phillips; they shared with me letters and other written information, as well as recollections of early family life. To my cousins, other than those named above, as well as to our kinsman, Hugh Johnston, I am especially grateful. And most of all, I am indebted to my wife, Hazel; her interest in the Thomas family history, which preceded my own, helped to get me started, and more importantly, to keep me going.

My final word is one of regret. Wisdom and common sense dictate that I should publish my findings at this time, even though I should like to continue my research to clear up moot points. For example, I should like to know exactly where and by whom I.D. Thomas and Penelope Edwards were married. I'd like to pin down the route that Benjamin Thomas took in traveling from Alabama to Texas and the exact year he arrived in the State. I would like to know when and by whom Buck Thomas was ordained and how long he continued actively to preach. However, I know that such increase in exactitude would not add greatly to the overall story. There comes a time when one must stop gathering material, must get it written, published, and in the hands of those for whom it was from the start intended.

Robert E. Thomas  
6230 Royal Crest Dr.  
Dallas, Texas 75230

March, 1978

#### A CHART OF THE FAMILY

##### The First Four Generations

- 1st John Thomas, born 1606; arrived in Virginia in 1622.  
2nd John Thomas of Nansemond County; born 1628; died 1655;  
    married Elinor Montague  
        1. Katherine Thomas, married Thomas Oglethorpe of  
            Isle of Wight County.  
        2. Richard Thomas, born 1648; died 1687

- 3rd Richard Thomas, born 1648, probably married Elizabeth  
    Sanders; died 1687  
        1. Elizabeth  
        2. Phoebe, married William Curle  
        3. Sarah, not married  
        4. John, born 1668, died 1706

- 4th John Thomas, born 1668; died 1706; married 1st Elizabeth  
    Rogers.  
        1. Elizabeth  
        2. Mary  
        3. John (1689-1754)  
        4. Richard  
    Married 2nd, Mary Lawrence, daughter of John Lawrence,  
    Sr. of Nansemond County.  
        5. John, born 1705; died 1788 in North Carolina.

##### Fifth and Sixth Generations

- 5th John Thomas, born 1705; married Christenator Roberts in  
    1732. Died in 1788 in North Carolina.  
        1. Rev. John Thomas, Jr., born 1733; married Patience  
            Williams, died 1807.  
        2. Rev. Jonathan Thomas, Sr., born 1735; married  
            Mary Hilliard; died 1775.  
        3. Obedience, born 1737; died 1788, not married.  
        4. Millicent, born 1742; died before 1788, not married.  
        5. Theresa, born 1744; married Theophilus Hill.  
        6. Theophilus Thomas; born March 8, 1739/40; died  
            1803; married Mary Rogers in 1771.

- 6th Major Theophilus Thomas, born 1739/40; died Sept. or Oct. 1803; married Mary Rogers (1756-1810).
1. Obedience, born Nov. 29, 1771; married 1st Elathan Tartt; 2nd George Brownrigg; died in Edgecombe County in 1840.
  2. Millicent, born April 28, 1773; married 1st James Tartt, 2nd John Eason, 3rd Abraham Simms, 4th William Eason, who was nephew of her second husband.
  3. Ichabod, born Nov. 8, 1774; married Susannah Barnes; died in 1826.
  4. Benjamin, born April 16, 1778; died in 1834 or early 1835; married Mary Ann Dickinson.
  5. Theresa, born April 25, 1780; married Enos Tartt; probably died in Edgecombe County about 1841.
  6. Tabitha, born August 7, 1782; married Benjamin Simms; died 1862 in Goldsboro, North Carolina.
  7. Micajah, born May 26, 1785; died in Alabama on September 13, 1840.
  8. John Rogers, born Sept. 20, 1787; married Mary Hooker; died in Edgecombe County, N.C., in 1826.
  9. Theophilus, Jr., born May 25, 1790; died 1849.
  10. Elizabeth, born November 17, 1793; married John Cobb.
  11. Nancy, born August 1, 1797; married a Mr. Pope.

#### Seventh Generation

- 7th Benjamin Thomas (1778-ca.1834); in about 1797 married Mary Ann Dickinson (b. March 25, 1776; died about 1840);
1. Geraldas S. (Gary), born in North Carolina in 1798; married Emily Margaret Davis May 27, 1827; died April 11, 1858; buried in Wallisville, Tex.
  2. Shadrach Dickinson, born 1800; married Polly (Mrs. E.W.) Brown in 1827.
  3. Margaret, born about 1801; married Elias K. Davis (1793-1858); died in San Augustine, Texas, July 3, 1842.
  4. Theresa, born about 1803; married Dr. George B. Brownrigg in 1819; died in San Augustine, Texas Jan. 3, 1843.
  5. Iredell Dickinson, born January 6, 1805; died Feb. 29, 1866; married 1st Penelope Edwards and 2nd Elizabeth (Holman) Campbell. Eight children by first marriage; none by second.
  6. Benjamin Rogers, born probably in 1806; married first Martha Engledow, and second a Mexican woman; died in Bexar County, Texas in 1891.

7. Wiley, born 1810 (or 1811); married about 1839 Julia Smith; was living in Bexar County in 1850.
8. Mary Ann (Polly), born 1813; never married, buried in San Augustine, Texas.
9. Theophilus, born August 13, 1815; died May 5, 1881; buried in Thomas Cemetery, San Augustine; married Susan Winn September 12, 1837.
10. Maria, probably born about 1816; married Noel G. Roberts.
11. Jackson, born probably in 1818.

(Note: The genealogical record for the children of Benjamin Thomas is less reliable than that of the other family groups. One author shows that the family included a girl named Theodosia; we believe this to be in error.)

#### Eighth Generation

- 8th Iredell Dickinson (1805-1866); married 1st Penelope Edwards (born 1814, Russellville, Ky., daughter of Amos Edwards and Penelope Ashmore Edwards).
1. Almedia, born Jan. 21, 1832; married Samuel H. King.
  2. Mary Jane, born June 20, 1834; married James B. Holman on Oct. 10, 1852; both died of yellow fever in Grand Ecore, La., in 1853. No children.
  3. William (Buck); born Feb. 1, 1836; died August 6, 1927 in Sulphur Springs, Texas. Married Susan Jane Buford (daughter of Thomas Young and Mary Brooks (Simpson) Buford) on July 3, 1856.
  4. Loena Edwards (Lonie), born June 23, 1837; married George W. King on May 1, 1856.
  5. Penelope (Nep), born May 21, 1839; married William Hardin Crouch.
  6. Victoria (Tode), born Jan. 30, 1841; married Charles I. Polk about 1860; died March 10, 1924 in Beaumont, Texas.
  7. Iredell D., Jr., born June 18, 1842; married Anna Kirksey.
  8. James Edwards, born June 1, 1844; married Mary L. Blount in 1867; died in Washington, D.C. August 1, 1917.

Ninth Generation

- 9th William (Buck) Thomas (1836-1927), married Susan Jane Buford July 3, 1856. Had 13 children, of whom six died before reaching the age of five.
1. William Buford Thomas, born Oct. 13, 1859; died April 17, 1950; married Rebecca Nora Askew.
  2. John Wesley Thomas, born Dec. 11, 1862; died Sept. 28, 1887; married Mollie McKechniey.
  3. James Edwards Thomas, born Sept. 3, 1864; died 1950; married Hattie Tweedle.
  4. Henry Bascom Thomas, born March 16, 1871; died Sept. 1942; married Minnie Little.
  5. Enoch Marvin Thomas, born Feb. 27, 1873; died May 1961; married Luella Hargrave.
  6. McTyeire Thomas, born Dec. 16, 1874; died Oct. 24, 1963; married Mary McDonald.
  7. Hubbard Harrison Thomas, born Dec. 3, 1878; died Dec. 8, 1918; married Virginia (Virgie) Russell.

Tenth Generation and Beyond

The seven sons of Buck and Susan Thomas comprise the tenth generation. The descendants of the seven brothers, listed in Appendix A, comprise the eleventh through the fourteenth generations.

Chapter I

VIRGINIA

The First Four Generations

The first permanent English settlement in Colonial America was at Jamestown, Virginia. On Arpil 17, 1607 the first group of hardy settlers landed on the north side of the James River. Living conditions were very bad and a huge proportion of the settlers died as a result of malaria, dysentery, and malnutrition. The colony would have foundered except for the ships that arrived from England several times a year. They brought both supplies and additional settlers. The new arrivals were sufficiently numerous to maintain and slowly increase the population, so that by 1622 about 2,000 settlers were living on the narrow peninsula between the James and York Rivers.

The first settlement of Virginia was made by the Virginia Company, a privately financed stock company, an early forerunner of the modern corporation. Merchants and wealthy persons bought shares in the Company. These shareholders were called "Adventurers"<sup>1</sup>. Some of them ventured only their money while others ventured their person; that is, they came in person to Virginia and worked to establish the colony. From the start the Company was in trouble financially, and in 1624 the Charter of The Virginia Company was cancelled and the King took over the enterprise as a part of his government.

In the process of transferring ownership from the private company to the Crown, an inventory was taken of the people and property then available to the enterprise. A committee of three persons was designated by the authorities in London to conduct the inventory and to "close the books" as ownership was transferred. One of these men was Captain Samuel Matthews who figured in our early Thomas history. He may have been a naval captain, but more likely he was commissioned in the British army. He probably was the younger son in a wealthy, landed family. Since the oldest son in England always inherited the estate, the younger sons found careers in the army, the church, or in the government. He probably was an original shareholder in the Company, an "Adventurer" who came in person. In somewhat later years, he was known as Colonel Matthews; in those years he owned a large plantation named "Denbigh" on the north side of the James River at Blount Point and the mouth of the Warwick River (now Warwick County).

Between January 20 and February 7, 1624/25\*, during the term of Governor Sir Francis Wyatt the inventory was taken. At each farm or plantation in the Colony all inhabitants were "mustered out" for a count. At the same time they reported the number of bushels of corn on hand, as well as other forms of property. The muster of Capt. Samuel Matthews included one John Thomas, age 18, who came over on the Southampton in 1622. This John Thomas was the earliest member of our branch of the Thomas family to come to America.

Captain Matthews continued to bring additional settlers to Virginia and to employ them on his extensive lands. In 1643 he brought over William Thomas and John Thomas, Jr. and used them as headrights to land in Rappahannock County. We cannot establish that this John Thomas, Jr. was the son of the first Thomas, but it is at least reasonable that he was from the same family group back in England and was related to the first John Thomas.

A word is in order concerning the economic arrangements whereby these early settlers were brought to Virginia. During the first ten years of the new Colony all new settlers were brought in as employees of the Virginia Company, under long-term contract to the Company. However, between 1615 and 1620 there gradually evolved the system known as "indentured servitude", whereby the new arrival bound himself to an employer for a period of from three to seven years (average of 5 years). Although called servants at that time, today we would call them employees. Some worked as domestic servants, but mostly they worked as farm workers or (if they had such skills) as craftsmen, such as blacksmiths, carpenters, coopers, etc. This system was very widely used in the English colonies in America for a hundred years, until it was displaced by the growing use of African slaves after 1700.

During the period of indenture, the employee worked without money wages but was provided by the master with food, lodging, and clothing. (Of course, money in those days was largely

\*This designation of a date is a consequence of the adoption by the English colonies of the Gregorian Calendar in 1752. To correct the calendar, the first day of each year was set as January 1st instead of March 25th as was the case earlier. The 84 days from January 1st to March 25th were dropped from the calendar. The double designation, therefore, is used only for events that happened between January 1st and March 25th. The effect is as follows: if you are comparing a date with an earlier date, you would use 1624; if with a later date, you would use 1625.

nonexistent; tobacco served as the medium of exchange.) The indenture contract was not always the same. In some instances it provided the master would give the servant a plot of land to have as his own after he had worked off his indenture. In any case, he usually bought land of his own in a short time. Because the servants were from England—speaking the same language and being of the same race and religion—there was no stigma against having started as an indentured servant. Many former servants married the daughters of their former masters; as early as the 1640's more than a few members of the House of Burgesses of the Virginia Assembly were listed as former "servants".

In the early years of the Colony, a land-entitlement law was passed; this greatly facilitated immigration to the Colony. The Colonial Government pledged itself to grant 50 acres free to every person who migrated to the Colony. Every immigrant, of whatever age or marital status, was entitled to a "headright", as the entitlement was called. Moreover, the headright was salable. Under this arrangement, even a desperately poor person in England could enter into a contract whereby he could be transported free to Virginia, and upon reaching the Colony he would sign over his headright to the person who paid for his passage. Usually, but not necessarily, the same individual who paid the passage of the migrant and obtained his headright to the 50 acres also signed a contract of indenture whereby the migrant worked for him during the specified number of years.

Because of this system of colonizing, we have on record the names of at least three-fourths of all settlers who came to Virginia during the 17th century. Much of our knowledge of our early ancestors is based on these contracts. When the 50-acre blocks of land were granted, the name of the migrant was always entered. Likewise, the contracts of indenture were regarded as property (the value depending on the length of the unexpired time) and the contract could be sold or handed down by inheritance.

Altogether, probably more than 100,000 persons were brought to the Virginia Colony from England between 1607 and the end of the 17th Century. During the latter half of the Century about 3,000 persons often arrived in a single year. By 1660 all the Tidewater areas had been settled and by 1700 the settlers had pushed westward as far as Richmond and southward to the Albemarle River in North Carolina. However, since the period of indenture was so short, the accumulated number of indentured servants was never large. Even as late as 1704, when the Governor of Virginia made an inventory of all landowners in the Colony, there were about 6,500 land own-

ers and about 4,000 servants and 6,000 slaves. This would average out to about one and one-half workers for each family farm.<sup>3</sup>

The John Thomas whom we count as the second generation of our family in America was born about 1628 and died about 1655. About 1647 he married a young lady whose first name was Elinor. Since John Thomas was given land by Peter Montague who had a daughter named Elinor, we assume that his wife, Elinor, was the daughter of Peter Montague who had settled south of the James River, in Nansemond County, about 1636.

Peter Montague had come to Virginia on the Charles in 1621 when he was 17 years old. His first land of record was obtained in 1642, in what is now Nansemond County, Virginia. Montague was a leader in Colonial affairs, representing Nansemond County in the House of Burgesses in 1652 and 1653. After this service he moved to what is now Lancaster County. He owned land in that area, and was a Burgess for the County in 1657-58 and on September 29, 1658 his name was presented to the General Court for appointment as sheriff.

Peter Montague had patented 150 acres of land in upper Nansemond County on December 18, 1645. This land, described as east of the head of New Towne Haven River (now Chuckatuck Creek), was transferred to John Thomas at an unspecified date (probably at the time of his marriage) and was then repatented by John Thomas on November 19, 1654. Montague had given the land to Thomas at least a year before it was repatented, since Hopkins Howell, on January 12, 1653/54 had patented 400 acres which he described as "at the head of New Towne Haven River and running by John Thomas's land".<sup>4</sup>

John Thomas died intestate not long after 1654. At his death he was about 27 years old, had been married some 7 or 8 years, and left one or more small children. He owned at the time the 150 acres referred to above, plus another 24 acres which he had also patented. The deed records for this land indicate that his widow lived about 20 years more. Her second husband was William Thompson, as indicated by the fact that on March 27, 1659 the will of her father, Peter Montague of Lancaster County, left to his daughter, Ellen (Elinor), the wife of William Thompson, 1,000 pounds of tobacco in cask.<sup>5</sup>

During her lifetime, Elinor Thomas Thompson did not own in fee simple the land she inherited from her first husband. She had what is known as a life estate. It was hers for her lifetime and would then pass to the oldest son of her late husband. This was in accord with the laws of primogeniture.

In those days, England (and the English Colonies, of course) followed the old feudal laws which specified that only the eldest son could inherit the land owned by his father. These laws prevailed in the Colonies until 1791, after the beginning of the American Union. (They prevailed in England for still another hundred years.)

The third generation in the Thomas line is represented by Richard Thomas, the only known son of John and Elinor (Montague) Thomas. He was perhaps born in York County about 1648, but was brought as an infant to Nansemond County and where he lived until his death about 1687. Existing records indicate that about 1668 he married Elizabeth Sanders who was born about 1650 and died about 1685. We believe she was the daughter of John Sanders, Sr., of Nansemond County. The data on her life are uncertain because most of the Nansemond County records were destroyed by fire. This often happened in those days since court houses were only wooden houses and easily destroyed by fire.

Richard Thomas became a substantial landowner for those days. On March 21, 1675/76, the same 174 acres which had been granted to his father in 1654 were regranted to him, described in the deed as "son and heir" of John Thomas, late of Nansemond County. His mother must have died just a few weeks prior to this date. How do we know this? Because just two months earlier - on January 20 - Hopkins Howell sold the tract of land he had patented 22 years earlier. In 1676, just as in 1654, he described his tract as adjoining the tract owned by John Thomas.

Richard Thomas made a considerable addition to holdings in 1681 when he acquired another 550 acres. He joined with two other men, John Sanders and Jonathan Robinson by name, to import 33 colonists. Being entitled to 50 acres for each immigrant, they patented 1650 acres on Queen's Grave and King Saile (Kinsale) Swamps in Isle of Wight County (near the Nansemond County line).<sup>6</sup> Although the records do not exist, he probably also signed a contract of indenture to employ the 11 workers on his newly acquired land. This seems plausible since at about the same time that he patented the 550 acres he sold his 174 acre farm in upper Nansemond County and moved to his new property between Kinsale Swamp and Queen's Grave Swamp. His new land was near the Isle of Wight County line, about a mile south of the present town of Carrsville, Virginia. It was on this plantation that the family lived until most of them migrated to Edgecombe County, North Carolina, some sixty years later.

During the latter part of the 17th Century, the Thomas

family, like most of their neighbors, were sturdy yeomen farmers. On their separate farms they were independent and self-sufficient. Most of their needed goods were raised or fabricated on their own place. Their surplus produce was shipped from their own wharf to England and many needed items were imported from there.

In Virginia in those years there were no aristocratic planters in the sense that term was used a century later. Throughout the entire 17th Century there were no large plantations in Virginia. The slave trade was insignificant in America until after 1700. Although many wealthy and influential men speculated in land and held title to many thousands of acres, these lands were usually not brought together into working plantations. Even as late as 1704 when Governor Nicholson made his inventory of farms in the Colony, he listed 376 farms in Nansemond County and the largest of these was only 2,300 acres. The average was 212 acres. Twenty-six farms were of 50 acres or less, 66 were between 50 and 100 acres, 110 between 100 and 200 acres, 88 between 200 and 400 acres, 78 between 400 and 1,000 acres, and only 8 over 1,000 acres. These modest family farms were the great source of wealth in those days. Most pieces of land stayed in a single family for a hundred years or more, often being handed down by means of a written will, on file in the Court House (unless the Court House burned).

We have no record that the Thomas family was active in county government in those years. Nor did they sit in the House of Burgesses. Yet we can be sure they were much interested in the actions of the Colonial government and the Royal Governor at Williamsburg. The taxes and other fees collected by the sheriff were uncertain and often unjustified. The military protection afforded by the government was likewise uncertain and inadequate. People in the tidewater area complained that their river fronts were not safe; the Dutch fleet had invaded Chesapeake Bay as recently as 1667 and pirates continued their depredations. Although the Indians were no longer a problem in the tidewater area, they were a constant menace in the counties further up the Rivers.

There was much discontent with the administration of Governor Berkeley who was a dedicated royalist. The discontent erupted in 1676 in the famous Whiskey Rebellion which was led by Nathaniel Bacon in support of the frontier farmers who rose in rebellion against the Governor. The yeomen farmers of Nansemond County used the occasion for expressing their discontent with the administration of Governor Berkeley. They drafted a letter to the King and it was signed by Richard Thomas, John Thomas, and about 100 other County farmers. Although they

signed the letter as the "King's Loyal Subjects," they made clear their discontent with the administration by the Governor, listing more than a dozen grievances.

Six years after he moved to the lower part of Nansemond County, Richard Thomas made his will, on April 10, 1687. Later in the same year he died, at the age of about 41. Because the Court House in Nansemond County burned, we do not have a copy of the will. We know from the land records, however, that he bequeathed his land to his four children.<sup>7</sup> These were John, Phoebe, Sarah, and Elizabeth. Each received 137 $\frac{1}{2}$  acres which is one-fourth of the 550 acres on Kinsale Swamp, Richard's part of the 1,650 acres which he and two other men patented in 1681.

It is interesting to note the history of each of these 137 $\frac{1}{2}$ -acre tracts. In 1704 when the Royal Governor of Virginia compiled the Quit Rents roll, John owned 275 acres, exactly two shares from the inheritance. We assume he owned also in that year the share that had been inherited by his sister, Sarah, who apparently had died unmarried before 1704 and left her share to her brother.

Richard's daughter, Phoebe, married William Curle and apparently had two children. In the 1704 Quit Rents roll of Nansemond County William Kerle held 325 acres. At least some of this land remained in the family until 1751. In that year John and Phoebe Winborn sold 75 acres which was described as being from a patent of 1,650 acres to Jonathan Robinson, Richard Thomas, and John Sanders in 1681, and the title had come to Winborn's wife "as a jointure from her grandmother Phoebe Kerle in the year 1706."

Richard's daughter, Elizabeth, was living in Newport Parish of Isle of Wight County when, on October 27, 1712, she made her mark (E) to sell her share to Robert Sanders who lived in the Upper Parish of Nansemond County. The price was 1,000 pounds of tobacco. On July 12, 1731, Robert Sanders bequeathed this tract to his nephew, Richard Sanders.

Richard's oldest (perhaps his only) son, John, also inherited land from an aunt and uncle. Entries in the earliest Will and Deed books of Isle of Wight County indicate that Richard Thomas had a sister named Katherine. She married Thomas Oglethorpe who, in May of 1679, bought 170 acres in Nansemond County. In 1686 he was still living in Isle of Wight County, since his name appeared as a witness to a will drawn by a neighbor of his. On March 31, 1687, Oglethorpe made his own will in Isle of Wight County, and it was probated on February 9, 1687/88. He left his property to his daughters and equal heirs,

Katherine, Sarah, and Mary, but stipulated that the eldest son of Richard Thomas was to have the reversional interest in the estate. Richard Thomas signed this will as a witness.

John Thomas, the son of Richard Thomas, represents the fourth generation in our history. He was born in 1668 and died 38 years later, in 1706. At about the age of 20 he married Mary Rogers and by her had four children—John, Elizabeth, Mary, and Richard. After about fifteen years of marriage, his first wife died, and John Thomas married again, this time to Mary Lawrence. Before his death in 1706, he had a son by his second wife, and again he named him John. All we know of this John Thomas, the son of Richard, is that he moved with his parents to the southern part of Nansemond County (near the town of Carrsville) in 1681 when he was about 13; he married very near the time his father died, and undoubtedly took over ownership and operation of the family farm. Although the early records of Nansemond were lost when that Court House burned, the deed records on the ownership of land are available and these provide the evidence of his two marriages and his five (at least) children.

Both his first wife and his second inherited land from their respective fathers, and the wills left by these men give the names of John Thomas's children by each wife. The father of his first wife was Michael Rogers of Newport Parish in Isle of Wight County. His will was filed on April 5, 1710. It provided that each of his two granddaughters, Elizabeth Thomas and Mary Thomas, should have 1,000 pounds of tobacco when they should become 21 years of age or married. To his grandson, John Thomas, he left one cow, while his other grandson, Richard Thomas, was to be the executor and to have the residue of the estate. (Isle of Wight Will and Deed Book 2, p.499) It was customary in those years to leave only personal property to the daughters, while leaving the land to the sons. The obvious explanation of why he left to one grandson only a cow and the bulk of the estate to the other was this: under the law of primogeniture the oldest grandson, John, would automatically inherit the entire estate of his father. This would have amounted to about 275 acres of land, since the Quit Rents roll of 1704 listed "Jn<sup>o</sup> Thomas" with a farm of that size. Richard Thomas, therefore, inherited no land from his father, but he did from his maternal grandfather.

Under the law of primogeniture, sons by a second marriage likewise could not share in the landed estate of the father. It is fortunate, therefore, that John Thomas's wife also inherited land from her father and it was passed on to her son. (Without this particular will, it probably would have been impossible for current genealogical searchers to make a connec-

tion between our ancestors who lived in North Carolina and the earlier generations that lived in Nansemond County.)

Mary (Lawrence) Thomas, the second wife of John Thomas was a daughter of John Lawrence, Sr., of Nansemond County, Virginia. On November 22, 1704—soon after he married Mary Lawrence—John Thomas of Nansemond County sold a tract of 208 1/3 acres of land which lay in North Carolina, about 30 miles due south of their home in Nansemond County.<sup>8</sup> It was a part of a 625-acre tract which John Lawrence (deceased in 1704) had patented on September 25, 1663. John Thomas indicated that he sold the land "by right of Mary my now wife, daughter of y<sup>e</sup> afores<sup>d</sup> Jn<sup>o</sup> Lawrence." (Chowan County, North Carolina, Deed Book W, p. 57)

Mary (Lawrence) Thomas's husband, John, died (probably) in 1706 when she was 25 years old. She continued to live on land inherited from her father, located on the main Blackwater River which forms the boundary between Nansemond and Isle of Wight Counties. If she followed the custom for those days, she combined households with either her father or a brother, with one of them taking the responsibility for farming her land. Perhaps she lived in her brother's home, since in 1713 she deeded 100 acres to John Lawrence, Jr. In this transaction she was described as a "widow" and Lawrence as her brother. The tract lay in Lower Parish of Isle of Wight County and was a part of the 530 acres patented by the late John Lawrence on June 6, 1678. The price for the 100-acre tract was 5,100 pounds of tobacco. She continued to own another 100 acres from her paternal inheritance until her son and heir, John Thomas, sold it after her death in 1736.

Although we have no records other than those for land, we can assume that young John was raised with some advantages for that day. Based on his activities in later life, we can assume that he was given an education that was of a level attained by not more than 10 percent of the Colonial population. There must have been books in the home, probably forming the nucleus of what was referred to as a "Liberry of Books" when his estate was inventoried many years later.\* It is also believed, though not supported by actual records, that he studied law. If this is so, he probably attended William and Mary College or the Grammar School operated in connection with it. After the College was established in 1693, the prosperous plant-

\*It should not be assumed he was uneducated because he did not correctly spell a word like "library." Spelling of common words did not become standardized in America until after 1800 when Noah Webster began working on his successive editions of an American dictionary.

ers from the Virginia Colony began to send their sons there to study law, agriculture, and administration of local government, as well as theology and the classics. Williamsburg, the site of the College, was 40 miles from lower Nansemond County and could easily be reached by boat or by horseback.

## Chapter II

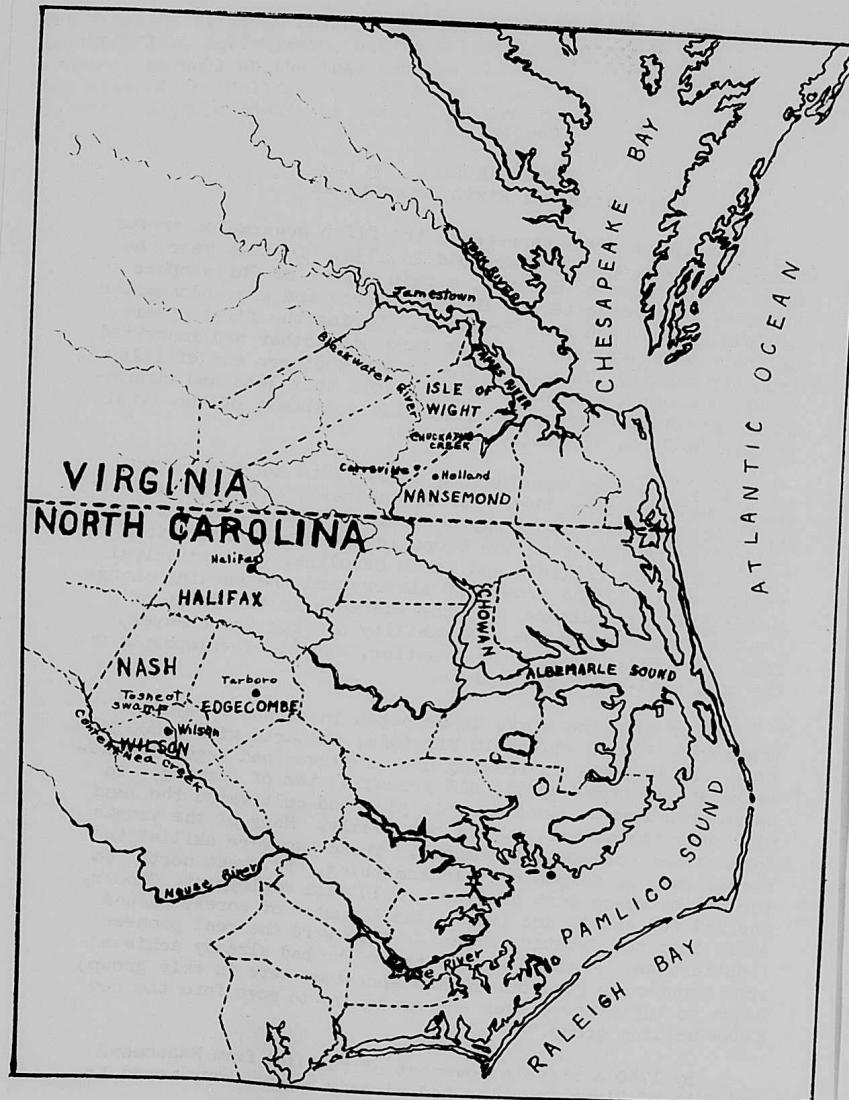
### NORTH CAROLINA The Fifth and Sixth Generations

John Thomas, who represents the fifth generation in our Thomas history, was 27 years old in 1732. In that year he married Christenator Roberts, a twin sister of Christopher Roberts, and a daughter of Thomas Roberts and a granddaughter of John Roberts and Jane Braswell. During the first years of their marriage they lived on land his mother had inherited from her father. This land was in the southern end of Isle of Wight County, but about 1736 he sold that land and returned to Nansemond County, several miles southeast of the little town of Holland, Virginia.

By 1740 he was considering a move into North Carolina, and he made the move that year or the next. Although we have no direct information on why he decided to move, we get an indication by examining the economic and social conditions then current in Virginia and North Carolina. The principal trends were: (1) the growth of slavery and the ensuing change in Virginia agriculture, (2) the increase in the value of land in Virginia and the availability of free (or cheaper) land a few miles toward the frontier, and (3) developments in the political-religious sphere.

After 1700 the slave trade began in earnest. By 1730 there were 30,000 slaves in Virginia, compared with 6,000 in 1704. By 1730 the increasing use of slaves had begun to challenge and to break up the old yeoman system of farming, in which each farmer owned a small plot and cultivated the land with only the members of his own family. Many of the yeoman farmers had to make adjustments. Those who were skilled in trades such as carpentry, blacksmithing, etc. went north to the cities where such artisans could find employment. Others, who had few assets and only a small number of acres, pushed early into the frontier areas -- they were the real pioneer frontiersmen. A third group, those who had already achieved some prosperity (and our Thomas ancestors were in this group) began to buy a few slaves and gradually to move into the new slave-holding group.<sup>1</sup>

By 1740 a sizable movement of families from Nansemond and Isle of Wight Counties had already begun. Many moved to



northern North Carolina. The movement south had started as early as 1723. By that year there were 20 families on the Tar River alone. By 1730 the first sawmills had been built in what is now Edgecombe County, so that new settlers built the kind of houses they had had in Virginia. The year 1740 was the beginning of a great migration into lower Edgecombe County. During this year the North Carolina Assembly distributed over 50,000 acres of land to new settlers. At that time, virgin timber lands could be bought at a very cheap price. These potential farms, on which the land had to be cleared and at least some buildings constructed, were especially attractive to new settlers who owned several or many slaves. They wanted land on which they could immediately put their slaves to profitable work. An epidemic in Isle of Wight County in 1741 or 1742 is reported to have caused an especially large number to move at that time.

A factor of considerable influence in the migration from Nansemond and Isle of Wight Counties to Edgecombe County, N.C. between 1732 and 1742 was the issue of religious liberty. In Virginia the established (or Anglican) Church was supreme. Although the Act of Toleration (enacted in 1689) applied in the Colonies as well as in England, it was not given much support in Virginia. Only a Church of England minister had full rights to preach. A dissenter who wished to preach had to obtain local sponsorship, and local sponsors were hard to find, especially by itinerant preachers. However, the Church of England priests usually were not able men. They were sent to this country by the Bishops in England, and only the less competent ones were sent. Their preaching was dull; their sermons were read and delivered completely without conviction. Worst of all, they were "gentlemen", in league with the ruling aristocracy.

In North Carolina the Church of England had been established by law in 1701 but it was even less successful there than in Virginia. Early in the Colonial period North Carolina gained a reputation as an asylum for the religiously persecuted. This reputation was widely advertised in England as well as in the colonies. Lumpkin<sup>3</sup> says that before the end of the proprietary period (in 1729) dissenters came in larger numbers from Nansemond County, Virginia, than from any other area of similar size. They usually arrived in small companies.

Although John Thomas was reared an Anglican, and although he did not change over to the Baptists until 1748, it is possible that he was influenced by current preaching to make the move into North Carolina.

These years just before he left Virginia saw the start of what American historians call the "Great Awakening."<sup>4</sup> This was a series of religious revivals which swept the American Colonies, resulting in doctrinal changes and influencing social and political thought. Chief among those who galvanized the "Great Awakening" were Jonathan Edwards with his revivalist preaching in Massachusetts in 1734, and even more important, John Wesley and George Whitefield who came from England. Wesley was in Georgia in 1738-39, while George Whitefield—a preacher of unusual eloquence and conviction—traveled throughout the eastern seaboard in 1739-40, preaching the new doctrines. On December 14, 1739 he reached Williamsburg, the metropolis of Virginia. It is possible that John Thomas heard him there or in Nansemond County.

The Baptists had maintained a strong toehold in Isle of Wight County and Nansemond County since about the time that John was born in 1705. They were a group known as the General Baptists, a denomination not as Calvinistic and not as revivalistic as the later Baptist groups. Nevertheless, they were dissenters and this undoubtedly contributed to their moving to North Carolina, especially after Edgecombe Precinct was created in 1732. Originally the Precinct, and later the County, comprised most of the land between the Neuse and Roanoke Rivers, an area from which 10 modern counties have been formed.

Regardless of the exact reasons for the move, it undoubtedly was made in 1740 or 1741. In the latter year, John Thomas obtained his first known grant of free land. It came from King George II of England and was from the huge block of land allocated in 1744 to the Earl of Granville.

The trip undoubtedly was overland, covering by wagon the 110 miles from Holland, Virginia, to lower Edgecombe (now Wilson) County. John Thomas was about 35 years old at the time. He had his wife and four small children with him, and he may by that time have owned one or two slaves. Having sold the land he owned in Virginia he would have had sufficient funds to buy necessary supplies and equipment and to make a successful start in farming in his new area.

During the decade from 1740 to 1750 John Thomas worked almost exclusively to develop a successful farming operation. In addition to his original patent, he acquired several others in the North Carolina Colony, totaling 1,351 acres. Counting an additional 523 acres which he purchased, he eventually owned a total of 1,874 acres. All the land was on Toisnot Swamp, White Oak Swamp, and Buckhorn Branch. Except for 340 acres lying south of Toisnot Swamp which he sold to Simon Daniel in 1744, all this land remained in his possession until

he passed it on a little at a time to his three sons.<sup>5</sup>

In the early days of operating his plantation, the principal crop would have been corn. This was always the first crop to be planted by a new settler, since it was the staple crop on which both the family and the livestock lived. Every farm included various kinds of livestock. Cattle, swine, oxen, horses, sheep, and fowl contributed greatly to the subsistence of their owners. Some were even exported, especially hogs. After the 1740's great numbers of hogs were driven overland from North Carolina to Virginia, just as cattle were driven north from Texas more than a century later.

One of the principal money crops was tobacco, as it was in Virginia. Unlike Virginia, however, North Carolina developed other important products for export. Export products were floated, during periods of high water, down Toisnot Swamp, Contentnea Creek, and the Neuse River to the wharfs that accommodated ocean-going ships.\*

North Carolina exported great quantities of naval stores, consisting of tar, pitch, and turpentine; also exported were wood products, consisting primarily of shingles, staves, and sawn lumber. These products provided a means whereby the settlers could make good use of the extensive forests throughout the State of the longleaf pine, a tree which yielded prolific amounts of resin and hence was greatly sought after by tar burners and turpentine collectors.

All three classes of "money crops" required large amounts of labor and hence these enterprises were engaged in on an increasing scale as each planter acquired a larger number of slaves. The use of slave labor in these industries was complementary, in that in good weather the slaves worked in the tobacco fields and in wet or inclement weather they worked in the forests to produce naval stores and/or wood products.<sup>6</sup>

The only direct information we have on the nature of John Thomas' farming operation is the inventory of his estate which was taken a few days after his death in December, 1788. It indicates his usual farm operations during the 1770's. The inventory listed 700 pounds of tobacco and 200 pounds of cotton. Since these were the "money crops", undoubtedly

\*In early North Carolina, many creeks were called swamps. Because the channels were uncleared and the undergrowth was so thick, they flooded and held water like swamps. In East Texas where the Thomas descendants later lived, such creeks were called bayous.

considerable quantities of each commodity, in the months immediately preceding his death, had been floated down the Toisnot Swamp and Contentnea Creek to the Neuse River for shipment to England from the busy ports of New Bern and Beaufort.

At the time of his death he owned 58 hogs, 4 sheep, 22 cattle, and 4 horses. Apparently the Baptists of that day were not opposed to liquor since he operated a still and had on hand 90 gallons of brandy and 8 barrels of cider. The status of the plantation as a self-sufficient operation is indicated by the inventory of 9½ sides of leather, 3 spinning wheels, a cloth loom, 2 hackles (for flax), and a small crop of flax.

Mostly his plantation was farmed by slave labor. Although we do not know the number of slaves he owned, he and his sons must have had in the neighborhood of thirty-five to forty-five by the time he died. Shortly before his death in December of 1788, he willed 9 slaves to his son, Theophilus, and one to his granddaughter, Millicent Horn. Since Theophilus had two older brothers, we can assume that his father had already given at least an equal number of slaves to these older sons.

If the family held slaves in that number, they rated among the more prosperous members of the population. From 1755 to 1767 the Negro population of North Carolina increased by 89 percent, mostly from natural increase. During this period they constituted about 50 percent of the population in Edgecombe County and adjacent areas. Such data as are available indicate that, in the Edgecombe County portion of the State, about one-half the households owned one or more slaves. Of those who owned slaves, about half owned from one to 10, a fourth or more owned from 10 to 20, and perhaps no more than 8 to 10 percent owned more than 20. It seems clear that the Thomas plantation was among the top five percent of all plantations in the value of its land and slave holdings.

By 1750, when he had been in his new home for 10 years, John Thomas had established himself as a successful planter and undoubtedly was a well known and respected member of his community. In that year he was 45 years of age. He and his wife had seven children, all of whom were still at home. His two oldest sons, John Jr. and Jonathan, were 17 and 15 years of age, respectively. The oldest daughter, Obedience, was then 13 years old. The third son, Theophilus, who had been born just before or just after the move to North Carolina, was then 10 years old. The two youngest girls, Millicent and Theresa, were 8 and 6 years old, respectively.

By 1750 he probably had already built a comfortable frame house with several bedrooms. When his estate was inventoried in 1788 it included 8 bedsteads and 8 featherbeds and furnishings. Among the other items listed were: 12 chairs, a safe, 19 pewter plates, 9 pewter basins, 8 dishes, 3 plates, 6 punch bowls, glass tumbler, 1½ cases of knives and forks, 24 table spoons, and a large ladling spoon. The kitchen, with its large fireplace for cooking, contained among other things, 5 iron pots, 4 pairs of pothooks, 2 iron pot racks, iron baker, pair of flesh forks, pair of hooks to roast meat, 4 large jugs, 2 large butter pots, honey pot, sugar box, candlestick, and a pair of money scales.

From 1750 until about 1780, when failing health forced him to relinquish many of his usual activities, John Thomas was heavily involved in public affairs. He was both a public official and a minister of the Baptist Church, having accepted his first political appointment in 1749 and having been ordained in 1756. The quarter century of his active involvement in public life was as turbulent and full of change -- and as historically significant -- as any quarter century in our history. It was the quarter century that led to the American Revolution in the political sphere, and to the spread of the Protestant denominations in the religious sphere. In the eastern North Carolina area he played an important and influential role in both spheres.

His first political appointment was on October 11, 1749 when Governor Gabriel Johnston and His Majesty's Council in session in New Bern named him to be Justice of the Peace for lower Edgecombe County (now Wilson County). The Justices of the Peace, all appointed by the Governor, constituted the County Court at that time. This court controlled almost every phase of local government and administration. After Halifax County was formed in 1758 and the town of Tarboro was founded and made the County seat, he began regularly to ride the 30 miles or so from Wilson to Tarboro. He served regularly on the Bench of Judges at Tarboro from June 27, 1758 to October 18, 1775. The surviving Minute Books of the County Court indicate his participation not only in the formal sessions but also in a road or bridge commission nearly every year during this long period.

Most of his service before 1776 was by virtue of appointments by the Royal Governor at the time. After the Declaration of Independence he was reappointed under the laws of the State of North Carolina. However, he served very little after 1776 because of failing health. He restricted his public work in his later years mostly to the ministry.

Before the American Revolution, the Governor of the Province had broad appointive powers. He named all the county officers, the sheriff, the constable, and jurymen. Those not appointed by him were appointed by his appointees. The "Court House Ring" was self perpetuating. There was no appeal for grievances. There was much discontent, especially among the poorer farmers and especially those living in newly settled frontier areas. There were many causes for antagonism between the prosperous office holders and the poorly educated and economically struggling frontier farmers. Not the least of the causes of discontent was the fact that office holders received no salary, but were paid by means of the fees they collected. The proper fee for various actions was not clearly defined and this led to disputes and general discontent.

John Thomas was definitely a member of what today we call "the establishment"; yet he was a prominent leader in a dissenting church, in a day when the principle of separation of church and State had not yet been accepted, when in fact some Baptist groups were looked on as incipient, if not actual, revolutionaries. The historians, Lefler and Powell, pointed out that Baptists were among the most active opponents of the Established Church in the Colony, and Royal Governors on many occasions condemned the whole denomination for the opposition expressed by some individual members. They then added that "not a single adherent of the Baptist faith is known to have held an office of importance at the local or the provincial level before the Revolution; but it was from the members of this church that much of the leadership of the early Revolutionary movement was to emerge"<sup>7</sup>. This statement is significant, even though it is obviously wrong. Not only did John Thomas hold important offices on the local level; his close friend and associate, Elisha Battle, served as Moderator of the Kehukee Baptist Association. Battle was born in Nansemond County, Virginia and is believed to have migrated to North Carolina in the same year that John Thomas did. Battle served with distinction as a member of the Provincial legislature and participated in the Convention that wrote the Constitution for the new State of North Carolina after the Declaration of Independence.

In looking at the possible conflict between his political and religious activities, it may be noted that he did not assume leadership in the church until after he had already established himself as a local public official. Although he may have heard some Baptist preaching as early as 1740, it was not until 1748 that he was converted to the doctrines of the Baptist denomination. In the summer of that year, Dr.

Josiah Hart preached the doctrines of the Baptists in the Edgecombe County area. John Thomas, along with several members of his family and several neighbors, was baptized into that faith. A new congregation was formed but it was 8 years before they had a regular pastor. In 1756 John Thomas was ordained by Elders John Moore and George Graham and made the pastor of the congregation.

For a year or two, religious services were held in various private homes in the area, both in the Thomas home and those of several neighbors. However, on September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1759, the Rev. John Thomas deeded to his son, the Reverend Jonathan Thomas, a square acre of land on his plantation for the erection of a Meeting House. Morgan Edwards described the building as measuring 16 by 28 feet.<sup>8</sup> At the time it was built, there was no other church within 18 miles. A small pond was made by damming up the waters of a small brook, thus providing a place for baptizing the new members of the church. A graveyard was established adjacent to the church.

The little church building has long since vanished and its exact location is not known. However, the graveyard still exists and the grave of the Reverend John Thomas, along with those of his wife, his sons, and numerous other members of the family, are marked by attractive headstones, put there in later years by descendants. The pond has been enlarged and today constitutes a beautiful area near the graves that lie under the pine trees.

A word about the Baptist denomination is appropriate. In 1756 John Thomas was ordained; two years later his home church, Tosneat Baptist, was reconstituted according to the Calvinistic interpretation of the "Plan of Salvation." During these years North Carolina was filling up rapidly with new settlers from Virginia. Most of the new settlers in the frontier counties further west listened to the traveling evangelists and became adherents of the Baptist faith. The Baptists grew very rapidly as a denomination during this period.

There was a great emphasis in that era on the niceties of doctrinal interpretation. The differences centered mainly on the degree of emphasis placed on Calvinism—that is, on predestination and on the time and method of baptism. Another point of great importance was the particular style of worship. Generally speaking, the Baptists in eastern North Carolina (that is, Edgecombe County) were formal and orderly rather than emotional and given to exhortation and other forms of religious fervor. The latter group was dominant in the western settlements, now the central part of the State.<sup>9</sup>

At that time there was no national organization of the church. Churches tended to develop in better populated areas, and then an association was formed which brought together those churches which were geographically accessible to each other and which shared a common interpretation of Scripture and doctrine.

Unless one is trained in church and theological history, it is difficult to trace the successive doctrinal affiliations of John Thomas and his sons. He seems to have started his career in affiliation with the General Baptists but he changed over soon after his ordination to the Particular Baptists, a much more Calvinistic group. Toward the end of his ministry the rivalry was between the Particular Baptists in the East and the more emotional and evangelical Separatist Baptists who appealed more to the frontiersmen in the western provinces of the State. It should also be noted that these Separatist Baptists on the western frontier were usually classed as politically radical—that is, they opposed the "eastern establishment" both in the religious sphere and in the sphere of government.

In the late 1750's, Dr. Oliver Hart, who helped to establish the Particular Baptist group throughout eastern North Carolina, established an association of the Baptist churches of his persuasion. It was established in Charleston, South Carolina, and in 1760 Reverend John Thomas and his two sons—Rev. John Thomas, Jr. (then age 27) and Rev. Jonathan Thomas (age 25)—mounted their horses and made the long and difficult journey to Charleston in order to bring Tosneot Church into the Association. However, the distance was so great and the travel so arduous that they decided, in 1762, to withdraw from the Association. By 1769 there were a sufficient number of churches in eastern North Carolina to justify the formation of an association there. On November 6, 1769, the Kehukee Baptist Association was formed and held its first meeting in Halifax County. (The lead church was the Kehukee Baptist Church which had been founded on the Kehukee Creek and took its Indian name from that source.) John Thomas represented the Tosneot Church and signed the Covenant that was adopted. His last recorded attendance at the Kehukee Baptist Association was on October 20, 1777, when the membership elevated him to the office of Moderator and also placed under his leadership the special committee that drew up the Articles of Marriage which are still reflected in the ceremonies of the Southern Baptists.

It is clear that for a decade or more Reverend John Thomas did considerable traveling in the adjacent areas of North Carolina and Virginia to spread the Gospel where the people

had no regular minister and to assist in organizing new churches. The Baptist historians, Burkitt and Read, report that he was active all through the decade of the 1770's in organizing and reconstituting new churches. Silas Mercer who first lived in Currituck County, N. C., and later in Wilkes County, Georgia, where he became the founder and pastor of several of the earliest churches in that County, as well as in Hancock County, reported: "the first minister of the denomination he ever heard preach was a Mr. Thomas, at that time a successful preacher in North Carolina."<sup>10</sup> John Thomas's last religious act, of which we have official record, occurred on September 17, 1780, when he was near his 75th birthday. He and Reverend John Page constituted the Lower Town Creek Baptist Church on that date.

In those early days before the modern era of the separation of church and State, John Thomas must often have been faced with problems on the relationship of the church and the government. Some examples survive. In 1759 Reverend John Thomas took the precaution of securing legal sanction for his church under the English Act of Toleration. Approval was granted on September 24, 1759. According to Turner and Bridgers, the first reference concerning religion in the minutes of the Inferior Court of Pleas at Tarboro was made in the form of a petition in 1759 by John Thomas and others "of the profession of Ana-Baptists." They reported that a Society of Baptists had constructed a meeting house, and a division of the Society had occasioned a dispute over the legal owners. Consequently, John Thomas, "the leader of the Ana-Baptist element" petitioned for a claim to the meeting house which had been constructed under his supervision. Thomas was one of the leaders of the dissenting element and had forcefully closed the doors of the church to the services of the Baptist Society. The historians add that the records do not show how the issue was disposed of; they offered the guess that the dissenting element would have lost since the Church of England had opposed the dissenting element.\*

The next incident, also reported by Turner and Bridgers, came in 1761, soon after a precinct court was established in Tarboro about 1759. In that year, Jonathan Thomas was granted a license to preach, reportedly the first non-conformist legalized in eastern North Carolina. Thomas produced an ordi-

\*This account is grossly inaccurate, according to Hugh Johnston, a historian of the early Baptist Church as well as of the Thomas family; he says the historians misinterpreted the old court records and confused the licensing of the Tosneot Church with a genuine controversy that took place at the tolls of the Tar River Baptist Church in 1775.

nation in writing, signed by John Moore and George Graham, leaders of the Baptist Society, qualifying him to preach according to their tenets. The Court, according to its power, administered the oath of allegiance, and issued a permit for Thomas to preach.

A final incident occurred in 1772. On September 17th of that year the Kehukee Baptist Association appointed Rev. John Thomas to a committee to present a complimentary address to Governor Josiah Martin at New Bern. Governor Martin had just taken office, having succeeded Governor William Tryon, under whose administration the relationship between the Government and the dissenting churches had been strained. Governor Tryon had placed great obstacles in the way of the dissenting churches, trying, literally, to force them to show more allegiance to the Anglican Church. His efforts had been strongly resisted. There were some disturbances in Edgecombe County, but they were not nearly as serious as in the western counties where a large number of the poorer, frontier settlers were Baptists and where the officials of the Government were often abusive and even dishonest. The dissenters led in the formation of a sort of vigilante society called the Regulators (the regulators, that is, of public affairs). They did so much to challenge the authority of the Governor and his appointees that he called out the militia. On May 16, 1771, the Governor's troops and the Regulators met in battle at Great Almamance Creek, west of Hillsboro. About 2,000 armed men were on each side, but the militia were much the better armed and disciplined. About 9 men were killed on each side, and about 60 militia men were wounded. The Regulators were routed.

Governor Martin was a far more reasonable man than his predecessor. The Kehukee Baptist Association, desiring to promote a new era of good feelings, sent the following message to the new Governor.

To his Excellence Josiah Martin, Esq<sup>r</sup>, Governor and Commander in Chief of the Province of North Carolina.

The Humble Address of all the Ministers and Elders of the Baptist Society who associate annually in Hallifax County, in the Province aforesaid in behalf of themselves and many hundreds of their Brethren.

May it please your Excellence -- It is with unfeigned pleasure, we acknowledge the Happiness

with which we are Blessed in common with the other Inhabitants of this Province, under your administration of Government; But we beg leave, in a more particular manner, to express our Grateful Sentiments of the protection we enjoy in the Exercise of our Religious and Civil Liberties; for which it is our Duty, and shall be our Constant Endeavor, to Distinguish our Selves as Loyal Subjects to our most gracious Sovereign, and usefull Members of Society. We hope this Address will not be Considered as a Customary Complement, But a Tribute of Acknowledgement due to your Merit, from the experience we have had of your publick Conduct. It is our prayer to the Almighty, that as he has placed you in a Most Distinguished Station, he would Eminently guide and Direct you in all your Actions, and Bless you with prosperity here, and Everlasting Happiness hereafter.

Signed at our Association in Hallifax County  
Sept. 17, 1772.

Jonathan Thomas, Moderator  
Elisha Battle, Clerk.

We appoint our Brethren Jonathan Thomas, Henry Abbott, William Horn, Elisha Battle, John Thomas, and William Burgess To present this address.

In speaking of the political aspects of the letter, Turner and Bridgers describe the Baptist leaders as conservatives. Unlike some conservatives (the Royalists) who were partial to the authority of England, these men held a decided view in favor of the Colonists. But they were not enthusiastic about rushing into political conflict with so powerful a nation as England. Their letter probably helped to calm the feverish spirit of the times. But many of these men, cool and level headed as they were, soon changed their views and entered wholeheartedly in the Revolutionary cause, bearing their full share of the Revolutionary burden.

By 1776, Reverend John Thomas was 71 years old and in failing health. Although he lived for another 12 years, he began gradually to turn over his wealth to his sons who already had been taking over his role in public life.

Theophilus Thomas, who represents the sixth generation in our family history was one of the six children of the Rev.

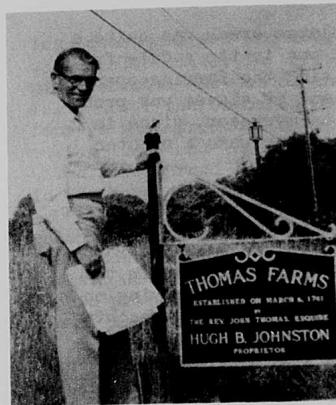
John Thomas. The children were born in the eleven-year period from 1733 to 1744, each of them being about two years apart in age. Theophilus, the fourth child, was born in 1739/40, just a short time before or after his parents migrated to North Carolina.

We know very little about the home and family life of the children in their early years, but a few general conclusions can be relied on. By 1750, when Theophilus was 10 years old, all six children were still at home with their parents. As an educated man, his father may have personally served part time as the teacher of his children, or a tutor may have been hired jointly by several prosperous planters. There were books in the home, and a thorough grounding was achieved in reading the Bible and also Shakespeare and other leading English writers. He began in those early years to assemble what was described in later years as an excellent library. Most of the tutors employed by successful planters at that time had a thorough knowledge of the classics which they read in the original Greek and Latin. Like the sons of many successful planters of the day, Theophilus studied law in preparation for his expected role in public affairs.

By 1760, Theophilus was 20 years old. At that time his older brothers, John Jr. and Jonathan, were 27 and 25 years old respectively and were active as newly ordained ministers. They understudied their father and eventually took over his role in the ministry, while Theophilus took over his place in public affairs and plantation management, and added an additional role in the military.

During the 1760's, and even more during the 1770's, when his father and at least one brother were riding far and wide to carry on their work in the ministry, Theophilus undoubtedly assumed a major load in managing and expanding the family plantations. The acreage owned by his father and by his two brothers and himself was concentrated in two locations. The earliest grant to Rev. John Thomas, Sr., in 1741, was for land in what later was known as the "lower plantation." This land was along the Tosneot and White Oak Swamps, on both sides of the latter. Much of it was individually owned later by Theophilus Thomas. It comprised about two square miles in the area where White Oak Branch flows into Toisnot\* Swamp. The "upper plantation" dates from 1747; it lay north of Tosneot Swamp on both sides of Buck(horn) Branch. It also lay on both the north and the south sides of what is now designated as North Carolina State Highway No. 42, east from Wilson.

\* The creek formerly called Tosneot is now called Toisnot.



The author at the site of the 18th Century Thomas Farms.



Mr. Hugh B. Johnston, Jr., at the North Carolina historical marker in front of his home.



The Thomas Cemetery adjacent to the one-time location of the Toisnot Baptist Church. (See Foreword and Acknowledgements, p. vi.)

Supervising the work of these large areas was quite a job. Undoubtedly, Theophilus Thomas was in the saddle from sun up to dark on many days, supervising the farming operations. The family holdings of land and of slaves was probably large enough for him to employ an overseer, since in those days it was economical to employ one when a planter owned as many as fifteen slaves.

It should not be presumed, however, that Theophilus carried the full supervisory load for his father and brothers. Ministers at the time, at least those in the emerging Baptist and Methodist denominations, did not work full time in the ministry. They usually were farmer-ministers, carrying on their regular farm operations during the week and preaching on Sunday or special occasions. As a rule they were never paid a salary, although certain small emoluments may have come their way.

By 1771, Theophilus had been serving for more than a decade as a plantation manager. He was nearing his 31st birthday; it was time for him to be married. We have no records of his social life, but we can assume that he was acquainted with all the plantation owners and prosperous smaller farmers within a 15-mile radius. He was a man on horseback in those years, often riding several miles in a day merely to supervise operations on the two family plantations. There were no towns in those days (Tarboro was the nearest and it was only a small village), so most business and social visits were to the plantation itself rather than to a town.

In February of 1771 he married Mary Rogers, the daughter of Thomas and Mary Rogers who lived on Turkey Creek in what was later to be Nash County. They lived in the southwest part of Nash County, which was about 18 miles from the Thomas "upper plantation." Eleven children were born to the couple during the next quarter of a century. All grew to adulthood and married; and most left North Carolina at various periods after 1800 to establish new homes in Alabama, Georgia, or Texas.

On February 20, 1771, Theophilus's father gave him 273 acres of land on White Oak Swamp. The deed indicates that it was transferred "for love." John Thomas had originally acquired this tract in 1762 when he had bought it from Jacob Barnes, a nearby neighbor who was "sort of related" since one of Theophilus's sons married Jacob's daughter, Susannah.

By the time Theophilus was married and had begun to assemble his own plantation, he was fully competent in the farm-

ing techniques and procedures for that day. He used his slaves alternately for growing tobacco and for working in the pine forests. He pushed the growing of flax and hemp, especially after the Colonial Government offered a bounty to all farmers who produced these products which were so useful in making linen and rope. He undoubtedly had large herds of hogs which were turned loose into the swamps and dense undergrowth in the bogs. Periodically they had to be rounded up, with each farmer identifying his animals according to his own brand which was notched into the hog's ear. (The County Clerk in each county customarily kept official records of each farmer's marks. On November 19, 1751, Theophilus's father had recorded his private livestock mark: "a crop off the left ear and a half moon under & over the right.") Barns and bins had to be constructed for storing the corn that was so important for both people and animals. Extensive orchards were planted, as well as vegetable gardens. On one occasion Theophilus and his slaves built a ferry in Toisnot Swamp so he would have easy access to the saw mill constructed by his neighbor, Jacob Barnes. On another occasion, he directed that a pit be dug for trapping wolves and other "varmints"-- the chief object being both to protect his own crops and livestock and to collect the bounty offered by the Colonial Government for killing such "varmints". In later years, as his land was sold off, the deeds of sale referred to the ford and the pit as surveyor's marks for various plots of land.

Theophilus Thomas considerably increased his holdings during the decades after he began serving as office holder in the county government. He patented 150 acres in 1768; 1,040 acres in 1778; two tracts totaling 1,140 acres in 1779; one 300-acre tract in 1783; a 100-acre tract in 1790; and five tracts totaling 932 acres in the decade of the 1790's. Altogether he accumulated 5,858 acres of land. He patented 3,708 acres from the State of North Carolina, bought 1,360 acres, and received 790 from his father. By the time he died, however, 1,100 acres had been deeded to Ichabod and Benjamin, his two oldest sons, and the only ones who had reached their majority by the time of his death.

Theophilus Thomas was never a land speculator, nor an absentee landlord. Most of the patents from the State of North Carolina conveyed to him tracts of from 300 to 500 acres. Several, especially in the area of the "lower plantation" (where White Oak Branch flows into Toisnot Swamp) were irregularly-shaped blocks of land that lay entirely surrounded by land already owned by himself or his neighbors. In other words, he obtained the last available free blocks of land in the vicinity of his plantation.

It is likely that he increased his land holdings in proportion to his increased ownership of slaves. In Colonial America land was always more plentiful, and cheaper, than labor. Unless one had many sons, or many slaves, the land was of little value. Slave owners like Theophilus Thomas could use the land more profitably than his less affluent neighbor. This was especially true of heavily timbered land in the swamps and river bottoms; such land was not cleared for tobacco or cotton, but a plantation owner could put his slaves to work in such areas, obtaining pitch, tar, and turpentine, and staves and shingles, for export to England. As the trees were gradually cut for their wood products, the fields were gradually cleared for farm crops.

It is probable that prior to his father's death in 1788 he owned in the neighborhood of 12 to 15 slaves. He inherited 9 slaves from his father in 1788, and in 1790 the Federal census taker listed 21 slaves as a part of his household. The 1800 census showed him to own 19 slaves. By then he may have given one or more to each of his two oldest sons, Ichabod and Benjamin, especially since he had given 550 acres of land to each of them in February, 1799.

Theophilus Thomas was a Patriot and was actively engaged in the Revolutionary War. We do not know exactly when he became a Captain of a militia company of Edgecombe County, but it was some time prior to June 1781. In that month, shortly after British troops under Gen. Cornwallis passed through Wayne and Edgecombe Counties on the way to Virginia, Captain Thomas marched a company of three-month draftees from Lower Edgecombe County to the town of Halifax, where some of his men were turned over to Captain Benjamin Coleman of the United States Continental Line for service against the Tories along the Cape Fear River. He was promoted to Second Major of the Edgecombe County Militia Regiment in 1785, and on January 4, 1787 the General Assembly of North Carolina approved the recommendation by members Elisha Battle\* and Ethelred Phillips that he be appointed First Major, a commission which he held until his resignation in 1795.

Documents on file at the North Carolina Archives show that Major Thomas received a number of payments from Green Hill, Treasurer of Halifax military district. They also show that a number of men established their service under Captain or Major Thomas as a means of documenting their application

\*This is the same Elisha Battle who was born in Nansemond County, was converted to the Baptist Church at the same time as Theophilus's father, and served as Clerk of the Kehukee Baptist Association.

for a Revolutionary War pension. One of them listed him as Captain "Offie" Thomas, indicating that he was known by that nickname.

After his father retired from public office, about 1780, because of poor health, Theophilus took over in the same capacity and served for a quarter of a century. He became a Justice of the Peace and served regularly as a Judge on the Bench of Edgecombe County Court at Tarboro from August 26, 1778 to February 24, 1800. He also collected the taxes in his District from May 24, 1780 until the year following May 23, 1793, it being then Captain Eason's District (No. 6 in Edgecombe County). The Court Minutes mention his election as sheriff of Edgecombe County on February 2, 1790, but he had so much trouble collecting the taxes for 1789 that he declined to serve after February 11, 1791. The records indicate that on November 1, 1790, he had been able to pay the State Treasurer only \$71 pounds in cash and had not yet been able to redeem the certificates for the other 256 pounds and he may have had to guarantee these from his personal resources.

At that time the County Government did not use its own employees to maintain the roads, to build and repair bridges, etc. The County Commissioners contracted with prominent citizens to do each job as it became necessary. Road repairs were basically a neighborhood operation. A "Commission" was created for each job. Usually these commissions were headed by prosperous local planters who used their own slaves for the work. From 1787 to 1799 he headed, or was a member of, a commission to repair a road or build a bridge, usually in the vicinity of the Thomas family plantations. The Court Minutes mention bridges over the Contentnea Creek, White Oak Swamp, and Toisnot Swamp. In all instances he was paid some stipulated price, stated in pounds, shillings, and pence. On November 4, 1790 he was appointed Overseer of Roads in his neighborhood. In this capacity it was his responsibility to list all men of poll-tax-paying age in his district and to call on them from time to time for a specified number of days of free work on the roads each year. He probably did not hold this job long, since drafting men to perform free work on the roads was no less contentious an assignment than the sheriff's job of collecting taxes.

Theophilus Thomas retired from public life in 1800 and three years later he died. On June 25, 1803, he drew up and signed a 9-page will which directed the disposition of his extensive holdings. It is likely that he died in September or October of that year, since his will was probated on November 29, 1803. The will is interesting. It throws light on both the living conditions and the social customs of the day. Some

points may be noted. The custom of primogeniture had broken down and now all the sons shared in the estate, especially the ownership of land. However, the wife and daughter did not share equally in this regard. It was expected that the girls would marry and their husbands would take care of them; if they did not, they would live with a brother. Theophilus left to his wife, Mary, one Negro girl for her own use, and he "loaned" her two Negroes and the plantation on which he then lived, along with his still, cap and worm, and stipulated that she should not "be moved off the plantation where she now stands by no person whatsoever till my youngest son comes of age to take it in his possession."

The specificity with which personal property was divided among the family suggests the scarcity and the value of such items.<sup>11</sup> Specific bequests were common at that time. Under most wills, practically every farmer, to the extent his affluence permitted, handed down his possessions with great care. A horse, a bridle, and a saddle were given to almost every member of the family, indicating the extreme importance of horses for travel in an era when roads were hardly more than paths. An affluent household included up to a half dozen featherbeds and furniture which were passed down to heirs. The beds all had a canopy over them, and curtains for both above and below the bed went with them.

The sheets and handmade quilts, and even the personal clothes of the deceased were bequeathed. All cotton and wool products were handmade and immense amounts of labor went into such items, both in the spinning and weaving of cloth and the painstaking stitching by hand. All kinds of farm and household utensils were also named. Pewter plates, brass candlesticks, and storage chests were highly valued. Other items often named were the cotton cards, woolen and flax wheels, box irons (hand iron with an arrangement for opening the iron and putting live coals inside for heating), and piggins (a small wooden tub or bucket used for many purposes). Theophilus Thomas named which son would receive his shot mold and the ladle to melt lead. He directed that his books be divided equally between his 3 youngest sons and his two youngest daughters, suggesting that he had already given books to the older children. Two books, however, were specifically mentioned. His son, Micajah, was to get his Law book called Iredell's Revisal and his son, Theophilus, Jr. was to get The Young Man's Companion.

One can well imagine that the Revisal was his pride and joy. It had been published in 1791, authored by James Iredell, a brilliant lawyer from Edenton, North Carolina, who served about that time as Attorney General of North Carolina.

During the Revolutionary War period the weekly newspapers far and wide printed his scholarly arguments, first in favor of independence from England, and later in favor of the ratification of the proposed United States Constitution in 1788. After the Constitution was adopted and the American Nation came into being, he was appointed to revise all the laws passed between 1776 and 1789 and make them compatible with the new Constitution. His Revisal also contained all the acts of the North Carolina Assembly, a most important tool for a County official responsible for administering those laws on the local level. In 1790, George Washington appointed Iredell as an associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. Iredell died in 1799 as a result of exposure during his lengthy and frequent travel to various places where Federal Court sessions were held in those days. Although we have no record of such, it is likely that the Judge was personally known to Major Theophilus Thomas and he may even have visited in the Thomas home. At any rate, he must have been greatly admired by the family. Benjamin Thomas, named one of his sons Iredell D. Thomas, and this was in 1805, more than five years after the great judge had died.

When Theophilus Thomas died, six of his children were at least 20 years old, and the youngest five ranged from 6 to 18 years of age. Most of these children migrated to newly opened sections in Georgia and Alabama. By 1840, practically all of Theophilus Thomas' holdings in the "lower plantation" had been sold, although (as mentioned in the Foreword) some of the holdings in the "upper plantation" have remained in the family until the present time.

### Chapter III

#### MOVING WESTWARD: TO ALABAMA AND TEXAS The Seventh Generation

Our story of the seventh generation begins in 1810. By then, Major Theophilus Thomas had been dead for seven years. His widow, Mary (Rogers) Thomas died in April of 1810 at the age of 53. At that time, only two of her eleven children were still teenagers. The other nine ranged from 20 to 38 years of age. Most of the older ones were married, and the grandchildren were coming along. When Theophilus died in 1803, he had divided his five thousand or so acres among his five sons. His daughters had begun to marry the sons of neighboring farmers who had similarly divided their estates. The lands in the smaller family plantations were both too small and increasingly unproductive.

Some of the Thomas farms had been in continuous cultivation for at least fifty years. Under the primitive agricultural practices of that day, the land had been totally exhausted. Like other Colonial farmers, the Thomases never practiced crop rotation; barnyard manures were not used and leguminous crops seldom planted. The farmers were also unskilled in the care of their lands; they knew nothing of terracing, often plowing their furrows along the slope of the drainage and allowing the top soil to wash away with every heavy rain. Another reason for the poor farming practice was the lack of proper tools; and tools were difficult and expensive to import. Plows were only beginning to be in common use; in the days when Theophilus Thomas began his plantation, they had been especially crude, something like a wooden shovel pulled through the earth.

Even though the land was wearing out, its market price was increasing because there was no more free land in that portion of the State. Land in lower Edgecombe County was selling for from \$2 to \$5 an acre, depending on its location and the extent of buildings and other improvements. On the other hand, new areas on the frontier were constantly being opened up by explorers, surveyors, and pioneers. One historian, in writing about the period from 1805 to 1815, says that the demand for land was insatiable. The demand for more and better land was universal, little short of a mania. The local papers, both on the frontier and in the towns on the eastern seaboard, advertised acreage for sale in the unexploited sections.<sup>1</sup>

The appetite for fresh land was further whetted by the new emphasis on cotton farming. Eli Whitney had invented the cotton gin in 1793 and this led quickly to an increase in cotton production. Within ten years cotton had replaced tobacco as the principal money crop for southern plantations. By 1810, cotton buyers from England had personally arrived at southern ports such as New Bern, Charleston, Savannah, and even at the river ports such as Augusta. They took up residence there and established their business, buying cotton for immediate shipment to the cotton mills of England. If one wanted to share in the new cotton prosperity, he had to move to the south: that was where the new, fresh lands were waiting.

The obvious direction to move was to the south, to the Cotton Country, through South Carolina and into Georgia, keeping to the east of the Appalachian Mountains and keeping one hundred miles or more in from the Atlantic seacoast. Georgia, of course, was one of the original thirteen Colonies, but by 1776 it had been settled only along the Atlantic seacoast and on the rivers extending inland, especially up the Savannah River as far as Augusta. During and after the Revolutionary War, however, settlers had begun to claim the virgin lands to the south and west from Augusta. Members of the Thomas family had moved southwestward into South Carolina and Georgia even before the Revolutionary War. The first to make such a move was Theresa Thomas, a sister of Major Theophilus Thomas. In about 1769 she moved with her husband, Theophilus Hill, to Edgefield District in South Carolina. Theophilus Hill was a prosperous merchant, first in Edgefield and later in St. Augustine, Florida. Their son, Lodowick Hill, remained in Edgefield and left many descendants prominent in that locality.

The next member of the family to move southwestward for new land and new opportunity was the Reverend John Thomas, Jr., (1733-1807). In 1781 he also moved to Edgefield, South Carolina. Six years later, however, he moved another 150 miles in the same direction, locating in Hancock County, Georgia, where he lived for the remainder of his life. Since he had nine children by his first wife (Patience Williams) and thirteen by his second wife (Elizabeth Jones), he left many descendants in that area of Georgia. He was joined in Hancock County by several of the married daughters of his brother, Reverend Jonathan Thomas.

After 1810 more and more Thomases began to consider a move southwestward into Georgia, looking for lands cheap and fertile, suitable for cotton. Benjamin Thomas apparently was one of the first; at least he was the first to sell out his holdings in Edgecombe County. On August 14, 1811 he sold the

100 acres north of Toisnot Swamp, a tract which he had owned since February 28, 1805. On February 12, 1812, he sold to Willie Stanton the 600-acre tract which he had obtained from his father on February 23,<sup>\*</sup> 1799. For these two tracts of land he received about \$3,000.

Although we have no record of the exact time or route of Benjamin's move from North Carolina to Alabama, it is probable that he left Edgecombe County shortly after he sold the land in February of 1812. Our guess is that he and his family and his slaves moved first over the 300 miles of well marked and heavily used road that led to Edgefield, South Carolina, and (25 miles further) to Augusta, Georgia. He may have stopped for a while in these busy towns, or he may have headed on another 100 miles to Hancock County, Georgia. Undoubtedly, he would have visited with his relatives in these areas while making inquiry, or visual inspection, of lands that might be available.

He may have been in this area when he first heard about a promising area that had opened up further west. This was on the north side of the Tennessee River, what is now Madison County, Alabama, with Huntsville as its county seat. In 1805 the first settlers had pushed down into this area from Tennessee and found the land bountiful and the Indians peaceable. At the site of fresh water that came from bubbling springs a small community gradually came into being. It was named Twickenham, in honor of Alexander Pope, whose Essay on Man was widely read throughout America in those years. Twickenham was the name of Pope's estate in England. However, six days after James Madison was elected President of the United States in 1808, the county (then a part of the Territory of Mississippi) was renamed Madison and the county seat's name was changed to Huntsville.

Except for the Gulf Coast, this was the only part of Alabama available for settlement. The remainder was still held by the Indians. At the turn of the Century, nine-tenths of the Territory of Mississippi had been occupied by the Indians—Cherokee, Chicasaw, Choctaw, and Creek. After the War of 1812, Spain no longer controlled the Gulf Coast, and in the years from 1812 to 1816 the Indians were driven out or removed from the Territory. During these years there were a number of military campaigns against the Indians,

\*This sale in 1812 was the first one to show the sale price in American dollars. All earlier ones had given the price in pounds, shillings, and pence.

several led by General Andrew Jackson who cemented his status as a hero of the frontier by his campaigns against "the savages."

By 1812, Madison County, Alabama was becoming well known. Reports about the County had surely been carried back to Georgia and North Carolina, and probably to other areas in the east. On January 14, 1811, the County had come into national prominence when the National Intelligencer had reported that Madison County, with 22 square miles, had doubled the cotton production of any county of its size in America.<sup>2</sup> In that year, 48,463 acres of land in the County were listed under private ownership. 606 families lived in the County and 29 percent of them owned slaves. By 1813 the County had 1,125 families and 32 percent of them owned slaves (1,272 slaves in all). In 1814, another 27,644 acres were sold to homesteaders, and in the two years following, an additional 43,000 acres were sold. Eighteen cotton gins were reported in operation in 1814.

We cannot be sure when Benjamin Thomas and family reached north Alabama. It may have been as early as the latter months of 1812 or as late as the early months of 1816. The first official documentation of his residence in the State was in 1816. In that year the Territory of Mississippi (which also included what is now Alabama) counted the inhabitants of the Territory. The Census reported the names of all heads of families, but no other data.<sup>3</sup> Benjamin Thomas was listed as the head of a family and living in Madison County. Another family was headed by a Mr. John Thomas, who may have been a relative who had come with him to Alabama from Georgia.

So far as we have been able to ascertain, he first purchased land in the State in 1816. On December 11th of that year he paid \$1,590 to John and Alice Pettus for a deed to the following tract of land: NE/4 Sec 26-3-1E with tenements (houses). Although the abstract of the deed does not show the size of the tract, it probably was in the neighborhood of 800 acres.<sup>4</sup>

By 1820, Alabama was a part of the Union and was therefore included in the Federal census for that year.<sup>5</sup> Benjamin and his family were then living in Lawrence County, Alabama. This County had been created in 1818, one year after Alabama was admitted to the Union. Our assumption is that Benjamin moved to this County --some twenty-five or thirty miles further west and on the south side of the Tennessee River-- in search of cheaper or better land. Current records

indicate that Benjamin did not obtain free land. He undoubtedly bought land, but it was not cheap. Available land in Madison County was selling for two dollars or more per acre at the time Benjamin lived there.

In 1820, Benjamin Thomas's household, according to the Federal Census, consisted of himself, his wife, six sons and five daughters. He owned seven slaves, counted as part of his household. His oldest son, Geraldas S. (Gary), was listed as a separate household; he was about 22 years old and presumably was living separately from his parents. However, he was unmarried and owned no slaves. In that year, Benjamin was 42 years old and his wife, Mary Ann, was 44. They had twelve children with or near them—the 8 who were born in North Carolina and four more born in Alabama.

Benjamin Thomas apparently liked Alabama and urged his relatives in North Carolina and Georgia to join him there. Two of his brothers—Micajah and Theophilus—were living in Alabama north of the Tennessee River at least as early as June of 1819, at which time they endorsed (i.e., guaranteed) a note given by one of their neighbors for the purchase of slaves (Deed Book E, page 500).

Micajah Thomas (1785 - 1840) lived in Madison County for more than 20 years before his death.<sup>6</sup> He was buried at the New Cemetery in Athens, Alabama. He and his wife had 5 children: the four who lived into adulthood included Cornelius Ann, Treasey Elizabeth, Elisa Hill, and Joseph Van Buren Thomas.

Theophilus Thomas, Jr., also lived in Athens, Alabama, and served for a time as an alderman of the town. However, when he died in 1849, he was living in Greene County, Alabama. In 1815, Theophilus had married Mary Hooker in North Carolina. Almost immediately they left North Carolina, going first to Georgia and then on to Alabama. During the 1830's and 1840's, Theophilus must have been fairly well fixed, for according to county records, he served many times as surety for executors of estates and for officials such as the sheriff and the county clerk.

Benjamin's brothers, Ichabod and John Rogers, both stayed in North Carolina and died there in 1826. After their deaths, however, each man's widow moved to Alabama to join many of their children who already had moved there, mostly to Greene and Sumter Counties. John R. Thomas left land to the following children: Hymeric H., J.R.H., Elnathan Hooker (Nathan H.), and W.J.R. Mary Hooker Thomas, John R.'s widow, died in 1845. Ichabod Thomas left land to the following

children: Bennet, Morrison, Edwin B., Margaret (married Warren B. Barnes), James, Temperance (married Elijah Price and moved somewhat later to San Augustine, Texas), Wade R., and John J. Ichabod's widow; Susannah (Barnes) Thomas, died in 1838.

Benjamin's sister, Millicent, buried three husbands and then married a fourth. She had children by John Eason, her second husband, and William Eason, her fourth husband (who was a nephew of her second husband). She and her second husband must have gone to Alabama about the same time Benjamin went; at least one of their children, William Thomas Eason, was born in 1814 in Anson County, North Carolina, which is on the direct route to Edgefield, South Carolina. In 1818 she died, presumably in Madison County, Alabama; at least her fourth husband died there about 1836. She had four children by John Eason and three by William Eason.

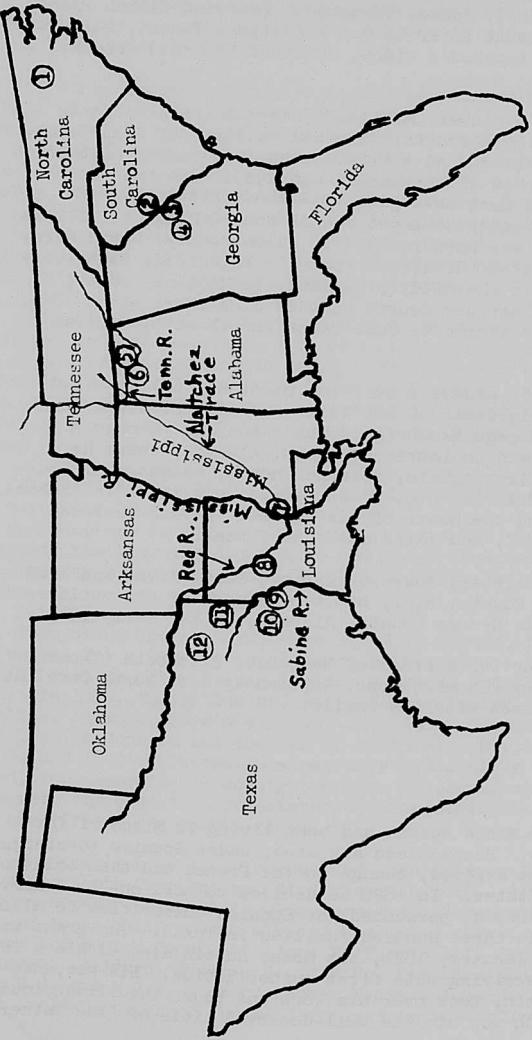
Benjamin's oldest sister was Obedience (1771 - 1840). After the early death of her first husband, Elnathan Tartt, she married George Brownrigg. Their son, Dr. George B. Brownrigg, moved to Lawrence County, Alabama, where he married his first cousin, Theresa Thomas, daughter of Benjamin. In 1821, the U.S. Census showed him to be in Alabama, unmarried, and the owner of six slaves. He and Theresa married in 1821, and later moved to Texas.

Another sister, Theresa (Thomas) Tartt lived and died in Edgecombe County, N.C., but two or more of her children had settled in Greene County, Alabama, by the early 1840's.

The other two sisters of Benjamin, Elizabeth (Thomas) Cobb and Nancy (Thomas) Pope, apparently left North Carolina and lost contact with the family.

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In 1820 Moses Austin had been living in Missouri for twenty years. He had seen his area, under Spanish sovereignty when he first arrived, change to the French and then sold to the United States. In 1820 he decided to move on--to Texas. Reaching there, he persuaded the Spanish authorities to allow him to settle three hundred families in Texas. The grant was approved in January, 1821, but Moses Austin died within a few months of receiving this first authorization. His son, Stephen F. Austin, took over his work and began the illustrious service which won him the well-deserved title of "the Father



The Thomas migrations: 1, Wilson County, N.C.; 2, Edgefield, S.C.; 3, Augusta, Ga.; 4, Hancock County, Ga.; 5, Madison County, Ala.; 6, Lawrence County, Ala.; 7, Natchez, Miss.; 8, Natchitoches, La.; 9, San Augustine, Tex.; 10, Nacogdoches, Tex.; 11, Jefferson, Tex.; 12, Sulphur Springs, Tex.

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of Texas." During the spring of 1821, Austin was in San Antonio for the purpose of getting the grant from the Spanish Government transferred from his father to himself. In August and September, 1821, Austin surveyed the land between the Trinity and Colorado Rivers and located the area in which he would settle his 300 families.

Austin immediately returned to New Orleans where he advertised for settlers. Austin's dispatches went by post rider to all the settled areas to the north and east. Within two weeks his advertisement would probably have arrived in North Alabama where it would have been published in the weekly newspaper which had been in operation in Madison County, Alabama, for several years.

The grants offered by Austin were very attractive. He announced that each head of a family and each adult single man would receive 640 acres (a square mile, or a "section"). An additional 320 acres would be allowed for a wife. Also, 160 acres would be allotted for each child and 80 acres for each slave. Not only was the acreage large, but it was almost free. There was only a small service charge by Austin for surveying, establishment of title, and the like. Austin's advertisement attracted great interest, especially from Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, and North Alabama.

Benjamin Thomas could easily figure what the offer meant to him. He and his wife would get 980 acres, plus 1,600 acres for his 10 children under the age of 21, plus another 560 acres for his 7 slaves. His own family would get 3,140 acres and his two sons over 21 years of age would each get 640 acres for their own.

Austin's announcement could hardly have come at a more opportune time. The United States Congress in 1820 had passed a law which for the first time required a cash payment for the new land being opened up in the Territories. In 1819, the Government had sold 5,110,000 acres of public land; in 1820 they sold only 1,089,000 acres; and in 1821 only 781,000 acres.

It probably was during the winter of 1821-22 that Benjamin Thomas sold whatever land he owned in Lawrence County, Alabama, and prepared to move on to Texas. His first decision was, what route should he follow? He had two choices: to put his possessions on a locally constructed flat boat, hardly more than a raft, and to float downstream—down the Tennessee, the Ohio, and the Mississippi—for nearly a thousand miles to Natchez, Mississippi; or to go by land, following the Natchez Trace about 300 miles from the northwest corner of Alabama to Natchez, Mississippi.

Floating down the Ohio and the Mississippi was a means of travel for thousands of pioneer families who had pushed westward in the years since the Revolutionary War. The Kentucky boatmen who guided these flat boats or rafts down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers were called "Kaintucks". When they reached New Orleans they walked back to Kentucky, following the Natchez Trace from Natchez to Nashville, Tennessee. On their return trip these "Kaintuck" boys passed through Alabama within 20 miles of where Benjamin lived. Benjamin may have ridden his horse over to the Natchez Trace to talk with these rough and ready boatmen about the pro's and con's of each method of travel. By building the flat boat (raft) and using it to go down the Rivers, he could take more possessions. He could put a wagon aboard, his horses and oxen, as well as furniture, necessary implements for farming or for blacksmithing. When he reached Natchez, his boat could be knocked apart and the lumber sold. Any additional needed supplies or equipment could be bought in Natchez.

They probably advised him, however, that it would be best to go by way of the Natchez Trace. This road was the straightest and shortest way, and it had been greatly improved during the past few years. The boatmen reminded him that General Andrew Jackson, on three different occasions, had taken his Tennessee Regiment over the trail, once to the relief of New Orleans in 1812, to fight the Creek Indians at Horseshoe Bend in 1814, and to subdue the Florida Seminoles in 1818. Because of these military uses of the road, the Federal Congress was currently engaged in improving the road. Travel on the road had become more feasible by 1822, especially since the establishment of "stands" (inns) about every 20 miles along the road. These "stands" had been established so that postal riders could reach one every night. These "stands" were kept for the most part by Indians who had traditionally lived in the area. They varied greatly in quality; some had blacksmith shops and stables, while others were primitive one-room log cabins.<sup>7</sup> Since the establishment of the "stands", outlaws were no longer as serious a menace as they had been some years earlier. During the 1820's the Trace was called the "safest and surest" land route between the eastern seaboard and the lower Mississippi Valley.

As one travels today down the Natchez Trace Parkway and stops off from time to time to inspect remaining portions of the old trail, one ponders over the incredible hardships that must have been endured by the pioneer settlers who travelled this narrow, rough, and often muddy trail. Since it was too narrow for wagons, most of the Thomas party of some twenty or more persons must have walked most of the distance. On those winter nights, especially when it rained, the "stands"

must have been a godsend.

When the party reached Natchez, they found a bustling river town where necessary supplies could be purchased — wagons, farming utensils, food, and additional clothing. From there they went westward across Louisiana to the Red River town of Natchitoches, about 105 miles away. When they reached Natchitoches (pronounced Nak'i tush) they found a thriving river-port town which for several decades had been the jumping-off place for entry into east Texas. For more than a hundred years, this Spanish and French town had been important to the commercial and military activity of a wide area. It was located at a spot where the water and land trade routes converged. The Red River served the entire area from New Orleans northwestward to what is now Paris, Texas. A well-established trail led westward across the Sabine, reaching Nacogdoches and extending all the way to Mexico City. Another trail, over which they had just arrived, ran eastward to Natchez, Mississippi. Still another trail extended southward to Opelousa, Louisiana.

Much merchandise cleared through the town of Natchitoches. Pack trains from the west arrived regularly, bringing furs and hides and dried buffalo tongue from the Indians, and silver from the mines of Mexico. Docked at the River front were clumsy river rafts from New Orleans which had been rowed—or "cordelled", i.e., pulled by ropes—northward against the current; they brought tobacco, medicine, spirits, farm tools, and other products of civilization for the Spanish settlers and friendly Indians both in Louisiana and in Texas. One of the most precious commodities was the salt which was produced by Indians and white men at Saline Bayou, just 20 miles to the northeast.

While we have no official records of the matter, it is likely that Benjamin Thomas's party fully expected to meet Stephen F. Austin in Natchitoches. Austin had advertised that letters of enquiry should be sent him at Natchitoches. When he returned to Natchitoches, he found more than 300 letters of enquiry. To his colleagues back in New Orleans, he wrote to say, "I am convinced I could take on 1,500 families as easily as 300 if permitted to do so." However, Austin was not there when the Thomases arrived. Austin had gone to Mexico City because Mexico had just won her independence from Spain and he felt he had to re-validate his contract for bringing in American settlers.

The townspeople in Natchitoches, the men who operated the ferry, the trading post, the general stores, the news-

paper, and the boarding house knew of the efforts of Stephen F. Austin to bring in new settlers. They could have told Thomas that at least 100 families had already passed through the town in the past six months, all headed to Austin's grant between the Colorado and Brazos Rivers. Austin later reported that, in March 1822, there were 50 men on the Brazos and 100 on the Colorado, all of them having come to the area without his knowledge.

We know that the Thomas family was in Natchitoches by the end of February because on March 3, 1822, Benjamin and his wife appeared before Judge John C. Carr to sell a tract of land to their son, Shadrach.<sup>8</sup> The Parish records show that Benjamin and Polly Thomas, both of the State of North Carolina, sold to Shadrach Thomas "a tract of land on Contentney Creek in Edgecombe County, N. C., Halifax District, consisting of 205 acres more or less. . . . being the same tract which fell to the share of Polly Thomas, one of the heirs of Shadrach Dickinson, deceased, at the settlement of his estate . . . . Shadrach promised to pay \$1,200 on December 25th next and gave his note."

Before his note for the land came due, Shadrach sold the tract. According to land records in Edgecombe County, N.C., Shadrach sold the tract, for \$1,100, to Jesse Simms of Edgecombe County. Like most land sales in that day, this transfer was "in the family." Benjamin's sister, Tabitha, had married Benjamin Simms, who probably was a brother or father of Jesse Simms.

When the land was sold to Simms during July of 1822, Shadrach listed himself as a resident of Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana. From our available data, it seems likely that the Benjamin Thomas family stayed in Natchitoches for several months, at least from March until July, before moving on to Texas. For one thing, they may have been waiting for Stephen F. Austin to return to Natchitoches to personally lead his settlers into Texas. They may have used the time to reconsider their plans, both the parents and the older sons who were old enough to strike out on their own. We know that Iredell, who was 17 years old at the time, did remain in Natchitoches to work as a clerk or apprentice in one of the larger mercantile firms of the town. Shadrach, in purchasing the land from his mother, may have been contemplating the operation of his own farm somewhere in Natchitoches Parish. However, if any of the family did have such thoughts, they apparently did not act on them, since the available Parish records indicate that none of the Thomas family ever owned land in the Parish.

During their months in Natchitoches, Benjamin and his family must have waited impatiently for Stephen F. Austin to meet his incoming settlers. We know now why he did not come. When Benjamin and his family arrived in Natchitoches, Austin was on the Texas Gulf Coast, searching for his ship Lively which sank off Galveston Island, bringing great loss to Austin and the settlers in his Colony. In March 1822, Austin traveled hurriedly to San Antonio to negotiate with the Spanish Governor there regarding the restrictions that had been placed on Austin's authority as an empresario. From San Antonio he went on to Mexico City, to confer with the Mexican authorities, since Mexico had just won her independence from Spain. It was more than a year before Austin would return to his Colony in Texas.

Benjamin and his family undoubtedly decided to proceed into Texas on their own initiative, as other families were doing. Perhaps they thought they would find Austin or his representative in Nacogdoches, a village of about 500 persons which constituted the eastern outpost of the Spanish (or Mexican) government. They probably were advised to go on to Nacogdoches and, if they did not find Austin there, simply to settle on any good land that was unoccupied.

There was no question of the road to follow. For many years there had been a well-marked road to the ferry across the Sabine River and on to Nacogdoches. Once they crossed the Sabine, the new settlers traveled on the Camino Real, the King's Highway, which led to San Antonio, and from there through Laredo and Monterrey and on to Mexico City. Practically all families who came into east Texas between 1821 and 1823 traveled along and settled near to this well marked but primitive road.

As the settlers traveled to Texas, many families settled in the Ayish Bayou area. The Ayish Bayou (creek) flows through the center of the present town of San Augustine. It drained an attractive area, with gently rolling land, good fresh water, and a suitable mixture of pine forests and open pasture lands. Those who stopped there, rather than pushing on beyond the Trinity River, simply occupied their land and then began the process of trying to validate their titles.<sup>9</sup>

We assume that Benjamin Thomas settled in the area adjacent to the present Thomas Cemetery, which is five miles west of San Augustine, on the highway to Nacogdoches. (A small highway marker designates the dirt road that leads to the cemetery, 100 yards south of the highway. For a hundred years after his arrival, this area was known locally as the Thomas Community. We have not searched the State Archives for records

that indicate the exact location of his land. It probably was just south of the Camino Real and may have been bounded on the west by Attoyac Creek, which is the present boundary between San Augustine and Nacogdoches Counties.

Many of the new settlers who came into Texas at that time simply occupied a tract of land and claimed squatter's rights until they could obtain a valid title through regular governmental procedures. We believe it likely that Benjamin Thomas simply settled on unoccupied land, as the other new arrivals were doing. However, he may have bought some land from older settlers who did have a valid title. We know that he had funds for such purpose, and by buying his land he could obtain a more desirable location, land with improvements such as houses and barns, and with better opportunity to use his slaves immediately and profitably. Moreover, Crockett tells us that the Red Land Farm which I.D. Thomas owned during the period of the Republic of Texas had formerly been owned by Don Juan Ignacio Guerrero, who was a son-in-law of Captain Gil Y'Barbo who had been for some years the Governor of the Province for the Spanish Government and Y'Barbo did have valid title to thousands of acres. His title had been issued by the Spanish Government long before the political turbulence ushered in Mexico's bid for independence. Lastly, we know that neither Benjamin Thomas nor any of his sons was the original or "headright" owner of any land in San Augustine.

If Benjamin Thomas came to the Ayish Bayou area in 1822 (as we think he did), he was 44 years old and his wife was 46. Four of his sons—Gary, Shadrach, Iredell, and Benjamin R.—ranged in age from 22 to 16. One of his older daughters, Theresa, was not with them. In 1819 she had married Dr. George Brownrigg in north Alabama; it was some years later before they moved to San Augustine, Texas. Five children probably were under 12 years of age. (For some of the children the year of birth is uncertain.)

Even if the family bought land with some improvements on it, the first months in the new area must have been difficult. Like most new settlers, all or some of the family may have had to sleep in or under the wagons until suitable houses could be built, using the pine trees nearby for a typical log cabin. With the help of neighbors, a small cabin could be put up in one or two days.<sup>10</sup>

A few months later another cabin, of the same size, was often built to one side of the first, with an open space about ten feet wide between the two units. Later, a common roof was added across both structures, making a covered hallway. With a porch added across the entire front of the house and with

a lean-to built on the back of each room, we find the typical "dog-run house". A fireplace was usually placed in each room, one of sufficient size for cooking and heating and the other for heating only. This type of house was common throughout Texas until the late 1800's. Such a house was well suited to the climate of Texas. The summer breezes cooled the open runway through the center of the house during the hot months, and most of the chores of the family were performed in its shaded area. In the winter it offered some shelter, especially on cold rainy days, for those tasks that had to be performed out of doors. In extreme weather it even sheltered some of the animals.<sup>11</sup>

Life must have been pretty rugged. Supplies for farming and for household necessities were in short supply. It was necessary for the new settlers to bring with them such equipment as plows, axes, rifles, knives, fish hooks, brass kettles, and tin cups. They were fortunate if they brought along at least a two-year supply of clothes for new supplies of cloth were hard to obtain. Coffee, salt, and wheat flour were exhausted, and many families lived for months at a time on corn meal and fresh game killed in the woods.

After 1825-26, however, living conditions became much better. By then, sawmills had been opened for business and many of the unhewn log houses were being finished on the outside with clapboards; the open passage was often made into an enclosed hall; and a deep well replaced the trip to the creek for water. Glass became available for windows, and the floors of packed mud or clay were replaced by puncheon floor-logs.

By the mid-1820's the trail from Natchitoches to San Augustine was improved for the accommodation of wagons. Heavy wagons, pulled by four or more yoke of oxen, replaced the pack horse and the small wagon pulled by one yoke of oxen. The May 8, 1826 issue of the Natchitoches Courier reported that "on Sunday last, the expedition for the Mexican Provinces left town. It composed twelve wagons loaded with goods and accompanied by a number of men, commanded by Mr. Currier. It moved along the banks of the River in a very handsome manner, displaying the American flag on the foremost wagon."<sup>12</sup>

One wonders whether Benjamin and/or his older sons engaged in such hauling, especially since one of his sons remained in Natchitoches and was employed by a mercantile firm there. At any rate, as this hauling continued, some surplus of goods began to accumulate, and small country stores—often in log houses—were established by the more enterprising settlers, ones who were better educated, had some capital,

and knew how to figure and to calculate interest.

In the years before 1832 there were only a few towns in all of Texas, and none of the cultural advantages that go with towns. There were no schools, either private or public. Protestant churches were not permitted and Catholic churches and priests were equally nonexistent. Sunday was spent by most settlers in hunting, fishing, and breaking wild horses. Nobody went to church, although a few families observed the Sabbath and tried to live as if they were still in North Carolina or Virginia.

Government was practically nonexistent during the decade from 1822 to 1832. That which did exist was so inefficient as to be almost worthless. Most of the problems originated in Mexico City. When Mexico won her independence in 1822, a period of great turbulence was ushered in. Unlike the English Colonies on the eastern seacoast who had enjoyed a measure of self government for a century before 1776, the Mexicans had had no such experience. The new government was run by successive dictators. They were too busy fighting each other to pay any attention to the needs of Americans in East Texas. Corruption and inefficiency were rife, perhaps even worse in the provinces than in the Capital.

The land policy of the Mexican government was especially haphazard and inefficient. Not long after their revolution in 1822, the Mexican government adopted a policy of free grants of land that was even more generous than the amounts they authorized Stephen F. Austin to offer. The basic offer was one League and one Labor of land. Spanish land measurement was based on the vara, which is 33 and one-third inches in length. A League is 25 million square varas, or 4,428 acres. A Labor is one million square varas, or approximately 177 acres. The usual grant of "a league and a labor" of land was based on the assumption that the larger area was for ranching and the smaller for farming.<sup>13</sup>

Plenty of land was available. It was freely granted and much of it was available for the taking. The big problem was to get valid titles to the land which had been claimed by "squatter's rights" or had been bought from someone else who may or may not have had a valid title.

Between 1825 and 1827 the settlers' concerns for farming and for validating land claims turned to graver matters. This was a turbulent time and the fate of the early settlers such as Benjamin Thomas was uncertain. Much of the uncertainty had its origin in the adventures of Hayden Edwards, the instigator of the Fredonian War. In 1825 Edwards was al-

located a tract of land that included the areas around both Nacogdoches and San Augustine and stretched to the Gulf of Mexico. He was authorized to bring in 800 families to settle the area. However, much of the land around Nacogdoches and San Augustine already had been occupied and the existing settlers considered themselves to have valid ownership of their land. Their legal titles, however, were often nonexistent, largely because of the inefficiency and corruption, as noted above. Most of the settlers around Nacogdoches were of Spanish or Mexican descent, but around the Ayish Bayou District (now San Augustine) most were Americans who had come in during the five years preceding. At first, most of the leading citizens of the San Augustine area were favorable to Edwards but this changed because of his assumption of arbitrary and imperial power in regard to the establishment of valid land titles. He set himself up as judge and jury, and was much too arbitrary in the matter. His manner also angered the Mexican officials who thereupon cancelled his contract and banished him from Texas. It was then that Edwards formed his little army and recruited the Cherokee Indians to join his cause. After this turn of events, most of the Americans deserted him.

The American settlers were in a tight spot. They were not willing to join Edwards; yet they were not inclined to oppose him, especially after he recruited the Indians who were of unknown strength and number. When Edwards at one point threatened to confiscate the property of all settlers who did not submit their land claims to him for adjudication, most settlers fled to Louisiana. One settler who later wrote about the affair, said that at the period of greatest danger only two families were left in the District. The two who remained were the Alexander Horton and Edward Teal families, who lived on either side of Moral Creek, west of Ayish Bayou.

The Edwards forces were defeated only a month after this proclamation, so probably the settlers returned soon, before damage was done to their homes and farms. In his history of the County, Crocket does not mention the Thomas family. Our guess is that the Thomases were opposed to Edwards and fled to safety along with most of their neighbors.

Since Benjamin's son, Iredell, later married the niece of Hayden (also spelled Haden) Edwards, we should take note of the kind of man he was. He was a Kentuckian, descended from a prosperous, educated, and politically active family. Crocket described him as amiable and accomplished, but notes that his "chief difficulty seems to have been a lack of practical wisdom in dealing with men, a failure to adapt himself to the conditions that surrounded him." (p.132) Although

Hayden Edwards was and still is honored as a patriot of early Texas, it seems clear that his arbitrary and highhanded manner as an empresario did not endear him to many of the American settlers in the San Augustine area.

Hayden Edwards had two brothers in Texas in those years. One of them, Benjamin W. Edwards, was his lieutenant in the Fredonian War. His other brother, Amos Edwards, was not involved in the Fredonian "affair" since he did not come to Texas until 1828 when he moved with his family from Louisiana to the Galveston Bay area. When Benjamin's son, Iredell, married Penelope Edwards in 1830, the two families became permanently estranged. It is possible that the antagonism between the two families went back to the 1826-27 era of the Fredonian War when Colonel Hayden Edwards threatened to confiscate the lands of the American settlers in the area.

We know practically nothing of the activities of Benjamin Thomas after his arrival in the Ayish Bayou District in 1822-23 and his death in probably 1834, or the early months of 1835. There are many references to his having been a resident there in the mid-1820's, but we find no record of his involvement in civic or political affairs. We know that during those years he lived about 5 miles west of San Augustine in the area of the Thomas Cemetery, the area known during the 19th Century as the "Thomas Community." Although he was putatively a land owner, it seems clear that at the time of his death he still had not obtained legal title to the land he had been living on and farming for more than 10 years.

The decade from 1824 to 1834 was a period when governmental affairs in all of Mexico were in total disarray. Mexico had won her independence from Spain in 1822. Their Constitution had been adopted in 1824 but the first presidents of the Country in those years tended to rule more as military dictators than as upholders of the Constitution. Turmoil prevailed in Mexico City and neglect and inaction prevailed in the States at long distance from the Capital. Texas in those days was a part of the State of Coahuila and Texas, with the State Capital in Monclova. For years the State Government took no action to issue land titles. Finally, in 1834 when it looked as if President Santa Anna would assume dictatorial powers and would dissolve the State Legislatures, the legislators passed precipitous and reckless legislation to dispose of much of the public land—much to their own financial gain, some historians believe.

On March 14, 1835 the Legislature authorized the government officials to sell 400 leagues of land without being subject to the Colonization Law of 1825.<sup>14</sup> The land was quickly

disposed of, even though the act of March 14th was abrogated by the General Congress of Mexico the following month. The government officials were supposed to require that the persons who received the land would pay for it by providing a militia which would guard the settlers against the Indians. They agreed to provide a force of 1,000 men, but not a single soldier was ever equipped and put into the field. Nevertheless, the firm of speculators issued to 40 men the certificates to the full 400 leagues. A few months later these grants were reviewed by a special constitutional committee and some of the grants were nullified, but others were validated; some of the latter probably had no more merit than those nullified.

Later in 1834 land commissioners were appointed for the purpose of issuing or validating titles to land. A separate commissioner was appointed for the colonies established by Stephen F. Austin and the other empresarios, and there was also a commissioner for what they called "the frontier settlers east of Austin's Colony."<sup>15</sup>

Benjamin Thomas died before these grants were made, but other members of his family obtained sizable grants during 1835.<sup>16</sup>

— On September 23, 1835, 4,428 acres to Mary Thomas (the widow of Benjamin), on Big Sandy Creek which is in Polk County, on the east side of the Trinity River.

— On September 12, 1835, 4,428 acres to I.D. Thomas on the West Bank of the Trinity River: includes land in two surveys.

— To Wiley S. Thomas, 1,476 acres, on November 25, 1835: land adjoins that granted to Mary Thomas.

— On March 2, 1835, 4,428 acres to Geraldas S. Thomas.

These early grants also went to other families to which the Thomases were connected by marriage. Amos Edwards, the father-in-law of I.D. Thomas, got 4,428 acres on the west shore of Galveston Bay and George B. Brownrigg, who married Benjamin's daughter, Theresa, got a league (4,428 acres) on Big Sandy Creek in Polk County. The following grants were made to men later connected with the Thomas family by marriage: Elisha Roberts got one league (4,428 acres) and his son, Noel G. Roberts, got a league and a labor (4,428 plus about 177). Elias K. Davis, who married the oldest daughter

of Benjamin Thomas got a league of land in Liberty County, near the grant awarded to Gary (Geraldas) Thomas.<sup>17</sup>

Most of these standard grants of 4,428 acres were not in San Augustine County, the reason being that much of the good land in this early-settled county had been spoken for years earlier. For example, four leagues were granted in 1800 to Edmund Quirk, who came to the area about that time. To get land in San Augustine County, or to get grants for more than one league, one undoubtedly had to be a "wheeler and dealer". For example, Elisha Roberts had been the alcalde of San Augustine in the early years, the highest political office in the area. Both he and his son, Noel, got a league within San Augustine County. But the champion was Phil Sublett, the able lawyer who was the long-time friend of I.D. Thomas. He got  $7\frac{1}{2}$  leagues in San Augustine County. Haden Edwards got 11 leagues (nearly 50,000 acres) in the colony established by Stephen F. Austin. Although he had been banished from the State after the Fredonian Rebellion, he came back in short order and during his long life was a man of accomplishment and distinction. Another "wheeler and dealer" was Thomas Y. Buford who obtained grants of 10 leagues in the colonies settled by the empresarios, Grant, Durst, and Williams. This Thomas Young Buford was the great-grandfather of the present writer. His daughter, Susan Jane Buford, married the son of I.D. Thomas.

Other members of the family got title to their land a few months after the Texas Revolution, so that their titles were issued by the Republic of Texas. These included:

- Shadrach Thomas, granted 4,428 acres in Upshur County, between the Big and Little Cypress Bayous.
- Jackson Thomas, 1,476 acres in Upshur County, land being south of the Little Cypress.
- Benjamin R. Thomas, 1,476 acres in Colorado County, on the waters of the San Bernado.

In addition to the above, Benjamin R. Thomas obtained special grants, totaling 1,600 acres, for service in the Tex- as army during the months of the Revolution and on into 1837. Gary Thomas also received 320 acres for his 3 months of ser- vice from March until June of 1836.<sup>18</sup>

We estimate that Benjamin Thomas died late in 1834 or in the early months of 1835, near his 57th birthday. His wife, Mary (Dickinson) Thomas, died some two or three years later.

We assume they are both buried in the Thomas Cemetery but we have no proof of this.

Our estimate of the deaths of Benjamin and Mary Thomas is based partly on the early records compiled by Marion Day Mullins.<sup>19</sup> She reproduced the "Muster Roll of Ayes Bowe District", dated 1835. This is a list of 32 men, divided into four platoons, each consisting of a sergeant and seven men. Shadrach Thomas was listed as a first sergeant, Wiley S. Thomas as a private, and Benjamin Thomas was listed as a private in one platoon and listed again as a private in another platoon. We assume that this was Benjamin and his son, Benjamin R. The elder Benjamin must have been alive until 1835—or, assuming the muster list might have been not kept up-to-date—until at least 1834. Apparently he died before September 23, 1835 when his wife, described as a widow, obtained a grant for one league of land (4,428 acres). Also, in a census taken sometime during 1835, Mary Thomas was listed as a widow. She must have died before 1840, because in that year a census taken by the Republic of Texas listed Benjamin R. Thomas as living in Colorado County.<sup>20</sup> He declared himself to own two horses, to have title to 500 acres, and to be liable for paying one poll tax. He listed himself again as "Admr for B. Thomas, dec'd" whose estate included 1,476 acres which had been surveyed but for which final title had not been obtained. We assume that Benjamin R. was appointed administrator of his father's estate after the death of his mother.

There is one additional indication that Benjamin Thomas died about 1834. In March of 1858, his son, Shadrach Thomas, learned that the Texas law permitted him and his brothers to apply retroactively for land as the heirs of Benjamin Thomas. Accordingly, Shadrach was appointed administrator for such claim and he engaged the prominent lawyer, Henry W. Sublett, to draw up the necessary papers. The statements by Shadrach and three character witnesses throw some light on when Benja- min came to Texas and when he died.<sup>21</sup>

Sublett said that Benjamin "emigrated to Texas in 1826 or '27" and remained in San Augustine County "until 1834, in which year he died". Shadrach testified that his father "em- igrated to Texas in or about 1825". Burwell J. Thompson said that he knew Thomas in San Augustine County "about the year 1821, and knew him all the time afterwards until the year 1832, soon after which time he died. . . . . at his residence in San Augustine County." Another testimony was given by General Harrison Haden Edwards who first came to Texas in 1825 or '26 with his father, Hayden Edwards. Gen. Edwards said, "I knew Thomas ....in the year 1826. He lived where I first knew him in San Augustine where he resided

until his death. I knew him residing there for about 7 or 8 years. He performed all the duties of a good citizen and I never knew of his receiving any land as a headright or otherwise."

The last statement was by Matthew Cartwright, a wealthy merchant in San Augustine, in 1857. He said he "knew Benjamin Thomas as an excellent citizen of what is now San Augustine County from the year 1825 until his death which I think occurred about the year 1832."

In March 1859, valid title was obtained for one league of land in Tarrant County. This land was located within the present boundary of the city of Ft. Worth, about nine miles north of downtown Ft. Worth. However, the land was not kept. It was sold immediately, to the highest bidder at an auction on the steps of the Court House in San Augustine, on March 1, 1859. San Augustine County probate records, which are fragmentary, show that \$25 payments were made to each of two of Benjamin's sons and two of his daughters, as follows: Shadrach, Theophilus, Martha (Thomas) Davis, and Maria (Thomas) Roberts. The land was sold for \$750, so apparently additional payments were made to other heirs. The record shows also that an unspecified amount was paid for legal services, undoubtedly to Henry Sublett.<sup>22</sup>

#### Chapter IV

##### SAN AUGUSTINE The Eighth Generation

The children of Benjamin and Polly Thomas constitute the eighth generation in our history of the Thomas family. The descent is through the fifth child, Iredell Dickinson Thomas, who was born in Edgecombe County, North Carolina, in 1805. He was named in honor of James Iredell, a one-time associate justice of the U. S. Supreme Court, and of his mother, who was Mary Ann Dickinson before her marriage. After Iredell was an adult, he was known almost exclusively as I. D. Thomas.

Iredell had just passed his seventeenth birthday when he came with his parents to Natchitoches in 1822. When his parents pushed on into Texas, he remained there to work in a general store. According to one account, he clerked in the store; another reports he was apprenticed to the store owner whose name was Victor Bissonet.

The existing files of a weekly newspaper published in the town in those years, the Natchitoches Courier, indicates there was no firm in the town by the name of Bissonet, or if there was they did not advertise in the paper. More likely, Iredell worked for the large mercantile firm of Harrison and Hopkins. However, he probably lived with the Bissonet family, in a sort of apprenticeship arrangement. The family tradition is that I. D. remained a friend of Victor Bissonet throughout his life, and often visited him on his many trips through Natchitoches during the 40 years of his life after going to Texas. Iredell's sixth child, when she was born in 1841, was named Victoria, in honor of his long-time friend.

We do not know exactly how long Iredell stayed in Natchitoches, but a little more than six years is a good estimate. We know he was there with his family in March 1822, and was there on April 3, 1827. On that latter date, he placed the following ad in the Courier: "HORSES FOR SALE - The subscriber has fifteen good work horses which he will dispose of low for cash, or on short credit. Apply at Harrison and Hopkins. (Signed) Iredell D. Thomas" Our best guess is that he moved to San Augustine County, Texas, about a year later. This is because it was in 1828 that (as will be related later) he first met his bride-to-be when she travelled through Natchitoches with her family as they moved to Texas.

I.D. told his children in his later years that much of his education had been gained during his stay in Natchitoches. During these years "he became acquainted with and a great friend of a very learned Catholic priest who was not only highly educated in literature but also in the mechanical arts."<sup>1</sup> After four or five years of tutoring by the priest, Iredell reportedly "became to a great extent master of several languages and very proficient in the mechanical arts."

The family reports undoubtedly are correct in designating these years as the period in which I.D. greatly improved his basic education, although too much credit may be given to one individual (the priest). Of course, he would naturally have learned a good deal of the French language since that language was widely used in this old French and Spanish town. The local newspaper at that time was published in both French and English. As to the religious resources of the town, there was no Protestant church or minister in the town until 1841. According to our consultant on the local history of Natchitoches (Mrs. Elizabeth S. Mills), there were also few priests there between 1822 and 1828. Francisco Maynes left the town in dejection in 1822, discouraged by his bishop's criticism of the religious decadence, cold faith, and ruinously delapidated state of the church itself. The church burned in 1823 along with much of the town. There was no priest there until 1825 when Bishop Duberg visited the parish briefly and left behind a priest named Anduze. This priest did not stay long (though perhaps long enough to give books and lasting encouragement to young Iredell). In February of 1826 the Louisiana Legislature authorized the parish to hold a lottery to raise funds to build a new church which was not completed until 1828.

I.D.'s years of employment with (probably) Harrison and Hopkins were undoubtedly of great value to him. A leading mercantile establishment in a busy trading center of that day was far different from a village retail store today. Their trading area would be not merely the five or six miles that a family could drive to the store in a wagon; it reached for hundreds of miles. They served the entire Red River area from what is now Paris, Texas to New Orleans. It was a central area for caravans of pack horses or heavy wagons, west to Nacogdoches and San Antonio, south to Opelousa, and east to Natchez. Much of their goods were bartered, but when a medium of exchange was used, the payments may have been in gold, silver, or the bank notes of several different nations.

The firm itself may have sent out its own caravans of wagons or pack horses. In fact, Iredell himself may have engaged in such trading activities. This possibility is

suggested not only by his ownership of work horses—the ones he offered for sale in 1827—but by the family reports that I.D. in his early years won the friendship of the Indians in the San Augustine area. The family legend is that he was a good friend especially of Chief Loena, as attested by the fact that in 1837 he named his fourth child after the chief.

The mercantile establishments of that day in Natchitoches were active trading partners with the Indians who lived to the north of San Augustine and Nacogdoches. The extent of this trade is indicated by a report made by a Mexican official to his Government in 1832.<sup>2</sup> In that year, the Department of Bexar exported from 8,000 to 10,000 skins annually; the Department of the Brazos exported \$50,000 of skins; and the Department of Nacogdoches exported more than \$200,000 of cotton, corn, cattle, and skins. The American settlers provided the cotton, corn, and cattle; the Indians the skins. Austin's Colony sent much of their produce down the rivers and then by ship to New Orleans, but all the produce from Nacogdoches and San Augustine went by land to Natchitoches and thence down the Red River to New Orleans.

We believe it likely that I.D. used his pack horses to transport basic supplies to the Ayish Bayou settlement and to bring back skins or pelts purchased from the Indians.

Even if I.D. never made such trading trips, he would nevertheless have been well informed regarding developments in the community where his family lived. The local newspaper printed one or more news items, letters, or editorials about Texas in almost every issue. In the issue of September 15, 1825 the editor quoted a long letter from General Wilkinson who had just obtained authorization to take to Texas a large number of Americans for settlement at the Bay of the Trinity, 40 miles from Galveston. The editor commented on the authorizations already granted to Col. Stephen F. Austin (800 families), to Mr. Leftwich of Russellville, Kentucky (800 families), to Hayden Edwards (800 families), to Mr. G. DeWitt of Missouri (450 families), and to Mr. Thorn of New York (450 families). The account concluded with the following comment by the editor: "We cannot help being astonished when we hear of . . . our fellow citizens thus renouncing the benefits of a government equal to none . . . leaving millions of uncultivated acres of land in their own Country, to settle a foreign soil—a country not more fertile, a country not more healthy, and where the government is altogether inadequate to the protection of the citizens . . . We can furnish proof the most unequivocal, and pronounce it dangerous for any republican American, to migrate to that Country before its government becomes settled and energetic, which will not be

soon, or before it becomes a part of our Republic by cession, or otherwise, which may never be the case."

When the Fredonian War broke out in December 1826, and until its resolution, some two or three months later, long articles and letters from participants traced the conflict. Both Hayden Edwards and his brother, Benjamin W. Edwards, were in Natchitoches during some of those months, residing there at least long enough to write lengthy letters to the editor to explain and justify their cause. In so small a village, it is likely that I.D. Thomas was personally acquainted with both of them.

In the May 13, 1827 issue there appeared a lengthy letter from Col. Ahumada, Mexican commanding officer at Nacogdoches, saying among other things that the population of the Ayish Bayou Colony "is composed of one hundred and sixty-eight families, more or less averaging five persons to a family."

Two weeks later, I.D. had a good visit with several members of his family. On that day his older brother, Gary, and his older sister, Martha, came to Natchitoches for a double wedding with a brother and sister from the Davis family. Emily Margaret Davis and Elias K. Davis were son and daughter of Warren Davis, an early settler in the Ayish Bayou community. According to marriage records in Nacogdoches, Gary and Emily Margaret were married by John C. Carr, the same judge in Natchitoches before whom Gary's father and mother had sold land to Shadrach.<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Roberts tells us that Elias K. and Margaret were married on the same day (July 27, 1827), so we assume it was a double wedding that took place in Natchitoches.<sup>4</sup> Since Elias K. Davis was listed as a witness to the marriage of his sister, we can take it as proof of the double wedding.

Inasmuch as there was no Protestant church on either side of the Sabine, and sometimes not even a Catholic priest on either side, many of the American settlers were married by Judge Carr. His surviving records, however, are extremely incomplete, so it is impossible to verify most of them. For example, Iredell's older brother, Shadrach, was married in 1827, to Mrs. E.W. (Polly) Brown but we do not know where the ceremony was performed.

No one knows exactly when Iredell moved from Natchitoches to San Augustine. However, it was sometime after April 1827, when he offered the horses for sale, and January 1830 when he was married to Penelope Edwards.

One account—written in 1902 by Iredell's daughter, Penelope Crouch, and reproduced by Mrs. Roberts in Four Families—says Iredell came to Texas only shortly after his marriage in 1830. She says that I. D. was working for the large mercantile firm in Louisiana when he became acquainted with, and an ardent admirer of, Penelope Edwards, the daughter of Amos Edwards who had resided for a time in Louisiana. Amos Edwards objected to Iredell's attentions to his daughter, since he was "a poor young man." Edwards was said to be wealthy and "very proud and aristocratic." The account continued that Edwards moved on to Nacogdoches where his brother, Hayden, had located. The Edwards family, however, spent only a short time there, residing in the upper floor of the Old Stone Fort before continuing. Iredell, in the meantime, having learned of their plan to move on, got several young men to go with him to Nacogdoches where they stole Penelope out of the Old Stone Fort and returned to San Augustine where they were married.

Another account, which we consider more reliable, indicates that Amos Edwards moved to Texas in 1828. His move to Texas is chronicled in a long biographical account of Penelope's brother, Monroe Edwards.<sup>5</sup> (More about him later.) Amos Edwards moved his family to Texas in an effort to recoup a fortune which he is said to have lost in Kentucky. He planned to join his brothers, Hayden and Benjamin W., who had been active in Texas affairs since 1825. Although both had been banished from Texas after the collapse of the Fredonian War in 1827, they had been pardoned and by 1828 had returned to Nacogdoches where they lived as prosperous and honored patriots.

Amos Edwards and family undoubtedly first came to Texas by way of Natchitoches where they stopped to rest, to lay in supplies, and to make enquiries about conditions in Texas. Amos undoubtedly talked to numerous persons, including Iredell Thomas, who were personally acquainted with his two brothers. Iredell first met the fifteen-year-old Penelope at this time and probably moved permanently to San Augustine (a move he probably had been contemplating for some months) at the same time that Penelope went with her family to Nacogdoches. In Nacogdoches Amos Edwards would have visited his brothers, and also would have contacted Mexican officials to apply for immigration papers and for land. He then proceeded to the area of Red Fish Bar on the west coast of Galveston Bay, which latter became known as Edwards Point and is now San Leon. It was in 1835 that the Mexican Government finally granted him title to 4,428 acres (one league) which he settled on in 1828.

Thomas family tradition has it that Penelope's father ob-

jected to her love for I.D. and for that reason sent her back to Kentucky for a while. It is more likely that he took her and his family to his new home on Galveston Bay. Then, he probably returned to Nacogdoches the following year either to visit his brothers or to validate his land title at the Mexican Government district headquarters in that town. It probably was during such a revisit to Nacogdoches that young Iredell renewed his courtship with Penelope and moved with dispatch to marry the 17-year-old beauty before her father took her back to her Galveston Bay home.

Many old family accounts tell, and probably embellish, the story of I. D.'s elopement with Penelope. Several young men were with Iredell when he met Penelope after she slipped down the back steps from the second floor of the Old Stone Fort. (The downstairs served as the Court House and the upper floor was used at the time as a hotel.) Iredell and Penelope, accompanied by Col. William Garrett and possibly also by Col. Phil Sublett, rode hurriedly back toward San Augustine; another says the ceremony took place on the bridge across Attoyac Creek which forms the boundary between Nacogdoches and San Augustine Counties. The wedding party was followed by Penelope's 22-year-old brother, Monroe Edwards, who challenged Iredell to a duel. Tradition has it that Iredell refused the challenge out of love for his new bride.

Most of this romantic tale cannot be questioned, including Penelope's secretly leaving her second-floor room and eloping into the night, and her brother giving chase and issuing the challenge. But the questions remain, where were they married and by whom? After spending the first night with relatives or friends in Ayish Bayou, the wedding party may have gone on to Natchitoches the next day to be married by Judge John C. Carr.

To get married legitimately in those days was a problem. Texas was still a part of Mexico and subject to the Mexican Constitution which recognized only the Catholic Church and permitted no other.<sup>6</sup> But there were no priests in Nacogdoches or elsewhere in East Texas during those years. According to one church historian, there was no priest anywhere east of San Antonio. It is possible, however, that by 1830 the political chief in San Augustine (called an alcalde) had devised a civil contract similar to the one developed and used by Stephen F. Austin in his Colony. Austin's contract read as follows:

. . . . we, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_,  
of lawfule age, inhabitants of Austin's Colony, in  
the Province of Texas, wishing to unite in matrimo-

ny, each of our parents having given their consent, and there being no Catholic priest in the Colony, - - therefore, agree to take \_\_\_\_\_ for my legal wife and as such to cherish and support and protect her, forsaking all others and keeping myself true and faithful to her alone. . . . and each of us bind and obligate ourselves to have our marriage solemnized by the Priest of the Colony. . . . as soon as the opportunity offers- - all of which we promise in the name of God and in the presence of Stephen F. Austin, judge and political chief of this Colony --

Witness our hands this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_,  
182\_\_\_\_.

The above form was signed by the persons who were married. On the reverse side of the form were two brief statements, one to be signed by the witnesses and the other by Stephen F. Austin. This procedure, although inaugurated by Austin without sanction by the Mexican authorities, did constitute a valid marriage contract. This was only one of the many procedures of self-government that the early colonists forged for themselves out of necessity.

After the marriage on January 21, 1830, the relationship between the Thomas and Edwards families remained strained. Family tradition has always reported only that Amos Edwards was "aristocratic" and objected to Iredell Thomas as a son-in-law because he was poor. This explanation has some validity, for indeed the Edwards family, through several generations, had held posts of responsibility and prominence. The first Hayden Edwards came to this Country a few years before the Revolutionary War. He was accompanied by his two brothers, Robert and Benjamin Harrison. Of the three brothers, only Hayden was married. Shortly before leaving the family estate (their old castle in Wales was known as Edwards Hall), he had married Penelope Sandford. His bride, who started the succession of girls by the name of Penelope, wore at her wedding a costly gown that has since been handed down to successive generations of descendants named Penelope.

The gown was made of heavy pale green material, elaborately trimmed with the finest lace and sparkling with beautiful jewels. After her marriage, according to family tradition, she appeared before the courts of Europe in her "gorgeous trousseau." The first Penelope requested that the gown should be handed down to those who would bear her name and that each

one who received it should marry in it, or wear it once. We do not know on what occasion Penelope Edwards Thomas wore the dress; undoubtedly it was not for her marriage. She gave the dress to her daughter, Penelope (Thomas) Crouch, who in turn gave it to her granddaughter, Azalea Penelope (Smith) Downs. It is still in the possession of the family and is occasionally on display at the Cullen House Museum in San Augustine.

The family tradition that Amos Edwards objected to Iredell Thomas as a son-in-law because he was "poor" hardly seems to be the full story, both because Iredell came from the well-educated planter class who were responsible for the administration of public affairs, and because Penelope Edward's father, though successful, was hardly aristocratic. We doubt that the appellation could be applied even to Penelope's grandfather, John Edwards, who had served both as State senator and U.S. Senator from Kentucky, and who (according to the Dictionary of American Biography) owned 25,000 acres of land. The appellation of "aristocratic" could hardly be applied to any man, however successful, who had gone to Kentucky in those early years when the Indian fighting was the fiercest and bloodiest of any on the American frontier; nor to any man who had been successful in the rough-and-ready frontier politics that prevailed in the years after Kentucky was admitted to statehood in 1792.

It seems likely that Amos Edwards shared a personality trait with other members of the Edwards family. He may have been somewhat autocratic in manner. His brother, Hayden, failed in his role as an empresario because of his autocratic manner. His first cousin, Ninian Edwards, is said by his biographer to have had a stormy and checkered political career because of his autocratic manner. This Ninian Edwards had served as U.S. Senator from Illinois, as a minister to Mexico, and, at the time I.D. asked for the hand of Penelope, he was serving the Governor of Illinois.

Our guess is that Penelope's father withheld his immediate permission for his 17-year-old daughter to marry the young merchant. Iredell was unwilling to wait, since it meant that Penelope would go with her family to Galveston Bay, which according to the difficulty of travel in those days was more inaccessible than if she had been in New Orleans.

Young Penelope had two sisters and four brothers. Her oldest sister, Mary Edwards, married Dr. Heard, a prominent physician in New Orleans. This Dr. Heard was a relative of General Morgan, a participant in the Revolutionary War and undoubtedly a member of the same family to which young Monroe Edwards was apprenticed as a young man. Her second sister,

Minerva, married a Mr. Morris, a Virginia planter who located in Texas where they died and left children.

Of her four brothers, one was Ashmore Edwards who was at one time a Supreme Court Judge in Louisiana. Her brother, Robert, drowned in the Red River when he was a mere youth on his way to visit his sister in San Augustine. Her youngest brother, William Edwards, at one time represented Harris County in the Texas Legislature. During the Civil War he served as a Captain in the Confederate forces. He died a bachelor. Her last brother was Monroe, the young man who had challenged Iredell to a duel and who never came to terms with Iredell, though he did visit his sister a few times in San Augustine when he was there on business. He was the one black sheep in a distinguished family.

When Iredell and Penelope were married in 1830, Monroe was 22 years old. Two years later his career started auspiciously when he was involved in what the history books usually call the "affair at Anahuac", generally recognized as a preliminary to the Texas Revolution of 1836. Although he and fourteen other Texas patriots were thrown into jail, along with William B. Travis who later died in the Alamo, they were not imprisoned for long. A brigade of Texas settlers from San Augustine County promptly marched to their rescue and forced their release.

It was the next year that Edwards met a slave trader on Galveston Bay and, after appropriate arrangements, they sailed from New Orleans on a slave smuggling operation. After many hardships they succeeded in bringing back a cargo of 196 slaves. They had purchased the slaves at an average cost of \$25 each and sold them at about \$600 each, realizing a total profit of more than \$100,000, to be split 50-50.

Monroe invested much of his money in a large plantation in Brazoria County. The next year he entered into partnership with Christopher Dart and they promptly concocted another smuggling operation. This time they went to Cuba and bought the services of several hundred black "indentured servants" who could be legally worked virtually as slaves for a limited period of time, something under ten years. But Edwards and Dart, after their return to Texas, sold the blacks as lifetime slaves, thus getting about \$500 each for indentured servants for whose services they had paid not more than \$200 each.

The very next year Monroe Edwards attempted to forge a bill of sale, by which he tried to cheat his partner out of his half of the extensive plantation holdings. After a lengthy trial (which opened on March 1, 1839 in Brazoria under the

laws of the Republic of Texas) the forgeries perpetrated by Monroe Edwards came to light. He was helped to escape from jail by his 16-year-old slave girl who usually dressed as a man and accompanied him everywhere as his "man-servant". She was a mulatto, an illegitimate child of a Spanish grandee in Cuba and a slave.

From 1839 until 1842 he lived by his wits, traveling extensively and living sumptuously in New Orleans, Cincinnati, New York, Philadelphia and London. In London he cut quite a figure in the highest social circles of the city. According to all accounts he was well educated and a person of great charm and social grace. His wardrobe was expensive; he was at ease in the homes of royalty and nobility. In London he presented forged letters from Senator Daniel Webster and obtained "a loan" of 250 pounds, offering as security bogus bonds and receipts upon a bank of the United States.

Before long, word reached the United States minister in London that "Colonel" Edwards from Texas was an imposter. Thereupon Monroe promptly returned to New York. After staying about two months in New York, he moved to Philadelphia where he began laying plans for a gigantic swindle. He assumed the name of John P. Caldwell, proprietor of a large cotton plantation near Phillips City, Arkansas. Under this guise he applied for a loan of \$25,119.52 from Brown Brothers & Co. of Baltimore and New York, offering as security 1,011 bales of cotton, supposed to be in the hands of Maunsell & Co. of New Orleans. After two months of careful work in forging documents to build up the case, he received checks in New York and Philadelphia, totaling the amount of the sale and made payable to John P. Caldwell. He managed to cash the checks before the merchants discovered they had been taken.

Edwards planned to slip away from Philadelphia but he waited one day too long, and was arrested on October 2, 1841. After his arrest, he employed as his counsel George N. Dallas, a former mayor of Philadelphia and later to become vice president of the United States and still later to give his name to the little town of Dallas, Texas. On the next day, Edwards's trunk was searched and was found to contain \$43,600.

The trial received national publicity, being widely reported by the sensational National Police Gazette. On the second day of the trial they reported: "The avenues to the court room were more crowded even than before, and when the door was opened, the rush of the throng to get inside was so impetuous, as to bear down and completely overthrow the officer in charge ..... The Colonel, with the exception of a

tasteful change of dress, looked just as he did on the previous day. He marched along with the same easy nonchalance, and as he walked up to his counsel, he saluted them with the same polished self-possession which had caused such favorable remarks before."

The trial lasted seven days, ending June 12, 1842, when the jury brought in a verdict of guilty. He was sent to Sing Sing Prison where he met his death in 1847 when he was caught in an attempted get-away and was given a severe lashing. He died shortly thereafter, presumably as a result of the beating, and was buried in the prison burial ground.

Monroe Edwards's career was in such sharp contrast to that of the other members of the family that it has been hard for the descendants to accept. Two examples may be given. When Penelope Edwards Crouch (a granddaughter of Monroe's sister) wrote about the family of her grandmother, she described Monroe as "one of the most brilliant men of his day who was crushed in his great career by his enemies and false friends". Another incident is recounted by H. Bascom Thomas, Jr. In 1922, while a student in the Law School at the University of Texas, he happened to be visiting in the home of Ira H. and Betty Harrison in Sulphur Springs, Texas. A cousin, present at the time, was telling about her family and family connections in the old days in San Augustine. She referred to Monroe Edwards as a brilliant man who was noble and just in all respects but was led astray and betrayed by his friends. Bascom chuckled, and told her, "You don't have that exactly right. Just last week I read a new book by Judge Francis L. Wellman. It was entitled The Art of Cross Examination and it gave a full account of Monroe Edwards's trial in Philadelphia. It is hard to make the case that his friends led him astray. He was his own worst enemy; from that first slave-smuggling operation, he seemed destined to a life of crime." His one redeeming virtue was that he loved and respected his family and did what he could not to involve them in any of his schemes.

\* \* \* \* \*

After their marriage, Iredell and Penelope lived in the Thomas Community some six miles west of San Augustine, near the location of his store. The country store which I.D. operated in those years in the "Thomas Community" was undoubtedly a gathering place where neighbors exchanged the news and gossip of the outside world. Since there were no towns

in that era, the country store, even those located in a one-room log house, served a social function as well as a store house of basic goods for the settlers. It is likely that I.D. and his brothers, especially because they lived near the store, took an active part in the political discussions and activities of that day.

These country stores were the meeting place also for the courts of justice. The Ayish Bayou District, because of its isolation from the center of Mexican authorities, had developed their own American blend of governmental processes. At a local town meeting where they talked about the need for local government, they decided to elect an officer to whom they gave the Spanish title of alcalde. They agreed to give him the authority to render legal decisions. They elected another office, called the sheriff, who was to execute the decisions of the alcalde. The alcalde was also authorized to summon a jury of twelve citizens to help him arrive at a just decision. After a few years two regidores (assisting officers) were chosen to help the alcalde perform his duties. Hence, the alcalde and regidores were based on Spanish law, and the sheriff and jury on American experience.

The alcalde's court was held at the residence of the alcalde. As different men were elected to this post, the court moved from one part of the district to another. This was not convenient, especially in handling necessary papers or storing court records. Hence, they needed to establish a town which would be a permanent seat of local government. In 1832, therefore, a citizens' meeting was held and a committee of 15 men was appointed to select a spot on which this new town would be located. One member of the committee was Shadrach Thomas, at that time about 32 years old. He probably lived in the Thomas Community and was expected to represent the interest of settlers in that locality.

The town of San Augustine was laid off on the eastern bank of the Ayish Bayou, on both sides of the principal east-west road. It contained 48 blocks divided into 356 lots, each 80 feet wide and 160 feet deep. This was reputed to be the first town in Texas to be laid out by an American plan, rather than according to Spanish law. By 1834 the site had been selected, the surveys made and the lots laid out. The first store in the town was built by I.D. Thomas who moved his business there from its location in the farming area six miles west of the town. His original building, according to Crockett, was a log house but this was followed later by "a broad building with three roofs and valleys between them and a parapet

projecting so as to form a long gallery — a type of building common enough in all new towns."

In those days in 1832 when citizens got together to talk about local government and the new town, there was also much talk of their safety and the need for military protection. Their objective at the time did not focus on independence. They were still loyal to Mexico and hopeful that they could be safe and prosperous under the Constitution adopted by Mexico in 1824, soon after they won independence from Spain. The settlers mostly wanted to protect themselves from the arbitrary and high-handed actions of the regional military commanders stationed in central and east Texas. These men often acted like military dictators, governing by whim and personal greed rather than according to the Mexican Constitution. Of course, Mexico in those days was a new nation, recently independent, with no experience in self-government, and racked by the struggles for power by contending forces.

In this situation the settlers banded together and formed the Mexican National Militia, which brought together the militias from Ayish Bayou, Teneha (Shelby County), Sabine, and Bevil Settlement. Existing reports list I.D. Thomas and his brother, Theophilus, as members of the militia who marched to the relief of Anahuac and fought the battle of Nacogdoches.<sup>7</sup>

The need for the National Militia was clear: on April 6, 1830, President Bustamente of Mexico had issued a decree forbidding colonists from the United States to enter Texas. A second decree directed that Mexican convicts be sent to Texas, making it in effect a penal colony. To enforce these decrees, custom houses were established at San Antonio, Nacogdoches, Copano, Velasco, Anahuac, and at the head of Galveston Bay. Troops were sent to where they were needed to enforce these decrees. In Nacogdoches, for example, Colonel Piedras had 300 troops under his command.

The immediate catalyst for action by the National Militia came in 1832 when General Santa Anna declared in favor of the Constitution of 1824 and against President Bustamente. The American settlers in East Texas sided with Santa Anna and prepared by force if necessary to oust the soldiers who served under the commanders appointed by President Bustamente.

It was in this context that the "affair at Anahuac" occurred. Protesting the actions of the military commander at the customs house at Anahuac, Monroe Edwards (I.D.'s brother-in-law) was thrown into jail, along with Colonel William B. Travis and fourteen other American settlers. The National

Militia from East Texas, including the Redlanders from the Ayish Bayou area, marched to their relief and quickly obtained their release.

However, Colonel Piedras had been appointed by Bustamente, and when it became clear to him that the American settlers were giving their support to General Santa Anna, he prepared to attack the settlers. This was the occasion for the battle of Nacogdoches in which the Militia made an attack on Nacogdoches and captured Colonel Piedras and his entire contingent. On the afternoon of August 2, 1832, heavy fighting took place house-to-house and hand-to-hand as the 300 or so militiamen moved forward to capture ever more of the town. The final coup came later in the day when a detachment of Redlanders from Ayish Bayou cautiously circled the town and made a surprise attack on the rear of the Mexicans. The following night the entire Mexican contingent stole out of their fort and started a retreat to San Antonio.

This battle, which has sometimes been called the "Opening Gun of the Texas Revolution" was an important step toward the crucial events of 1836. For one thing, after 1832 no Mexican soldiers were stationed in East Texas. This made it easier for the Texans to work together, and to coordinate their actions with the Americans on the Colorado, Brazos, and Trinity Rivers. It gave them freedom from military intervention when they met together in conventions to debate politics and eventually to declare for independence. Most important of all, it gave them confidence that they had the power and the resolve to resist the Mexican dictators and, if need be, to win their independence.

It soon became evident, however, that Santa Anna was using his position as a ladder by which to climb to absolute power. In 1834 he dissolved the Mexican Congress and invested himself with dictatorial powers. In the face of this situation, it became clear to the Texans that a time for decisive action had come. The Committees of Safety and Correspondence were reactivated and they took a prominent part in turning men's minds toward the impending struggle for independence.

The Committee met regularly in San Augustine, as well as in other districts, during 1835. According to Crockett, I.D. Thomas was secretary of the San Augustine Committee. At the meeting in San Augustine on December 22, 1835, Major Jonas Harrison delivered the fervent call for Texas Independence. His address was unanimously adopted by the Committee who instructed I.D. Thomas to have printed 200 copies for distribution to other parts of Texas, including the newspapers printed at Nacogdoches and at San Felipe de Austin.

Only four months after the call for independence by the San Augustine committee in December 1835, Sam Houston (a resident of San Augustine at the time) led the Texans to victory and independence at San Jacinto. The principal fighting was at three places—the Alamo, Goliad, and San Jacinto. So far as we can ascertain, Benjamin R. Thomas was the only member of the Thomas family involved in these particular battles. Benjamin's name is inscribed on the monument that now stands outside Houston on the San Jacinto battle grounds. Details on him and the other 326 soldiers who were with Sam Houston at the battle are given by many Texas historians.<sup>8</sup> Benjamin served from March 16 until June 16, 1836, in Captain Kimbro's Company which was recruited in San Augustine. For this service he received a special grant of land, awarded on November 13, 1837. The following year he received another grant for 1,280 acres for additional army service from September 1836 until September 1837.

Although Benjamin R. was the only family member who fought in the decisive battles of the Texas War of Independence, he was not the only one who served during the period. According to Miller's study of land grants, Geraldas (Gary) Thomas also received a grant of 320 acres for service during the critical period of March to June of 1836. Also, according to *Four Families*, Theophilus Thomas, as well as his younger brother, Jackson Thomas, were members of Captain Thomas S. McFarland's Company of Volunteers in 1836; and Theophilus was still (or again) serving in 1842 when the Texas Militia were called into service to repulse a Mexican invasion. He was among the Texas soldiers captured and forced to draw blindfold from a pot of beans to see who would be executed. Fortunately Theophilus was not among the 17 men who drew the black beans and were shot by the firing squad.

Although Iredell was often referred to in later years as Colonel, we find no evidence that the title was other than honorary. There is no record in the Adjutant General's office that he served in the army of the Republic of Texas.<sup>9</sup> By 1836 his mercantile business was prospering and his daily attention was needed to serve his customers and to oversee a large and varied inventory.

However, we may be sure that he assisted the war effort in his own way. For example, on June 13, 1836, he provided goods to a local detachment of troops which was being assembled and outfitted for marching to the Texas Headquarters of the Volunteer Army of Texas. Although the Battle of San Jacinto had been won and Santa Anna captured, Mexico had not conceded the contest. No treaty had been signed and the Texans fully expected that a new Mexican army would soon arrive to continue

the struggle.

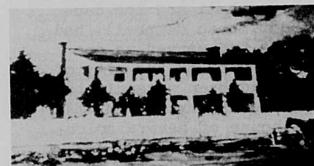
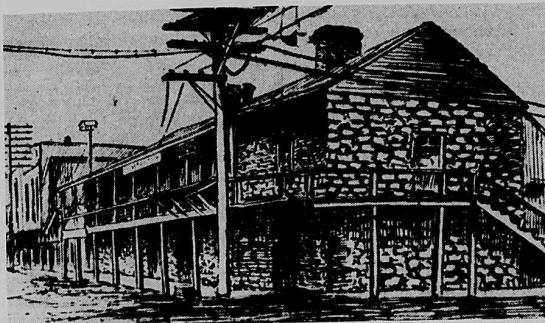
On that day in June, Major Irvine, the assistant quartermaster for the eastern department of the Texas Volunteer Army, asked for a loan of \$20 cash and an assortment of merchandise needed by the troops. The following items were listed on the I. D. Thomas account books:

June 13 - 3 fry pans	6/	\$ 2.25
" 13 - 7 brass kettles	30"	46.13
" 13 - 3 ropes		3.00
July 2 - 1 small bunch cords		.50
" 6 - Bunches "		4.50
" 6 - 14 yards linen		3.50
" 6 - 16 yards negro shirting		50.00
" 6 - threads		.37
" 6 - 1 locke		.50
" 6 - 100 lb coffee		25.00
" 6 - 100 lb sugar		25.00
" 6 - 8 brass kettles, 27"		41.25
" 6 - 1 bridle and spurs		5.50
" 6 - 28 blankets		98.00
" 6 - 5 yds webbing		1.25
" 6 - 5 yds "		.75
" 6 - 1 bunch $\frac{1}{2}$ yd webbing		1.13
		<u>263.63</u>

At that time there was no Republic of Texas, no one to guarantee the payment. He carried the account until September, 1837, by which time the Republic had been established, Sam Houston elected President, and a Department of the Army established. I. D. presented his claim for payment "on this sixteenth day of September in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty-seven and in the Independence the second." He was fully paid \$263.63 for the merchandise and the cash loan.

\* \* \* \* \*

The quarter century from Texas Independence until the start of the Civil War was a period of peace and prosperity for the Thomas family, and indeed for the town of San Augustine. Business was good, the standard of living was steadily rising, and the town was striving diligently to increase its amenities, especially in the cultural aspects of life. San Augustine in the 1840's was second only to Houston in size among Texas towns, and was the leader in education, religion, and polite society. It called itself "the Athens of



At top: The Old Stone Fort before it was torn down in 1902. The stones were saved and the rebuilt Fort now stands on the campus of Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, Texas. Right: Portrait of Gen. Sam Houston, painted by Penelope Thomas. Middle left: Portrait of I.D. Thomas, painted by his grandson, S. Seymour Thomas, and based on a photograph. Portrait now hangs in the S. Seymour Thomas Memorial Room at the Cullen House Museum, San Augustine, Texas. Lower left: The I.D. Thomas home, sketched by his grandson, S. Seymour Thomas, who was born there two years after I.D. Thomas died.

Texas," although one or two other towns, especially Marshall, also claimed the title.

Iredell and Penelope must have been one of the more attractive couples in the small town. They were both small and energetic. I. D. was about 5 feet 6 inches tall, the same as his son William. Penelope's daughters have been described as being about 5 feet tall.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, we have no direct reports on Penelope, no description of her as a person. After her marriage, she lived only 14 years, during which time she gave birth to 4 girls and 3 boys. She died in June, 1844, from complications of child birth. Her last child was born on June 1, 1844. She is believed to be buried in the Thomas Cemetery, 5 miles west of San Augustine. Her grave, however, like that of her husband, is unmarked at this time and its exact location is surmised but not definitely known.

The first child was born to I. D. and Penelope on January 21, 1832, and the second on June 30, 1834. The first was named Almedia and the second, Mary Jane. The first boy, William (but called Buck), was born on February 1, 1836, the last of the children to be born a "native-born Mexican", that is, a citizen of Mexico. Loena Edwards Thomas was born on June 23, 1837; she was named for her father's close friend, Indian Chief Loena. All her life she was called "Lonie." Penelope, who was always called "Nep", was born May 21, 1839; Victoria, who was always called "Tode," was born on January 30, 1841; I. D., Jr., on June 18, 1842; and James Edwards on June 1, 1844.

On February 23, 1845, I. D. married again, this time to Elizabeth Campbell, the widow of Isaac Campbell and the daughter of Isaac Holman. Her late husband, Isaac Campbell, had been a prominent citizen of the town. He had served as one of the commissioners who had selected the site of the city of Austin, and in the elections of 1842 he had been a candidate for election to the Senate of the Republic of Texas. In 1839, he and Elizabeth had built a beautiful house of severe colonial architecture and almost perfect proportions, on the extension of Main Street just north of University Square. Later, it was owned by Matthew Cartwright and remained in possession of the Cartwright family for another century.

Apparently Elizabeth brought some wealth to the union, since each year from 1845 until his death I. D. rendered his own property for taxation, and then as agent<sup>11</sup> for Elizabeth Thomas rendered 1,400 acres and 10 slaves.

Elizabeth Campbell had no children by Isaac Campbell and she had none as the wife of I. D. Thomas. She undoubtedly

tried hard to be a good mother to her newly acquired seven children. However, family tradition reports that her status as a stepmother was not altogether happy. The descendants of I.D.'s son, William, have always understood that one reason he moved so quickly after his marriage to Hopkins County in Northeast Texas was that he did not get along with his stepmother. After I.D.'s death in 1866, Elizabeth's share of the estate of her late husband was bought out by her stepson, I.D., Jr., and she went back to Tennessee where she had been born and where her relatives still lived. Yet, the situation must not have been too bad; eight years after her own marriage to I.D., her 18-year-old stepdaughter was married to James B. Holman, who was the son of her brother, Col. W.W. (Billy) Holman.

The basis for the social position and general prosperity of the family was, of course, I.D.'s business operations. From the start he operated a busy mercantile establishment in town and continued to operate farms out from the town, especially in the neighborhood of the original family holdings, five miles west of town on the road to Nacogdoches.

His business operations have been described by his grandson, J.V. Polk, who undoubtedly got the information from his mother, Victoria (Thomas) Polk. Victoria (Aunt "Tode") was 25 years old when her father died in 1866, so the report should be reasonably correct. I.D. Thomas "became one of the greatest merchants of his day and time. His store covered half a block and he was one of the first men to have an idea of a department store. He had a separate room for dry goods and notions; one for shoes and hats; one for hardware; one for groceries; and he had his own drug store. A planter could come to town and get everything he needed from him, and it was not uncommon for them to buy two or three thousand dollars worth at a time. Thomas was a planter as well as a merchant. He owned three plantations and 150 negroes, and had his own gin and grist mill. It was said he spent the money he made in his store buying negroes and running his farms, and his farms were never profitable because he spent so much money feeding and clothing his negroes and did not make them work well."

(Crockett, p. 218)

William H. Crouch of San Antonio (a son of I.D.'s daughter, Penelope) reported the following information in 1933 at the time of the death of his mother: "Iredell was a prosperous land and slave owner with some 10,000 acres in plantation and 250 slaves and was known as one of the largest cotton planters of the south. He shipped much cotton and bought many boat loads of merchandise in New Orleans." These reports appear to be essentially accurate, though subject to some corrections.

In those early years, San Augustine published a weekly newspaper, first the Journal and Advertiser and later The Redlander, which provided occasional reports on activities of the San Augustine merchants.<sup>12</sup> They refer to the busy traffic in merchandise from New Orleans to San Augustine. It is clear that the proprietors of all the leading mercantile houses travelled frequently to New Orleans, taking their cotton there and buying merchandise to bring back. In a September 1841 issue of the local newspaper, it was reported: "our merchants anticipate much improvement in the condition of business during the approaching winter. The cotton crop will not fall short of 50,000 bales and will afford a sufficient medium of exchange for all trade purposes." The editor reported that the established mercantile houses, as well as ones newly established by English, German, and French interests, are "well prepared to serve the planter, to make advances in every variety of merchandise as well as in cash." He further suggested that it would be better for the planter to deal with these merchants than with those at New Orleans, as their cotton "can be shipped from this port to Europe at less expense than from that city."

Every issue of the newspaper carried quotations of current prices of cotton in New Orleans and on the world market. Current exchange rates were quoted on English and French money, as well as on various kinds of specie in the United States. There were different quotes for funds in New York City and Boston, on American gold pieces, and U.S. Treasury notes. Conversion rates for Spanish or Mexican doubloons were also quoted.

It would seem logical that I.D. Thomas made large advances to his customers to carry them until their crop was marketed, since this was customary and remained so for many decades in agricultural communities. Yet, an advertisement (see next page) which he placed in the local newspaper on March 25, 1841, indicated an attempt at least to discontinue the practice. We can assume he did not stick with his policy of selling for cash only. When his estate was inventoried for probate in 1866, he had a huge volume of accounts receivable that were uncollectable. The face value of his "notes and accounts" was four times as large as his current inventory.

As to his farming operations, we can assume the correctness of the report that he operated three farms or plantations. According to the tax assessor's records for the County, I.D. owned only 640 acres in 1838. By 1843, however, he owned 6,929 acres in the County. This number declined as he gradually sold off the land in the County which he did not himself farm with his own slaves. In 1856, he owned 4,564 acres; and

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### S U M M E R   G O O D S

The attention of purchasers is particularly directed to this important fact—viz:—that the

#### CASH SYSTEM

has been absolutely and unavoidably adopted, and he earnestly requests, that his old customers and friends will not for a moment indulge in the idea that the credit system can be longer tolerated, & therefore trusts he will not have an opportunity presented of being under the necessity of refusing.

DRY GOODS, comprising every variety of staple articles of the season

CLOTHING, of every variety, from the latest approved English and American fashion, to the ordinary and cheapest article

SHOES, an extensive assortment

HATS AND CAPS, latest fashions

HARDWARE	CROCKERY
GROCERIES	BOOKS & STATIONARY
HARNESS	HORSE COLLARS
PLOWS, etc., etc.	

I.D. THOMAS

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when he died in 1866,<sup>13</sup> he owned four tracts in the County, totaling 2,419 acres. His largest block consisted of 1,822 acres in the Ren Fuller headright, and the smaller ones were in the M.Salem headright (120 acres), the Joseph Ship headright (300 acres), and the Thomas Cartwright headright (177 acres). He also farmed the 1,400 acres which belonged to his wife.

The land he owned outside the County was for speculative investment, looking to the gradual increase in land price

throughout the State. In 1838 he owned no land outside the County, but in 1843 he rendered 8,000 acres for taxation. In that year he also owned 16 town lots in San Augustine and 15 town lots in three other east Texas towns. In 1846 he owned about 19,000 acres elsewhere in the State and he apparently continued to own about this amount until the Civil War when he must have sold much of it. When he died in 1866, his estate included only 5,448 acres in counties other than San Augustine.

His ownership of slaves was proportionate to the number of acres he cultivated in the County. In 1838 he owned 5 slaves for work on his 640 acres; in 1843 he owned 22 Negroes, and in 1845 he had 39 slaves in his own name and 10 in his wife's name. This is about the number which he rendered for taxation each year until the end of the War. At his death, of course, the slaves had been freed, and therefore not listed in the inventory of his estate.

The number of slaves he owned was far fewer than was indicated by newspaper reports published between 1900 and 1920. One grandson remembered that he had 150 slaves; another that he owned 250. Even the 50 that he actually owned was a large number. According to the U. S. Census, slightly over one-fourth of all east Texans (that is, all residents east of the Trinity River) were Negro slaves. Ten different counties, including San Augustine, had over 1,000 slaves. In all of East Texas the Census listed 272 persons who owned more than 20 slaves and could thus properly be called "planters." Ninety-two "planters" lived in Harrison County (Marshall), 24 in Bowie County, and 22 in Cass County; in each of the other counties there were fewer than 20 persons classified as "planters."<sup>14</sup>

I. D. Thomas would have been better advised if he had followed the business policy advocated by some of his wealthy neighbors, such as S. W. Blount and Matthew Cartwright, who invested funds primarily in land rather than slaves. I. D. apparently sold off much of his land but kept the slaves. At any rate, I. D. had many slaves to attend to his household, as well as to labor on his plantations. Tradition in the author's family has always reported that Grandfather William always had his own personal slave during boyhood and as a young man.

I. D. Thomas gave his time and attention not only to his business. Every sort of community enterprise had his active support. The education of his children was one of his enduring interests, and along with eight or ten other men from the business and professional leadership of the town, he sponsored

numerous educational ventures.

In 1842 when his two oldest girls were 8 and 6 years of age respectively, he joined with eleven other citizens to sponsor the San Augustine Female Academy. They engaged Mrs. A. E. Madden and authorized her to teach all branches of a thorough English education, together with music, drawing, painting, ornamental needlework, etc. The following year he assumed responsibility, as a member of the Board of Trustees, for a more ambitious undertaking, namely, the University of San Augustine. Along with Matthew Cartwright, I. D. Thomas placed his name on an advertisement in the local newspaper, soliciting applications for a director of the school. Later that summer they employed a man with energy and intellectual attainments—although, as it turned out later, not one with much skill in public relations. Their choice was Reverend Marcus A. Montrose, a Scotsman who let it be known that he was a graduate of the University of Edinburgh and a minister of the Presbyterian Church.

Crocket repeats an amusing story of the circumstances of his interview with a committee of the Board of Trustees. The committee consisted of I. D. Thomas and two of his close friends. One was Matthew Cartwright who had married Amanda Holman, a sister of I. D.'s second wife, Elizabeth. The other was Phillip Sublet, a successful lawyer who 13 years earlier had accompanied I. D. on that trip to Nacogdoches to steal his bride-to-be away from the Old Stone Fort. Since the committee-men felt somewhat inadequate for the job of examining so learned a man, they decided to make it a matter of form. I. D. asked, "Can you figure?" Mr. Montrose, who was a master of calculus, modestly admitted that he thought he could, and I. D. announced that he was satisfied. Matthew then asked, "Can you calculate interest?" Mr. Montrose thought he was equal to the task, and Matthew declared himself satisfied. Phillip then asked, "Can you turn the grandmother's trick?" (a trick at cards well known among gamblers). This puzzled the worthy Scotsman and he was forced to confess his ignorance. "Then I am satisfied," exclaimed Phillip, and Mr. Montrose was accordingly employed.

San Augustine University offered courses in chemistry, mineralogy, conchology, and the Hebrew, Syriac, Chaldean, and Arabic languages, as well as in the more usual subjects. Painting, music, and "stenography" were also a part of the curriculum. A few lectures on law, medicine, and patriotic subjects were given by local professional men. However, courses were also offered in the elementary grades, so that I. D.'s young son, William, born in February 1836, probably learned his numbers and his alphabet here.

Much of the work of the "University" undoubtedly was below college level. At any rate it never offered a college degree. Its enrollment soon reached 200 students, but this number was cut in half almost immediately when the local Methodists established a competing school which they called Wesleyan College. Mr. Montrose brought on the competition by preaching a fiery sermon on the subject of sanctification. It so angered the Methodists, who constituted the leading church in the town, that they pulled out of the University, lest their children be corrupted by anti-Methodist doctrines.

As a result of the competition, both schools went broke and the town was left with two empty college buildings. The citizens of the town were instrumental in urging the State of Texas to pass a law (on March 8, 1848) incorporating the "University of Eastern Texas". I.D. Thomas was one of the 15 representative citizens who composed the first Board of Trustees. This institution, however, soon failed because of continual religious bickering. Afterward, the Masonic Order took on the task of running the local school, and did a fair job, better than the religious groups had done.

One reason for the continuing troubles of the private schools was that the prosperous men of that day sent their children "back east" for their schooling.

When Mary Raymond, granddaughter of I.D. and daughter of James Edwards Thomas, was in San Augustine in 1879 and visited with her Aunt "Lonie", Aunt "Tode", and Aunt "Nep", she first learned the stories which she recounted several decades later when she told the story of her Texas Heritage. She said:

"My grandfather sent each of his daughters to finishing schools. Whether all attended the same place I do not know, but I am sure Aunt Lonie went to a now ancient and highly respected seminary in New Jersey . . . . (on one occasion) my grandfather had gone to meet his own and a neighbor's daughter after the girls had completed their term. Grandfather permitted the two girls to tarry briefly in New York City as a treat. On Sunday he escorted them to services at Old Trinity Church. When the congregation rose to sing, my aunt discovered in no time that her powerful voice was almost drowning out the choir, so she sang . . . . with even greater vehemence, knowing that everyone was turning cautiously to glimpse the young stranger who was singing so enthusiastically. . . . Aunt Lonie had been the choir leader in the humbler house of worship in East Texas, so she didn't hesitate to take the lead when she felt Old Trinity needed her."

Most likely, Lonie's friend, who returned with her and I.D. from New York, was Mary Garrett. Mary's father was William Garrett, a prosperous merchant and planter who, like I.D. Thomas, had served as one of the trustees of the unsuccessful University of Eastern Texas. The Garrett family preserved the following letter from their daughter, Mary, dated December 31, 1854, and bearing a New Jersey postmark:

"It is now Sunday evening and I have again to sit down and write you to come for me—but I know you are very tired of listening to me. (I) beg you to let me come home. I cant help it for it is very disagreeable to stay here, we have no fire in our rooms and I tell you it is so cold we do not know what to do. The ice is on the windows where we breathe and the windows is wet. It is frozen in the mornings thick and the water that we have to wash in so cold that it makes our fingers ache so that we can scarcely make our beds up . . . . this is a very lonesum place although there is so many girls but they will not go with us they think that they are too good. Pa, you must be sure and come after me. I cannot keep from crying to think of the many happy days I have spent at home . . . . Just to think of home that sweet place home Pa you do not know how much we suffer here it is so hard for us to stay. I know that you cannot say no when I have asked you so often to let me come home . . . . you must excuse all mistakes and the bad writing. and write immediately to your daughter."

San Augustine maintained a lively social life, especially among the twenty or so families who lived like the "planter families" of the Old South. The leadership of the town in those days comprised about a half dozen families who were merchants, an equal number of lawyers, and a smattering of physicians, newspaper publishers, and other types of entrepreneurs. All were land owners and planters, as well as business or professional men. Their houses were scattered over a six mile radius from San Augustine but they came together readily on horseback and in their family carriages. We have some accounts of their social activities in that day. For example, a newspaper item on September 8, 1841 reported that "the town was literally deserted last Sunday. Everybody went to the Presbyterian Camp Meeting and everybody returned in the evening well pleased."

In the same issue was an open letter to General Sam Houston asking him to attend a dinner or barbecue and to expound his views on "many important questions (especially the France Texienne Bill) which are now agitating the community." A letter came back promptly to I.D. Thomas and the other signatories of the letter that he could not come on the date indicated but would meet with them "on October 9th inst." (During his early years in Texas General Houston had lived in San Augustine, and ever after he always signed his letters to them as "Your Fellow Citizen, Sam Houston."

During those years there were no hotels as we know them now. Although some families kept transients for pay, most noted travelers stayed as house guests with prominent citizens in the community where they were visiting. General Houston and other leaders of the Republic often stayed in the home of I.D. Thomas, as well as with other prominent merchants and lawyers in the community. A prized possession, still in the family in San Augustine, is the large portrait of Sam Houston painted by I.D.'s daughter, Penelope, during the decade of the 1850's. This is said to be the only portrait for which General Houston ever sat; all others were copied from photographs.

A wedding often furnished the occasion for the custom of going from place to place, enjoying the festivities first in one home and then in another. The diary of Thomas S. McFarland, under date of September 12, 1837, gives an account of the festivities when Theophilus Thomas, the brother of I.D., was married to Miss Susan Winn who "were married on the 12th inst. at candle lighting. Myself and Miss Adeline Davis stood up with them, as usual in such cases. After the wedding a few plays were brought up which served to pass off the evening, after a tolerable supper. On the next morning after breakfast the party, consisting of a few relations, rode up to Mr. Thomas', 17 miles, where we were refreshed by partaking of a very good supper, after which we had quite a variety of agreeable plays, with pleasant company, which lasted till about midnight, when the party quietly retired to their homes." (Crockett, p. 229)

Plays were an important and frequent type of social activity in those days. San Augustine developed an active community spirit in support of its enthusiastic Thespian Society. Colonel John S. Ford—doctor, editor, lawyer, politician, and Indian fighter—reports that the Thespian Society was organized in 1838 and was in intermittent operation for at least six years. Two of their plays were written by Dr. Ford. One of these was a comedy based on his observation of life in the Republic. It told the story of a swindler who received spurious land certificates in return for worthless "wildcat"

paper money. In keeping with the custom of the day, all parts were taken by men—none by women.

But the women had their activities too. Extracurricular activities in connection with the local "university" included meetings of the literary and debating societies and celebrations of patriotic holidays. May Day was an appropriate time for the young ladies of the town to hold a special celebration.

On May 1, 1844, the co-eds of the University of San Augustine crowned their queen, Miss Almedia Thomas, before a packed house. The weekly newspaper at the time reported that at the opening exercises, the girls marched around the stage which was decorated with flowers and evergreens. With Miss Brichta at the piano, the Queen took her seat on the throne, while the maids of honor, cushion bearer, and other attendants took appropriate positions. Several young ladies, including the queen, delivered original speeches; a song composed for the occasion was sung, and a procession formed and proceeded to a nearby home for a banquet. In her speech, the young daughter of I. D. Thomas gave thanks for the honor that had been rendered her, praised the school, and closed her address with the following ringing paragraph:

"My Comrades, may you see the return of many a season of flowers—though storm may gather, the tempest roar, and the chilling winds of apathy freeze, yet remember this day and remember this institution. Forget not to cultivate those graces of the heart, so often portrayed, drink deep of the Pierian Spring, then shall Orion, Arcturus and the Pleiad(e)s, speak of the ages they have glittered in yonder sky. The flowers of the field shall utter prophecies, and all nature shall open her lavish store for your admiration and pleasure—by such literary efforts, our nation shall be great and "The Home of the Brave."

Iredell was surely on hand that evening to applaud the triumphs of his 12-year-old daughter. We may wonder, however, whether Penelope was there and whether it was at their home that the co-eds had their banquet, since Penelope was very much pregnant at the time. She died shortly after her seventh child was born on June 1, 1844.

On the whole, I. D. Thomas was a pretty solid citizen. There is no indication that he gambled on anything other than the price of cotton futures on the world market. Gambling, however, was widespread in Texas in those early days. It centered mostly around horse racing. Race tracks were oper-

ated in many Texas towns, including those along the Red River (Clarksville and Boston). The San Augustine Jockey Club was organized in the winter of 1839-40 and it was reported in the spring of 1840 that race horses "all the way from Long Island" were in training for the meet in San Augustine.

After the organization of the Episcopal Church in San Augustine in 1848, I.D. and his wife, Elizabeth (Holman) Thomas, were identified with that body. Other relatives were also members, including Elizabeth's brother, Colonel Billy Holman, and Colonel Elijah Price and his wife, Temperance (Thomas) Price. During the 1850's the Episcopal Church was the most prominent religious body in the town, enrolling more than its share of the prosperous and prominent citizens. It is possible, however, that I.D. Thomas was not a member, but only an active supporter, of the congregation. His family, of course, had been actively identified with the Methodists since 1834 when Henry Stephenson crossed over into Texas from Louisiana and, in defiance of the authorities, preached at the home of Benjamin Thomas, seven miles west of town. By 1848 I.D.'s brother, Shadrach, was preaching regularly at the Methodist church west of town in the Thomas community.

There seems no doubt that I.D. Thomas's primary interests lay in his business and in his home. His home was said to be the first two-story home in Texas. Whether that was true or not, it was a comfortable and well appointed home for that day and time. On his semi-annual trips to New Orleans he regularly brought back items of furniture and furnishings to add beauty and comfort to his home. The piano was perhaps his pride and joy. We do not know the year it was brought in, but we may be sure that it occupied space on the river boat and the wagon across country that could have been occupied by valuable cargo for his store. When his estate was inventoried after his death, the piano was valued at \$500— at a time when two beautiful sofas were valued at only \$25 each. Another year he brought back window drapes, especially made by artisans in England or France. Another year he had made for his special order a set of china in France. At the time of his death the 138 pieces in the set were still intact. These have been passed down in the family as treasured heirlooms. (After his death the entire set was appraised at \$60.)

In later years the personality and disposition of I.D. Thomas was often described by his sons and daughters or by his grandchildren who heard the stories from their parents. (Because of his rather early death, few of his grandchildren remembered him.) He was relaxed, easy going, and always socially polished. However, he was not one to make speeches or to take the lead in political meetings or community cele-

brations. In his early years, he was an excellent dancer. In later years he liked to spend some time on his hobbies at home. During his apprenticeship in Natchitoches, Louisiana, he learned to work in the "shop", using mechanical tools for practical projects and for artistic effects. In later years he often worked in wood, making beautiful items for his home. For a while he studied oil painting with his daughter, Penelope, undoubtedly encouraging her when she painted the portrait of General Sam Houston that still hangs in the San Augustine home of his great granddaughter.

\* \* \* \* \*

All the brothers and sisters of I.D. Thomas established successful pioneer families in early Texzs. I.D. and five others (two brothers and three sisters) stayed in San Augustine. Five more moved to newer areas of Texas where land was plentiful. His brothers who remained in San Augustine were Shadrach and Theophilus. The sisters were Martha, Theresa, and Maria.

Shadrach and Theophilus were perhaps not as successful in business as was Iredell, but they were equally well known and respected in the community. Both were basically farmers, though they also held various jobs in town. In the early days of the Republic, Shadrach obtained a grant for 4,428 acres in Upshur County (on the upper Sabine River), but this land was probably not kept long. Worth about ten cents an acre when obtained, it may have appreciated to twice that amount if he held it a few years. In the Census of the Republic of Texas, in 1840, he reported the ownership of one slave but no real property. The only personal property he listed was one wooden clock.

Shadrach was an elected public official during much of his life. The marriage records for the community indicate that he served as Justice of the Peace during the years from 1837 to 1842.<sup>16</sup> In 1847 he was elected sheriff of San Augustine County and was re-elected, except for one term, until 1856. Years later Shadrach's son, Noel Gill Thomas, described him as a "tall, angular man, of undoubted courage, but peaceable and quiet in demeanor, who seldom carried firearms in the discharge of his duties. Such was the force of his character and the respect in which he was held that he enforced peace in all parts of the County. On one or two occasions he arrested desperate men without the aid of firearms and paroled them upon their honor to appear in court, and that their word was strictly observed."

Perhaps Shadrach was best known during the 1840's for his work in the local Methodist church. San Augustine in those days became the cradle of Protestantism in Texas, and the Thomas family from the start had been hospitable to the Methodist circuit riders that had come to the area from Louisiana. One of the best known of the early Methodist preachers was Henry Stephenson. In 1834 he crossed the Sabine into Texas and, although he was prevented by the authorities from preaching in some locations, he did preach in San Augustine, "at the house of Benjamin Thomas, seven miles west of town, and also held a meeting at the house of George Teal and organized a church."<sup>17</sup> Immediately after the Texas Revolution, the church could then be legally organized. Hence, the first quarterly conference of the San Augustine Conference (of the Methodist Church) was held on September 16, 1837, at the Polygoch Creek, in Sabine County.<sup>18</sup> In the San Augustine circuit between 1837 and 1842 there were 13 "Societies", with each society including several "classes." One Society was named the S. D. Thomas Society. In 1838, Shadrach was examined and approved as a Class Leader. This official, who would correspond to the Lay Leader in a Methodist congregation today, was the lowest rank in the pastoral hierarchy, closest to the individual members. He was appointed by the circuit preacher. His duty was to visit members, to exhort them and counsel them, and to receive collections. Shadrach also served as secretary and recording steward of the entire circuit. In about 1842 Shadrach was raised in the pastoral hierarchy to the post of exhorter. Then at the 4th Quarterly Conference for 1843 he was licensed to preach.

In 1843, Shadrach and Theophilus Thomas and three others were appointed as trustees for Union Campground. In 1851 Theophilus Thomas was on a committee to locate a new camp ground and to collect funds with which to secure a deed to land and to erect a church house in the neighborhood of Capt. E. W. Brown's and to hold such church house in trust.

The license issued by the Church to each local or lay preacher was for one year only. At each annual conference, the church officials "examined the character" of all licensees and renewed each license. After Shadrach became sheriff, he seemed to have trouble living an exemplary life. Whether there was any connection between his being both a preacher and a sheriff we can only speculate. Late in 1849 his license renewal was deferred in consequence of a personal encounter in which "Brother Thomas" was a party. A committee of three were appointed to investigate, and at the next Quarterly Conference they recommended that the preacher in charge should talk to Brother Thomas and only then should the license be renewed. However, two years later another charge was

brought and this time the only entry in the official minutes was: "character not passed and license not renewed." This was during the 4th Quarterly Conference, November 6, 1852.

He is reported to have married Mrs. E.W. (Polly) Brown in 1827. According to the provincial census taken about 1835, and the U.S. Census of 1850<sup>19</sup>, he had the following children, who were born in about the years shown: Sufrona, 1827; Elanson, 1829; Samuel B., 1832; Ann, 1837; John, 1843; and Noel G., 1845.

Theophilus was the second brother who lived most of his entire life in San Augustine. Although he earned his living as a farmer, he was best known in the community as a licensed (lay) preacher of the Methodist Church. He was first licensed to preach when about 35 years old, perhaps a couple of years before Shadrach's license was revoked. The marriage records on file in San Augustine County show him often as the officiating clergyman in the two decades following his licensing. During his later years he lived for a while in Chappel Hill, in Washington County, which was a center for organized Methodism in those years. In the 1920's when Crocket was gathering material for writing *Two Centuries in East Texas*, many of the old-timers then in the County remembered "Uncle Offey" for his fervent testimonials and exhortations given at Methodist revivals and camp meetings.

On September 12, 1837, Theophilus Thomas married Susan Winn (born April 9, 1822; died October 19, 1888). They had ten children, as follows: Amanda (b. 1842, married William R. Roberts); Virginia (b. 1844, married John W. Rankin); Robert Winn (b. Dec. 25, 1845, married Anna J. \_\_\_\_\_); Edwin W. (born 1848, died in Hunt County, Texas); Henry Clay (b. 1851); John Wesley (born 1853); Elizabeth (b. 1855, married W. R. Leonard); Martha, (b. 1860, married Joseph Waller); Mary (her twin)(b. 1860, married John K. Polk); and Jefferson Davis (date of birth uncertain, died in Greenville, Texas).

The two sisters who married San Augustine men and continued to live there throughout their lives were Theresa, Martha, and Maria. Theresa had married her first cousin, Dr. George B. Brownrigg in Alabama; their first child was born in Louisiana and their second in Mississippi. Their six children with the approximate years of birth were as follows: James (or Junius) B., 1823; Julia, 1828; Emily, 1833; Amarilles, 1837; Laura, 1840; and Susan, 1841.

Martha married Elias K. Davis who had come to Texas in 1821 with his father, Warren Davis. They were married on July 27, 1827, the same day that Geraldas (Gary) Thomas married

Elias K.'s sister, Emily Margaret Davis. Elias and Margaret Davis built a comfortable home near San Augustine that was still occupied by their grandchildren a hundred years later. Before Martha's death on July 3, 1842, she bore eight children, as follows: Ludwell Rector, 1829; Iredell, 1831; Marcellus and Margaret (twins), 1834; Thomas, 1836; Minerva and Maria (twins), 1840; and Warren, 1842.

Maria married Noel Gill Roberts, probably in 1833 since their first child was born October 30, 1834. Noel had been born on Nov. 19, 1813 and Maria probably about 1816. Their children, with probable dates of birth, are as follows: William, 1835; Elisha, 1836; Benjamin, 1834; Elizabeth, 1840; Noel G., Jr., 1845; Maria, 1846; and Martha, 1848; and Felix Grundy, 1849.

One other sister of Iredell died and was buried in San Augustine. This was Mary Ann, usually called Polly. She never married. For many years she lived with her brother, Wiley, in the area between Austin and San Antonio, but returned to San Augustine and died there.

There is less information on the family members who left San Augustine than on those who stayed. Geraldas (Gary), Benjamin R., Wiley, and Jackson all left San Augustine in the years before the Civil War, probably during the 1840's. The fifteen years before the Civil War were a period of extremely rapid growth in the population of the State. During this time "Gone to Texas" became a National by-word as frontier farmers throughout the American States abandoned their log cabins and headed for Texas. During these years the State continued the Republic of Texas policy of granting land either free or at a nominal price. While they did not continue to grant as much as a league and a labor, they made land easy to obtain by selling land scrip cheaply. Especially during the years of the Republic (1836-1845), the sale of land scrip was a source of revenue to the Government. Instead of levying taxes, they sold land scrip in order to pay the cost of the military and ordinary functions of government.

The scrip did not convey a title. It merely gave the bearer an entitlement to select for his own a portion of a larger survey of land. For example, a surveyor might survey an area of approximately 10 Leagues (44,280 acres) and the Government would then issue scrip for 70 sections of land (640 acres, or a square mile, equaling a section). The holder of the scrip had to go to the area, or send his agent, select the available land he wanted, have it surveyed, and then send all his papers to the district office of the General Land Office. If his papers were in order, a title would then

be issued. Often times the process was complicated by the existence of fraudulent land scrip that arose either from honest errors or from the activities of fraudulent land promoters.

The oldest of the brothers was Geraldas (Gary) S. Thomas. He moved to the Galveston Bay area (Liberty County at that time) before 1850. According to the Federal Census in that year, he was a farmer and his land was valued at \$1,800. Given the market value of land in those days, he probably owned about one league (4,428 acres). The land would have been worth about \$1,500 and the house and barn another \$300 or so. According to his great-granddaughter, Mrs. Octavia LaFour, who now lives in Wallisville, Texas, he died on April 11, 1858, and both he and his wife were buried in the family plot in Wallisville, with marked headstones. For a while, Gary was the manager of the port of Anahuac, later the port of Chambers County.

Their oldest daughter was Mary Louise, who married Albert G. Van Pradelles. (Mrs. LaFour is descended from her.) The other daughter, Ann, died during the Civil War period. The only son was Beneman; his diary of service during the Civil War is still in existence but shortly after the war he disappeared and was never heard from again.

The three remaining brothers — Benjamin R., Wiley, and Jackson — went west to the area between Austin and San Antonio. In January 1839 Benjamin married Martha Engledow, from a pioneer family in Nacogdoches, but she died fairly soon. After he moved to the San Antonio area (Bexar County) he married a second time, reportedly to a Mexican woman. He is reported to have had the following children by his first wife: Oscar E., William S., and Angelina.

Wiley Simms Thomas probably left San Augustine about 1840. In 1850 he was living in Bexar County. In about 1839 he had married a young widow with two small children, William and Andrew J. Smith. In 1850, Wiley and Juliana had five more children: Samuel H., John A., Eleanor, James C., and Elonza. At the time of the 1850 census, Wiley's sister, Ann, was living with his family. Since his real estate holdings were valued at \$3,000, he probably had title to around 6,000 acres of land.

We have practically no information on Jackson, who is reported to have lived for many years and to have died in Hayes County. In 1835, he was living with his mother in San Augustine and working as a clerk, probably for his brother. In 1840 he would have been 22 years old. He probably was still

unmarried and went in about 1840 with his older brothers to the area between Austin and San Antonio. However, he was not listed anywhere as a Texas resident by the Census of 1850.

One genealogist (Roberts, Four Families) reports that I.D. had a sister named Theodosia. This probably is in error. Mrs. Roberts apparently got her information from the east Texas historians, Lou Kemp and George L. Crocket, who were collecting biographical data on early families in the early 1920's. The information they got was primarily based on the memory of older persons still living then. They reported that Theodosia Thomas married R.B. Russell on June 3, 1841. But, according to early marriage records of San Augustine County, R.B. Russell on that same date married Laneta Brownwigg.

And finally, Iredell may possibly have had a brother named Isaac. We cannot be sure. If there was an Isaac Thomas, he might have been a brother, or possibly a cousin. Or perhaps it is an error caused by the fact that Iredell Thomas went so much by his initials, I.D., that his friends did not know what the initials stood for. They may have thought he was Isaac D. Thomas.

\* \* \* \* \*

When the Civil War started in 1861, I.D. Thomas was 56 years old. He carried on his business during the War and undoubtedly it was a very difficult time, even though Texas was beyond the theater of operations and was much better off than the sections east of the Mississippi.

Although I.D. was a devoted friend and political follower of General Sam Houston who was opposed to secession and who resigned the governorship rather than lead his state into the Confederacy, I.D. supported the Southern cause. Even though he may have had some doubts about secession, these did not deter him from going along with his community and his State.

The War years were very difficult for business men.<sup>20</sup> Early in the struggle, a Federal blockade started the disruption. The cotton which was grown in great quantities in that area could not be exported, or only with great difficulty. More acreage gradually went to corn and other food crops. By July, 1861, the Texas coast was under tight blockade and the crop of 1861 could not be sold. The only outlet was by hauling the cotton in wagons over the long, difficult terrain to Matamoros, the Mexican port on the Rio

Grande River, across from Brownsville, Texas. Two million dollars worth of cotton was sold through this outlet. Some additional cotton was sold to the Government for its manufacture of cloth at the penitentiary at Huntsville. A million and a half yards of cloth was made there each year with convict labor.

What hurt I.D. Thomas most of all was that he could not collect the huge debts owed to him, debts normally paid each fall when the cotton crop was harvested. As the conflict went into its second year, Governor Lubbock had successfully urged the Texas State Legislature to pass an act to suspend all debts for the duration of the conflict. All of I.D.'s income was cut off when he could no longer collect on his accounts receivable. But he still had to pay taxes. The entire State was put under martial law and the collection of State taxes was put under the supervision of Confederate military forces. Taxes were levied not only in money but also on the direct gathering of food crops by the military.

During these difficult years, I.D. had carried on without the assistance of his grown sons. Although his oldest son, William, did not serve in the War, he had married and left San Augustine some years before the War started. His other two sons, however, had promptly enlisted. I.D., Jr., enlisted on May 1, 1861, as a member of Company E, 3rd Texas Cavalry (Ross Brigade, Jackson's Division). James Edwards enlisted in about June of 1861, when he was barely seventeen years old.

Soon after the end of the War, I.D., Jr. returned after having spent the full four years with the same company. A considerable portion of the time had been spent in military hospitals, recuperating from severe shrapnel wounds in his lower left leg and left shoulder. Although these wounds gave him great trouble throughout his life, he must have been in at least a fair state of recovery at that time. He was able to accompany his father on business trips, and he was able to take the lead in organizing a body of more than 200 men in the Invisible Empire of the Ku Klux Klan. This was a period of great uncertainty and disruption. Union soldiers were stationed in San Augustine; the recently freed Negroes were roaming the streets; and the country seemed to be drifting into a reign of terror.

In his later life, his military wounds gave him considerable trouble. When his Confederate pension application was filed on November 16, 1899, he was unable to work and, in fact, had been unable to work for as long as fifteen years at a stretch during the years since his war service.

It was not until late in 1865, during the winter cold, that I.D.'s son, James Edwards, came trudging home, having walked all the way from the military prison in Illinois where he had spent the last 21 months of the war. Jim wouldn't talk much about his military duty, but he let Nep and Tode read the diary he kept from January 1, 1863 until he was captured in June of that year.<sup>2</sup> During these months his regiment was in eastern Mississippi, along the Duck River in Tennessee (near the town of Columbia), the Tennessee River area just south of Athens, Alabama, and then westward across Mississippi, as his regiment marched to the relief of the besieged Vicksburg.

The greatest battle he was in occurred on March 5th near Columbia, Tennessee, when General Forrest outflanked the Yanks with an attack in the rear, capturing 4,000 prisoners, 4,000 guns, and five pieces of artillery. His most gruesome experience was his service, the day following, on a detail sent to bury the dead Yanks, dumping eight and ten in one grave. His most uncomfortable experiences were the cold, rainy nights during the winter months and the insufferable dust during the hot day-time marches in late spring; his great consolation was his little Bible in which he read several chapters each day; his most constant danger was in being captured or ambushed while serving as a courier, or scouting in the countryside for food for the company mess; his greatest delight was the pretty daughters in the homes of local farmers when he dined or stayed overnight, and the hundreds of ladies who lined the streets of the towns to pass out food and other "dainties" to his regiment. His most constant responsibility was Sam (his personal slave and body servant) who contributed in many ways to the military effort, not the least being his ability to snatch a few chickens from some unguarded chicken yard.

After his capture he spent much of his time working in the hospital ward of the prison, but there also were many hours of enforced idleness. According to his daughter (Mary Raymond), the deprivations and brutality of the prison, and the horrors of the operating room, contributed much to his lifelong aversion to Yankees in general and to doctors in particular.

By the end of 1865, I.D. Thomas was probably trying hard to re-establish his business operations at something like the pre-War levels. During the War, cotton had not been exported, and needed supplies had not been imported. A trip to New Orleans was needed. He and his son, I.D. Jr., planned the trip for mid-February; he wrote to Buck, his oldest son who was in the mercantile business in Hopkins County, asking him to join them in New Orleans.

Our guess is that it was not an easy trip. His financial resources had been decimated by the war. His cotton and cattle had been commandeered by the military, his cotton had remained unsold, and his fifty or more slaves had been freed. Most hurtful of all, money owned him could not be collected. Instead of having many thousands of dollars in cash, derived from the sale of cotton during the preceding fall months, he had a drawer full of uncollectable notes from customers throughout the County.

On that trip to New Orleans, he probably sat on the deck of the river boat and talked with his son—now a grown man and ready to take over part management of the family business—about how he could obtain the necessary credit to see them through. "After all," he said, "these merchants know me. I've been traveling to New Orleans for thirty years. I've done business with them, and I have always met my obligations. Surely, they will help us get back on our feet!"

They went on their mission, to sell what little cotton they had for export, to arrange for credit, and to order merchandise for shipment up the Mississippi and Red Rivers and on to San Augustine. However, before they could complete their mission, I.D. Thomas met his death in a tragic accident. The details are best given in the poignant letter his son wrote home to his stepmother, his sister, and his brother:

New Orleans, La.  
Feb'y 26 1866

Ma Nep and Jim,

I am most afraid and tremble with tears, to have to pen such sad & shocking news, Oh I cannot hardly utter such a distressing thing to you—but my duty to you is to tell of our good & indulgent father's death. He was killed today but not instantly, Oh, I have had an awful time this day, imagine my feelings when Pa died in my arms, but still I cannot realize that he is dead.

I will relate to you the accident and circumstances. We were going together in a crockery store to purchase, and just as we were entering the door, a crate was coming down from the upper story, and one of the ropes broke lose, just as Pa was walking in, and it fell on him, crushing him perfectly speechless. I ran to him and dashed water in his face and hands until he

became sensible, it was between twelve and one o'clock when it transpired, I sent for a doctor immediately, in which time he gave good advise and done all he could. I took him to the Hotel Dien where he received the best of attention. I sent for Dr. Stone right off, but before he came Pa was gone, you have no idea the suffering he had to endure, his left leg was badly broken between the knee and ankle and I think his back was broken, but the worse hurt was an internal one for he complained all the time of his stomach and breast. he died this evening at 4 o'clock and you know that I am placed in a very embarrassing situation. But I have succeeded in making all necessary arrangements to get him home, I will have a metallic coffin. We heard from Buck and I am looking any hour for him, and shall wait for him two or three days, and if he don't get here soon I shall start for home, I wish you could manage to get some conveyance to meet me at Grand Ecore.

I cannot write any more, I have never experienced anything untill this day, this is something so close that I never never dreamed of.

I must close this sad note.

I remain yours affectionately,  
I.D. Thomas.Jr.

We do not know the circumstances of the return trip home. Perhaps I.D., Jr., was alone as he took the body home, or perhaps his brother, Buck, arrived in New Orleans in time to assist in the sorrowful responsibility. We can assume that James Edwards (Jim) took a wagon across country to Grand Ecore to meet the boat that came up the River from New Orleans. (Back in 1832, the Red River had changed its course and no longer flowed through Natchitoches. Thereupon, the adjoining town of Grand Ecore took over as the trade center between New Orleans and East Texas.)

Since we have been unable to find a will in the San Augustine County Clerk's office, it is likely that he died intestate. If this was the case, one-half his estate under State law would have gone to his widow and the other half to his children. Elizabeth Thomas, his widow, was appointed administrator of the estate. However, in April 1866 the County Judge named I.D. Thomas, Jr. as administrator. The reason for this change was noted by the Court. Mrs. Thomas pleaded inexperience

in business affairs and expressed the desire to return to Tennessee to live with relatives in that State where she had been born. On November 16, 1866, the County Court approved a contract between I.D. Thomas, Jr., Administrator, and Elizabeth Thomas whereby her interest in the estate of Iredell was sold to I.D. for \$2,000 in gold, one half to be paid at present and one half a year later. He gave his note for the one half to be paid the following year. So far as we know, she returned soon thereafter to Tennessee.

Some of the records on the settlement of the estate apparently have been lost or misplaced, so we cannot know how fast or for how much the estate was liquidated. The first step was taken on September 11, 1866 when the assets were inventoried. The appraisers appointed by the Court were S.W. Blount, Edwin J. Fry, and George F. Crocket.

Some indication of the size of the estate can be gleaned from the probate records which may or may not be complete.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, the listing below should be taken as a general indication, rather than as an exact listing:

Thomas & Crouch, partnership in drug business:	
Invoice value of goods.....	\$ 8,066
Notes and accounts.....	<u>31,959</u>
	<u>40,025</u>
Store buildings & land (San Aug.) 1,500	
Lots in San Augustine.....	150
Farm land in San Aug.County.....	1,957
Land outside San Aug. County....	<u>3,407</u>
	7,004
Value of personal property on farms in San Augustine County; includes cattle, hogs, oxen, wagons, mules, plows, wheat thresher, spinning wheels, looms, etc..	1,955
Furniture and furnishings (of which the most expensive was a piano valued at \$500).....	2,170
Thomas & Holman	
Notes & accounts & merchandise	7,792
Notes and accounts.....	<u>12,119</u>
Total (excluding homestead).....	<u>19,911</u>
	\$ 71,065

In May, 1868 the Court approved the sale of "\$400 of assets to pay expenses of Elizabeth Thomas and heirs". The

purchasers were S.W. Blount\*, William H. Crouch and James E. Thomas. The buyers were "in the family"; Iredell's son, James, had just become the son-in-law of S.W. Blount and William H. Crouch had just recently married Iredell's daughter, Penelope.

On April 28, 1871 the newspapers published a notice whereby S.W. Blount, a creditor of the estate, petitioned the Court for an order to sell certain property from the estate. The sale was made from the Court House steps in September 1871. S.W. Blount was the only bidder. For \$4,318 he bought all the real estate which had been inventoried in 1866 for \$7,000. Of the sale price, \$3,950 was turned over to Blount to satisfy his claims against the estate and the remainder was paid to I.D., Jr. as Administrator.

The records clearly suggest that the estate was liquidated for a fraction of what its value had been in pre-War days. In the Federal Census of 1850 I.D. Thomas had listed his real property for \$25,000 as compared with the appraisal of \$7,004 and the actual sale for \$4,318.

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\*Stephen William Blount (b. Feb. 3, 1808; d. 1890) was a prominent and wealthy citizen of San Augustine. He was a signer of the Texas Declaration of Independence, served as County Clerk, and also was Postmaster for several years. He engaged in the mercantile business in partnership with Col. Elijah Price, whose wife, Temperance (Thomas) Price, was I.D.'s first cousin. Blount's daughter, Mary Landon, became the wife of I.D.'s son, James Edwards. All three of the appraisers were members of Christ Episcopal Church where I.D. and his wife worshipped.

## Chapter V

### HOPKINS COUNTY The Ninth Generation

Although we have no documented information on the boyhood of Buck Thomas, we may assume that his life as a child and a teen-ager was happy and productive. The years between his tenth and twentieth birthdays (1846 to 1856) were a period of great prosperity for the Thomas family. His father was financially successful and his father and mother were active both socially and politically. From the standpoint of material comforts, they lived as well as any family in the State. They were intimates of the most powerful families, as well as the most cultured and best educated.

During those years William lived with his family in the center of the little town of San Augustine. His father's store was across the street from his home, so we assume he often helped by clerking in the store and probably learned some of the art of buying and selling, both locally and with the wholesalers and importers in New Orleans. He undoubtedly attended the local academies which his father helped to establish and manage in his home town. The family farms were six miles west of town on the road to Nacogdoches and he undoubtedly rode there often. He probably carried messages to the plantation overseer and did other chores for his father. In those days of slave labor, it is doubtful that he ever picked a row of cotton or guided a plow behind the mule. Indeed it is doubtful that he even saddled the horse he rode, since he had his own personal slave to attend to his personal wants.

It is likely that, as a young boy, he was given the nickname of Buck, one that stuck with him all his life. His father probably gave him the nickname early in life to designate him a "young buck" or a chip off the old block. We know that I. D. Thomas gave nicknames to all his children: Allie for Almedia, Polly for Mary Jane, Buck for William, Tode for Victoria, Nep for Penelope, Lonie for Loena, and Jim for James Edwards.

Some of Buck's grandsons remember stories in the family, mostly by their Aunt Nora (Mrs. W. B. Thomas), which trace the nickname to his early days in Hopkins County when the young man reputedly killed two bucks with one blast from his rifle. The story claimed that he shot one buck through the

# Excerpted Thomas Biographies

Relief, U.S.A., Inc., chairman of China Child Welfare, Inc., and a trustee of the Shanghai American School and the American Hospital of Istanbul. He was a director of the China Society of America and a member of the Church Committee for China Relief and of the Council on Foreign Relations in New York. In addition, he belonged to the American Academy of Political Science, American Institute of Pacific Relations, American Museum of Natural History, English Speaking Union, Japan Society of New York, and Omicron Delta Kappa. A Presbyterian Mason (32), he was a member of the following clubs: India House, Manursing Island, American Yacht Club, Apawamis, China Club of Seattle, American Club of Shanghai, and Thatched House of London.

On his retirement Thomas moved to White Plains, N.Y., where he lived for the balance of his life. His association with the Duke family had given him a keen interest in Duke University, to which he donated in 1928 his Far East library, one of the choicest collections of its kind in the world, a result of thirty years of careful selection. He became a member of the Duke University Board of Trustees in 1936 and served as chairman of the Duke Memorial Fund to erect a memorial to Washington Duke and his sons Benjamin N. and James B. Duke. He made repeated purchases of rare books on Oriental life for the university, many of which he bought from Arthur Probsthain, an Oriental bookseller and publisher in London.

Thomas's first wife, Anna Branson of Durham, died in November 1918, only seven months after their marriage. He then married Dorothy Quincy Hancock Read on 21 Nov. 1922, and they had two children, James Augustus, Jr., and Eleanor Lansing.

SEE: *New York Times*, 11 Apr. 1940; James A. Thomas, *A Pioneer Tobacco Merchant in the Orient* (1928) and *Trailing Trade a Million Miles* (1931); Introduction to James Augustus Thomas Papers and Thomas Papers (Manuscript Department, Duke University Library, Durham).

AUGUSTUS MERRIMON BURNS III

**Thomas, James Houston** (22 Sept. 1808–4 Aug. 1876), congressman and lawyer, was born in Iredell County, the son of Isaac J., a physician, and Asenath Houston Thomas. Called Houston, he was seven years old when he moved with his parents to Tennessee, where he attended rural schools. In 1830 he was graduated from Jackson College in Columbia, Maury County, Tenn. He then studied law, was admitted to the bar in 1831, and began practicing in Columbia. On 17 Aug. 1843 he became a law partner of James K. Polk, whose family had migrated to Maury County from North Carolina a few years prior to the arrival of the Thomas family. Elected district attorney general in 1836, he served until 1842. While Polk was president of the United States (1845–49), Thomas wrote to him on many occasions concerning cases in which his firm was involved. As a Democrat Thomas served in the U.S. House of Representatives during the Thirtieth and Thirty-first Congresses (4 Mar. 1847–3 Mar. 1851). Although unsuccessful in his 1850 bid for a third term, he was again elected in 1858 and held his seat from 4 Mar. 1859 to 3 Mar. 1861.

On 17 Jan. 1861, when the possibility of secession was being widely considered, Thomas spoke in Congress in favor of remaining in the Union "with dignity" if possible, but he was critical of the North for its attitude towards the South. "The Southern states," he reminded his colleagues, had a common interest and a common destiny that Southerners would protect "peacefully if we can but forcibly if we must." His words were printed and distributed in Tennessee as well as in other Southern states.

Having supported the governor of Tennessee in bringing about secession, Thomas was elected to the Provisional Confederate Congress. He was an outspoken Southern nationalist and urged the invasion of Kentucky, where it was anticipated backing would be found for the Confederacy. He served only one term, however, after which, in February 1862, he returned to his law practice in Columbia. After Nashville, together with much of central Tennessee, was occupied by Federal troops, Thomas moved to Alabama. Returning home in 1864, he was arrested for treason and imprisoned until the end of the war by Unionist officials who held power in the state. Afterwards he moved to Fayetteville, Tenn., forty miles southeast of Columbia, to practice law and was living there at the time of his death. His body was returned to Maury County for burial in the cemetery of St. John's Episcopal Church at Ashwood, of which he was a member.

Thomas was married on 20 Dec. 1832 to Margaret Meeds Stephens (1810–49), the daughter of the Reverend Daniel Stephens, D.D., rector of St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Columbia. Their children were James David (1833–34); James Daniel (1835–99), a Confederate captain of engineers; Margaret Stephens (August–September 1839); and Mary Catherine (1844–1920).

SEE: *Biog. Dir. Am. Cong.* (1951); William Bruce, *History of Maury County, Tennessee* (1955); Richard N. Current, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Confederacy*, vol. 4 (1993); Fred Lee Hawkins, Jr., comp., *Maury County, Tennessee, Cemeteries* (1989); Marise Lightfoot and Evelyn Shackelford, comps., *They Passed This Way*, vol. 2, "Maury County, Tennessee Death Records" (1989); Robert M. McBride and Dan M. Robinson, *Biographical Directory of the Tennessee General Assembly*, vol. 1 (1975); Leonidas L. Polk, *Handbook of North Carolina* (1879); Jon L. Wakelyn, *Biographical Dictionary of the Confederacy* (1977); Herbert Weaver and others, eds., *Correspondence of James K. Polk*, vols. 1–8 (1969–93).

WILLIAM S. POWELL

**Thomas, John** (11 Oct. 1705–3 Dec. 1788), religious leader, justice, and militia officer, was born in Nansemond County, Va., the son of John and Mary Lawrence Thomas. Educated locally, he was "bred a Churchman," but after settling in North Carolina about 1740 he was converted to the Baptist faith by Dr. Josiah Hart in 1748. In 1756 Thomas founded and was first pastor of the Tosneot Baptist Church, the first of any denomination in lower Edgecombe County. On 24 Sept. 1759 the county court licensed the meetinghouse recently completed on his upper plantation near Tosneot Swamp.

In 1760–62 he allied his church briefly with the distant Charleston Baptist Association, but on 6 Nov. 1769 he became a founder and signer of the covenant of Kehukee Baptist Association at its first formal meeting in Halifax County. On 17 Sept. 1772 he was named to the committee selected to present a complimentary address of the association to Governor Josiah Martin at New Bern. His last appearance noted in the surviving minutes was 20 Oct. 1777, when he was elected moderator and directed the special committee that drew up the Articles of Marriage still reflected in the ceremonies of the Southern Baptists.

In the course of his evangelical career he assisted, on 2 May 1772, Elders Morgan Edwards (Baptist historian from Rhode Island), John Moore, and John Meglamre in ordaining Willian Burgess as pastor of Kehukee Baptist Church. On 24 Sept. 1773, "through the goodness of God, and the instrumentality of Elder John Thomas," a reformation was accomplished at the Red Banks Baptist Church in Pitt County, and in 1776 he and the Reverend

John Thomas, Jr., constituted the Flat Swamp Baptist Church in Martin County, also ordaining John Page to the pastorate. Early in 1777 he helped to reorganize the Lower Fishing Creek Baptist Church in Halifax County. With the assistance of Elder John Page, he constituted the Lower Town Creek Baptist Church and installed Elder Joshua Barnes as its first pastor on 17 Sept. 1780. He and Elder Barnes constituted Little Contentnea Baptist Church in Greene County on 10 Aug. 1785, it having been for some years a branch of the Tosneot church. Although Elder Thomas's home church remained in "a languid situation" for a time after his death, it was destined to fill many years of renewed prominence into the late twentieth century as the Wilson Primitive Baptist Church.

On 11 Oct. 1749 Governor Gabriel Johnston and the colonial Council at New Bern appointed John Thomas a justice of the peace, and the surviving minutes of the Edgecombe County Court reveal that he was in regular attendance at Council meetings from 17 June 1758 to 18 Oct. 1775. Although reappointed by the General Assembly on 23 Dec. 1776, he withdrew from the bench and devoted himself to ministerial duties and public service. His name appears on a road or bridge commission almost yearly between 1767 and 1786, and he served as captain of militia in his district from 1761 until after 1774.

A successful planter, Thomas accumulated around 1,800 acres and at least nine slaves. His considerable household goods, livestock, and home-distilled or fermented beverages enabled him to provide hospitable entertainment for the frequent visitors in his community on church or public business. The inventory of his estate listed twenty-four books by title, principally of a religious nature, and suggest his intellectual preparation for his long and useful career.

The Reverend Morgan Edwards, who visited Thomas in 1772, recorded that his host was married about 1732 to Christenater Roberts (1712–96), the daughter of Thomas and Mary Roberts of Nansemond County. They had six children: the Reverend John, Jr. (1733–1807), who married (1) Patience Williams and (2) Elizabeth Jones; the Reverend Jonathan (1735–75), who married Mary Hilliard; Obedience (1737–88); Major Theophilus (1740–1803), who married Mary Rogers; Millicent (1742–before 1788); and Theresa (1744–ca. 1826), who married (1) the merchant Theophilus Hill and (2) Don Manuel Marchal of St. Augustine.

SEE: Lemuel Burkitt and Jesse Read, *A Concise History of the Kehukee Baptist Association* (1803); M. A. Huggins, *A History of North Carolina Baptists* (1967); George W. Paschal, *History of North Carolina Baptists*, 2 vols. (1930, 1955), and "Morgan Edwards' Materials towards a History of the Baptists in the Province of North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* 7 (July 1930); William L. Saunders, ed., *Colonial Records of North Carolina*, vol. 5 (1887); J. Kelly Turner and John L. Bridgers, Jr., *History of Edgecombe County, North Carolina* (1920).

HUGH BUCKNER JOHNSTON

**Thomas, John Warwick** (27 June 1800–17 May 1871), founder of Thomasville, politician, and educator, was born in Caswell County, the son of Robert and Margaret Warwick Thomas. Because many in Margaret's family spelled their name Warrick, following the popular English pronunciation, numerous descendants continue to use the phonetic spelling. Robert Thomas died in 1810 leaving his widow with six children. John matured young and in late 1817 pursued his interest in mining to Davidson County, where gold, silver, and other valuable min-

erals were found. He engaged in mining, both personally and in business partnerships, for many years. At the home of Moses Lambeth, who lived on large landholdings in the place much later called Cedar Ledge, he fell in love with the daughter Mary (Polly) with whom he eloped on 25 Jan. 1818. Earlier the same month his mother became the second wife of Daniel Merrill, a Revolutionary War veteran who lived a few miles southeast in Randolph County. In 1823 Moses Lambeth ceded to Thomas a large tract of his home place for the consideration of love and affection. Soon Thomas erected a substantial frame house there for his growing family; the house with remodelings was occupied until 1976.

Active in public affairs, Thomas was named one of nine trustees of Fair Grove Methodist Church, which was less than a mile from his home. In 1830 he entered politics and was elected a county representative in the 1831 General Assembly. He was returned as a senator in 1842, 1848, 1854, and 1860. An outspoken Whig, he strongly supported his party's promotion of internal improvements. In 1849 he voted for the bill obligating the state to build a railroad from Goldsboro to Charlotte via Raleigh, Greensboro, and Salisbury. He was chairman of a committee that sold more stock in Davidson than was sold in any other county. Because the survey passed two miles north of his home, he purchased a large piece of land centered by the proposed route and with his sons contracted to construct three railroad sections towards Lexington. He soon had started a town with a large frame store in the center and a mill near the east edge where both grist and lumber were produced. On 23 Oct. 1852 the *Greensborough Patriot* announced the gathering at Thomas Depot on Saturday, 30 October, to be addressed by six named leading North Carolina Whigs promoting the candidacy of General Winfield Scott for president and William A. Graham, a recent state governor, for vice-president. From this first printed naming, the town counts 1852 as its founding date.

Workers came from all around to clear the heavily wooded area, prepare the roadbed, build houses for their families, and provide necessary services. The Thomasville post office was established in 1853 with mail distribution from a desk in the Thomas store. In 1857 the town was incorporated by the General Assembly. Other events that year included the erection of a large house for the Thomas family west of the store on Main Street, the arrival of two shoe manufacturing firms from Bush Hill (Archdale) so as to be better served by the newly completed railroad, and the relocation of the Glen Anna Female Seminary from its place two miles south to the large brick building on East Main Street north of the railroad.

Families moved to the town to provide schooling for their children. Thomas's continuing interest in education dated to his youth, when schooling for those without means was hard to get. But from his many speeches published in the *Greensborough Patriot* during his political years, one finds him well read and using excellent English. When Davidson County first established public schools in 1843, Thomas was one of ten men named to the school board and elected their chairman the first two years. As president of Glen Anna in its new town location, he secured a faculty of highly trained Northern teachers. Both the culture and the prosperity of the area benefited from the seminary's activities and programs.

As a Methodist from Fair Grove, he gave his church a lot north of the railroad for a building and was equally generous to the few Baptists, who received a lot on Randolph Street south of the railroad. Thomas became a member of Richland Lodge No. 214, Ancient Free and Accepted Masons, when it was organized in 1860. He and his sons were active in this strong lodge. He soon gave it a

Upon his return to Texas in 1845, Terrell was again made Indian Commissioner. He was known as an opponent of Texas annexation to the U.S.

He died on May 13, 1846, in Austin. He is buried in an unmarked grave believed to be in Oakwood Cemetery. The Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebration had a monument erected in Oakwood Cemetery in his memory. John Paul Loven, Sr. #5520 A

### HENRY TEUTSCH

Henry Teutsch, born in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1812, became involved as a young man in a religious mysticism movement led by Count Maximilian Leon Proli, the "Prophet of Offenbach," who inspired a loyal following during his various imprisonments and releases in Germany. Leon's 1830 trial was sidetracked by Grand Duke Ludwig II, on condition that Leon and followers would decamp. After a difficult and lengthy Atlantic crossing, their ship docked at New York in September 1831, and was welcomed by President Jackson's letter, issued that month.

#### *Henry Teutsch*

Disorder followed the religious community, resulting in a breakup of the original New Philadelphia in Pennsylvania and a Mississippi voyage to re-establishment as Germantown, eight miles east of Minden, Louisiana. The book, "Fragments of a Dream ... The Story of Germantown," copyright 1962, details Germantown's history, with drawings, recipes, and recollections of various pioneer hardships, including members who were devoured by wolves. These and civil disturbance led to an eventual dissolution off of the community after the countess' death the 1870s.

Many Teutsches were listed community members, but Henry had left long before that stage, and married, in approximately 1843, Louvina Fulcher, Nacogdoches County, born in 1821 to Rebecca Robbins (daughter of a family which owned an early ferry crossing on the Trinity, off of Highway 21 presently), and the wealthy William Fulcher of North Carolina.

Henry and Louvina farmed in Nacogdoches County the remainder of their lives, passing away in 1887 and 1886, respectively, being buried at the Mast/Teutsch Cemetery, between Melrose and Blackjack in Nacogdoches County.

Henry's first wife and a number of children had died from yellow fever in New Orleans, but three surviving sons distinguished themselves in the Confederate Army later: William, Frederick, and August (who lost an arm in the war). Uncle August was a bachelor until his 1928 passing, and my grandfather John Thomas often recounted picking the old man up and giving him a ride over the hills in the Model T from Nacogdoches to Melrose in the early part of the century.

Lewis George Teutsch, the fourth of eight children of Henry and Louvina, married Rebecca Chisum, an orphan of William P. "Cherokee Bill" Chisum and Louisa Brimberry, daughter of Captain Samuel Brimberry, who settled and died near Blackjack after a distinguished career in the Illinois State Militia in the Blackhawk Indian War in the 1830s. (Captain Brimberry's widow, Mary Jones Brimberry, received a pension from the United States government for his service while she resided in the Republic of Texas.)

Lewis and Rebecca's daughter, Ada Lou Teutsch, married John Thomas of San Augustine County, raising their children in the Melrose and Huntington communities, and my mother, Clara Mae Thomas married my father, Dennis C. Cook, of Beulah/Renfro Prairie, Angelina County, in 1940.

My wife, Mary Alice Askins, and I moved to Alaska, where our three sons — Adam, Justin, and William Travis — were born, and where I practice law.

### BENJAMIN THOMAS, SR. 1778-1832

Benjamin Thomas, Sr., at age 46, was one of the earliest Texas pioneers, having settled eight miles west of Ayish Bayou, now San Augustine, in 1824. He was born in 1778 in Edgecombe County, North Carolina, the son of Theophilus Thomas, a major in the American Revolution, judge and descendant of John Thomas, who arrived in Jamestown Colony, Virginia from Great Britain at age 16 in 1622.

Accompanying Benjamin Sr., were his wife, Mary Ann Dickerson, and eight children: Shadrack D., Benjamin Jr., Iredel D., Wiley Cary, Theophilus, Jackson, Theresa and Ann. Benjamin Sr. died in 1832 at the age of 54. His children went on to serve the Republic of Texas.

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#### *Pension Claim*

Shadrack (my great-great-grandfather) was listed among the free males of Ayish Bayou District on June 6, 1826, for the first census of Texas. He entered the Army of the Republic as a 33-year-old private in July 1832, and fought in the Battle of Nacogdoches on August 2, 1832, under Captain James W. Bullock. The Battle of Nacogdoches, sometimes called "The Opening Gun of the Texas Revolution," occurred when a group of Texas settlers defied an order by Colonel Piedras, Commander of the Mexican Battalion at Nacogdoches, to surrender their arms to him. In the battle, Piedras lost forty-seven killed and forty wounded. The remaining 300 Mexican troops were marched to San Antonio by James Bowie, where they were discharged. The Battle of Nacogdoches is an important lesser-known conflict that cleared east Texas of Mexican military rule and allowed the citizens to meet in Convention without military intervention.

Shadrack was listed as 1<sup>st</sup> sergeant under Captain Thomas Dorsett and 1<sup>st</sup> lieutenant James Bullock in 1835, and Captain

McFarland's Company in January 1836. At age 75, he received a pension of \$250.00 from the state of Texas under an act approved in 1870. He was elected sheriff of San Augustine County in 1847, for a nine-year period. He married Sarah Brown.

Their son, Sam B., was born in Texas in 1831, and served in the Civil War from 1861 to 1865. He was captain of Company F, 13<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry, Walker's Texas Division at war's end. Sam married Mary Garrett, granddaughter of Jacob Garrett, who came to Texas in 1824.

In 1830, Jacob was chosen as alcalde of Ayish Bayou District, and in 1832 was elected delegate to the first Convention at San Felipe. He was also one of the delegates to the Consultation of 1835 in San Felipe. In October 1835, he raised \$600.00 and 13 mules for the army. This and a larger sum were the only contributions in money furnished by any town in Texas during the revolution.

Another son of Benjamin Sr., Theophilus, also served at the Battle of Nacogdoches. In November 1835, he enlisted in Captain Bayley Anderson's Company and served as 1<sup>st</sup> lieutenant in the Grass Fight on November 26, the last engagement in the Siege of San Antonio before the final Texan assault on the town. Erastus (Deaf) Smith had reported that Mexican Cavalry with pack animals, thought to be carrying pay for the Mexican Army, was approaching San Antonio. Colonel Burleson ordered James Bowie and forty cavalry and a hundred infantry under William Jack to seize the supply train. After a prolonged battle, the victorious Texans brought in forty captured pack animals, only to discover that their prizes carried only grass to feed army animals. In December 1835, Thelophilus was granted permission by General Burleson to return home because of ill health. Otherwise, he most likely would have died at the Alamo the following March.

Benjamin Jr., at age 30, fought at San Jacinto under Captain William Kimbro in Sherman's regiment. His discharge on June 15, 1836, was signed by Captain Kimbro and Sam Houston, Commander in Chief. On March 5, 1840, he was issued a donation certificate for having participated in the battle. Benjamin first married Martha Engledow, and following her death, Penelope Wheeler. He died on his ranch north of San Antonio in 1891, while a member of the Texas Veterans Association.

God bless Texas and all those who contributed to her greatness. Terry L. Thomas #6369, Kathy Thomas, Jon Thomas, Cheryl Thomas, Steven Thomas, Charlie Faglie, Brady Faglie, Luke Thomas, Josh Thomas, Maxwell T. Goldsworthy

## WILLIAM EVAN THOMAS

William Evan Thomas (3 September 1810 - 6 August 1867) was the seventh of twelve children born to Evan Thomas and his wife, Mary Evans, in Llangunllo, Radnorshire, Wales, a sheep-farming community. He came to America about 1831-33. In an 1848 letter, his mother expresses amazement that he has lost contact with his sister Jane Parlour, living near Niagara Falls, Canada, and his brother James, living near Toledo, Ohio. "It is singular to observe how you lost each other - it is a state of things which we cannot make out."

William received his conditional Texas land grant certificate in 1839; the property was conveyed by unconditional certificate in 1845. He owned the Mustang Stable in Houston, operating a taxi service between Houston and Galveston, and was alderman of the First Ward 1863-1866.

In 1853, at age 42, he married Ann Major, 16, native of Leicester, England, and daughter of foundryman Isaac Major and Mary

Tooper. Their children were Lavinia Danish, William, Emily Harrison, Jennie Scollard, Henry, and Gussie. Henry was sheriff of Galveston County for many years. Gussie was my maternal grandmother, wife of Judge John Kirlicks, who is believed to have defined "goo-goo eyes" in court soon after 1905. Gustave Antoine Miströt III, SRT #6298

## HENRY SEWELL THOMPSON

Henry Sewell Thompson was born in Georgia on October 30, 1810, the son of John Nicholas Thompson and Elizabeth Sewell, and the grandson of Henry B. Thompson, who died in 1823 in Jones County, Georgia. John Nicholas Thompson was born December 14, 1786 in North Carolina, married Elizabeth Sewell on February 18, 1807, probably in Robison County, NC, and died March 8, 1856 in Ashley County, Arkansas.

Elizabeth Sewell, the daughter of Thomas Sewell, was born February 4, 1787 in Sampson County, NC, and died June 5, 1860 in Ashley County, Arkansas. They were the parents of 10 children, the oldest of whom was Henry Sewell Thompson.

Henry Sewell Thompson was married first to Margaret F. Matthews on November 5, 1828 in Greene County, Alabama. She was born July 23, 1806 in Georgia, the daughter of John and Lydia Matthews. Henry and Margaret Thompson had 7 children: Joseph B., born November 14, 1829; Mary Elizabeth; Thomas S., born November 7, 1834; James O. A., born November 14, 1836; Isabella F., born February 25, 1839; Wilber F., born January 27, 1841; and John Nicholas, born July 10, 1844.

Mary Elizabeth Thompson was born May 15, 1832, in Greene County, Alabama and married Patrick Jack Cochran on January 21, 1849. They had 6 children, the last of whom was David Elias Cochran, who married Emily Ellen Graham. David and Emily Cochran had 8 children, the fourth of which was Della Cochran, who married Joseph Devereau Garrison, my grandparents.

Margaret Matthews Thompson died September 28, 1845 in Carthage, Texas, and Henry married second on September 10, 1850 in Panola County to Lucinda A. Allsup, born October 10, 1826 in Tennessee, the daughter of Peter P. and Mary Allsup. Henry died April 16, 1855 in Carthage, and Lucinda died September 13, 1872. Henry and Lucinda had two children: Esiah T., born March 27, 1852; and William Ware, born October 27, 1853.

Henry Sewell Thompson is not found on the 1840 tax list, but is in Texas by January 27, 1841 when his son, Wilbur, was born. He is on the 1846 tax list and 1850 Census of Panola County, Texas. David Lacey Garrison, Jr. #4745

## JESSE G. THOMPSON

Jesse G. Thompson was born about 1812 in Alabama. The place of birth and his parents's names are unknown. He came to Texas in June 1835. On April 3, 1836, he enlisted in Captain Ware's Company of Texas Volunteers. He participated in the Battle of San Jacinto on April 21, 1836. For this service, he was granted a donation certificate in Houston County, Texas.

He married Margaret Malinda (surname unknown), and was the father of at least 8 children. He and his family resided in several Texas counties before settling in Houston County. These counties included Shelby, Colorado, Lavaca, Jackson and Walker.

He died in Walker County, Texas, in November 1859. His final resting place is unknown, but is believed to be an unmarked grave in Chalk Cemetery, Trinity County, Texas. He was my great-great grandfather. H. Keith Thompson #6567

vineyard and made wine from the grapes, storing it in barrels in a special room. He also had peach and plum orchards and a garden full of roses.

Sarah Thomas died July 27, 1895 and Huse remarried on May 12, 1896 to Mary Jane Williford and had two sons, Edgar B. Thomas and Sam Houston Thomas Jr.

Sam Houston Thomas Sr. and Mary Jane Thomas and Sam Houston Thomas Jr.

Sam Houston Thomas Sr. died at age 76 on Sept. 12, 1917 and was buried between his two wives at Rutledge cemetery in Poteet, TX.

Mary Ellen Thomas Carmack, (GD), 17123

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**SHADRACH DICKINSON THOMAS**, son of Benjamin Thomas and Mary Ann Dickinson, was born in Edgecombe County, NC, in 1800. He came to Texas prior to 1825, settling around San Augustine. He married Sarah Holman, daughter of Isaac Holman and Anna Wigglesworth, and had the following children: Sufrona, 1827; Elionson, 1829; Samuel B., 1832; Ann, 1837; John, 1843, and Noel G., 1845. She died prior to 1850. His second marriage was to Mrs. E. W. (Polly) Brown in 1855.

He was a farmer by trade, but was also examined and approved as a Class Leader in a Methodist congregation. His duties included to visit members, to exhort them, to counsel them, and to receive collections. In the following years he was promoted to the post of exhorter and then licensed to preach. However, the character of the licensee had to meet the approval of the church officials at each annual conference. Shadrach had trouble living an exemplary life after he became sheriff. Although he seldom carried firearms, he did kill two men in the line of duty. Thus, he lost his status as a preacher in 1852. He died in 1872 in San Augustine County.

Carolyn Thomas Raney, (GGGD), 12307

**BENJAMIN RUSH THOMPSON**, son of James Thompson, was born in Wayne County, NC, Dec. 22, 1811. He married Margaret Miller Sampson Nov. 30, 1840 in Lowndes County, MS, and they moved to Milam County, TX, by 1843. Their children were: John E., Sarah A., Margaret H., Benjamin R., William, Sarah Eliza, and Mary A. Benjamin Rush was a Methodist clergyman and farmer. He died March 7, 1880, just nine days after his wife had died. They are buried in a private Thompson family cemetery located on one of their farms in Robertson County, TX,

Una Petty Jones, (GGGD), 11326

**HENRY SEWELL THOMPSON** was born Oct. 30, 1810 in Twiggs County, GA, died April 16, 1855 in Carthage, Panola County TX, and was buried in the Old Macedonia Cemetery in Panola County. He was the son of John Nicholas Thompson and his wife, Elizabeth Sewell, whose father, Thomas Sewell, served in the American Revolution. Henry was a farmer and merchant.

Henry married Margaret F. Matthews Nov. 5, 1828 in Greene County, AL. Their children were: Joseph Benson, born 1829; Mary Elizabeth, born 1832; Thomas Sewell, born 1834; James O. A., born 1836; Isabella F., born 1839; Wilber F., born 1841; and John Nicholas, born 1844. Margaret died and Henry married Lucinda Agnes Alsup (Allsup) Sept. 10, 1850 in Carthage, Panola County, TX. Their children were Isaac Thurston, born 1852 and William Ware, born ca. 1853/1855.

Henry moved from Sumter County, AL, to near San Augustine, TX, ca. 1841/1842, and is found on the San Augustine tax rolls beginning in 1843. He moved to Panola County soon after Sept. 28, 1845.

June Moosberg Sherman, (3GGD), 15635

Rolf Lewis Sherman, (4GGS), CRT 6252

**HIRAM LOWE THOMPSON** was born in Missouri in 1822, probably Gasconade Township. His parents removed to East Texas in 1822, and by 1826 both parents had died. In the 1829-1836 Texas Census, Hiram Thompson was listed as a single person, age 15, living in the Tenehaw district. Served in the Texian Army in 1835 for which he received a land

grant, and served in the Texas Militia in 1843. He married Louisana Dever Yocom in Liberty County, in 1842. By 1853 they had moved to Oak Island on the Medina River in Bexar County. He appeared on the tax rolls as having 1,476 acres of land, three Negroes, cattle, hogs and a wagon. The 1860 Census listed him as having a wife, Louisana, and six children: Rosana, Roanna, Julia, Alice, Alva, and John. About 1864 Louisana Thompson died and in 1865 he married Christine Elizabeth Bechtol Winn and moved to Bell County. Two children, Charles E.

Hiram Lowe Thompson

and Hiram Desmuke, were born to this marriage. In later years, he moved to Del Rio where he died in 1904. The following obituary appeared in the Del Rio newspaper:

*Del Rio, Val Verde Co., Tex. Feb. 13, 1904. Rev. Hiram L. Thompson, probably the oldest preacher in Texas, lies dead at the Franks Hotel. Rev. Thompson was born in Missouri, Jan. 13, 1818, and his parents came to Texas in 1822 and settled on the Trinity River. In 1823 the elder Thompson was killed by a premature discharge of his gun while hunting buffaloes, and in 1825 Mrs. Thompson died, thus leaving the young Hiram Thompson without a relative to battle for his life in the wilds of Texas at the age of eight years.*

*The mode he adopted in early youth to fight the battle of life and trying scenes through which he passed would make interesting reading. The clouds of war at different times hanging over the land like a midnight pall, the ever lurking foe ready to take a human scalp at every opportunity, yet he raised not his hand to strike his brother man; but ever ready to lend a helping hand in time of need.*

*For more than 50 years this man of God preached the gospel of Christ. Thirty years of his ministry was in the Methodist Episcopal Church and the rest of his life was with the Latter Day Saints. He never would receive one penny as a contribution from the church, but worked for the love of the cause.*

*Thus falls one of the rare men of God, and his fall was as rare as his life. Just 140 days ago this man fell from his chair and was carried into his room and pronounced to be dying; but not a trace of suffering marred the approaching end. So he lay, not suffering, but dying, just dying until the period of gestation of life, so was death. Rev. Thompson leaves four daughters and three sons, 39 grandchildren and 30 great-grandchildren. Katherine Ann Gerstenberg Green, (GGGD), 18938*

**JAMES GEORGE THOMPSON**, the great-grandfather of Mary Wilson Kelsey of Scottish descent, was born Jan. 12, 1802 in South Carolina, son of Jesse Thompson, (1776-1855) born North Carolina, and Anna McDonald, (1780-1850), born South Carolina and buried in Texas. Thompson grew to manhood among the Cherokees of Alabama and married, first, in 1818, Margaret McNary, a quarter-blood Cherokee. In 1828 the Thompsons joined the Cherokee Migration to what is Oklahoma today where he operated a trading post on the Arkansas River. In 1833, he traded 1,000 bushels of corn for peltries to Holland Coffee in the Washita Ben of Red River. By 1834, while Texas was still a part of Mexico, he established himself in the Washita Bend (now Preston bend in Grayson County). By 1838 Thompson served as a captain of Volunteer Frontier Rangers to protect against Indian raids. He received a land grant from the Republic of Texas. He became the first Chief Justice of the newly organized Grayson County in 1845 just before Texas joined the Union. He was one of the commissioners to locate the county seat, Sherman, in 1846.

Thompson's wife Margaret McNary died in 1839. In 1843 he married, second, Nancy Shuntally who died following childbirth two years later. Thompson's third marriage in 1846 was to the widow Martha Gresham Caruthers who had come to Texas at 16 years of age with her

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James George Thompson

## SAMUEL KITCHENS WOODWARD.

Samuel K. Woodward was born in Franklin County, Tenn., August 31, 1837, a son of J. B. and Naney (Kitchens) Woodward. His father was a native of Tennessee and his mother of North Carolina. They were of English and Scotch origin respectively. Samuel Woodward was the youngest but one of eight children—six girls and two boys. In August, 1862, he enlisted in Company F, 8th Texas Regiment, C. S. A., and served as a private through the hardships and the perils of the war period. Although never wounded, seven horses were shot under him. He never surrendered, but had a hard trip home.

In April, 1868, he left his native section of Tennessee and went with other brave companions on the long journey across the plains and mountains of the West, their goal being California. While a resident of Los Angeles County, Cal., he was there married in 1871 to Miss Mary B. Dunn. His death occurred at the home, Inglewood, in November, 1910. His wife, five sons, and a daughter survive him. Comrade Woodward was a member of the California Camp, No. 770, U. C. V., in 1895.

## MAJ. NOYES RAND.

Major Rand, a gallant soldier, died at his home, in El Paso, Tex., March 19, 1911, and by his expressed wish he was laid to rest in Charleston, W. Va., where sleep his ancestors.

Born seventy-one years ago on the banks of the beautiful Kanawha River, Noyes Rand responded to the first call to arms, and in his first baptism of fire displayed great gallantry. He soon won his promotion to the adjutancy of the 22d Virginia Infantry, and later became adjutant general of the brigade. He was almost recklessly brave when there was an emergency. He was twice wounded and once made prisoner. He had the painful experience of being marched right in front of his home on the way to Camp Chase.

After the close of the war he became prominent in Charleston's business circles; but about thirty years ago he went to El Paso, where up to his death he filled honorable and important rank as a business man. "Plus" Rand, as he was intimately known, was not only a dashing, knightly officer, but a beloved, genial gentleman. He leaves a widow, two sons, and two daughters.

## CAPT. E. NELSON.

A venerable and beloved veteran, Capt. Edwin Nelson, of Manassas, Va., is numbered now with the great majority. Through near fourscore years he had been a servant of God and a helper of his fellow-man. The funeral service was conducted in the Primitive Baptist Church at Manassas on land donated by Captain Nelson and built largely through his contributions. Although the pressing claims of the community in which he lived and was so useful induced him to equip a substitute and remain sheriff of his county, he resigned from that office to enter active service early in 1862 as lieutenant with Company H, 15th Virginia Infantry. In addition to service with his regiment, he was guide for Gen. J. E. B. Stuart on an important raid. During the time of the raid he was with General Stuart and staff at a dinner when a cannon shot from the enemy knocked a pitcher of milk from the table. In June, 1863, he was captured and held as prisoner to the end of the war, enduring the privations of Point Lookout, Old Capitol, Fort Delaware, and Johnson's Island.

Captain Nelson was married in 1861, and leaves three sons and two daughters. One of the sons, John H. Nelson, is a member of the Interstate Commerce Commission.

[The notice of Captain Nelson doesn't give dates of birth and death.]

## CAPT. GEORGE W. NOREN.

The passing of Capt. George W. Noren, of Maben, Miss., furnishes occasion for a glimpse of "frontier" life in the South that will interest the present generation.

George Noren was born in Coweta, Ga., April 16, 1828, the third son of nine children born to Thomas and Mary Noren, natives respectively of South Carolina and Kentucky. In 1833, they removed to Chambers County, Ala., in the Creek Nation. In the disturbed relations of the time, Thomas Noren volunteered for service with his white friends, although he was obliged to leave his wife and six children among unfriendly Indians. In 1842 he moved his family to Mississippi, going by Columbus, a mere village, and crossing Big Black River, located in a sparsely settled section known as the Chickasaw Strip, not then subject to entry. Two years later the family moved west, and located at the present thriving city of Little Rock, Ark., where, in 1844, Thomas Noren died, and his wife died two years afterwards.

Six months after the death of his parents, George Noren volunteered in a company of eighty for the Mexican War. They marched to Greenwood, eighty miles, where they took a steamer for Vicksburg, whence by a Mississippi River boat they went to New Orleans, where they were detained three weeks before they could secure transportation to the Rio Grande and join General Taylor. This company was engaged in the battle of Monterey and Saltillo.

Returning to Mississippi in 1849, George Noren was married to Miss Mahala Few, a native of Morgan County, Ga. Seven children were born to them. The mother died in 1890.

In April, 1862, George Noren enlisted in the 37th Mississippi Regiment. He was promptly elected 2d lieutenant, and ere long was promoted to 1st lieutenant, and then to captain of his company. He was wounded three times. He served at Chickasaw Bayou, Baker's Creek, Jackson, then under Gen. Jos. E. Johnston on the Dalton-Atlanta campaign; and then in the severe battles of Franklin and Nashville. After the retreat to Tupelo he was with General Johnston in North Carolina, and surrendered with his army. He walked back to Mississippi with Senator N. B. Crawford. During those four perilous years his family sustained their full share of privations.

Captain Noren was a member of the F. A. M., first with Lodge No. 302, and later with Lodge No. 224, of Maben, Miss. In 1875 he began a successful business career in Atlanta, Miss., which he continued later at Maben. It is said that for forty years "everything he touched prospered."

After an illness that confined him to his room for three months, his earthly career ended on March 1, 1911, at the age eighty-three years. He had already prepared a large, fine vault for his wife (who died in 1890) and himself.

[From sketch by Comrade J. W. Allen, Maben, Miss.]

## CAPT. S. B. THOMAS.

Samuel Brown Thomas, whose death occurred recently at his home, near San Augustine, Tex., was a native of Texas. He was born October 7, 1831, under the Mexican flag in the old homestead near where his remains lie. His parents, Shadrach and Sarah Thomas, were among the earliest settlers of Texas; and this son saw the sovereignty of his native land pass from Mexico to the Republic of Texas, to the United States, and after four years in the Confederacy back to the United States again, and to every flag while it was his he was loyal and true. Filled with the adventurous spirit of the West, he went to California in the fifties to try his fortune in

the hunt for gold. The outbreak of the Civil War caused his return to Texas, and with his brother John he enlisted in Capt. Hiram Brown's company of Angelina County, of which Comrade Thomas was made first lieutenant. Later, when Captain Brown resigned, he was elected captain, and with his men was enrolled in the 13th Texas Cavalry Regiment under Colonel Burnett. Later it was dismounted and known as "dismounted cavalry." It belonged to Waul's Brigade of Walker's Division, and served in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas. Throughout the four years Captain Thomas was a gallant soldier and an efficient officer, ever fighting at the head of his company.

When the war closed, Captain Thomas returned home and faced the hardships of ruined fortune with unflinching fortitude. He was married first to Miss Phoebe Sharp, daughter of Dr. B. F. Sharp, but after two happy years the young wife was stricken by death, leaving a little daughter. In 1871 he married Miss Mary Garrett, and removed to Nacogdoches County, where he made his home until a few years since, when he returned with his family to San Augustine County, near the old homestead.

CAPT. MICAJAH Woods.

Many a comrade sorrows in the death of Capt. Micajah Woods, of Charlottesville, Va., which occurred on March 14, 1911. The cultured and patriotic people of Albemarle County, including the University of Virginia, were blessed with a leader, an ever-popular, cultured, and conservative fellow-citizen. He was a distinctively representative Confederate, and his treasures in letters and souvenirs from eminent Southerners should be preserved in the relic hall at Richmond and designated the Micajah Woods collection. He was foremost among his people. As an artillery officer in Jackson's Virginia Battery his conduct was so conspicuous that the commander of the artillery reported officially upon his good conduct. (See "War Records," Volume XXIX., page 547.)

Rosewell Page writes the Southern Churchman about him, from which the following is taken:

"A country boy, trained on a big plantation, attending a school where scholarship and character were prized, the war found him ready to ride away from the university with that band which was to become immortal as Confederate soldiers.

"After the war he came back to the university, and was graduated therefrom in 1868 as Bachelor of Law. He settled in his native county, and at once took high rank at the bar, which was one of the best in the State. In two years he was elected Commonwealth's Attorney, a position which he filled for forty-one years, having in all that time had opposition but twice. Unique and extraordinary is this record. His first idea was to do justice to the prisoner at the bar as well as to the commonwealth. He loved mercy and walked humbly with his God.

"While a conscientious lawyer, he was fearless. His life was that of an upright man who feared God. He loved every incident connected with Virginia history. He had known the ancient régime—its courtliness, its graciousness, its dignity, its kindness, and its worth. Fond of the society of his fellow-men, in the presence of women there was no more courtly gentleman. His home life was radiant with happiness.

"His wife, who was Miss Tillie Morris, of Clazemont, in Hanover County, and three daughters (Mrs. William J. Rucker, of Chicago, Mrs. Frank Lupton, of Birmingham, and Miss Lettie Woods, of Charlottesville) survive him.

"After a life well spent in the service of his own people,

whom he so much loved, he laid down its burdens whose weight had overborne his strength and made it impossible for him to go even a day's journey farther.

"Many who mourned for him entertained the sentiment, 'He lived for the right.'"

#### OTHER TRIBUTES TO CAPTAIN WOODS.

The Richmond Virginian states:

"The death of Capt. Micajah Woods in Charlottesville removes from Virginia one of her most gifted and accomplished sons, a Demosthenes in oratory, a Chesterfield in manners.



CAPT. MICAJAH WOODS.

He was a brilliant warrior, most eloquent speaker, a stanch and tireless advocate at the bar, a relentless prosecutor, a patriotic Virginian, and a lovable man.

"As a lawyer Captain Woods was held in such high esteem, respect, and affection that he was elected President of the Virginia Bar Association.

"Tall, erect, handsome, with his snowy hair and mustache emphasizing a countenance of the most delicate pink, and sparkling eyes, ever alert yet kindly, Captain Woods was always a most imposing and impressive figure in court. He was as courtly a knight as ever won the admiration and heart of Southern womanhood. To illustrate his feelings Captain Woods once recited an incident which occurred in his office while prosecuting attorney: 'A farmer whose wife had been insulted by another man came to me and said he had felt in duty bound to horsewhip the scoundrel, and asked if I would prosecute him for cowhiding the insulter. He seemed deeply affected by the insult, and I said to him: "If you cowhide him gently and thoroughly and feel satisfied with the job, you can rest assured that Micajah Woods will not prosecute you.''"

Many will remember the exquisite tribute to his beautiful daughter, Miss Maud Coleman Woods, as the first article in the VETERAN for March, 1904.]

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