

The Munsons of Texas

An American Saga

2006 Edition



by

Thurmond A. Williamson
Updated by Laura Munson Cooper

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Foreword



The preparation of this manuscript has required almost four years. It was truly a labor of love, and occupied many a rainy day. During the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, I frequently visited my Aunt Erma in Stephenville, Texas, and I was always intrigued by her “boxes in the closet.” These were the *Munson Papers*—about a dozen grocery boxes filled with old papers and her transcriptions and summaries of them. Gradually I reviewed their contents and made copies of many. During the 1970s I often urged Aunt Erma to write a book on the family history, but she had done her “thing” in collecting the papers and adding much in research. As I realized that she could never do it, I had this feeling of great responsibility—this story must be preserved for future generations—and I was the one who would have to do it. When Aunt Erma was forced to give up her Stephenville home due to advancing age, I was delighted when her daughters, Mary Rich Adams and Erma Jo Watson, offered me the opportunity to become custodian of “the boxes in the closet.” After several false starts, I finally got the project underway early in 1984, thanks to “Microsoft Word” word processing and a “Compaq” home computer. Without these it would never have happened.

Most of the material in this manuscript is nothing more than a collection and reorganization of history recorded elsewhere. A continuous problem has been how to “rewrite” this history without just copying it and without overburdening the manuscript with references to sources. A middle course has been attempted. Any material not specifically referenced can be found in the *Munson Papers*. Much of the history, especially the history of Texas, has been taken (at times word for word) from other sources—heavily from John Henry Brown’s *History of Texas from 1685 to 1892*. In such cases, notations are always given to identify the major sources used.

Readers will notice that more space is given to the stories of some family groups than to others, especially in the case of the families of “in-laws” who married into the Munson family. This is not because information was omitted from the shorter stories, but because information was not available. In all of the shorter stories of family groups, all available information is given, while in the longer ones information is omitted to hold the length down.

Some readers may wish to know how much research has been done and how and where one would go on from here. Genealogical research can be done in several ways—by one’s self by correspondence, by library research, or by field research (going to the site and searching libraries, museums, archives, courthouse records, individuals, and all other sources); or by hiring a professional researcher. The latter can also be a library based researcher or a specialist in the geographical area of interest. Besides the original *Munson Papers* collected and saved by Erma Munson Rich, these papers also contain the data from her personal research over a period of about thirty years. Her research included extensive correspondence and considerable on site research in many localities. She added a multitude of facts to the story. This writer has carried out

research primarily through professional researchers. For several years during the 1970s a researcher at the genealogical library of the Mormon Church in Salt Lake City, the world's largest such library, was retained. Numerous significant data on the early Munsons were found, but never the central point—the parents and origin of Jesse and Robert Munson. During the 1980s a specialist in South Carolina genealogical research has been retained. While many new pertinent facts have been found, the failure in finding the central point is the same. Our earliest Munson forebears appear to have been traced back to North Carolina and Virginia in the mid-1700s. This is the next place to search.

My reasons for distributing this manuscript prior to the completion of the book are threefold. My first reason is that there are many Munsons who have been hearing about this book for the past four years and are eager to read it. By distributing copies of the manuscript, I can give them an early chance to read the story. My second reason is that this has been an enjoyable project in retirement, and I do not want it to acquire time pressure. By distributing the manuscript to family members, I will be relieved of the pressure of an early completion of the book. The third and possibly most important reason is to find additions, errors, and corrections before publication. Despite my considerable efforts, there are unquestionably many errors, omissions, and areas for improvement. I sincerely request that every person who reads this manuscript do it with a pencil and note pad handy, and send me his notes on areas that should be changed. A good way to do this is to note the pages where changes should occur, and send me a photocopy of those pages with the changes noted. I feel that this book will be read 100 and maybe 200 years from now by our descendants, and this is our last chance to get it right.

Of course there were many others whose contributions have made this manuscript what it is. Many of the Munsons of Texas have contributed to their family stories. I especially think of the late Mary Kennedy Giesecke and Lewis Munson; also of Ruth Munson Smith, George McCauley Munson, Mary Emma Murray Stasny, Catherine Munson Foster, Eleanor Stevens Vaughan, Jennie Kate Munson Ankenman, Alice Ball, and Ellen Munson Snow. On the big job of editing the manuscript, I owe special thanks to friend and neighbor Dorothy Weiser Seale of Estes Park, Colorado; to nephew-in-law Ed McBride of Plano, Texas; to my professional historical editor, Ann Graham, of Austin, Texas; and especially to my wife, Ruth, for her constant editing and support.

The job of converting this manuscript into an illustrated book is no small job. I have collected about 200 photographs, documents, pictures, and maps from which to choose. These include photographs of fifteen of the sixteen children of Mordello and Sarah Munson and their spouses—all except Sarah Kate Cahill Munson. I now plan on two or more years to complete this job.

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Thurmond A. Williamson
November, 1987

Preface to the 2006 Edition



I can't remember when I first heard of Thurmond Williamson's *Munsons of Texas* project, but it must have been in the early to mid-1980s. He had approached my aunt, Catherine Munson Foster for information on the George P. Munson branch of the family, and she in turn approached me about making copies of old family photographs for the book Thurmond hoped to have published.

Years later, in early 1999, I called Thurmond to inquire on the status of the project, and was naturally disappointed to learn that plans to publish had been abandoned. The call was not a waste, however; we had a very pleasant conversation. Thurmond answered some questions about early Munson land records, and followed up by sending me a few copies from the *Munson Papers*.

I couldn't have been more shocked (or thrilled) when some six years after our last conversation, Thurmond offered me custody of his research materials. I was searching for an appropriate way to thank him when he mentioned his dream of publishing *Munsons of Texas* on the Internet. I had my answer. Eventually the research materials, including the many photographs, will be turned over to the Brazoria County Historical Museum's Adriance Library for the benefit of future generations of Munson descendants.

For those of you who asked for a printable version of *The Munsons of Texas*, I hope this meets your expectations. I chose the Adobe Acrobat format because it can be opened on any computer that has the free Acrobat Reader installed. As there are over 300 pages, I suggest taking the file to a print shop for printing and binding.

I want to thank Thurmond for allowing me to be a part of this project; also for encouraging me to make additions and corrections that have been documented since the first edition was completed in 1987. I also want to thank others who have contributed to the update, in particular, Frances Caldwell Underwood, Marianne Curson Gilbert, Eleanor Stevens Vaughan and Jane Rogers Matthews. I want also to mention my dad, Joe U. Munson Sr., and Cousin George Kennedy, both deceased, whose many tales of the Munson family I continue to pass along to anyone who will listen. I never realized how much I talk about the family until I asked my grandson, who was five or six years old at the time, if he knew who Texas was named for. Almost confident, but not quite, he looked up at me and asked, "Munsons?"

Laura Munson Cooper
April 2006

Table of Contents



Foreword	iii
Preface to the 2006 Edition.....	v

Chapters

1. A Munson Overview	1
2. The Monsons of England and the Monsens of Denmark — 1100-present.....	9
3. The Munsons of New England	17
4. Early Munsons of the South 1745–1820.....	23
5. Jesse and Robert Munson in Mississippi and Louisiana — 1792-1816.....	33
6. The Robert Munson Family of Louisiana — 1792-present	49
7. The Early Years of Henry William Munson — 1793-1817.....	61
8. The Story of the Pearce Family.....	75
9. Henry William Munson and Ann Binum Pearce and Their Move to Texas — 1817-1828.....	81
10. Jesse P. Munson and Micajah and Elizabeth Everett Munson	95
11. Henry William and Ann Munson at Oakland Plantation — 1828-1833.....	109
12. Ann “Nancy” Munson, James P. Caldwell, and the Caldwell Family — 1835-present.....	121
13. The Munson Sons at Oakland — 1828-1848 and William Benjamin Munson and George Ann Sutherland	137
14. Gerard Brandon Munson and Ann Elizabeth Westall.....	147
15. George Poindexter Munson and Agnes B. Davis and the George P. Munson Family	155
16. The Education Years of Mordello Stephen Munson — 1838-1849.....	179
17. Sarah Kimbrough Armour’s Family 17. the Armours, the Hillens, the Waddys, and the Kimbroughs.....	193
18. Mordello Stephen and Sarah K. Munson Early Years at Bailey’s Prairie — 1850-1862	201
19. Mordello Stephen Munson and Sarah K. Munson The Civil War Years — 1862-1865	211
20. Mordello Stephen and Sarah K. Munson and Their Eight Children and Seven Stepchildren at Ridgley Plantation — 1865-1903.....	221
21. The Life and Family of Henry William Munson III (b. 1851–d. 1924).....	239
22. The Life and Family of George Caldwell Munson (b. 1853–d. 1931).....	247
23. The Life and Family of Emma Munson Murray b. (1855–d. 1936).....	267
24. The Life and Family of Sarah Munson Kennedy b. (1858–d. 1913).....	277

25. The Life and Family of Joseph Waddy Munson (I) (b. 1861–d. 1917)	285
26. The Life and Family of Hillen Armour Munson (I) (b. 1863–d. 1909).....	299
27. The Life and Family of Walter Bascom Munson (I) (b. 1866–d. 1949).....	305
28. The Life and Family of Milam Stephen Munson (b. 1869–d. 1950).....	311
29. The Munsons of Today — 1987	319

Appendixes

I. The Munson Papers.....	323
II. Munsons Found in the Early United States Census Records of the South.....	324
III. Petition by Mordello Munson to the Probate Court of Brazoria County (March 27, 1848)	326
IV. Partition of the Estate of Henry W. Munson.....	328
V. Division of the Slaves of James P. Caldwell and Ann B. Caldwell and Other Family Matters	331
VI. Biographical Articles on Mordello Stephen Munson	334

Charts

1. The Munsons of Texas.....	6
2. The Monsons of England.....	10
3. The Munsons of Louisiana.....	57
4. The Pearce Genealogy.....	80
5. The Descendants of Micajah and Elizabeth Everett Munson.....	106
6. The Caldwells of Texas	133
7. The Munson Sons at Oakland	137
8. Matilda Agnes Davis' Ancestry.....	161
9. The Family of George P. Munson I.....	165
10. Descendants of George Poindexter Munson Sr. (II) and Louise Underwood	176
11. Sarah Kimbrough Armour's Roots	193
12. Sarah Kimbrough Armour's Paternal Ancestry The Armours and the Hillens	195
13. Sarah Kimbrough Armour's Maternal Ancestry The Waddys and the Kimbroughs.....	196
14. The Fifteen Munson Children Raised by Mordello and Sarah Munson at Ridgely Plantation.....	227
15. Descendants of Henry William Munson III.....	245
16. Descendants of George Caldwell Munson	260
17. Descendants of Emma Munson and Reverend Joseph Lapsley Murray	275
18. Descendants of Sarah Kimbrough Munson II and Walter Kennedy.....	283
19. Descendants of Joseph Waddy Munson	295
20. Descendants of Hillen Armour Munson.....	304
21. Descendants of Walter Bascom Munson.....	309
22. Descendants of Milam Stephen Munson	316

Insets

1. The Austin Colony..... 2

2. The English Crown in the Years 1603-1660..... 14

3. The Danish Influence in England 14

4. About the Early Immigrants to New England..... 15

5. The Story of the Natchez Indians 36

6. Early Spanish Exploration of the Area..... 44

7. French Designs on the Mississippi Valley..... 45

8. European Power Struggles over the Mississippi Valley 46

9. The United States Acquires the Louisiana Territory 47

10. The Many William Munsons 62

11. The Several Samuel Munsons..... 63

12. Sam Houston at the Battle of San Jacinto..... 124

13. About Gerard C. Brandon 148

14. About George Poindexter..... 156

15. James “Brit” Bailey and Bailey’s Prairie..... 191

16. The Story of the First Meeting of Waddy Munson and “Woodie” West 287

17. In Memoriam 292

Photographs and Maps

Stephen Fuller Austin..... 2

Map of the Austin Colony..... 2

Empresario Grants 3

United States, 1783-1803..... 34

Township plat including Jesse and Robert Munson’s Spanish land grants 39

Isaac Johnson, Governor of Louisiana 1846-1850..... 55

Battle of Medina map..... 70

Georgia Historical Marker – “Washington Slept Here”..... 77

Map of Lunenburg, the Pearce Plantation..... 79

Detail of 1824 map of Texas..... 82

Joseph William and Martha Emily “Mattie” Day Davis..... 101

Old Oakland Texas Historical Marker 110

Entrance Certificate to Austin’s Colony 111

Munson grave (modern) and Austin tomb at Peach Point Cemetery 120

Munson and Caldwell Texas Historical Markers at Peach Point Cemetery 120

Henry William Munson Texas Historical Marker at Peach Point Cemetery..... 120

Ann Pearce Munson Caldwell and Major James P. Caldwell 122

Robert Milam Caldwell I..... 126

Thomas William Caldwell I..... 126

Maud Munson Caldwell..... 126

Robert Milam Caldwell II	126
Georgie Caldwell and Sarah Munson Caldwell.....	126
Caldwell family members.....	126
Major James Peckham Caldwell Texas Historical Marker at Peach Point Cemetery.....	127
George P. and Agnes Davis Munson	164
Ammon Underwood	168
Joe Underwood	170
George P. Munson Sr. (II).....	172
Louise Underwood	172
The seven children of George P. and Louise Underwood Munson.....	172
Mordello Stephen Munson.....	228
Sarah K. Armour Munson.....	229
Henry William Munson III.....	240
Joseph Waddy Munson II	242
Bryan Cahill Munson.....	243
Lydia Munson.....	255
George Caldwell Munson.....	255
Sarah Kimbrough Munson.....	255
Adriance Munson.....	255
Henry William Munson IV.....	255
Hannah Adriance Munson	255
Mordello Stephen Munson II	255
Ruth Munson.....	255
Reverend Joseph L. and Emma Munson Murray.....	268
Mordello Stephen Murray.....	270
James Lee Murray	270
Emma Mary Murray	270
Emma Munson Murray and children	270
Sarah Murray.....	270
Frank Dimmit Murray.....	270
Lina and Lola Murray.....	270
Sarah Kimbrough Munson II	279
Walter Kennedy	279
Sarah, Emma and Mary Kennedy	281
Addie, George and Bill Kennedy, and Waddy Munson II.....	281
Mary Kennedy Giesecke and Bill Kennedy.....	281
Emma Munson Kennedy	281
George Caldwell Kennedy.....	281
Addie Kennedy.....	281

Joseph Waddy Munson (I)	293
Mary Corinne West Munson.....	293
Thurmond Armour Munson.....	293
Mary Mordella Munson	293
Erma Munson.....	293
Hillen Armour Munson (I).....	301
Armour and Lilla Cox Munson	301
Lilla, Alice, Bascom and Carrie Munson.....	301
Addie Cotton Munson	306
Walter Bascom Munson (I).....	306
Stephen Olin Munson	306
Ellen Munson	306
Houston Cotton Munson.....	306
Milam Stephen Munson Sr. family.....	314
Laura Munson	314

Chapter 1

A Munson Overview



The Years in Texas

The date was a November day in 1828. The place was a raw, untamed frontier region of the Mexican state of *Coahuila y Tejas*. A barge carrying a party of twenty-four persons landed on the south bank of the lazy and very muddy Brazos River about six miles upstream from its mouth on the Gulf of Mexico. It was near a small stream known as Jones Creek, made famous by a fierce battle in 1824 between a band of settlers under the leadership of Randall Jones and a group of Karankawa Indian braves. The present town of Jones Creek got its name from that stream.

Aboard the barge were Henry William Munson (aged 35), his wife, Ann Binum Pearce Munson (aged 28), their two young sons, William Benjamin (aged 4) and Mordello Stephen (aged 3), and twenty slaves. This was the arrival of the Munsons of Texas to the land that would become Brazoria County. They had come to settle on the 554 acres of rich gulf-prairie land that Henry William Munson had recently purchased from Stephen F. Austin for the price of one dollar per American acre (see Inset 1).

Henry and Ann Munson had married in 1817 near Cheneyville, Louisiana, and had resided there until 1824. Three sons were born to them between 1817 and 1822, but each of them died before reaching the age of two. A fourth son, William Benjamin, was born on February 24, 1824, and lived to accompany his parents on their move to the Atascosita District of Mexico (now Liberty County, Texas) later in the same year. Under the liberal land-grant laws of the new Republic of Mexico, they claimed one league (4,428 acres) of free land on the west bank of the Trinity River near the present town of Liberty. Here, on April 25, 1825, Stephen Mordella Munson (later known as Mordello Stephen) was born, reportedly the first white child to be born at the nearby Coushatta Indian village on the Trinity.

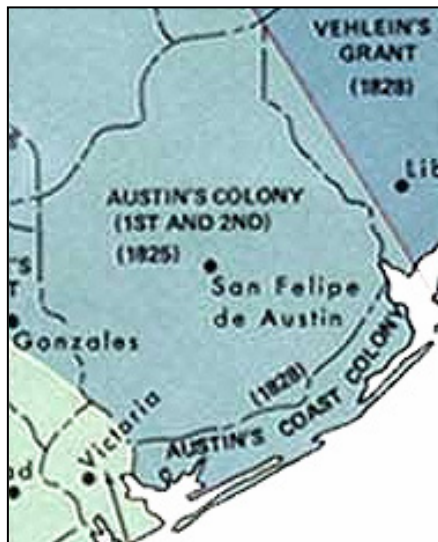
Spring floods, disease, and lack of progress in obtaining title to their land from inactive Mexican authorities convinced the Munsons to look for a better home. Henry William Munson had become acquainted with Stephen F. Austin and some of his colonists, and he had been urged to join them. In 1828 he purchased land from Austin, and the family abandoned their home of four years to join the Austin Colony. The family departed with three children, but the only daughter they were to have, Amanda Caroline, aged one, died en route and was buried at sea.

Their barge trip took them down the Trinity River to its mouth, along the nearby bays and inlets, out into the Gulf of Mexico to the mouth of the Brazos River, and up the Brazos to a landing near Jones Creek. Their new land was about one mile southwest of the Brazos River near

Inset 1 The Austin Colony¹



Stephen F. Austin's Texas colony had been established six years prior to the arrival of the Henry William Munson family. Moses Austin, a native of Connecticut, was, in 1820, the owner of a bankrupt mining company in the Missouri Territory. At this time Spain still controlled all of Mexico, and Moses Austin had learned from contacts in New Orleans about New Spain's new *empresario* land-grant policies designed to attract settlers to their northern state of *Tejas*. He therewith got the inspiration to apply for a large *empresario* grant to settle 300 American families (on a fee basis) and to sell parcels of his own personal grants to later settlers from the United States. He vigorously undertook development of his plan including making an exhausting trip to *San Antonio de Bexar*, where he gained permission from the Spanish Governor to establish the colony. However, he died unexpectedly soon after his arrival home in Missouri in June of 1821. By this



Map of the Austin Colony



Stephen Fuller Austin

time the Mexican revolution against Spanish authority was in full bloom.

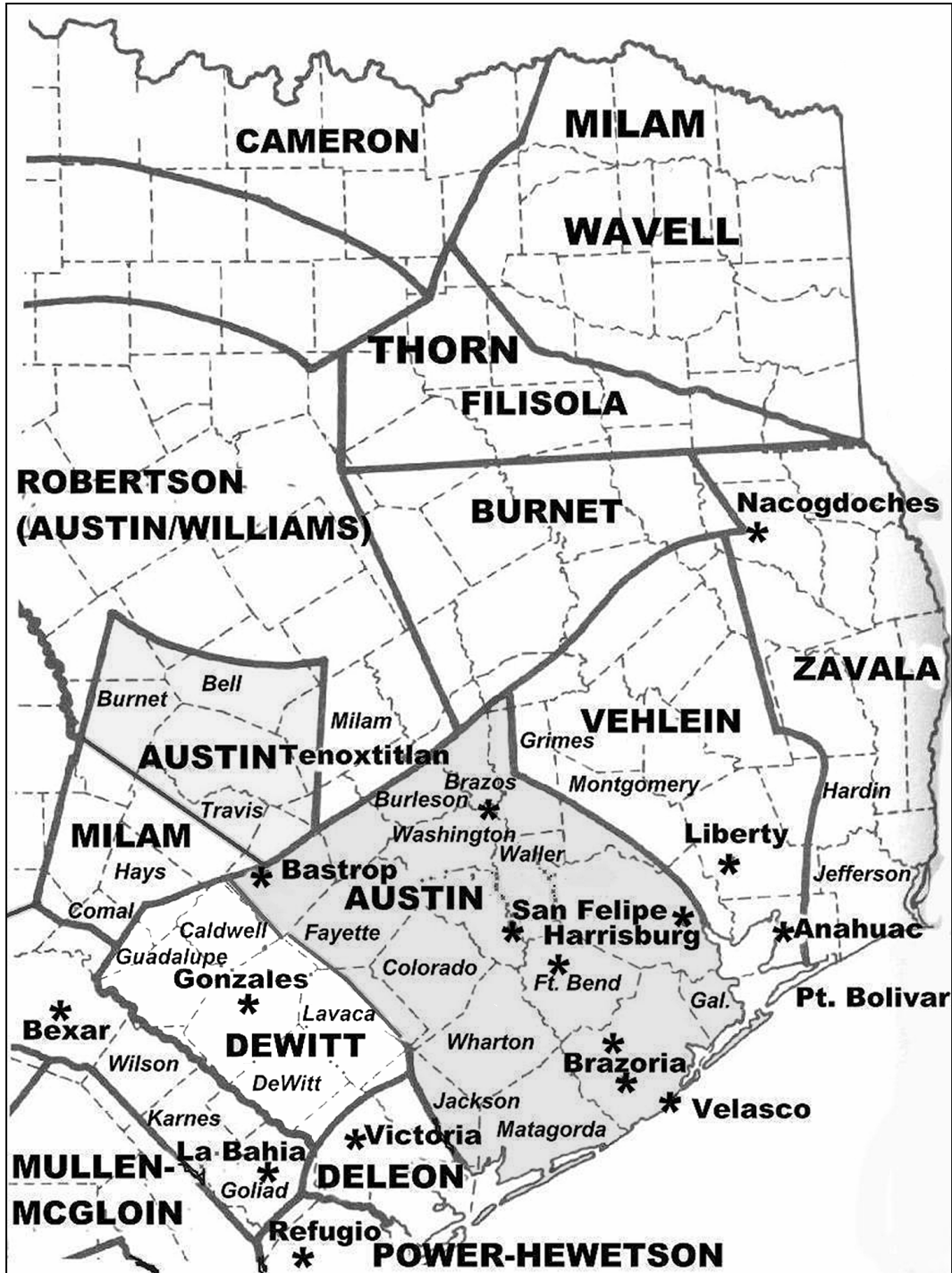
Moses' son, Stephen Fuller Austin, was then 27 years old. He was born in Virginia in 1793,² was raised in Missouri, attended school in Connecticut for a short time, and completed his studies at Transylvania University³ in Lexington, Kentucky. Having been aware of his father's plans from the beginning, he reluctantly took up the endeavor and diligently carried it out. He continually faced and overcame the most trying of circumstances which surely would have defeated a less patient and persistent man. He went to *San Antonio de Bexar* where, in August of 1821, he again received Spanish authorization to colonize his father's grant, just as Spanish officialdom was losing control of Mexico. He then went to New Orleans where he publicized the scheme, and the first settlers began arriving from Louisiana in December. They camped with Stephen F. Austin on

January 1, 1822, at *New Year Creek*, a spot which retains that name today. Texas' famous "Old Three Hundred" were the first three hundred families who settled in the Austin Colony between 1821 and 1827. The Henry William Munson family arrived in 1828.

¹ Stephen F. Austin was awarded four *empresario* contracts by the Mexican government. The last, dated May 31, 1828 on maps, is often called the coast colony contract because it was the first time *empresario* settlements were allowed within ten leagues of the coast. The land Henry William Munson bought from Austin in 1828 was in this colony.

² The same year in which Henry William Munson and James P. Caldwell were born.

³ The same college that Mordello Stephen Munson attended years later.



Stephen F. Austin was the most successful of the *empresarios*. He brought more than 1,100 families to Texas and received 22 *sitios* of land in payment. In addition to his contract to settle 300 families under the 1823 law, he secured a contract under the Colonization Law of 1825 to settle 500 families, another in 1827 for 100 families, and one in 1828 for locating 300 families in the coastal area. The darker shaded area shows land covered by the first, second and fourth contracts. The smaller shaded area, called "Austin's Little Colony," is the area covered by Austin's third contract.

an area that abounded in wild peach trees and to this day is known as Peach Point. They named their new home Oakland Plantation, and it developed into one of the most prosperous cotton, cattle, and sugar plantations in the new territory.

At Oakland Plantation they had two additional sons: Gerard Brandon born in 1829, and George Poindexter born in 1832. These sons were named for two men who between them had been lawyers, governors, senators, plantation owners, and leaders in early Mississippi; and were probably admired acquaintances of Henry William Munson in earlier years. This is one of the several indications of Henry William's appreciation of higher education and the professions. Henry William spoke of this appreciation on his deathbed—"Educate my children" were his last words—and the tradition has survived through many later generations.

With Henry William Munson's untimely death from yellow fever or cholera in 1833, at the age of 40, his widow was left with Oakland Plantation, several dozen slaves, and four small sons: William Benjamin (aged 9), Mordello Stephen (aged 8), Gerard Brandon (aged 4), and George Poindexter (aged 1). About eighteen months later she married the 42-year-old widower, Major James P. Caldwell. James Caldwell had been a friend of Henry William Munson; they had fought together in the Battle of Velasco in 1832, and when Caldwell was injured there, Munson took him home and Ann Munson nursed him back to health.

After the marriage, James Caldwell became a "father" to the four Munson boys, and James and Ann had two additional children: Robert Milam and Mary Jane Caldwell. Because these Munson and Caldwell children were raised together and remained as family and friends for life, the Munsons and the Caldwells long considered themselves to be one family. An illustration of the admiration they felt for each other is that in later years the Munson families often named sons Caldwell and Milam, and the Caldwell families named daughters Mordella and Sarah (for Mordello's wife). Mary Jane Caldwell died at the age of 16. Robert Milam grew to adulthood and married Mary Elizabeth House, and they raised six children. From these came the Caldwell branch of the family (see Chart 1).

Of Henry William and Ann's four sons, William Benjamin left no children, and Gerard Brandon, who had four children, had but two granddaughters, whose families have strayed from the Munson fold.

George Poindexter left a son, George II, and two daughters, Maud and Sarah. At this point a most unusual occurrence took place—George Poindexter Munson's two daughters married two sons of his half-brother, Robert Milam Caldwell. The sons were Thomas William Caldwell and Robert Milam Caldwell II. Each husband and wife pair were half-first cousins and all had Ann Munson Caldwell as a grandmother. Among them they raised ten children, each of whom had Ann Munson Caldwell as a great-grandmother through both parents. This produced the Caldwell-Munson branch of the Munsons of Texas.

George Poindexter Munson's only son was George P. Munson II. He married Louise Underwood, and their seven children created the George P. branch of the Munsons of Texas.

Mordello Stephen Munson married Sarah Kimbrough Armour in 1850, and they lived all of their lives at Ridgely Plantation at Bailey's Prairie. On the plantation they raised six sons and two daughters, as well as seven nieces and nephews from deceased brothers Gerard and George—fifteen in all. All of their own children grew to adulthood, married, and had a total of thirty-six "grand-children." These families account for the large Mordello Stephen branch of the Munsons of Texas.

Thus the Munsons of Texas today encompass four different branches: the Mordello Stephen branch, the George P. branch, the Munson–Caldwell branch, and the Caldwell branch (see Chart 1). Each year, on the second Saturday of June, nearly two hundred descendants of these families gather under the giant live oak trees of Ridgely Plantation at Bailey’s Prairie, Texas, to celebrate the Annual Munson Family Reunion.

The Munsons Earlier Origins

Henry William Munson’s father was Jesse Munson. Little is known of Jesse and his forebears. The first known date for Jesse Munson is October 2, 1787. This is the date of a Spanish land grant awarded to Jesse Munson by the Spanish Government of the Natchez District of New Spain for 500 arpents⁴ of land in the District of Feliciana (now West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana). Jesse’s grant was for Section 75 “located in the District of Feliciana upon the tributaries of Bayou Feliciana just below the District of Natchez.”⁵ His brother, Robert, was granted the adjacent Section 76, which contained 1,000 arpents. These grants appear as the original surveys on the parish maps at the courthouse in St. Francisville, Louisiana. Today the land, easily identifiable, is attractive rolling cattle country just two miles south of the Mississippi border and about midway between St. Francisville, Louisiana, and Woodville, Mississippi. The village of Laurel Hill, Louisiana, is situated on Jesse Munson’s original grant.

The next known date involving Jesse Munson was the birth of his son, Micajah, in South Carolina in 1788 or 1789. Evidence indicates that Jesse and his brother Robert (and other relatives) lived in South Carolina for some years and probably came there from North Carolina and Virginia. Family records relate that in about 1790 they migrated from South Carolina to Kentucky for a brief stay, and in the spring of 1792 they were in Holston, Virginia, near the Cumberland Gap. There, under the leadership of Colonel Henry Hunter, they built flatboats and floated down the Holston, Tennessee, Ohio, and Mississippi Rivers, arriving at the frontier settlement of Natchez-Under-the-Hill in the Natchez District of New Spain on April 17, 1792. This was the most common route for a large migration of emigrants from South Carolina to the Natchez District after the American Revolution.

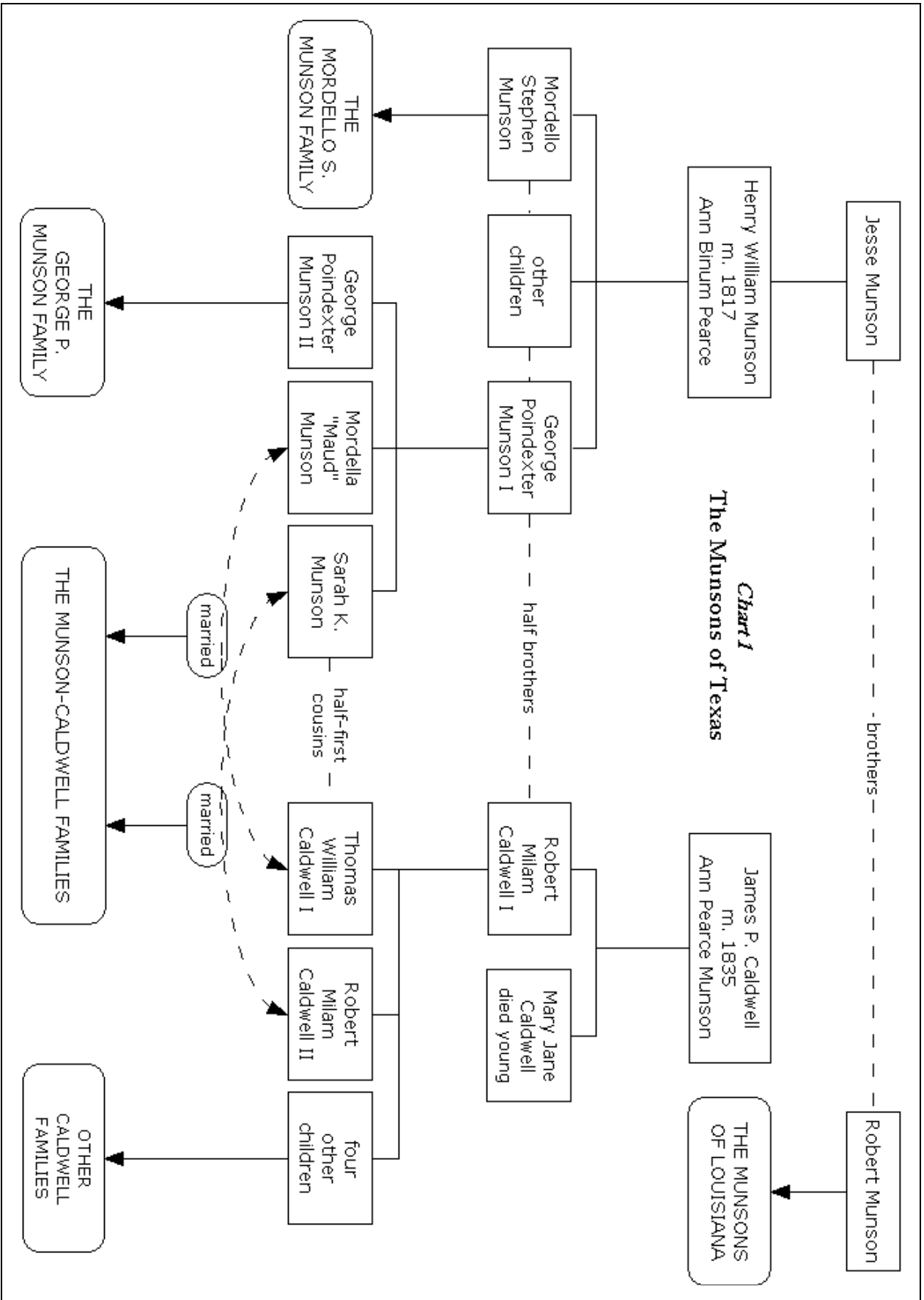
The 1792 Spanish census of the Natchez District⁶ lists “Jesse Monson” and “Roberto Monson” as residents of Villa Gayoso. Villa Gayoso, the second largest town of the District, was situated on a high bluff overlooking the Mississippi River some ten miles north of Natchez. Jesse’s second son, Henry William, was probably born there, in January of 1793. Evidence suggests that sometime thereafter the Munson brothers, together with their leader Henry Hunter, moved with their three families to the Munson land grants in the remote and unsettled District of Feliciana, about seventy miles to the south. There are numerous court records in the archives section of the Wilkinson County Courthouse in Woodville, Mississippi, pertaining to Jesse and Robert Munson. These date from about 1800 until their deaths in 1815 or 1816, and include probate proceedings.

Jesse Munson had three sons: Micajah, Henry William, and Jesse P The 1826 census of the Atascosita District of Mexico (now Liberty County, Texas, and surrounding counties), signed by three men including Henry William Munson, listed Micajah Munson as having been born in

⁴ An old French unit of land approximating one acre.

⁵ From the original Spanish land grant, *Munson Papers*, see Appendix I.

⁶ “The 1792 Census of the Natchez District of New Spain,” Natchez Municipal Library, Natchez, Mississippi.



South Carolina in 1788 or 1789 and Henry William in Mississippi in 1793. Jesse P., a half-brother, was born in Mississippi or Louisiana in 1800. The names of Jesse's wives are not known.

In summary, available data relate that Jesse Munson received a land grant in the Natchez District of New Spain in 1787, that a son was born to him in South Carolina in 1788 or 1789, that he was not listed in the 1790 U. S. census for South Carolina (nor elsewhere so far as is known), that he arrived in the Natchez District by flatboat in April of 1792, and that a son was born to him in what is now Mississippi in January of 1793. A statement most surely written years later by Mordello Stephen Munson and contained under the heading "Lost Tribes" in Volume II of *The Munson Record* states: "At an early day, Jesse Munson removed from South Carolina or Virginia to Kentucky, and again removed to Mississippi."⁷



Recently discovered records indicate that a Robert Munson, thought to probably be "our" Robert Munson, lived in South Carolina in the 1770s and 1780s. He appears to have come there from Virginia by way of North Carolina with his associate, Henry Hunter. This Robert Munson applied for a grant of 200 acres of land in the Camden District of South Carolina (today's Fairfield County) in 1769, but no record of his ownership of land there has been found. Henry Hunter owned numerous large acreages of land in that district. He also owned numerous slaves and was a community leader, so it seems possible that Robert Munson and his brother, Jesse, may have lived as employees of Henry Hunter on his land. As previously reported, Jesse Munson's oldest known child, Micajah, was born in South Carolina in 1788 or 1789. It is therefore thought that Jesse and Robert Munson, with their wives and children, lived in this South Carolina area in the 1770s and 1780s.

There is also a tantalizing sprinkling of minor records referring to other Munsons in South Carolina, Kentucky, and the Mississippi-Louisiana area, but very few in Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia, during this and later periods.⁸ This leads one to believe that there probably were other members of our Munson family in South Carolina, in Kentucky, and in Louisiana and Mississippi between 1785 and 1820, but proof of relationships is lacking.



Even though genealogical research has failed to identify the ancestors of Jesse and Robert Munson, it is interesting to postulate theories on their earlier origins. Long consideration brings two leading theories to mind. One is that they or their parents were recent immigrants from England to one of the popular ports in Virginia (or to Charleston or Savannah). The other, and in past years the more accepted, is that they were descended from an unaccounted-for member of one of the two earlier Munson families of New England—a "lost tribe." Following this latter theory, one or several young Munson men would have migrated south from New England in the early to mid-1700s. One group would have spent time in Virginia and North and South Carolina while another group settled in Kentucky. One member, a William Munson, apparently explored the Spanish territory of Natchez in about 1785, and Jesse, Robert, and several other Munsons migrated to that area between 1792 and 1800.

⁷ Myron A. Munson, *The Munson Record*, Vol. II, p. 1130, New Haven, Connecticut, 1896. Reprinted by the Thomas Munson Foundation, 1985.

⁸ See Appendix II for records of other Munsons and Chapter 4 for details.

Two books describe these early Munsons of New England (the family name is often interchangeably spelled Munson, Monson, or Manson. *The Munson Record*, previously mentioned, describes the descendants of a Captain Thomas Munson, first recorded in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1637. Myron Munson, the author, reasons that this Thomas Munson was a recent arrival from England, most probably from Lincolnshire, where many Monsons had resided for centuries. *The Munson Record* details the descendants of this Thomas Munson through nine generations, with most of the early generations living in Connecticut. There are, however, a few members of some family groups whose lives and whereabouts are not fully accounted for. Further, in reconstructing the history of such an extensive family group over so many generations, there might always have been some roving members who were overlooked. It is entirely possible that one or several of these Munsons migrated south in the early 1700s and gradually adopted the ways of the southern agricultural society. Such immigrants could conveniently account for the origins of the Munsons of Texas and of Louisiana.

In 1887 in New Haven, Connecticut, hundreds of descendants of Captain Thomas Munson held a 250th anniversary reunion of his first recorded date in America. At some later date they organized the very active Thomas Munson Foundation. In August of 1987 at Yale University in New Haven, members of the Thomas Munson Foundation held a massive reunion in celebration of the 350th anniversary. The size of the gathering is indicated by the fact that the organizers reserved 1,000 rooms for the first to place deposits for them, while all others had to arrange their own accommodations!

And similarly, in a small book entitled *Monson, Munson, Manson* published in 1910, Myron Munson further describes a smaller family of Munsons who originated from a Richard Monson first located in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in 1663. It appears quite clear that this Richard Monson was not a descendant of Captain Thomas Munson. This Richard Monson was most surely a separate immigrant from the Monson clan of Old England. The descendants of this Richard Monson are less numerous and more fully accounted for in Maine and New Hampshire, so the possibility of a descendant migrating to the south and becoming the sire of the Munsons of Texas and of Louisiana appears to be unlikely.

Thus it has been assumed in the past, but never confirmed, that the Munsons of Texas and of Louisiana are most likely direct descendants of the Thomas Munson family of New England. In any case they are most surely direct descendants of the Monsons of England as described in more detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 2

The Monsons of England and the Monsens of Denmark — 1100–present⁹



On both sides of the Atlantic, it has been the firm belief of all researchers on the subject that the Munsons of the United States are descended from the Monsons (pronounced “Munsons”) of England. One such researcher suggests that the Monsons of England came from the Monsens of Denmark. The detailed genealogy of these families is not known, but Burke’s Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Peerage, Baronetage and Knightage of the British Empire records five centuries of the descendants of one family of Monsons of England. The participation of some of the more interesting members of this family in important events in English history is reviewed.



The English Monsons have a recognized history extending through six centuries. The earliest record of the family mentions a John Monson, who was living in Lincolnshire in 1378. From him lineally sprang William¹ Monson, John’s great-great grandson (see Chart 2), who died in 1558, the year Elizabeth I came to the throne.

William¹ Monson lived in South Carlton, Lincolnshire, where the most important towns were Boston and Lincoln. Among his many descendants were Knights, Barons, Baronets, Ambassadors, a Viscount, an Admiral, graduates of Oxford and Cambridge, and other officers of the Crown and of the Royal Navy. Many important events of English history are mirrored in their family story.

William¹ had four sons: John² Robert² and two others.

Robert² began study at Cambridge University in 1546. He was subsequently elected to Parliament, where in 1566 he offended Queen Elizabeth I by persistently pressing for a reply to a petition praying that she marry and nominate her successor in the event of her death without issue, (which was, in fact, the course of history). He was an eminent lawyer and one of the judges of the Court of Common Pleas. He died in 1583 and was buried in Lincoln Cathedral.

John² married Mary, daughter of Sir Robert Hussey, and they had six children. One son, Sir John³, was a knight and lived in the Manor at South Carlton, where his family had lived for many generations (and, in fact, still do). He married Jane (or Ann) Dighton and they had ten children.

⁹ The material in this chapter is from *The Munson Record*, “Introductory;” The Dictionary of National Biography; a private genealogical sketch, “The Name and Family of Munson or Monson;” and *Munson Papers*, see Appendix I.

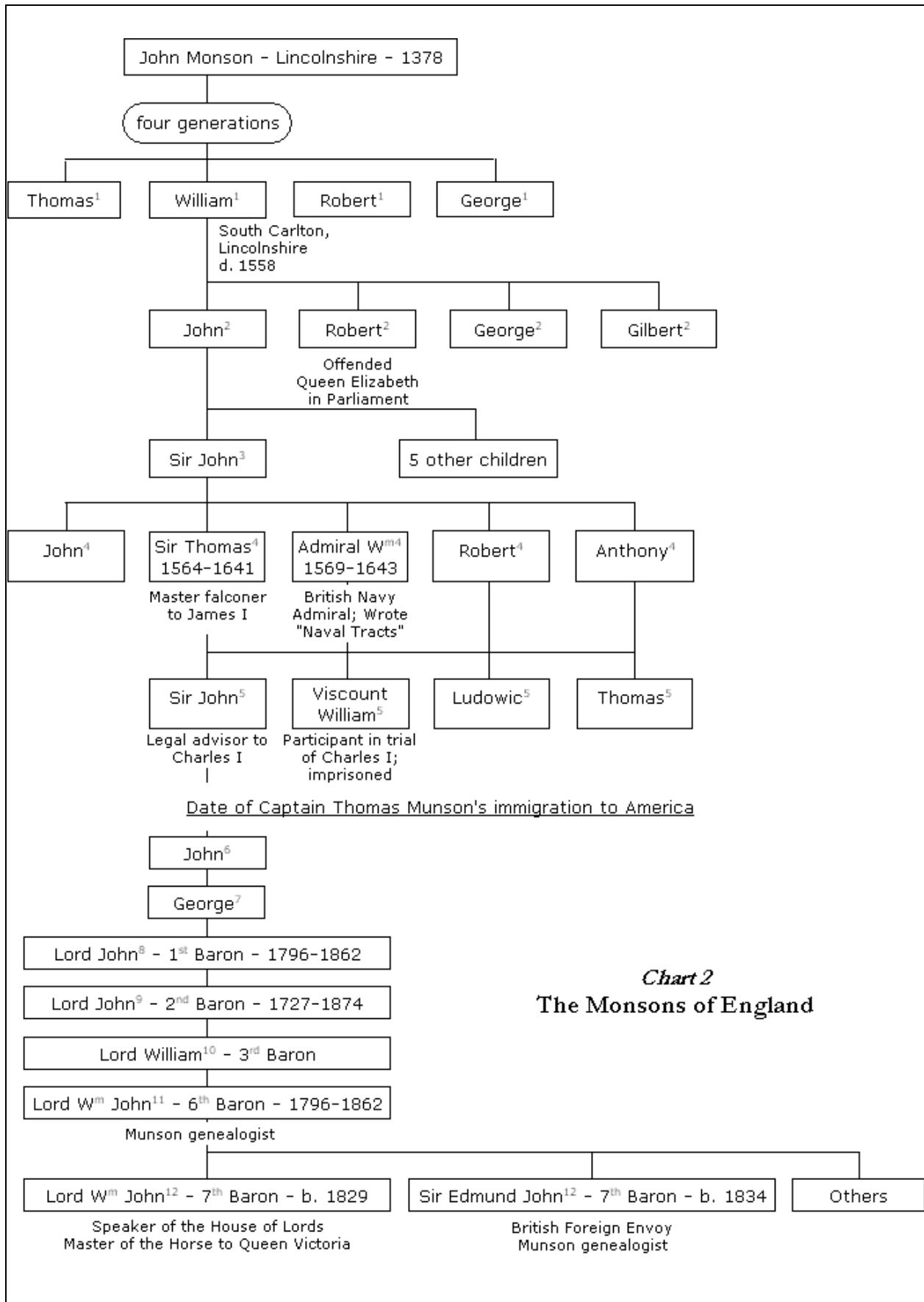


Chart 2
The Munsons of England

One of their sons was Admiral Sir William⁴ Monson, also a knight, who was born in 1569 in South Carlton. He was at Oxford University at the age of 14, but went off to sea in 1585 at the age of 16 without the knowledge of his parents. In 1588 he was a lieutenant on the *Charles*, one of the ships in the fleet which defeated the Spanish Armada in that year. In 1594 he received the honorary degree of Master of Arts from Oxford. He was made Vice-Admiral in 1602 and Admiral in 1604. His distinguished naval career (1588-1635) spanned the reigns of Elizabeth, James I, and Charles I. He retired to his seat at Kinnersley, in County Surrey, where he occupied himself with the preparation of his famous publication, *Naval Tracts*. He died in 1643, leaving his wife, Dorothy, and four children.

Another son of Sir John³ was Sir Thomas⁴, also a knight, who lived from 1564 to 1641. He also attended Oxford and left without a degree. He was knighted in 1588 and was awarded the honorary degree of Master of Arts in 1605, when he accompanied King James I on a visit to Oxford. He was a favorite of King James I, who made him his master falconer early in his reign, and “such a falconer... as no prince in Christendom ever had.”¹⁰ In June of 1611 he was appointed Master of the Armory at the Tower of London and created the First Monson Baronet.

Sir Thomas⁴ married Margaret, daughter of Sir Edmund Anderson. They had four sons: Sir John⁵ (1600-1683), Viscount William⁵, Lodowic⁵, and Thomas⁵. With his eldest brother inheriting the family property, this Thomas⁵ could possibly have been OUR Captain Thomas Munson, who was born in England in 1612, and who was first recorded in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1637. Similarly, Thomas⁴'s youngest brother, Anthony⁴, settled in Northorp, Lincolnshire, and had five sons, including a Thomas⁵, who could also possibly have been OUR Captain Thomas—or OUR Thomas could have been a more distant cousin.

Sir John⁵ married Ursula, the daughter of Sir Robert Oxenbridge, and became the Second Baronet by inheritance on the death of his father. He drained the low-lying lands along the Ancholme River in Lincolnshire and was rewarded with 5,827 acres of the reclaimed region. He was not a university man but was honored with the degree of Doctor of Civil Law by Oxford University in 1642. His legal acumen was noticed by King Charles I, to whom he offered much advice during Charles' severe disagreements with Parliament in 1640-42. He built and endowed a free school in South Carlton and a hospital in Burton.

Viscount William⁵ Monson, brother of John⁵, lived during the tumultuous reign of King Charles I and participated in his trial and conviction. In 1628 Charles I raised him to the peerage of Ireland, where he made his home, as Viscount Mounson of Castlemaine, County Kerry. Though concerned on behalf of the King as late as 1646, he thereafter took the side of the rebels in the House of Commons. He was a “committee man” for County Surrey and was nominated to be one of the King's judges. Quoting from *The Munson Record*: “... [he] attended the trial on the 20, 22 and 23 of January, 1649, though he did not sign the death-warrant.” (See Inset 2).

The Munson Record continues the story as follows:

The Long Parliament, in May 1659, was obliged, in order to form a quorum, to send for Mounson from the Fleet prison where he was confined for debt. At the Restoration, he was excepted out of the bill of pardon as to pains and penalties, and upon surrendering himself on 21 June 1660 was recommitted to the Fleet [prison]. July 1, 1661 he was degraded of all his honours and titles, and deprived of his property... [and]

¹⁰ Myron A. Munson, *The Munson Record*, Volume I, p. xxii.

imprisoned for life... Mounson declared that his design in sitting at the King's trial was, if possible, to prevent "that horrid murder." The ignominious part of the sentence was duly carried out each year on the anniversary of the King's sentence. Pepys, in his *Diary*, under date of Monday, 27 Jan. 1661-62, wrote: "This morning... called on several ships, to give orders. Going to take water upon Tower-hill, we met with three sleddes standing there to carry my Lord Mounson and Sir H. Mildmay and another, to the gallows and back again, with ropes about their necks."

This Viscount William⁵ Monson died in about 1672. He married three times but left only one son, Alston⁶ Monson.

Sir John⁸, a great-grandson of Sir John⁵, was born about 1693 and died in 1748. On May 28, 1728, in the first year of the reign of King George II, he was elevated to the peerage as First Baron, becoming Lord John Monson. In 1737 Lord John⁵ was appointed First Commissioner of Trade and Plantations. The town of Monson, Massachusetts, incorporated in 1760, was named in his honor.

Lord John⁹, son of Lord John⁸, was born July 23, 1727, and became the Second Baron. He was awarded the LL.D. degree at Cambridge University in 1749, and was offered an earldom on a condition which he declined. He died on July 23, 1774.

Lord William John¹¹ (1796-1862), a grandson of Lord John⁹, became the Sixth Baron. Two of his sons, Lord William John¹² and Sir Edmund John¹², gave distinguished service to the Crown. Another of his sons was given the unusual name of Debonair John¹² Monson.

Lord William John¹² was born February 18, 1829, and became the Seventh Baron. He was a graduate of Oxford, Treasurer of the Royal Household in 1874, Captain of the Yeomen of the Guard of St. James Palace from 1880 to 1886, Speaker (Lord Chancellor) of the House of Lords in 1882, and Master of the Horse to Queen Victoria from 1892 to 1894. The family estates in 1883 comprised 8,100 acres in Lincolnshire and 2,034 in County Surrey. His country house was Burton Hall, near Lincoln, and his town residence was 29 Belgrave Square, London, S. W.

Sir Edmund John¹², brother of Lord William John¹², was born October 6, 1834. He was a graduate of Oxford, a member of the British Legation in Washington in 1858, minister to Uruguay in 1879-84, Envoy Extraordinary to the Argentine Republic in 1884-85, and with the British Legations at Copenhagen in 1885-88 and Athens in 1888. This Sir Edmund John¹², his brother, and his father were active Monson genealogists.

The 1985 edition of *Debrett's Peerage & Baronetage*¹¹ gives up-to-date information about the family. The present Lord John Monson is the eleventh Baron and the fifteenth Baronet. He was born May 3, 1932, and he lives at The Manor House at South Carlton in Lincolnshire. He was educated at Eton School and Trinity College of Cambridge University. In 1955 he married Emma, the daughter of Anthony Devas, ARA. They have three children: sons Nicholas John (born 1955), Andrew Anthony John (born 1959), and Stephen Alexander John (born 1961). The Honorable Nicholas John Monson is married to Hilary Martin and they live in Mombasa, Kenya. They have a son, Alexander John Runan Monson, who was born in 1984.

¹¹ *Debrett's Peerage & Baronetage 1985*, Debrett's Peerage Ltd. And Macmillan London Ltd., London, 1985.

On The Origins of the Munsons of New England¹²

In New Haven, Connecticut, in 1887, 500 descendants of Captain Thomas Munson attended the 250th anniversary reunion of his first recorded date in America—Hartford, Connecticut, 1637. For this occasion, Sir Edmund John¹² Monson wrote from the British Legation in Copenhagen to the members of this reunion: “To your... relatives in the Old World, the multiplication of the posterity of your famous ancestor is a very curious circumstance, when we look around us and see how the English branch of the family is limited to very few members indeed.” Earlier this distinguished gentleman had written under date of July 24, 1886, “When I was appointed Attaché to the British Legation at Washington in 1858, my Father, Lord Monson [William-John¹¹]... was very anxious to know the subsequent career of that branch of the Monsons which had emigrated to America in the Seventeenth Century.”

Writing from Burton Hall, Lincoln, on July 10, 1886, Lord William John¹² had said: “My father [William John¹¹] passed a great portion of his life in genealogical researches and has bequeathed to me most valuable M.S.S. on our family history. It was a matter of great disappointment to him that he was never able to collect information respecting the Monsons or Munsons of the United States or connect that branch upon any authentic data with his Lordship’s Ancestors in the Mother Country. As his Lordship [William John¹² expresses his ‘best wishes for the welfare of my Transatlantic Cousins,’ so the Honorable Sir Edmund [Edmund John¹²] extends his congratulations to ‘all my American Cousins of the Clan Munson’ on the brilliant success of their Reunion in 1887.”

Sir Edmund John¹² expressed the opinion that their common ancestor was a Dane. “That portion of England [Lincolnshire] where the family was dwelling at the date of our earliest knowledge, in the fourteenth century,” he wrote, “had been overrun by the Danes. Many names of families and places in that locality are clearly Danish. The name of Monsen is very common to this day in Denmark.” (See Inset 3).

In the introduction to *The Munson Record*, Myron A. Munson concludes with the statement: “We have outlined the successive generations of this illustrious English family because of the rational presumption that our pioneer-ancestor, Capt. Thomas, sprang from it.” (See Inset 4—“About the Early Immigrants to New England,” page 15).

¹² Myron A. Munson, *The Munson Record*, Volume I, “Introductory.”

*Inset 2***The English Crown in the Years 1603-1660**

Upon the death of Queen Elizabeth I in 1603, leaving no heir to the throne, the first of the House of Stuart, James I of Scotland, became king. During his harsh reign, English colonists established settlements at Jamestown, Virginia, and Plymouth, Massachusetts. His successor, in 1625, was his son, Charles I, who ruled as an absolute monarch and did not call any Parliament from 1629 to 1640. When Parliament finally met, it refused to grant the king any funds until he agreed to limits on his royal power. Charles refused and civil war broke out in 1642.

Charles had the support of the nobility, gentry, and clergy, who were called Royalists. Parliament's greatest support came from the Puritans, who were called Roundheads because they cut their hair short. Oliver Cromwell was one of the principal parliamentary leaders. He led the Puritan army in a series of victories. Charles fled to his native Scotland, but the Scots turned him over to the Roundheads. A special court set up by Parliament condemned Charles to death, and he was beheaded in 1649. Sir William⁵ Monson was a member of this court, but apparently as a dissenter, for he was severely punished.

England became a Commonwealth ruled by a committee of Parliament. Oliver Cromwell ended the Commonwealth in 1653 by dismissing the Long Parliament, which had been meeting since 1640. The country was called a Protectorate and Cromwell was called Lord Protector. He ruled until his death in 1658. His son, Richard, was chosen Lord Protector, but Richard could not handle the affairs of government.

The Long Parliament met again to call for new elections. The result was The Restoration, in 1660, at which time the Stuarts were restored as the rulers of England in the person of King Charles II, the son of Charles I. The Court of Charles II is especially noted for its immorality. During these tumultuous years in English history, there was a large exodus of colonists to America.

*Inset 3***The Danish Influence in England**

The height of the Viking raids to England and Europe occurred between the years 800 and 1000 A.D. The Vikings were Norsemen, ancestors of modern Norwegians, Swedes, and Danes. They not only traveled to plunder but also to settle new lands, and through local warfare to establish new countries. They established Normandy in France and Dublin in Ireland, and they settled heavily on the eastern shores of England, in what is now Lincolnshire. There they fought with the Celts, the Angles, and the Saxons for control of the land for over two centuries. By 878 they had become the dominant force in central England, and the Danish king, Guthrum, ruled the Danish kingdom of Danelaw in central England. Danelaw was reconquered by the Anglo-Saxons in 939, but from 1017 till 1035 all of England was ruled by the Danish King Canute. The Normans from France were supreme after the invasion by William the Conqueror in 1066. Danish place names are common in Lincolnshire—the ending “-by” is Danish for a settlement, and a “thorpe” was a farm.

Inset 4
About the Early Immigrants to New England¹³



“Writing from Massachusetts Bay in September, 1629, Higginson said: ‘Many families are expected here the next spring out of Lincolnshire.’ The principal town of the English county of Lincoln was Boston. According to the Memorial History of Boston, Mass., ‘When the Boston (Eng.) men joined the Massachusetts Company... their superior wealth and standing gave them the ascendancy in its councils,’ and thus a name precious with Lincolnshire [i.e. Boston]... was applied to the Tri-Mountain settlement.”

“Increase Mather (1639-1723), President of Harvard College, wrote of the Rev. John Cotton, who for twenty years was minister in Boston, England, and for nineteen years minister in Boston, Massachusetts: ‘Both Bostons have reason to honor his memory; and New-England Boston most of all, which oweth its name and being to him, more than to any one person in the world.’ In the same ship with Cotton came Hooker, celebrated as a minister and as the founder of Hartford; and through Cotton’s influence... Davenport, celebrated as a minister and as associate-founder of New Haven, became a non-conformist, and so an exile to the New World. ‘However,’ says Mather, ‘the number of those who did actually arrive at New-England before the year 1640, have been computed about 4000...’

“The silenced, non-conformist ministers were at the head of this... migration. They had been ‘deprived not only of their livings, but also of their liberty to exercise their ministry, which was dearer to them than their livings.’... Most, if not all, of the ministers who then visited these regions, were either attended or followed, with a number of pious people, who had lived within the reach of their ministry in England...”

“Does one inquire for a definite answer to the question—What banished scores of the ablest, most devoted, most spiritual ministers, with 4,000 of their fellow-Christians, into a wilderness peopled with savages?... A conscientious refusal to practice certain ceremonies of human invention which had been added to the worship of God – unscriptural, unwarrantable, profane, as they believed; they could not conform to the requirements of the bishops and their courts in respect to these human inventions. That the silenced ministers might preach the Gospel, and that they and their fellow-Christians might have liberty to worship according to conscience... such were their primary motives in crossing the Atlantic.”

“Our Thomas Munson – the supposition is credible and unavoidable – was among those Four Thousand exiled servants of God. He may have voyaged hither with Higginson in 1629, with Cotton and Hooker in 1633, or with other brave and spirited colonists, loyal to God and to conscience. Whence he came, when he came, with whom he came, may some day appear.

¹³ Myron A. Munson, *The Munson Record*, Vol. I: xxv-xxvii

Chapter 3

The Munsons of New England



Two different families of Munsons are recorded in early New England, but it is not known if the Munsons of Texas are descended from either of them. Captain Thomas Munson was first recorded in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1637; and Richard Monson in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in 1663. Both families had many descendants, and these are well documented in two books authored by Myron A. Munson of New Haven around 1900. The early histories and other items of interest pertaining to these families are presented. The possibility that the Munsons of Texas descended from these Munsons is discussed.



The Thomas Munson Family of Connecticut

On December 11, 1620, (December 21 according to the calendar we now use) a band of plainly dressed voyagers moored their ship on a wild New England shore and knelt in prayer of thanks. These were the Pilgrims. They had braved the terrors of the little-known seas and sailed in the *Mayflower* to the place they called Plymouth, named after their point of debarkation—Plymouth, England. Among these Pilgrims was William Brewster with his wife and a son, Love Brewster. These were to be ancestors of one group of the Munsons who live in Texas today, 350 years later.

Because they were beyond the reach of England, the Pilgrims drew up a plan of self-government which they called *The Mayflower Compact*. It was an agreement to form a democratic government that would make “just and equal lawes... for ye generall good of ye Colonie, unto which we promise all due submission and obedience.”¹⁴ The future colony of Massachusetts and the new nation that followed never varied from the espousal of this theme.

In 1629, following the struggling success of the Plymouth colony and the initial settlements at Salem in 1626, King Charles I granted a charter for the “puritan colony of the Massachusetts Bay in New England.” Soon there were three settlements in the Massachusetts Bay Colony: Salem, Boston, and Gloucester. These settlements grew rapidly between 1630 and 1642—a time in England when the struggle between Charles I and Parliament and the resulting Civil War made

¹⁴ Willard Rouse Jillson, *Mayflower Compact*, 1966.

conditions especially unpleasant for the Puritans.¹⁵ Many of these immigrants were from Lincolnshire.¹⁶ By 1640 the Bay colonies are estimated to have had over ten thousand settlers and were beginning to expand westward. Early among these westward movements was the establishment of Hartford in the *Quinnipicut* Valley by Thomas Hooker in 1636 and New Haven by John Davenport in 1638.

Captain Thomas Munson, the first recorded Munson in America, was born in England in 1612 and is first located in Hartford in 1637. In that year he participated, at the age of 25, with Captain Mason's men in a successful campaign to drive the troublesome Pequot Indians out of the *Quinnipicut* Valley into the Fairfield Swamp. The battle took place at daybreak on June 5, 1637, eight miles northeast of New London. The tribe was virtually destroyed in this encounter, and Indian raids ceased thereafter.

The written record of that day, quoted from *The Munson Record*, tells the story:

May 1st, 1637, the Generall Corte [court] att Harteford 'rdered that there shalbe an offensive warr agt the Pequoitt, and that there shalbe 90 men levied out of the 3 Plantacons [plantations], Harteford, Weathersfield & Windsor; Harteford was to furnish 42. Wednesday, May 10th, the Connecticut army, composed of 90 Colonists and 70 Mohegan Indians, sailed from Hartford, and occupied five days in descending the Connecticut river—sixty miles. Only two members of the expedition were killed, and sixteen wounded; while according to Capt. Mason six or seven hundred of the Pequots perished.

Harteford. Generall Cort [court], Tuesday Nov: 14th, 1637... It is ordered that every common souldier that went in the late designe against... the Pequoites shall have 1s.3d. pr day for there service at sixe dayes to the weeke... and that the saide payment shalbe for a moneth although in strictnes there was but three weekes and 3 dayes due...

Myron A. Munson, in *The Munson Record*, further explains:

On the northern margin of the present city of Hartford was a cleared and fertile tract of 28 acres, which the grateful town allotted to the returning heroes; it has been known as the Soldiers' Field... eight acres of this Field... contained thirteen allotments, the most southern of which was that of Thomas Hale, adjoining the Spencer lot; then came in order the lots of Samuel Hale, William Phillips, Thomas Barnes, and Thomas Munson... Soldier Munson's house-lot, comprising two and one-half acres, was on the east side of the present High Street, opposite the head of Walnut (about two blocks N. E. of Union R. R. Station); our High Street was then known as 'the highway leading from the Cow-pasture to Mr Allen's land.' There was a house on this ground in February, 1641, which was probably built by Munson the Carpenter. Previously to this date, he had sold the place to Nath. Kellogge...

Previously to... February, 1640, Thomas Munson had quit Hartford plantation and cast in his lot with the settlers at *Quinnipiac* [the site of present-day New Haven]. Such experiments were numerous. The Historical Catalogue of the First Church, Hartford, gives the names of 147 early members; seventy-four of them, including Thomas Munson, are said to have removed to other settlements. The men who had a sight of *Quinnipiac* while engaged in the Pequot War were enthusiastic over the place. In April, 1638, Davenport and his fellow-adventurers sailed into the West Creek... The following year

¹⁵ See Inset 2 – “The English Crown in the Years 1603-1660.”

¹⁶ See Inset 4 – “About the Early Immigrants to New England.”

[1639], on the 4th of June, a *Fundamental Agreement* was enacted in Mr. Newman's barn: its main point was that church-members only should be free burgesses, and have the elective franchise... It was ordered that whoever should hereafter 'be admitted here as planters' should subscribe their names to the '*Agreement*': the fine signature of Thomas Munson is sixth in a list of forty-eight, (thirteen signed by their mark). Accordingly... there is no reason to doubt that he became a New-Havener as early as 1639; he may have joined the settlement during its first year.

This Captain Thomas Munson lived the next forty-six years as an active and eminent citizen of New Haven. His professions are recorded as carpenter, civic officer, and military service. He died on May 7, 1685, at the age of 73, and was buried on "The Green" in New Haven. His monument, a slab of sandstone, may now be seen in the Grove Street burial ground at No.9 Linden Avenue. His signature remains on many documents.

Thomas' wife in New Haven was Joanna Munson. She shared his life there for approximately thirty-six years. Neither the date of their marriage nor that of the birth of their first child, Elizabeth, is known. Their second child and only son, Samuel, was born in 1643, and their third child, Hannah, in 1648. Joanna died in New Haven in 1678 at the age of 68, and her gravestone stands beside that of her husband.

A footnote in *The Munson Record* suggests some interesting speculation on the date of Thomas Munson's voyage to America and of the possibility of an earlier wife:

In Hotten's *Lists of Emigrants*, page 279, appear the names and ages of all the Passengers which tooke shipping In the *Elizabeth* of Ipswich... bound for new Eng Land the last of Aprill, 1634; one of them is Susan Munson, aged 25. This Susan, three years older than Thomas, may have been his wife... It is impossible to doubt that Joanna Munson, who was two years older than Thomas, who died seven years before him, and whose grave stone is a twin to that of Thomas, was his wife, though possibly by a second marriage.

This passage suggests that Thomas had come to America before 1634, possibly in 1633 at the age of 21, or even as early as 1629, and that possibly his first wife, Susan, was coming to meet him.¹⁷ If so, she apparently perished en route or soon thereafter, and Thomas, possibly as a result, moved to the new frontier settlement at Hartford and participated in the Pequot war there.

In New Haven Thomas and Joanna Munson raised their two daughters and a son. Daughter Elizabeth married Thomas Cooper and resided in Springfield, Massachusetts. Daughter Hannah married William Tuttle and lived in New Haven. Both couples raised families and had many descendants.

Samuel Munson, the only son of Thomas and Joanna, married Martha Bradley on October 26, 1665, and lived in New Haven and nearby Wallingford, Connecticut. Samuel Munson's occupation is recorded as shoemaker and tanner. He and Martha raised nine sons and one daughter. These nine sons account for the very large family of the Munsons of Connecticut, who make up the subject matter of *The Munson Record*. These nine sons raised sixty-three recorded children, of whom the families of seventeen sons are detailed in *The Munson Record*. These seventeen "Heads of Clans" were born between 1689 and 1739.

¹⁷ See Inset 4 – "About the Early Immigrants to New England."



While the genealogical data in *The Munson Record* are amazingly complete, there nonetheless still exists a real possibility that one or several of the Munson men from these early families migrated to the southern colonies in the early or middle 1700s and thereby account for the ancestors of the Munsons of Texas. The last chapter of *The Munson Record* is entitled “Addenda: Unlocated Munsons.” Therein the author, Myron A. Munson, writing in Connecticut in the 1890s, reports as follows: “Though proof is wanting, there can be little doubt that the Senator [Mordello S. Munson]¹⁸ is of the Thomas Munson race... At any rate, he is a most loyal Munson, and an honor to the Family name. He [Mordello] writes that a neighbor of Dr. Henry J. Munson¹⁹ accosted him when a young man, and extended cordial greeting to him as one of the Doctor’s sons whom he had known from childhood: ‘it was with difficulty [Mordello wrote] [that] I could persuade him I had never met a member of Dr. Munson’s family.’”

Adding a little spice to this theory is a study of names given to the men in the early New England Munson families. A review of the names of boys born during the 1700s reveals many of the same names found in the early generations of the Munsons of Texas. In both families, the names Robert, Samuel, and William are common, but most amazingly, in the New England family there are five cousins in different families who were named Jesse Munson, all born between 1740 and 1772. None of these exact individuals appears to have been our Jesse, father of Henry William Munson, either because of the inappropriate years of their births or the complete record of their northern residences. This certainly shows, however, that the name Jesse was frequently used in this Munson family, and it adds credence to the possibility that yet another cousin was the father of our Jesse and Robert Munson in the middle 1700s. But this possibility is destined to remain nothing more than speculation until a future industrious genealogical researcher successfully locates a positive family connection. To date, all efforts have been unsuccessful.²⁰

The Richard Munson Family of New Hampshire²¹

In the foreword of Myron A. Munson’s book, *The Portsmouth Race of Monsons-Munsons-Mansons*, he writes: “While the Author was industriously accumulating information in regard to the descendants of Captain Thomas Munson, the pioneer of New-Haven, he discovered Richard Monson, an ancient citizen of Portsmouth [New Hampshire], whom it was impossible to connect with the New-Haven race by any relationship this side of the Atlantic... He visited Portsmouth and made a study of records there, and in neighboring towns, by which he was confirmed in the impression that Richard was the originator of a distinct Race of Munsons.”

This author then cites the variable spelling of the family surname among members of this family as follows: “Richard the First, of Portsmouth, always signed thus: R. The public scribes wrote his name, so far as my memoranda testify—twice, ‘Munson’, three times, ‘Manson’, and

¹⁸ No record has been found of Mordello having been a Senator.

¹⁹ A Thomas Munson descendant of Wallingford, Connecticut.

²⁰ This writer presently leans toward the belief that it is more likely that Jesse and Robert Munson or their parents immigrated directly from England to Virginia sometime before 1760, and were poor, migrant farmers until their migration to the Natchez District in 1792.

²¹ The majority of the information in this section, including all quotes not otherwise identified, is taken from Myron A. Munson, *The Portsmouth Race of Monsons-Munsons- Mansons*, New Haven, Conn., 1910.

sixteen times, 'Monson'. There has been the same diversity through succeeding generations, both in the usage of the Family, and of public scribes. Many persons have been indifferent in regard to spelling, using different modes in the same document... It is incumbent for genealogical researchers to always remember the variable spelling of names in earlier times."

The first record in which Richard Monson appears is dated November 1, 1663. James Drew sells to Richard Manson, fisherman, of Portsmouth "All that halfe & halfend eale of all that Dwelling house & eight acres of Land,... in Portsmouth, &... all... wayes, pathes, passages, Trees, woods, undrwoods, comons... the consideration being 19l 10sh: 20sh in money, 'five barrells of mackerell, and ye residue... in wel cured well condiconed ffish.'" This purchase appears to have been Richard's residence the rest of his life—thirty-nine years. Disposition made in 1699 indicates that it was located beside "a Little Runn of Water known as Richard Monson's Brooke."

In May or June of 1677, Richard Monson was one of the appraisers of the estate of "Robart Monson of the Isles of Shoals." Out in the Atlantic, about ten miles southeasterly from Portsmouth, are several rocky and barren islets which are known as the Isles of Shoals. Together they measure less than six hundred acres, and vegetation is small and scant. In about 1676, William Pepperell, at the age of 22, settled at The Shoals and established an extensive fishery. One of the earliest residents was the fisherman Robert Monson, who died there in or about 1677. This was twenty-five years before the death of Richard Monson of Portsmouth. Author Myron A. Munson wrote: "For twenty-seven years I have inclined to the supposition that Richard Monson, who was one of the appraisers of Robert's estate, was Robert's son; or possibly they may have been brothers..."

Richard and his wife, Ester, raised four sons and a daughter in Portsmouth, and these sons gave rise to a considerable clan of Monsons, Munsons, and Mansons in New Hampshire and Maine.

A noteworthy descendant of Richard Monson was his great-great-great-great-grandson, Thomas Volney Munson, of Denison, Texas. Thomas Volney's father, William, had moved from New Hampshire to Illinois in 1829. Thomas was born on September 26, 1843, on a farm near Astoria, Illinois, and graduated as B.S. in 1870 from the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Kentucky (now a part of the University of Kentucky). For a year he held the chair of natural sciences at his alma mater. In 1872 he started a market-garden and nursery near Lincoln, Nebraska, but the hot winds of summer and the clouds of grasshoppers convinced him to move. In 1876 he joined his brother, William Benjamin,²² in Texas and founded his now famous nurseries at Denison.

Thomas V. Munson was an unusually active and accomplished horticulturist. His specialty became the study of the wild grape varieties of North America. It is reported that in his lifetime he traveled over fifty thousand miles around the continent collecting and studying the native grape varieties. Through hybridization he developed some three hundred new grape varieties, many of which are still grown commercially. The botanical classification which he presented at the 1885 New Orleans Exposition was officially adopted and is still in use today. He published a large illustrated work entitled *Native Grapes of North America*; he wrote a section in the American

²² Not to be confused with William Benjamin Munson, the brother of Mordello.

Encyclopedia of Horticulture entitled “Viticulture in the South”; and his last work, published in 1909, was a scholarly and elegant production entitled *Foundations of American Grape Culture*.

His greatest recognition came, however, in the 1880s, when he collaborated on a program to save the French wine industry. A new disease had appeared in the vineyards of France, and it quickly became the scourge of the vineyards of Europe. It was caused by a plant louse, or aphid, and was called phylloxera. This insect lived and fed on the wild grape plants of North America with little damage, but it was unknown in Europe. American grape varieties had evolved so that they were not harmed by this aphid—the insect and its host lived happily together. The aphids’ ability to destroy non-resistant vines was not realized until it was carried to southern France on imported American vines. It is reported to have destroyed one-third of the vineyards in France, and it did further damage as it spread to other parts of Europe.

The phylloxera aphid feeds on both the leaves and the roots of the vine, but it does the most serious damage when it attacks the roots of non-resistant varieties. The roots become enlarged and rot away, the leaves then turn yellow, the vine stops growing, and it soon dies. Nearly all native American varieties are free from damage from root attack, and damage to vineyards is best prevented by grafting European grape varieties onto American rootstocks.

When the French wine industry was threatened with destruction, the French Commissioner of Agriculture, Pierre Viala, contacted Thomas V. Munson to enlist his help in finding the best American grape stocks which would resist phylloxera and thrive in the dry, chalky soils of France. The resulting research effort was successful, and today essentially all grapes in Europe are grown on the American understock selected by Thomas V. Munson. For these contributions, the French Government sent a delegation to Denison, Texas, to confer upon him the Legion of Honor with the special title “Chevalier du Merite Agricole.” He was only the second American to receive the French Legion of Honor, and the National Society of France elected him to honorary membership. In 1906 the Kentucky State Agricultural College (now a part of the University of Kentucky) conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Science, with the president of the institution extolling his accomplishments thusly: “No man in America is better entitled to this honor.”

Thomas Volney Munson died on January 21, 1913, at Denison, Texas, with a final request: “plant a vine on my grave and see it clasp its hands with joy.” His elaborate gravestone in Denison is carved with grapevines and clusters of grapes, and his nursery, willed to the United States Department of Agriculture, is preserved as a memorial to his achievements. He was a contemporary of Mordello Stephen Munson of Brazoria County, and Myron A. Munson wrote in *The Munson Record*: “In 1883, Thomas V. Munson called our attention to Mordello as an attorney-at-law who had been ‘a prominent and exemplary member of our Legislature and Senate several terms, and a man of fine standing.’ Though proof is wanting, there can be little doubt that the Senator is of the Thomas Munson race, a member of one of the lost tribes.”²³

²³ Myron A. Munson, *The Munson Record*, Vol. II, p. 1319.

Chapter 4

Early Munsons of the South 1745–1820



Available records mention a number of Munsons in the Southern Colonies and States between 1745 and 1820. Some of these Munsons appear to have been associated with our Jesse and Robert Munson, but no positive relationships have been established. Even though our Jesse Munson's son Micajah was born in South Carolina in 1788 or 1789, and Jesse and his brother Robert made the trip from Virginia to Natchez in 1792, they are not listed in the first U. S. census taken in 1790. Evidence suggests that they may have been migrating from South Carolina to Kentucky, back to Virginia, and on to the Natchez District just as the new nation was being organized and the first census was being taken. Several other Munsons are listed in South Carolina and Kentucky in the census records of 1790 and 1800. Thereafter, numerous Munsons appear in the census records in these states and in Mississippi and Louisiana. There are strong reasons to believe that these other Munsons of the South were close relatives of Jesse and Robert, but proof is lacking and the numerous possible relationships are confusing.



The earliest scattering of records found thus far which mention Munsons in the South are as follows: a William Munson was an inhabitant in North Carolina in 1745; a Benjamin Munson was an inhabitant in North Carolina in 1757; and a Samuel Munson Sr. was a taxpayer in Virginia in 1772, 1775, and 1777.²⁴

Recent research reveals that a Robert Munson married a Patience Daughtrey in Northampton County, North Carolina, (on the Virginia border) prior to 1754, at which time they had a son named William Munson. A large family of Daughtreys (also recorded Daughtree and Doherty) lived in Northampton County, North Carolina, and the adjoining Nansemond County, Virginia. In November of 1769 a Robert Munson (presumably the same man) petitioned the South Carolina Council of Provincial Government for 200 acres of land,²⁵ to which he apparently never received title. While no record has been found showing his ownership of any land, a Robert Munson lived in the Camden District (in what is now Fairfield County) from 1769 into the late 1780s. A close associate, a Colonel Henry Hunter, also from Northampton County, North

²⁴ From the notes of Erma Munson Rich, *Munson Papers*, see Appendix I.

²⁵ It must be remembered that new land in those days was practically valueless. Grants of new land could be obtained from the colonies free, but it was raw, unbroken land, rough and uncleared, and possibly with no access by roads or bridges. The census of 1790 shows that it was common for two or three families to live together and work the same land.

Carolina, also lived there. It appears that the Munson, the Hunter, and the Daughtrey families had migrated from Virginia to North Carolina and then to South Carolina about or before 1769. It is thought that all were very possibly related by marriage.

This Henry Hunter was apparently a participant with the rebels in the American Revolution, as a recently discovered pension application of a Revolutionary soldier states: “Was in a tour of duty under Captain Kemp Strother, Captain James Craig commanded the company and Col Henry Hunter was commander of the whole detachment. Took Captain Dick Smith, a Tory Captain and his command prisoners on Crane Creek Richland District.”²⁶

Evidence indicates that a Robert Munson was an active upland South Carolina planter in the Camden District during the 1770s and 1780s.²⁷ He may have farmed on land owned by others, which was a common practice. Henry Hunter owned several large tracts of land in the Camden District, and was at different times a juror, a grand juror, and a representative to the South Carolina Colonial Assembly. There were several Henry Hunters—father, sons, and nephews—in one big family during these years, and it has been suggested by one researcher that there appear to have been two Robert Munsons—father and son. In a judgment in a lawsuit in the Court of Common Pleas in Charleston, South Carolina, dated December 1, 1774, Robert Munson, a planter of St. Marks Parish in Camden County, agreed to pay to Meyer Moses, a merchant of “Charles Town,” the considerable sum of five hundred and nine pounds and nine shillings. To meet the requirements of the judgment, half that amount was paid on the day of the judgment. These sums suggest that this Robert Munson handled sizable values of goods and money.

A Robert Munson was the administrator of Bryan Doherty’s estate in the Camden District on March 3, 1787. He may have been appointed administrator because he was next of kin, which was the common practice, possibly a nephew-in-law or a brother-in-law.

No mention of a Jesse Munson has been found in these early records, although a Jesse Munson and/or a Robert or Rob Munson (certainly later generations) appear in every South Carolina decennial census from 1820 through 1850. This suggests that some close relatives and their descendants remained in South Carolina when Jesse and Robert migrated to the Natchez District in 1790-1792.

A Robert Munson was awarded a land grant in Georgia in 1785, to which he apparently also never received title. In the same year, a Robert Munson bought tools from a John Brown in Barnwell County, South Carolina, which county borders the Savannah River and Georgia. Micajah, the first known son of Jesse Munson, was born in South Carolina in 1788 or 1789.

These sketchy records strongly suggest the presence of our Robert and Jesse Munson in North and South Carolina during the second half of the 1700s. In 1787 Robert and Jesse Munson were awarded Spanish land grants in the Natchez District of New Spain for a total of 1,582 acres. Court records of the Natchez District show the presence of a William Munson there in July of 1781.²⁸ Who he was and whether he was an early resident, was on a trading mission, or was exploring this territory for settlement is not known. Local land grants were awarded by the Governor of the Natchez District, who at that time was Carlos de Grand Pre. This William Munson may have been the source of information or the applicant for the Munson land grants.

²⁶ Abstract of 1832 pension application of James Nelson, *Munson Papers*, see Appendix I.

²⁷ The early lowland South Carolina plantations, growing indigo and rice for export to Europe, were large and prosperous, and the owners were often wealthy and influential. The upland planters struggled and were usually poor.

²⁸ These items are from the *Munson Papers*, see Appendix I.

He may have been the father, a brother, an uncle, or a cousin of Jesse and Robert Munson. He may have been the William Munson who later settled in South Carolina and apparently left descendants there. None of the answers is known.

These land grants were in virgin territory just east of the Mississippi River in what is now eastern Louisiana, just a few miles from the Mississippi border. Years later Jesse's grandson, Mordello Stephen Munson, would report in *The Munson Record*: "At an early day, [grandfather] Jesse Munson removed from South Carolina or Virginia to Kentucky, and again removed to Mississippi."²⁹

It should be remembered that during these revolutionary times populations in upland South Carolina were sparse and poor and communications were limited. While some citizens and especially their leaders had strong revolutionary feelings, many were also loyal to the British Crown. The latter were called Tories, and many of them left the United States after the Revolution, moving to the Bahamas, the West Indies, Spanish Florida and the Natchez District, or back to England. But there was also a large group of citizens who did not support either side strongly. They were probably guided by peer pressure, economic considerations, and the desire not to be on the losing side. It has been suggested by researchers that the Munsons may have been in this group. This may have contributed, together with post-war economic hardships in upland South Carolina, to their decision to move to the Natchez District of New Spain.

This move was apparently made during the time that the first United States census was being taken, as neither has been found in the census of 1790 in any of the states. They were possibly en route to see relatives in Kentucky, as a Samuel Munson Sr. appears in the 1790 Kentucky census. Then, in the spring of 1792, Robert and Jesse Munson and their families, in company with the families of Henry Hunter and John Grady, traveled by flatboat from Holston, Virginia, (which is very near the Cumberland Gap into Kentucky) to Natchez, and both are listed in the June, 1792, Spanish census of the Natchez District. No roads and only a few trails existed in the mountainous terrain of western Virginia (which then included present-day Kentucky); travel was by foot, horseback, or riverboat, and was very slow. Such an expedition by several families would have taken many months.

A View of Those Revolutionary Times

It may be useful to consider the national events which were occurring at the time of these earliest records of our Munson ancestors in the South. The American Revolution began in New England in 1775; the American Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence—

When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another...

—in Philadelphia on July 4, 1776. The Revolutionary War was fought from New England to Georgia and South Carolina from 1775 until General Charles Cornwallis surrendered to General George Washington at Yorktown, Virginia, on October 19, 1781. The resulting thirteen independent states lived unsatisfactorily under the Articles of Confederation from 1777 until 1788. This is the period when the Munsons apparently lived in South Carolina.

²⁹ Myron A. Munson, *The Munson Record*, Vol. II, p. 1130.

In an effort to achieve a better form of government, the Constitutional Convention convened in Philadelphia on May 25, 1787, and the Constitution—

We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union...

—was signed and submitted to the colonies on September 17, 1787 (the year in which Jesse and Robert Munson received their Spanish land grants). The Constitution was first ratified by Delaware on December 7, 1787; by South Carolina as the eighth state on May 23, 1788; and by the ninth state, New Hampshire, on June 21, 1788, at which time it became the law of the land. A new era had begun. The first national elections were held in April of 1789, and George Washington, John Adams, and the new Congress took office in New York City soon thereafter.

Rhode Island, the last of the original thirteen states to ratify the Constitution, was admitted May 29, 1790. Vermont, the first addition, was admitted in the following year before the results of the first census were announced. Maine was a part of Massachusetts, Kentucky was a part of Virginia, and the present states of Alabama and Mississippi, presumably a part of the United States, were claimed by both Georgia and Spain. Spanish Florida included “West Florida” and extended to the Mississippi River. The present states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and part of Minnesota were known as the Northwest Territory. Each of the southern states extended to the Mississippi River, beyond which stretched that vast and unexplored wilderness belonging to the King of Spain. Although penetrated here and there by venturesome explorers and a few settlers, most of the land between the Appalachian Mountains and the Pacific Ocean was Indian-inhabited, unexplored wilderness.

The First United States Census — 1790

When the first United States Congress assembled in 1789, one of its first items of business was to order an immediate census of the new nation. No national census had been previously taken, and the new census, approved on March 1, 1790, became the first of the permanent decennial censuses of the United States and a major asset to future genealogists. Though the area covered by the first census seems very small when compared with the present area of the United States, the difficulties which confronted the census takers were great. In many localities there were no roads, and where these did exist they were poor and frequently impassable. Bridges were almost unknown. Mail was transported in very irregular fashion, and correspondence was expensive and uncertain. Philadelphia became the capital in July of 1790, and Washington was merely a government project to be known as The Federal City.

The 1790 census reported total inhabitants of 3,231,533 freemen and 694,280 slaves, for a total population of 3,925,813. By comparison, the 1980 U. S. census reported 235,000,000 persons. In 1790, New York City, the largest city, had a population of 33,131. Philadelphia was second with 28,522, and Boston third with 18,038. Many of the original documents of the 1790 census were lost when the British burned the nation’s capitol in the War of 1812. The retention of other copies, or their reconstruction as best possible from other records, as in Kentucky, produced the current census data. The 1790 census recorded the names of persons only when they declared themselves to be “head-of-household,” but it ostensibly counted all residents of the U. S. After the name of each head-of-household, there was reported for that household the numbers of “free white males over 16”; “free white males under 16”; “free white females”; “other freemen”; and “slaves.” In following census years, the categories were similar but included more

detailed information. It was not until 1850 that the names of spouses and children in a household were listed.

The Early Munsons in the Carolinas

A study of all of the Munsons listed in the southern states in the early censuses is interesting.³⁰ In Virginia and Georgia there were no Munsons in the 1790 or the 1800 census. In North Carolina, in 1790, there was a Moses Munson with a family of three males over sixteen and three females—this could have been a large family or two or three couples living together. There had been several Moses Munsons in the early Thomas Munson families of New England. This Moses Munson does not appear in the 1800 census, nor later, and nothing more is known of him. Having been the head of a large family of adults, he may have died before 1800.

The findings in South Carolina are more intriguing. The 1790 census of South Carolina reported 141,979 freemen and 107,094 slaves. The state was divided into eight districts, with Orangeburg District bordering the Savannah River, adjacent to Screven County, Georgia. In Orangeburg District, the 1790 census lists two families of Munsons, and the head-of-household in each is a female. One is Martha Munson with a family of two white males under sixteen and one slave. The other is Patience Munson with two white females and four slaves.

Could these have been the wives and families of Jesse and Robert Munson, who may have left for Kentucky and the Mississippi Territory? If so, Martha could have been the wife of Jesse, with two small sons. It is established that Jesse's son, Micajah, was born in South Carolina in 1788 or 1789. If this guess should be true, it would indicate that another of Jesse's sons is unaccounted for. He may have perished, or he may be one of the several unidentified Munsons—Samuel or Samuel Elder—who were closely associated with Jesse and Robert during the following decades. Patience Munson and two daughters could have been Robert's family. It is known that a Robert Munson married a Patience Daughtrey prior to 1754 in North Carolina, and that a Robert Munson, possibly the same Robert Munson, or a son, lived in South Carolina during the 1770s and the 1780s. This guess would indicate that this Patience Munson could either be the mother or the wife of our Robert Munson. If she was the wife, she did not survive, as the only reference to Robert's wife in Mississippi was to Winifred in 1805. Robert's known family in the Natchez District was wife Winifred, a son, Telfair,³¹ and two daughters. Estimates place Telfair's birth before 1774, so a robust son of sixteen or more could easily have accompanied his father on the trip to the frontier. This would have left behind Robert's wife, Patience, and two younger daughters. It is also noteworthy that the Patience Munson family had four slaves and the Martha family had one, because in later years Robert Munson would accumulate many slaves while Jesse died with none.

It is important to emphasize that there exists no proof of this theory beyond the above circumstantial possibility, but also that no facts appear to exclude it as a possibility. Furthermore, the 1800 census in South Carolina shows no Martha and no Patience Munson, and Patience and Martha are not heard of again. It is also interesting to note that in later years, when Jesse's eldest

³⁰ A listing of Munsons in the U. S. censuses of these southern states from 1790 through 1850 is given in Appendix II.

³¹ As Telfair is the family name of a very prominent, early Savannah family, this further suggests Robert's association with this area.

son, Micajah, married, his first daughter was named Ann Elizabeth for her mother, and his second daughter was named Martha C. Munson.

While this scenario describes some of our Munsons leaving South Carolina in about 1790, all the Munsons did not leave. A few Munsons are recorded in each decennial census thereafter, and their names include more than once a Robert, a Jesse, and a William.³² A William Munson is found in Richland County in 1801, a planter who assisted in making cotton gins used by General Wade Hampton. William Munson and William Boatwright made the first new gins of home manufacture in Richland County.³³ This could very possibly have been the William Munson who was recorded in the Natchez District in 1781. The 1810 and the 1820 censuses of South Carolina list a William Munson with, apparently, a wife and two children, Robert and William Jr., in Richland District. The 1830 census lists Robert and William (presumably William Jr.) and a Rob Munson, thought to be a son of William Jr. The 1840 census lists only Robert, and his 1841 will lists his children as Jesse, William, John, James, Thomas, and Elizabeth. The 1850 census lists Jesse, John, Thomas, and William C. Munson in Richland County. It appears that this William Munson and his descendants remained in Richland County, South Carolina; and their descendants may possibly still live there today. The names strongly suggest that this William Munson was a brother to our Robert and Jesse.

The Munsons of Kentucky

By the year 1750, the southern American colonies consisted of a string of English settlements along the Atlantic seaboard with large, wealthy farming estates in the lowlands and smaller, poorer farms in the uplands. As the years passed, adventuresome frontiersmen ventured further into the Appalachian Mountains. In 1753 the Colony of Virginia sent a young George Washington across the range to scout the new French settlements in the Valley of the Ohio River. Their aim was to assert British claim to the upper Ohio Valley. In the ensuing French and Indian Wars (1754-1763), the English drove the French back to Canada and captured Montreal. Further understanding of the land beyond the Appalachian Mountains was gained from these adventures.

Daniel Boone (1734-1820) is given much credit for opening the land beyond the mountains to settlement. He was born in Pennsylvania just two years after George Washington was born in Virginia, and at the age of 19 he moved to the mountainous frontier of North Carolina. In 1754, at the age of 20, he was participating in the French and Indian Wars. He traveled widely over the frontier and spent much time there among the Indians. In 1767 he hunted in the vicinity of the Cumberland Gap in the Allegheny Mountains, and in 1769 he made the entire trip through the Gap. In 1775, as the American Revolution was beginning in New England, he guided a party of settlers along the Wilderness Road into Western Virginia, to what is now called Kentucky, to form the first settlement in that territory, appropriately named Boonesboro.

The Wilderness Road ran 300 miles through dangerous and bloody Indian country, but it opened the great area west of the mountains to a flood of settlers. By the time of the 1790 census the population of Kentucky was 61,247 freemen and 12,430 slaves—a total of 73,677 persons. There is strong evidence to suggest that Jesse and Robert Munson followed this trail in about 1790 on their trips from South Carolina to Kentucky and again back to Holston, Virginia.

³² See Appendix II for census records in South Carolina.

³³ Green, *History of Richland County*, pp.139-40.

Daniel Boone settled in Fayette County, Kentucky, where he served as “lieutenant” of the county and later as a member of the Kentucky State Legislature. Also among the early settlers in Fayette County, as enumerated in the reconstructed 1790 census, was an Isaac Munson³⁴ and a Samuel Munson Sr. In the 1800 census there is an Isaac Munson and a Samuel Munson in Bourbon County, which had been formed out of Fayette County in 1795, and also an Allin Munson in Henry County. In the 1810 census there appears in Scott County an Allen Munson and a William Munson with families having five and seven minor children respectively. These, it is thought, were the children and grand-children of the earlier Samuel Munson Sr., and from these there may have grown a clan of Munsons of Kentucky.³⁵

It appears likely that this Samuel Munson Sr. was a close relative of Jesse and Robert—possibly their father, an uncle, a brother, or a cousin. It is interesting to note, as previously reported, that a Samuel Munson Sr. was recorded in Virginia in 1872, 1875, and 1877. In later years two Samuel Munsons appear in Louisiana and are closely associated with the other Munsons there. One was named as the only heir in the estate of Wright Munson in 1816, and, in the same year, a Samuel Munson was named to prepare a list of the assets in the estate of Jesse Munson, which estate was later taken over by Jesse’s son, Henry William. One could wonder if this Samuel Elder Munson might have been the unaccounted-for other son of Martha, a son of Jesse, and a brother to Henry William Munson. And further, Henry William Munson named his first son Samuel; and his first cousin, Telfair Munson, also named a son Samuel.

Wright Munson — A Brother or the Father of Jesse and Robert?

Of great interest is the sketchy story of a Wright (or Right) Munson in South Carolina and Mississippi. He is not found in the 1790 census, but the 1800 census lists two new Munsons in South Carolina. One is the Isaac Munson of Greenville County, recorded as a husband with wife only, both over 45 years old. Of greater interest, however, is a Wright Munson, found in Barnwell County, which had been formed out of the southeastern portion of Orangeburg County in the 1790s. The family of Wright Munson consisted of two males between the ages of 26 and 45, three females between 26 and 45, one boy between 10 and 16, two girls under 10, and no slaves—a Munson family of three couples and three children. Researchers feel that these may have been the families of Wright Munson and his two sisters, the Browns and the Bests, all living together.

What is known of this Wright Munson? He always signed his name “Right Munson.” On August 4, 1800, he purchased 744 acres of land from a Bartlett Brown of the same county on Briar Creek in the “Savannah River Swamp.”³⁶ There is a suspicion among researchers that Wright Munson may have been living on this site with the Browns and the Bests prior to the time of his purchase. Strangely, he appears to have moved to Mississippi soon after completing his

³⁴ An Isaac Munson and a Cornelius Munson are recorded as members of the Prince of Wales Regiment of the British forces in South Carolina in 1781 during the Revolutionary War. There was also an Isaac Munson recorded in Greenville County, South Carolina, in the 1790 census. Greenville County is in the extreme western part of South Carolina, well into the Appalachian Mountains, and not terribly far from Fayette (now Bourbon) County, Kentucky. There may well have been an Isaac Munson Jr., or maybe Isaac was counted twice.

³⁵ See Appendix II for the census records in Kentucky.

³⁶ The Pearce family had lived for two generations on a plantation in Effingham County, Georgia, (in what is Screven County today) only a few miles away. In 1817 Ann Pearce married Henry William Munson in Louisiana.

new purchase. On page 236 of Book A of the *Record of Deeds of Barnwell County* there is recorded the following deed, dated March 28, 1801:³⁷

DEED

Wright Munson, Planter of Barnwell Dist.
to Mary Best, my sister
For her Love & Affection

35 head of Cattle, 4 mares, 1 colt
100 head of hogs, one wagon gear
Plantation Tools, household furniture
the corn I have in the crib as well as the
crop for this present year
wit-C. D. Wyld

Jos. Harley [signed] Right Munson

Another interesting find from this period is an excerpt from the inventory of a John Brown, deceased. An account of expenses for the year 1785 shows that John Brown's blacksmith tools were sold to a "Robt. Munson." Less than nine months after he had purchased 744 acres of farmland, Wright Munson gave all of his farm inventory to his sister and headed for the Mississippi Territory to join his Munson relatives there. Wright Munson, Robert Munson, and Jesse Munson are listed on the 1805 tax rolls of Wilkinson County, Mississippi Territory. At an unknown date, Wright Munson purchased from Archibald Rhea one hundred acres of land bordering the land grants of Jesse and Robert Munson. He appears to have lived there, possibly until his death in 1815.

Then, in 1809, back in South Carolina, there appears on page 319 of Deed Book R of the *Record of Deeds of Barnwell County*, the following:

DEED

Wright Munson of Wilkinson Co. Miss.
to Bartlett Brown & Jacob Kittles
\$1488.00 744 Acres

Land in Savannah River Swamp near William Campbell and land owned by Beake,
surveyed for the said Bartlett Brown 11 [?] 1796 and granted to Right Munson 4 Aug
1800.

Wit-
Thos Goldery
Michael Brown [signed] Right Munson

In the archives section of the Wilkinson County Courthouse in Woodville, Mississippi, is the will of Wright Munson, dated Feb. 14, 1813, which reads:

Sick and weak, to well-beloved son, Samuel Elder, now known as Samuel Munson,
whom I claim as my begotten son and heir, 100 acres of land adjoining Archibald Rea. It

³⁷ Personal records of Erma Munson Rich, *Munson Papers*, see Appendix I. It is presumed that the original records are in the Archives Division, Allendale County Courthouse, Allendale, S. C. Allendale County was formed out of Barnwell County after 1800.

is my will that my present companion, Patsy Ward, shall receive a decent and comfortable support out of my estate during her single life. Friends, Gerard Brandon, Sr. and Jr., exrs. Wit: Dan Clarke, John Babcocks, G. C. Brandon. Probated 11 March 1815.

Other probate records dated 1815 refer to the estate of Wright Munson and his heir, Samuel Elder Munson.

A later recorded deed in the Wilkinson County archives reveals the following:

May 13, 1817 Samuel Munson of the State of Louisiana
and parish of Rapides
sold to Andrew Rea for \$2000.00
100 french acres on the banks of Bayou Sarah
Including houses, ginn, stables & buildings
It being a part of 1000 arpens originally granted to Andrew Hains.
It being a tract of land conveyed from Archibald Rea to Right Munson.

And further, in 1829, from the *Court of Equity Records* of Barnwell District, South Carolina:

JAMES B. ROWLEY, Admr. [Administrator] vs. JOHN A. OWENS, Admr.
Accounting & Discovery, Filed Nov. 21, 1829.

Petitioner is admr. on estate of Wright Munson and says the estate was first administered by James Overstreet [likely a brother-in-law] who was appointed by the Ord'y of P.D., Dec. 16, 1815, and that it consisted entirely of notes and accounts owing deceased here. Overstreet died intestate in 1822, without having fully administered, and William Overstreet became admr. on estate of James Overstreet; William Overstreet died w/o having fully administered, and John A. Owens became admr.

Defendant's answer dated Feb. 3, 1829, refers to Munson "when he left this state" as having on that occasion appointed James Overstreet his agent to collect said debts, and when Overstreet heard Munson was dead he had himself appointed admr. The Munson heirs never have appeared or sent for their money, and defendant does not know who they are or where they are but understands they live in Texas; and professes to be ready to settle with them. Rowley evidently not an heir or relative of Munson.

Thus, some of the biography of Wright Munson can be reconstructed. He is first found around Briar Creek in Barnwell County, South Carolina, in about 1800, but he may have been there some years earlier. Historians relate that many settlers from Virginia and North Carolina migrated to this area in the 1790s, and Briar Creek meets the Savannah River near the famous Burton's Ferry on the main overland gateway to Georgia. There Wright Munson appears to have been associated with the Browns, the Bests, and the Overstreets, all of whom may have been in-law relatives. Also, a Robert Munson had purchased blacksmith tools from the Brown family some years earlier.

Wright Munson moved to the Mississippi Territory between 1801 and 1805 and purchased land bordering that of Jesse and Robert Munson. He apparently had a house, a stable, and a cotton gin there. He died in 1815, leaving a Samuel Elder Munson as his heir. He strangely refers to this Samuel Munson in his will as "whom I claim as my begotten son and heir," and no other heirs are mentioned. Again one can wonder if this Samuel Munson may have been his nephew or a grandson, a son of Jesse. In a personal letter written in 1953, Mr. H. C. Leak, a lawyer and genealogist in Woodville, Mississippi, stated, "I am of the impression that Robert was a son of

Right Munson, though I am not certain on this part.”³⁸ It appears likely that Wright Munson was either the father or a brother of Jesse and Robert.

At this time it appears that the father of our Jesse and Robert Munson could have been William Munson, another Robert Munson, Wright Munson, Samuel Munson Sr., or someone else. An understanding of the exact relationships of these many Munsons of South Carolina, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Louisiana remains for future Munson genealogists to unravel.

³⁸ From the personal files of Erma Munson Rich, *Munson Papers*, see Appendix I.

Chapter 5

Jesse and Robert Munson in Mississippi and Louisiana — 1792-1816



Existing data suggest that Jesse Munson, and probably his brother Robert, left South Carolina in about 1790 for a visit or a move to their Munson relatives in Kentucky. Then, in the spring of 1792, with their families, they both left the settlement of Holston, Virginia, and traveled by flatboats down the Holston, Tennessee, Ohio, and Mississippi Rivers to the Natchez District of New Spain. They were there in the village of Villa Gayoso at the time of the 1792 Spanish census, and Jesse Munson's son, Henry William Munson, was born there in January of 1793. Robert appears to have prospered, gaining much land and many cattle and slaves. Jesse appears to have been poor and illiterate. Both died in Mississippi in late 1815 or early 1816. Each raised three known children, and today each has a large family of descendants. Robert's descendants are the Munsons of Louisiana and Jesse's the Munsons of Texas. Jesse's poverty probably had a great deal to do with his children's' move to Texas, while Robert's success probably accounted for his descendants staying in Louisiana.



Records indicate that Jesse and Robert Munson were in South Carolina in the 1780s, obtained Spanish land grants in the Natchez District of New Spain in 1787, and left South Carolina for Kentucky (and probably for the Natchez District) in about 1790. They arrived at Natchez by flatboat from Holston, Virginia, in April of 1792, and are listed as residents of Villa Gayoso in the Natchez District in the 1792 Spanish census.

On their migration from South Carolina, Robert and Jesse Munson probably traveled overland on well marked roads from South Carolina to Virginia, then by the famous Wilderness Road through the Cumberland Gap to Boonesboro, in Fayette County (now Clark County), Kentucky, where a Samuel Munson Sr.³⁹ was listed in the 1790 census. In 1791 or early 1792 they apparently returned through the Cumberland Gap to Holston, Virginia. There, in the company of Henry Hunter and James Grady, they built two flatboats and the four families floated down the Holston River to the Tennessee, down the Tennessee River through the dangerous Muscle Shoals to the Ohio, down the Ohio River to the Mississippi, and down the slow, winding Mississippi River to the rough and bawdy river-landing of Natchez-Under-the-Hill. They arrived

³⁹ This Samuel Munson Sr. could very possibly have been their father, an uncle, or an older brother. Jesse's son, Henry William, named his first son Samuel Munson. His second son was named Henry W. for himself, and this third son for his brother, Robert. None of his seven sons was named Jesse. This sequence suggests that a Samuel Munson was a close and admired relative.



The journey by flatboat from Holston, Virginia, to Natchez-Under-the Hill

there on April 17, 1792. The new town of Natchez (on-the-hill) was in its infancy, being built on the cliffs around Fort Rosalie overlooking the river. From Natchez the Munson-Hunter party apparently proceeded to the new village of Villa Gayoso, which occupied a beautiful spot on the high cliffs overlooking the Mississippi River about twenty miles north of Fort Rosalie.

A bit of evidence suggests that they may have been going to Villa Gayoso to join Narsworthy Hunter, probably a relative of Henry Hunter. It is recorded that an N. Hunter (further identified as Narsworthy Hunter) signed the petition to change the name of the village of Cole's Creek to Villa Gayoso on January 26, 1792.⁴⁰ This indicates that he was one of the leading inhabitants of that area before the Munson-Hunter party's arrival. This might also be a lead as to how Robert and Jesse Munson, living in South Carolina, obtained their Spanish land grants in New Spain in 1787. It might have been through the local efforts and influence of Narsworthy Hunter, likely a brother of Henry Hunter.

Many of the new settlers to Natchez were Tories and their sympathizers, escaping from the American Revolution and their discomfort in the new American nation. Since it appears that Robert and Jesse Munson were in South Carolina during the American Revolution, and since no records of their participation have been found, one can only guess as to their sympathies, and these, combined with economic pressures, may have been their motivation for leaving. One early resident historian wrote about this migration from South Carolina to the Feliciana District as follows: "On such a population, restless and ill at ease... tired of attempting to win a living from the rocky slopes of the South Carolina mountains... the stirring announcement that a boundless and fertile empire... waiting to be peopled... dazzled their imaginations... a few years later, the country began to fill up with... immigrants from the Carolinas... to battle with the bears, panthers and wolves for possession and a peaceful home."⁴¹

The difficulty of their trip and the wilderness into which they ventured is probably beyond our imagination. The only extensive travel by white men was by water, as no permanent trails or roads had been cut. Indians and robbers lay in ambush for flatboats, and river rapids were treacherous. Indian guides often took the boats through the rapids of Muscle Shoals, while the pioneers traversed by land. H. Skipwith, in *East Feliciana, Louisiana – Past and Present*, reports: "The Indian pilots brought most of the boats safely to the foot of the Shoals, but sometimes one would be wrecked and an outfit for a home in the wilderness would go to the bottom."

In the late 1700s the Spanish-administered Natchez District was nothing more than a string of small settlements along the tributaries of the Mississippi—St. Catherine's Creek, the Homochitto, Cole's Creek, Bayou Pierre, and Big Black—surrounded by Indian country. Essentially the entire area of the present states of Mississippi and Alabama was the home of the Choctaw, Chickasaw, and other Indians. The country was extremely virgin—one settler reported killing over one hundred bears in one winter. In 1792 the future site of Memphis was known as Chickasaw Bluffs, Vicksburg as Walnut Hills, and the town of Natchez, first laid out by Governor Carlos de Grand-Pre in 1788, was in its earliest years of development. The entire population of the Natchez District in 1792 was 4,346—Spanish, French, Anglo, and slaves. This included only 580 adult, white males.

⁴⁰ Jack D. L. Holmes, *Gayoso, The Life of a Spanish Governor in the Mississippi Valley 1789-1799*, Louisiana State University Press, date unknown.

⁴¹ H. Skipwith, *East Feliciana Louisiana – Past and Present*, 1892, Reprinted by Claitor's Book Store, Baton Rouge, La.

Inset 5
The Story of the Natchez Indians



When Sieur de la Salle stopped at the high bluffs of the lower Mississippi in 1682, he met some Natchez Indians from a nearby village. These Indians possessed an intense pride and a distinctive culture. Their religion was a complex version of sun worship, based upon the belief that their leaders were descendants of the Sun God, hence the title of "Sun." The monarch, called the "Great Sun," succeeded to his throne as the eldest son of the female Sun nearest kin to the mother of the last Great Sun. As chief of chiefs, he ruled with a iron hand from his Grand Village on St. Catherine Creek.

Within months after Sieru d'Iberville founded a French colony on Biloxi Bay in 1699, Jesuits were at work among the Natchez. In 1713 a trading post was established at the landing beneath the bluffs. Trouble immediately followed. In 1714 the Natchez murdered four French traders, and in the next fifteen months they killed other traders, stole their goods, and pillaged the warehouse. The French threatened armed reprisals, but in 1716 a treaty was signed in which the Natchez agreed to compensate the French by supplying lumber and labor for the construction of a fort on the bluff. The fort was named "Rosalie" for the wife of the Count de Pontchartrain. French planters came in 1717, and within a few years several large plantations were producing wheat and fine tobacco. Hatred for the Frenchmen grew among the Indians. Deeply resented were sexual abuse of the Natchez women, unjust treatment of the field laborers, encroachment upon Indian farming areas, the proximity of French settlements to the sacred Grand Village, and flagrant disrespect for ancient tribal mores. French abuses led to Indian retaliations, and in 1723 French Commandant Bienville led 500 soldiers against the Natchez, burning two villages, destroying their crops, and exacting the heads of twelve leaders.

In 1729 Commandant Dechepare was assigned to Natchez, and he proved to be a brutal, heavy-drinking tyrant interested solely in exploiting the settlers and Indians for his personal gain. He soon ordered the Natchez of the White Apple Village on Second Creek to vacate their lands and to pay debts to him in grain and fowl. A secret council was called to answer this threat. Settlers and armymen warned Dechepare that a conspiracy was brewing, but he scoffed at their timidity. Dechepare naively questioned the Great Sun, who was the son of the early Jesuit missionary St. Cosme, and the chief assured him that no uprising was considered. At nine o'clock the next morning, November 28, 1729, the Natchez appeared at Fort Rosalie bearing gifts and asking for a loan of guns and ammunition for a grand hunt. When they gained admission to the fort, they suddenly opened fire on the surprised Frenchmen. This was the signal for other groups to attack the settlements at St. Catherine Creek and Second Creek. At least 236 French men, women, children, and slaves died in the massacre, and some sources put the figure as high as 2,000. Dechepare was forced to witness the piling of decapitated heads in front of the new warehouse where the Great Sun sat in triumph, and then he was shot. It was later written, "This is how one man's faults can... cause a whole colony to be lost."

French reprisal was swift. They incited the Choctaw against the Natchez, and in January of 1730 the Choctaw attacked and did fearful damage. In February French reinforcements arrived. After besieging two Indian forts along St. Catherine Creek for two weeks, the French awoke one morning to find that the Natchez had slipped across the Mississippi River during the night. The Natchez escaped into a wild region of swamps, but the French continued to pursue them. Some were captured and deported to Santo Domingo, and the remainder was continually harassed. Gradually the remaining Natchez splintered into small elements and joined the Cherokee and Creek Indians, and disappeared as a tribe. The French then essentially abandoned Natchez, and it lay inactive until the British arrived in 1763. Today the original Grand Village of the Natchez in the outskirts of Natchez, Mississippi, is a state park. Much of the village and the life of the Natchez are reconstructed and displayed there.

The Spanish governor of the Natchez District from 1789 until 1797 was the colorful and effective Don Manuel Gayoso de Lemos. His predecessor, Carlos de Grand-Pre, remained as his military commander. The establishment of Villa Gayoso is described by Jack Holmes in his book *Gayoso* as follows:

Grand-Pre [who had laid out the town of Natchez] had also undertaken the ground plan for the town planned for Cole's Creek. He had purchased three hundred arpents from Thomas Calvet in 1787. Unfortunately, Grand-Pre had not taken the time to examine the lands thoroughly during the season of high water... Grand-Pre [therefore] suggested that the crown buy instead three hundred and fifty arpents... about two miles from the site of the projected town for Cole's Creek. The inhabitants... [also] declined to move to [this] site... Accordingly, Gayoso [who arrived as governor in June of 1789] selected land belonging to Colonel Thomas Green, located less than a mile from the Mississippi... The rich cypress groves leading to Gayoso's proposed town site surrounded a high, flat plateau with a good view of the river. Two springs nearby provided fresh, healthy water. The settlers along Cole's Creek agreed with Gayoso. Thomas Green... joined fourteen other leading inhabitants of the area in petitioning the governor-general to change the name of [the town of] Cole's Creek to Villa Gayoso in honor of their governor. Approval was granted, and Gayoso wrote the settlers, "I cannot but feel a sensible gratification in the wish you have expressed, that the Town now erecting in your vicinity should be known to posterity by my Name.

Dunbar Rowland, in his four volumes entitled *Mississippi*,⁴² describes Villa Gayoso in 1798 as follows:

In September, 1798, when [U. S.] Governor [Winthrop] Sargent made the first division of the [Mississippi] territory, he selected Villa Gayoso as the seat of government of the upper district, afterward named Pickering county... There was a church, commandant's and priest's house, kitchen, etc., all rough frame buildings...

In 1792, when Jesse and Robert Munson and presumably Henry Hunter and their families were living there, the Spanish Census of the Natchez District reported a population in the Villa Gayoso District of 637 whites and 272 slaves. Included were but 175 adult, white males. For a number of years Villa Gayoso was the second largest town, after Natchez, in the Natchez District, and is said to have reached a population of over 900 inhabitants at its zenith. Governor Gayoso apparently granted the land surrounding the town to himself, and it became his summer estate. When the U. S. took possession of the region and Gayoso moved to New Orleans in 1797, the area's major landowner, Thomas Green, purchased the land and the town. In later years, sometime during the 1800s, the town gradually diminished and disappeared. Considerable local research was required to find the town's original site. Local inhabitants still refer to the land as the Gayoso Estate and can identify the town's former location on a bluff overlooking the former course of the Mississippi River before it was straightened by the U. S. Corps of Engineers. The site is now about five miles from the river and no obvious signs of a town exist.

Jesse and Robert Munson and their party arrived in this frontier area in April of 1792, with Jesse having a child (Micajah), a pregnant wife, and one slave; with Robert having a wife and three children; with Henry Hunter having a wife, seven children, and fifteen slaves; and with John

⁴² Dunbar Rowland, *Mississippi*, 1907; The Reprint Company, Spartanburg, South Carolina, 1976.

Grady having a wife, two children and two slaves—a party of thirty-nine persons. They surely needed to find living arrangements quickly. During these times, frontier immigrants often camped-out for extended periods while awaiting the procurement of a home. Narsworthy Hunter may have been of assistance, and he is probably the reason that they went to Villa Gayoso. Years later, the Atascosita Census of 1826 (see Chapter 9) stated that Henry William Munson was born in “Mississippi” on January 15, 1793—very probably, it is thought, at Villa Gayoso. His birth was almost exactly nine months to the day after the party’s arrival at Natchez-Under-the-Hill. Robert and Jesse’s land grants were in a mostly uninhabited area about ninety miles to the south. The area was not accessible by water, and wagon trails there were in their infancy. How long they lived in Villa Gayoso before moving to their land grants in the wilderness is not known, but it would seem that preparations to move their families there would take some years.

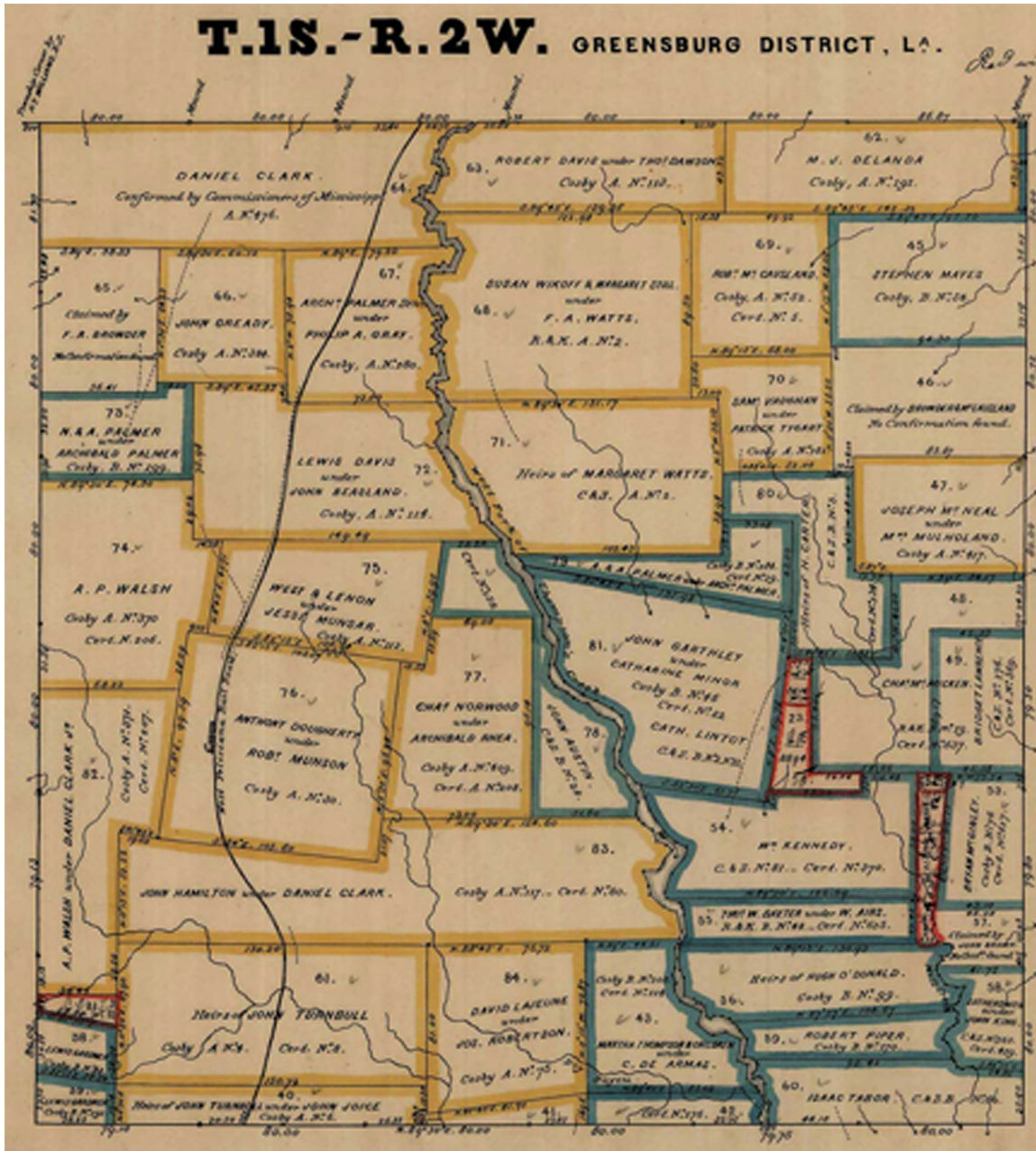
Surveys in later years showed Robert’s land grant to contain 1,021 acres and Jesse’s to be 561 acres—a total of 1,582 acres.⁴³ The amount of land awarded in Spanish land grants, in the absence of special influence, depended upon the number of members in the family and the number of slaves. These lands appear to have been on or beyond the fringe of settlement. When Jesse sold his land in the year 1801, some adjacent land was still listed as being public land belonging to His Majesty, the King of Spain. A nearby but not adjacent 397-acre plot of land is listed as having been originally owned by “John Gready.” This may well have been their traveling companion of 1792. No record of any land owned by Henry Hunter has been found, although the names of Henry Hunter and Nausworthy Hunter (surely a son of either Henry or Narsworthy) appear frequently in later records of this area. Since few definite records have been found to show the activities of these three families—Henry Hunter, Robert Munson, and Jesse Munson—for the years between 1792 and about 1813, the bits of information that are available suggest the scenario that follows.

It is known that Henry Hunter and Robert Munson had lived in the same district in South Carolina, and that they and Jesse Munson had traveled from Virginia to the Natchez District together. Henry Hunter had arrived in Natchez with seven children, fifteen slaves, farm tools, and household furniture, and it appears that he possessed wealth, leadership, and intelligence. He later became the Speaker of the first House of Representatives of the Mississippi Territory. Robert and Jesse Munson apparently arrived with but one slave between them, but they owned 1,582 acres of good land, and no land in this area has been found in the name of any Hunter. An old ledger book of the Cochran & Rhea general store in nearby Jackson, Louisiana, for the years 1803, 1804, and 1805, shows very frequent purchases of staples by Robert Munson, Henry Hunter, and Nausworthy Hunter, but not by Jesse Munson.⁴⁴ It is therefore suggested that they all may have moved as one big family to the Munson land at some time during the 1790s and lived there for the next ten to fifteen years, farming the land, trading at the local store, and raising and educating their children together. This could account for the good education received by Henry William Munson and for his high appreciation in later years of education and the professions, even though evidence suggests that his father, Jesse, was poor and illiterate.

It is assumed, but not known, that they built homes and raised their families on this frontier plantation. In later years the land was described as fine agricultural country, gently undulating and

⁴³ Original land grants are shown on Map T.1S.-R.2W. Greensburg District, La. (1851), West Feliciana Parish Courthouse, St. Francisville, La.

⁴⁴ From the ledger book of the Cochran & Rhea general store, now in the possession of Mr. & Mrs. Warren Munson, Baton Rouge, La.



1851 township plat of survey showing the location of the Spanish land grants of Jesse and Robert Munson. (U.S. check plat maps for district Greensburg T 15 R2W, Doc #:526.05409, Page#: 1, Louisiana State Land Office (SLO) Online Documents).

possessing soil of great fertility. If they farmed there, they probably kept beef and dairy cattle, sheep, hogs, and poultry, and farmed cotton, corn, fruit, and vegetables. Tobacco was the major commercial crop of the District until about 1792, when removal of Spanish allocations to Mexico destroyed its profitability. Indigo was tried without success, but Eli Whitney's new cotton gin was introduced in 1795, and thereafter, even until today, cotton was king. One note on early Natchez District professions reports that Henry Hunter was famed as a mechanic.⁴⁵

U. S. Highway 61 from Baton Rouge to Natchez now passes through the edge of both Robert and Jesse Munson's land grants. It is interesting to study the development of the route of this highway from earliest times to today. The route today is very close to the same as the route shown on the maps of 1813. The exact route of the roadway of 1813, in those areas where it is not identical to Highway 61, is still a beautiful one lane road through the forest. In this hilly country of Louisiana these roadways follow the very highest line of the divide between the watersheds of Bayou Sara to the west and Thompson's Creek to the east. This is obviously done to avoid frequent crossing of the tributaries of these creeks—just as the Indian trails had done before the white man, and the animal trails before the Indians. Thus today's modern highway follows the same route as the original animal trails, which were adopted by the Indians, then as horse trails by the white man, which were later widened to wagon trails, early roads, and today's highways. At the time that Jesse and Robert moved there, the horse trails were just being widened to wagon trails by the Gayoso government.

The town of Woodville, Mississippi, was established about fifteen miles to the north; Jackson, Louisiana, about ten miles to the east; and St. Francisville, Louisiana, about ten miles to the south of the Munson grants. Today the tiny village of Laurel Hill, Louisiana, lies on Jesse's original grant, and one can leave the highway and follow the old 1813 road through the hamlet with its lovely historic church.

The discussion of the exact location of Robert and Jesse Munson's lands is sometimes confusing. Even though their residences were always referred to as being in the Natchez District and the Mississippi Territory, their land was actually about two miles south of the 31st parallel—the southern border of the Natchez District and the Mississippi Territory. Their land actually lay in the Spanish District of Feliciana in the Orleans Territory of New Spain. All of their birth, death, and legal records are recorded as "Mississippi," but it seems probable that while they were recorded in Mississippi, some may actually have taken place in what is now Louisiana. It is assumed that the District of Feliciana was lightly populated, had no independent Spanish administration, and that this area was considered by all to be a part of the "Natchez District and its dependencies." As further evidence of this, Natchez District records often included data for the districts of "Bayou Sara" and "Thompson's Creek," which lay south of the 31st parallel. In those early days on the frontier, the locations of many exact borders, if they were not rivers, were probably unknown and of no consequence in daily life. The local political and social order probably established the functional boundaries.

During the years that Jesse and Robert Munson resided in the District of Feliciana, it was claimed at one time or another by France, Spain, England, the United States, and the independent Republic of West Florida. Evidence indicates that the local government, law, and contracts were Spanish, the commercial money was English and Spanish, the land measures (arpents) were French, and the town names—and probably the languages used—were intermixed Spanish,

⁴⁵ Jack D. Holmes, *Gayoso*, p. 105.

French, English, and Indian. The Indian languages contributed the words bayou, Natchez, Mississippi, and Alabama; the French contributed Louisiana, New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and St. Francisville; the Spanish contributed Feliciana, Florida, Villa Gayoso, and Bayou Sara; and the English contributed Woodville, Wilkinson, Jackson, and Buffalo Creek.

The Last Years of Jesse Munson

Records of Jesse Munson and his family are scant. No mention of him has been found in South Carolina or neighboring states. He may have always accompanied his brother Robert. Jesse's son Micajah was born in South Carolina in 1788 or 1789, and son Henry William in Mississippi in 1793. In 1800 a third son was born to Jesse and was named Jesse P. Munson. He is later reported to have been a half-brother to Henry William, so Jesse's wife may have died between 1793 and 1800.

Without assurance, it is assumed that Jesse Munson lived and raised his family with those of his brother Robert and his friend Henry Hunter on their land grants in the Spanish District of New Feliciana (now West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana). It appears that he was living in neighboring Wilkinson County, Mississippi, at the time of his death in 1815 or 1816.

On February 18, 1801, Jesse Munson sold "500 acres to William Lemon, said land located in the District of New Feliciana upon the tributaries of Bayou Feliciana just below the District of Natchez, bounded with the lands of John Bisland, Robert Munson, and vacant lands belonging to "His Majesty, the King of Spain."⁴⁶ William Lemon agreed to pay "300 pesos in cash and to pay in the month of March of the next coming year, 200 pesos for the completion of the sale price of the said land." The price appears to have been one peso per acre. There is no mention of buildings on the land; homes, if any, may have been on Robert Munson's part of the land. The sale was witnessed by Carlos de Grand-Pre (Governor of the Natchez District at the time the Munsons received their land grants, and later the military commander under Governor Gayoso), Antonio Solier, and Franco Miranda. The Munson ownership was confirmed by "the formal titles of concession from the general government of Oct. 2, 1787 [the original land grants]." Jesse signed the deed of sale with his mark, an "X." This and a few other hints suggest that Jesse was poorly educated and possibly illiterate, which was common and no disgrace in those times.

It is interesting to note that in the year 1801 the local administration and the currency were still Spanish. After the U. S. took control of the Natchez District and incorporated it into the Mississippi Territory in 1797, the 31st parallel separated the Mississippi Territory from Spanish West Florida (then a part of Florida, but now eastern Louisiana). Also, the land adjacent to Jesse's land was still recorded as being owned by His Majesty, the King of Spain. This parcel, also adjoining Robert Munson's land, appears to be the land from which Wright Munson purchased one hundred arpents from Archibald Rhea soon thereafter. Several bits of information indicate that Robert Munson, Henry Hunter, and possibly Jesse Munson, continued to live on this land until 1805 or later.

Captain Narworthy Hunter, thought to be the brother of Colonel Henry Hunter, was prominent in early Mississippi Territory politics. His name is mentioned frequently in territorial political and governmental records. In 1799 he carried a hotly-worded Memorial (petition) to the U. S. Congress in Philadelphia by horseback. In 1801 he was the first delegate from the new

⁴⁶ All quotes in this paragraph are from the actual contract of sale, *Munson Papers*, see Appendix I.

Mississippi Territory to the United States House of Representatives in Washington D.C.⁴⁷ He died in Washington on March 11, 1802, while serving in this position. These functions indicate that he was near the top of the local political structure. He was a member of the dominant Jeffersonian Democratic faction that included Thomas Green, Cato West, Henry Hunter, Gerard Brandon, and George Poindexter. Robert Munson, but not Jesse, was a signer of several Memorials sent to the U. S. Congress by this group. Nausworthy Hunter, who was closely associated with the Munsons and was named as an appraiser of Jesse Munson's estate in 1816, is presumed to be a son of either Narsworthy Hunter or Henry Hunter, more likely the latter.

It is also curious to note that Jesse sold his land within a year after his son, Jesse P. Munson, was born. This suggests that Jesse remarried and moved away from the farm in about 1800. Henry William was seven years old at this time and Micajah was about eleven. It is not known for certain where the family lived during these years. In any event, there is evidence that Jesse needed the money. Two entries in the old ledger book of the Cochran & Rhea general store in Jackson, Louisiana, in its list of receipts, tell a story. The first, dated April 25, 1804, reads, "[Received from] Robert Munson, amount of Jesse Munson acct, assumed"; and, on April 27, 1805, "Jesse Munson, in full, his acct assumed by Robert Munson."

Between the years 1805 and 1814, Jesse and Robert Munson are frequently listed on the tax rolls of Wilkinson County, Mississippi Territory, but not in the census.⁴⁸ Also on the 1805 tax rolls of Wilkinson County are Henry Hunter Sr., Henry Hunter Jr., Joseph Hunter, and William Hunter. The fact that they are found on the tax rolls but not on the census may indicate that they owned property there while residing across the border in Spanish West Florida. However, during the last years of their lives Robert and Jesse Munson appear to have been residents of Wilkinson County, as Louisiana became a state in 1812, and all records from 1812 to the time of the probate of their estates in 1816 are in Wilkinson County, Mississippi Territory.



The next record of Jesse Munson in the archives section of the Wilkinson County Courthouse in Woodville, Mississippi, reads as follows:

Mississippi Territory	By the Orphans Court of Said County
Wilkinson County	April Term 1816

To Nausworthy Hunter, Joseph Hunter and Samuel Munson⁴⁹

Greetings: You are appointed to appraise the goods and chattel rights and credit of Jesse Munson, late of said County, deceased, which shall be known to you by Henry W. Munson of the same, and the said Court also direct that you make a true and perfect inventory of the same and return it on oath into the Register's Office of the said Court

⁴⁷ Congress held its first session in the new Capitol in Washington, D. C., in November, 1900.

⁴⁸ Louisiana became a state in 1812; Mississippi in 1817. Records are in the Wilkinson County Courthouse, Woodville, Mississippi.

⁴⁹ Two Hunters and a Munson - the common practice was that close family members or associates were so appointed. This Samuel Munson (possibly Samuel Elder Munson) must surely have been a close relative to Jesse, possibly a brother, a nephew, or even another son, and possibly the Samuel Munson for whom Henry William Munson named his first son.

within three calendar months from the date thereof. Witness the Honorable James Carraway, Esquire, Chief Justice of the said Court the 1st day of April, 1816.

Joseph W. Hutton, Reg.

No appraisal was returned, and the following entry reads, “The above order is continued by the Chief Justice until January Term, 1817—James Johnston, Reg.”

The next entry in the probate of Jesse Munson’s estate reads as follows:

Mississippi Territory	To the Honorable, the Orphans
Wilkinson County	Court in the County of Wilkinson:

Inventory and return of the estate of Jesse Munson, dec’d, of said County up to December 20, 1816.

1 sorrel Horse, 3 Beeves, 3 Promissory notes—Ruffian Deloach to Jesse Munson, whole amount Twelve Hundred Dollars. One due bill to \$10.84 cents. On account to Robert Munson, dec’d, \$1952 dollars.

Henry Munson, administrator of the estate of said Jesse Munson, dec’d, being duly sworn deposed and with that the above is a true and just Inventory of the estate of said Jesse Munson, December 20th, as it has come to his knowledge since his administration. The appraisers appointed by the said Court having refused to act, the above Inventory is returned without appraisalment.

Henry W. Munson, administrator

Given and subscribed to this 20th day of December A.D. 1816 before me. J. Childs, J.P.

Henry W. Munson was 23 years old on the above date. These records relate that Jesse died between the time of the 1814 tax roll and the April, 1816, court date—most likely in 1815 or early 1816. He left an insignificant estate including no slaves and no real estate, and he owed his late brother, Robert, \$1,952. This estate had not been settled as late as 1825. On March 1, 1825, letters of administration were granted to Gerard Brandon⁵⁰ on the estate of Jesse Munson, with bond made at \$2,000, and with Wm. L. Brandon security. This is the last record found on the estate of Jesse Munson.

No records have been found of the names of any of Jesse’s wives, but a guess can be made. His oldest son, Micajah, married Elizabeth Everett, and they named their daughters Ann Elizabeth and Martha Caroline. Henry William and Ann Pearce named their only daughter Amanda Caroline. If these contain namesakes, the favorite guess for Jesse’s first wife is Martha, because there was a Martha Munson as head-of-household in the 1790 census of South Carolina, and there is a possibility that this was Jesse’s wife and Micajah’s mother (see Chapter 4).

⁵⁰ Gerard Brandon was a local plantation owner, a lawyer, a four-time governor of Mississippi, and surely a friend of the Munsons. This was the name given to Henry William Munson’s seventh child. See Inset 13 for a short biography of Gerard Brandon.

*Inset 6***Early Spanish Exploration of the Area**

Florida proper was first visited in 1513 by Juan Ponce de León, who landed on the Atlantic coast and claimed the region for Spain. In about 1528 Pánfilo de Narváez led a party of three hundred men to Tampa Bay. Faced with continual hardships, storms, and starvation, Narváez and most of his men were drowned in a storm while sailing along the Gulf Coast. About forty survivors of this band, including the royal treasurer, Cabeza de Vaca, continued around the Gulf and were again shipwrecked on a coastal island, usually thought to be on the coast of Texas. They lived as slaves of the local Indians until four survivors escaped and wandered nude over much of Texas and Mexico for seven years. Miraculously, they finally made their way to safety in Mexico and Spain. Cabeza de Vaca's detailed reports and erroneous rumors of cities of gold led to later expeditions, including that of Francisco Vasquez de Coronado to the Southwest and by Hernando de Soto to the Mississippi River.

In 1539 Hernando de Soto, the ambitious, newly-appointed Spanish governor of Cuba and Florida, excited by de Vaca's reports, led an extended expedition to Spanish Florida. They traveled for several years over much of today's Gulf Coast region before reaching the Mississippi River. De Soto died on the trip, and was buried in the great river to protect his body from desecration by hostile Indians.

For over a hundred years there was no further recorded exploration of the area, but Spain maintained its claim to "the land of Florida," extending from the Atlantic to the Mississippi River, with no designated northern boundary.

Inset 7
French Designs on the Mississippi Valley



During the century following the earliest Spanish explorations in Florida, English settlers began forming permanent settlements on the Atlantic coast. The French were active in fur trading in Canada, followed by settlements. Samuel de Champlain founded Quebec in 1608, and in 1663 King Louis XIV claimed Canada as a province of France, naming it “New France.” In 1672, Louis de Baude, the Comte de Frontenac, was appointed governor of New France, and, being aggressive, he actively promoted westward expansion. He quickly commissioned explorers, including Sieur Robert Cavelier de La Salle, Louis Joliet, and Father Jacques Marquette, to push westward and southward.

La Salle first went to Canada as a fur trader in 1666 at the age of 23. Over the next twenty years he was consumed by his efforts to explore and settle the valleys of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers for France. He properly saw them as more fertile and potentially profitable areas than France itself. In 1684, with direct authority from the King of France, he traveled down the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico and claimed all of the lands drained by this great river as the “Land of Louisiana” for King Louis XIV.

In his determination to colonize the territory, he returned to France, and with four ships and two hundred colonists he set sail for the mouth of the Mississippi. Except for one of history’s more disastrous mistakes, this heartland of America might be French today. La Salle mistook Matagorda Bay in South Texas for the mouth of the Mississippi. In the ensuing disagreements between La Salle and his ship’s captain, his ship sailed away while La Salle and a party of men were ashore. In desperation the party set out on foot for Canada, but, en route, La Salle was shot by one of his men during an argument. He was 44 years old. Thus ended effective French colonization efforts for Louisiana.

*Inset 8***European Power Struggles over the Mississippi Valley**

By the mid-1700s, Britain and France were at war over control of the American continent. After seven years of the French and Indian Wars, the British were victorious with the capture of Quebec in 1760. At the resulting Treaty of Paris in 1763, France ceded to Britain all of its claims to Canada and all of its claims to land east of the Mississippi River. This is how Canada became a member of the British Commonwealth; and this is why, when the American colonies won their independence from Britain in 1781, they were recognized as having gained all of the land between British Canada and Spanish Florida, and between the Atlantic coast and the Mississippi River—a remarkably huge area of land for thirteen small colonies.

Curiously, in a secret treaty in 1762 with its ally, Spain, France had ceded all of its claims to land west of the Mississippi River, plus New Orleans, to Spain. This was done, no doubt, in an effort to keep it out of the hands of archenemy England. The considerable number of French inhabitants of Louisiana disliked the transfer to Spain, and, in 1768, they attempted a revolution against the Spanish authority. This uprising was sternly put down and the French colonial dream in America was ended.

Thus, at the time of Jesse and Robert's move to the Natchez District in 1792, Spain maintained control of Florida (which they claimed extended the length of the Gulf coast to New Orleans) plus all of the lands west of the Mississippi River. They also claimed and controlled New Orleans and the Mississippi Territory as far north as present Vicksburg, which area was also claimed by the United States. A Spanish governor continued to administer the District of Natchez until Spain acknowledged U. S. ownership and vacated in 1798, and Spain continued to control "West Florida" until 1810.

Under this Spanish administration, Louisiana made considerable economic and cultural development, partly due to the immigration of Tory sympathizers and other settlers from the southern states of the United States. The Spanish governor had extended an invitation to settlers from the American Colonies and had encouraged them with large grants of land. Thus it was that in 1787 Jesse and Robert Munson were to obtain their land grants from Spain and to live under Spanish administration in the Natchez District for some years thereafter.

*Inset 9***The United States Acquires the Louisiana Territory***Let the Land rejoice, for you have bought Louisiana for a Song*

—Gen. Horatio Gates to President Thomas Jefferson, July 18, 1803

**The Louisiana Purchase**

As the European games of war continued with New World possessions being part of the booty to the victors, a victorious Napoleon forced Spain to give New Orleans and the remains of the original Territory of Louisiana back to France at the Treaty of San Ildefonso in the year 1800. This turn of events was much to the consternation of President Thomas Jefferson. The western areas of the new nation were rapidly being settled by industrious farmers, and the Mississippi River and the port of New Orleans were the only export outlets for their farm produce. Spain had been a friend, but there was fear that France might try to close this route.

Jefferson sent Robert R. Livingston and James Monroe to Paris in an effort to purchase the port city of New Orleans. They let it be known that the United States was prepared to join with France's enemy, Britain, and the then dominant British navy, in order to keep this route open, if necessary. Napoleon feared that war with Britain was inevitable, and that he could not hold Louisiana against the British navy, and, as always, he needed money. Napoleon's minister, Talleyrand, in a surprise move, offered to sell not only New Orleans, but the whole province of Louisiana for \$15,000,000. Livingston and Monroe accepted and brought the news back to an astonished Jefferson. Jefferson was not totally pleased, for he doubted that the new Federal Government of the American colonies had the power under the Constitution to make such a purchase. Nevertheless, he and the Congress quickly approved the purchase, and the size of the new nation was almost doubled.

For many years the boundaries between all of Spanish Florida and the English and American colonies were unsettled and remained in dispute. At the Treaty of Paris in 1783, England and Spain agreed upon a boundary. This would be the St. Mary's River from the Atlantic Ocean to a certain point, from there a diagonal line westward to a certain point on the Chattahooche River, and then the 31st parallel of latitude west from the Chattahooche River to the Mississippi River. This line separated Spanish Florida and West Florida from the United States for many years, until the United States purchased Florida from Spain in 1819, and it has remained as the state lines for Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana to this day. The 31st parallel became an important dividing line, first between the Natchez District and the District of New Orleans and later between the states of Mississippi and Louisiana. Even though Jesse and Robert Munson's land-grants were two miles south of this line, they were under the administration of the Natchez District.

Chapter 6

The Robert Munson Family of Louisiana — 1792–present



Robert Munson, his wife Winifred, and their three children, Telfair, Celia, and Thenia, most likely lived on their frontier plantation near Bayou Sara in what is now West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana. Each of the children married, lived nearby, and raised a family. Their descendants became The Munsons of Louisiana. Among their descendants are many distinguished citizens—lawyers, doctors, professors, inventors, and legislators, including a governor of Louisiana. Most of their many descendants still live in Louisiana.



Bayou Sara is a small tributary entering the Mississippi River at St. Francisville, Louisiana, and, with its many arms, it extends to the north and east into Louisiana and Mississippi. Over a low rise to the east are the many branches of Thompson’s Creek, which also flows into the Mississippi River farther downstream toward Baton Rouge. The small branches of Bayou Sara and Thompson’s Creek almost touch in the rolling hills of Louisiana and Mississippi. In about 1790 a Spanish settlement was formed at the confluence of Bayou Sara and the Mississippi—it was named Bayou Sara. St. Francisville, named by the French, was built on the adjacent higher ground. Today, St. Francisville is a lovely southern town and Bayou Sara no longer exists. Robert and Jesse Munson’s land grants were on the ridge between Bayou Sara and Thompson’s Creek, about ten miles north of St. Francisville and fifteen miles south of Woodville, Mississippi.

It appears that Robert Munson and his wife, Winifred, and their three children, Telfair, Celia, and Thenia, lived happily on their 1,021-acre plantation. Robert Munson appears to have been successful professionally, financially, and socially, and to have been a leader in the community. The Munsons were friends with other leading families in the area, including Lewis and Jane Alston, the Henry Johnson family, Colonel and Rebecca Kimball, Mrs. Juliet Barclay, and Benjamin and Susan Burnett. Henry Johnson became the fifth governor of Louisiana (from 1824 to 1828), and Robert Munson’s daughter, Thenia, married Henry’s brother, John Hunter Johnson. One of their sons, Isaac Johnson, also became governor of Louisiana. There is recorded an account of a now humorous affair involving the romance of Lewis Alston and Rebecca Kimball, and the involvement of Robert and Winifred Munson in aiding in their elopement to the displeasure of Rebecca’s parents.⁵¹ This is the only known record of Robert Munson’s wife.

⁵¹ From a copy of a page headed “Natchez Court Records, Book F, page 266,” in the files of Erma Munson Rich, *Munson Papers*, see Appendix I.

In the years just before 1800, Robert Munson's three children reached adulthood: the two daughters married and lived on nearby plantations, and son Telfair obtained his own Spanish land grant and established his plantation nearby. After Robert's death, his children, his grand-children, and his great-grand-children continued to live in the same area or in other parts of Louisiana. They produced a large family of successful and distinguished citizens of Louisiana, where most of the descendants still live. These are The Munsons of Louisiana.

Robert sold his 1,021 acres in Feliciana Parish, Louisiana, to Anthony Dougherty⁵² sometime before 1813. When the United States confirmed these land titles in 1813, the 1,021 acres was owned by Dougherty. Jesse had sold his land in 1801. Robert may have moved to the large ranch which he had acquired on Buffalo Creek, north of Woodville, in Wilkinson County, Mississippi. It is curious to note that Right (Wright) Munson, thought to be Robert's father or brother, bought one hundred acres adjacent to Robert's 1,021 acres for \$1,000 from Archibald Rhea on September 4, 1813. Wright Munson's heir, Samuel Elder Munson, sold this land, then including a home, stables, and cotton gin, to Archibald Rhea for \$2,000 on May 13, 1817.⁵³

In 1797 the Spanish authorities finally and reluctantly relinquished control of all territory north of the 31st parallel, and the Mississippi Territory was created as a part of the United States. Spain, however, continued to control West Florida until 1810 and East Florida until 1819. Woodville was incorporated as the county seat of Wilkinson County, Mississippi Territory, in 1811, and Robert was active in civic affairs there. He appears to have been a resident of that county at the time of his death in about 1815. No later mention has been found of wife Winifred, and it is thought that she may have died earlier.

Robert was a member of the Grand Jury for Adams County, Mississippi Territory, on April 6, 1799; and, in August, 1801, he served on the jury for the Natchez District. He was one of the subscribers to several "Memorials" to the United States Congress, dated December 6, 1800, November 25, 1803, and October 3, 1805. These were petitions to the U. S. Congress asking for removal of severe restrictions on business and politics placed on the Territory by Congress. The leaders on these petitions were the leading Jeffersonian planters and political figures of the Territory, always including Thomas Green, Cato West, Gerard Brandon, George Poindexter, and Henry Hunter.

An 1803 entry in the Wilkinson County records reads: "Entered on Record this 22nd day of August in the year of our Lord one thousand Eight hundred and three, the Brand and mark of Robert Munson, to wit, Brand, Mark ."⁵⁴ A person's mark was added to his signature or used in place of a signature on contracts and legal documents. When a person could not write his name and had no personal mark, he marked with an "X." This brand, it is assumed, was a cattle brand. Cattle rustling had become a problem and the leading ranchers banded together in an effort to control it. Universal branding was one of the policies recommended. Robert Munson had many cattle on his ranch near Buffalo Creek north of Woodville during his last years between 1811 and 1815.

⁵² Here is the Dougherty (Daughtrey, Doherty) family again. A Robert Munson (possibly our Robert Munson) married a Patience Daughtrey in North Carolina in about 1757, and two of Robert Munson's grandchildren married Dohertys in Louisiana in about the 1820s. It is conceivable that these were all from the same family, as names were frequently changed in this way from generation to generation.

⁵³ Data taken from May Wilson McBee, Mississippi county court records, *The May Wilson McBee Papers*, Genealogical Pub. Co., Baltimore, 1958.

⁵⁴ Archives records, Wilkinson County Courthouse, Woodville, Mississippi.

There are numerous entries in the old ledger book of the Cochran & Rhea general store in Jackson, Louisiana, for the years 1803, 1804, and 1805 reflecting business done there by Robert Munson. Items purchased included flour, sugar, molasses, tools, nails, cloth, rum, and whisky. This suggests that he resided in the Feliciana District rather than the Natchez District at that time.

Spanish and British Control of West Florida

From the time of the first Spanish landing on the Atlantic coast of Florida by Juan Ponce de Leon in 1513, Spain claimed the area that was called “Florida” all the way to the Mississippi River. In 1763, at the Treaty of Paris ending the French and Indian Wars in America and the Seven Years War in Europe, “Florida” was ceded by Spain to England in return for Cuba and the City of Havana. The British divided “Florida” for administrative purposes into East and West Florida. West Florida lay west of the Apalachicola River and included the western tip of today’s Florida, the southern tips of what are now Alabama and Mississippi, and the eastern part of Louisiana to the Mississippi River. During this period of English rule, many English settlers came to West Florida from Georgia and the Carolinas. It will be remembered that the early records show a William Munson in the Natchez District in 1781. This English settlement period may have been the time and reason for Robert and Jesse’s first interest in immigrating to this area.

These new British Florida colonies were not involved in the process leading to the American Revolution. Between 1779 and 1782, while the British were occupied in warfare with their American colonies, the Spanish again took control of West Florida. In the Treaty of Paris in 1783, ending the American Revolution, Spain regained control of all of Florida by renewing Britain’s rights to Gibraltar and the Bahama Islands. In 1803, when Napoleon sold the Louisiana Territory to the United States, Spain again retained control of West Florida, doggedly maintaining that the Louisiana Purchase did not include this area.

The West Florida Revolt and the West Florida Republic⁵⁵

It is not known if Jesse and Robert Munson and Jesse’s three sons were still living in the District of Feliciana at the time of the West Florida Revolt in the year 1810. It is quite certain, however, that Robert’s three children and their families—Telfair Munson and wife Leah, Celia Munson and husband Samuel Tuell, and Thenia Munson and husband John Henry Johnson—each with their children and their own plantations, were there. The Johnson’s home, named “Troy Plantation,” was located on the southern edge of the town of St. Francisville on the road to Baton Rouge. Jesse’s son Micajah was 21 years old; Henry William was 17; and Jesse P. was 10.

The Spanish governor of West Florida, Don Carlos de Lassus, made his headquarters at the old fort in Baton Rouge. The United States coveted this territory, claiming that it was a part of the Louisiana Purchase. It was also wanted for protection of New Orleans. The Anglo planters expressed numerous dissatisfactions with Spanish rule. These planters craved a strong local government in which local representatives could participate (a dissatisfaction which also foreshadowed the Texas Revolution).

Disaffections grew until secret meetings were held by the planters in the Feliciana District to discuss what actions might be taken without incurring a charge of treason. It was decided, with the reluctant approval of the Spanish commandant in their district, to call a meeting of the

⁵⁵ Information abstracted from material in the Historical Museum, St. Francisville, La.

inhabitants of Feliciana “to discuss measures to restore public tranquility.” On June 23, 1810, more than 500 persons gathered at Egypt Plantation, the home of Lewis Sterling. They adopted a plan to establish a general council from citizens of all districts in West Florida, and to hold a convention. As delegates, the Felicianians selected John Hunter Johnson, William Barrow, John Mills, and John Rhea.

News of this action by the Feliciana planters spread quickly, and, on July 6, 1810, residents of Baton Rouge District petitioned Governor de Lassus for permission to call a similar meeting in Baton Rouge. Among the signers were Philemon Thomas, Philip Hickey, Fulwar Skipwith, and Edmund Hawes. Permission was given, and this and other districts held meetings and elected delegates to a general convention. On a Sunday night toward the end of August, with the delegates apparently gathered in Baton Rouge, Governor de Lassus gave a gala dinner for them, hoping to ease the strained relations. The festive occasion ended with a twenty-one gun salute, using much of the fort’s supply of gunpowder.

An uneasy quiet followed.

On the morning of September 20, 1810, militiamen under Colonel Philemon Thomas intercepted a messenger being sent by de Lassus to Governor Vicente Folch in Pensacola, asking for an armed force to put down the budding rebellion. Colonel Thomas acted quickly and quietly. He informed Philip Hickey, and Hickey volunteered to carry the information to the other leaders. The danger the leaders had feared most was armed intervention by a superior Spanish force. So, in a manner reminiscent of Paul Revere, Hickey rode north, spreading the news across Bayou Sara and Thompson’s Creek to the Feliciana plantations.

The next night a group met at Troy Plantation, the home of John Hunter and Thenia Munson Johnson. They decided that a quick blow must be struck, and word was sent to Colonel Thomas—“gather all the armed men available and capture the fort at Baton Rouge. This is war!” Knowing of his later military involvements, one can wonder if Henry William Munson may have been involved.

A battle plan was developed. One man, Larry Moore, knew that the cows that furnished milk to the fort entered through a small opening in the stockade on the river side. If cows could get through, men on horses should be able to. Colonel Thomas sent a detachment to test the plan. Under cover of early morning fog from the river, the horsemen moved quietly up the river bluff, through the narrow stockade opening, and into the fort. A sentry spotted them, shots rang out, and young Lieutenant Luis de Grand-Pre⁵⁶ dashed from the guardhouse calling on the intruders to turn back. He gave the order to fire, shots were exchanged, and de Grand-Pre fell mortally wounded. Another Spanish soldier was killed, five were wounded, and de Lassus, who arrived after the shooting had stopped, was taken prisoner. None of Colonel Thomas’ men was hurt.

The fort surrendered, the red and gold banner of Spain was hauled down, and in its place was raised a new flag, secretly made by the women of Baton Rouge—a blue banner with a single silver star. Wild cheers greeted the banner, the flag of the West Florida Republic and the first “Lone Star” flag.

On September 26, 1810, a convention met and adopted a Declaration of Independence. A General Assembly was elected, and Fulwar Skipwith was named Governor. The Assembly adopted a constitution, a government, and a flag, with the capital at St. Francisville. Negotiations

⁵⁶ Possibly the son of Carlos de Grand-Pre, once governor and military commander of the Natchez District.

for annexation to the United States were initiated, but, with the territory around New Orleans pushing for statehood, President James Madison issued an executive order declaring West Florida to already be a part of U. S. territory, acquired in the Louisiana Purchase.⁵⁷ On October 27, 1810, he ordered William C. C. Claiborne, Governor of the Territory of Orleans, to take possession of West Florida in the name of the United States. Claiborne took possession in December of 1810, but this area was not included when the U. S. Congress admitted Louisiana as a state on April 8, 1812. The area of west Florida was annexed, partly to the new State of Louisiana and partly to the Mississippi Territory, with the Pearl River being the dividing line. This remains the eastern-most border of the State of Louisiana today.

Only after becoming a state in the United States were these Spanish “districts” called parishes. Land ownership claims were presented to U. S. authorities and proven ownerships were confirmed. A major source of proof was an original Spanish land-grant document. A map of the resulting land ownership published in 1813 and now located in the West Feliciana Parish Courthouse, shows the lands originally granted to Jesse and Robert Munson.

The Last Years of Robert Munson

On November 12, 1811, Robert Munson sold 2,200 acres on Buffalo Creek, a few miles north of Woodville in Wilkinson County, Mississippi, to Daniel Clark of New Orleans.⁵⁸ Daniel Clark was one of the most influential citizens, merchants, and landowners in Louisiana. Edward Randolph was attorney for Robert Munson. Later records show this to be only a part of Robert’s holdings in this area. No record has been found showing Robert’s acquisition of his extensive ranch properties on Buffalo Creek. He had apparently disposed of his Feliciana property earlier, certainly by 1813.

With this sale in 1811, it appears that Robert was beginning to dispose of all his property for settlement of his estate in anticipation of death. Estimates would place his age somewhere in the sixties. The following deed appears in the archives of the Wilkinson County Courthouse in Woodville, Mississippi, under the date of December 31, 1813:

Robert Munson of Wilkinson County in the Mississippi Territory of the United States, for \$3,490.00, sold to John H. Johnson [husband of Thenia Munson] of the Parish of Feliciana of the State of Louisiana:

The entire stock of Robert Munson on the plantation on Buffalo Creek; all negro slaves, horses, cattle, implements and furniture; one negro man, Alexander, his wife, Maria, and his children, one negro girl, Alice, 14 yrs old, one negro boy, Nelson, 12 yrs old, one negro boy, Lewis, 10 yrs old, one negro boy, Levi, 6 yrs old, one negro girl, Sucky, 3 yrs old and one infant child, Harriet. Also one negro man, Peter, his wife, Waffa, and one girl, Jenny, 13; one negro man, Tom, 60, and one black boy. Also one black, one bay, one sorrel and one roan horse, four beds and furniture, blacksmith tools, 74 head of cattle and 2 yoke of oxen.

The deed for this transaction was recorded by John H. Johnson in May, 1815, possibly as Robert’s health deteriorated. The items included in this sale suggest that Robert may have lived at this ranch at Buffalo Creek during his later years, sometime after 1805.

⁵⁷ A claim which history does not support.

⁵⁸ All Robert Munson property transfer records are in the Wilkinson County court records, Woodville, Miss., and are listed by May Wilson McBee, *The May Wilson McBee Papers*.

Three deeds were executed on August 19, 1815. In one, Robert transfers “to daughter Theney Johnson of Feliciana Parish, La., for \$1,200.00, one negro man, Ellich, and wife, Mariah and four children Levi, Suckey, Charlotte and Evelina.” In another, he transfers to daughter Celia Tuell of Feliciana Parish for \$800.00, “one negro man, Harry, one woman, Worphy and one boy, Lewis.” And the final deed reads, “Robert Munson, of Wilkinson Co., for love and affection to my son, Telfair Munson and my two daughters, Celia Tuell and Theney Johnson, all of Feliciana Parish, La., all my stock of horses, cattle and hogs.” This appears to be his last action, intending to give his children the last of his useful property, surely in anticipation of death.

The next records of Robert Munson, also in the Wilkinson County Courthouse, are as follows:

Monday, July 1, 1816

The court orders that letters of administration be granted to John H. Johnson on the estate of Robert Munson, dec.

That Edward Randolph be approved of as security in the amount of \$4000.00.

That Hugh Ried, Peter Prester and Peter Smith be appointed appraisers of said estate.

Monday, October 2, 1816

[Estate of Robert Munson] - Order of sale issued to John H. Johnson to sell personal estate thereof at the village hall in Pinckneyville [Mississippi] and Woodville.

April 7, 1817

The estate of Robert Munson - the personal property of said estate of said dec. is not sufficient to pay the debts against said estate, hence citation for all persons interested in real estate to be sold.

July 7, 1817

[The estate of Robert Munson] - Order to John H. Johnson to sell property to pay expenses.

Then, in 1819, “the heirs of Robert Munson” appear on the tax roll of Wilkinson County, and were assessed for 1,816 acres of land situated on Buffalo Creek. This is the last known record pertaining to Robert Munson and to his estate.

It thus appears that Robert Munson was a very successful farmer, rancher, businessman, and family man. If the situation was, in fact, as these records seem to indicate, he had acquired about 4,000 acres on Buffalo Creek with many slaves and extensive livestock. Because in these later deeds his residence was always given as Wilkinson County, it appears that he had moved permanently from his original land grant in Feliciana Parish, possibly after his children had married and his wife had died, and at least by December 31, 1813.

There are few references to Robert’s wife or wives. A Robert Munson married a Patience Daughtrey in North Carolina in about 1757. A Patience Munson with two daughters was listed as head-of-household in South Carolina in the 1790 census. In 1793 there are references to “Robert Munson and wife Winifred,”⁵⁹ and this completes the known records.

An interesting speculation involves the origin of the name Telfair. During the late years of the 1700s, a leading family in Savannah and in all of Georgia was the Telfair family. Edward Telfair

⁵⁹ Natchez Court Records, Book F. Page 266.

was an early governor of Georgia, a county in Georgia is named Telfair, and today the municipal art gallery of Savannah is housed in the beautiful, old Telfair mansion in Telfair Park. A very common choice of names for a son in those days, as today, was the maiden name of his mother. Also, there is one known reference to a land grant award to a Robert Munson in Liberty County, Georgia, not far from Savannah, in 1791—a grant that was never taken. Could one of Robert's wives (and maybe his only wife) have been a Telfair? Limited research has not uncovered such a record, but the possibility persists.

The Family of Telfair Munson

On April 10, 1795, Telfair Munson was granted a Spanish land grant of 400 acres in the Feliciana District “between the waters of Bayou Sara.”⁶⁰ This is probably the site at which he established a plantation and raised his family. If he acquired this land grant after reaching adulthood at the age of 21, he would have been born in or before 1774. He was Robert Munson's oldest known child, and if Robert was approximately 24 years old at the time of Telfair's birth, Robert's year of birth would have been around 1750. These are the best current estimates for the years of their births. The marriage dates of Robert's children are not known, but all can be estimated as being near the year 1800.

Celia, Thenia, and Telfair Munson all married and lived on plantations in Feliciana Parish, Louisiana, and they had twenty children among them. These are the foundations of the Munsons of Louisiana. Most of these appear to have remained in Louisiana and many, in fact, very near to their ancestral homes. Among these descendants can be counted a governor of Louisiana, judges, legislators, lawyers, doctors, professors, inventors, real estate developers, farmers, and many others.

Celia Munson married Samuel Tuell and they named their only daughter Ann Munson Tuell. Celia died at the home of Colonel John B. Dawson, a nephew, in St. Francisville, Louisiana, on Sunday evening, January 17, 1824, at the age of 47, and was buried in St. Francisville. This record of her age places her birth in 1776. This matches very well with the earlier estimates of Telfair's birth as 1774 or before, Robert's marriage in the early 1770s, and Robert's birth around or before 1750. By these estimates, Robert would have been in his mid to late sixties at the time of his death in 1815.



**Isaac Johnson,
Governor of Louisiana
1846-1850**

Ann Tuell, probably born around 1800, married first, John Middlemist, who died in 1827. Their children were Jane Middlemist and John Byron Middlemist. Son John died in 1832. Ann then married John McCall, of Rapides Parish, Louisiana, in 1832. They had no recorded children.

Thenia Munson married John Hunter Johnson. His brother, Henry Johnson, was the fifth governor of Louisiana. They were probably married about 1797 or 1798, as their first child was born in 1799. Thenia would have been approximately 20 years old at such a marriage date. John and Thenia Johnson lived at Troy Plantation, near St. Francisville. The ten children born and raised at Troy Plantation by this couple were as follows:

⁶⁰ Private notes of Erma Munson Rich, *Munson Papers*, see Appendix I.

1. Margaret Johnson, b. March 12, 1799, married Colonel John B. Dawson.
2. William H. Johnson, b. June 30, 1800, married, first, Mary Doherty in Louisiana and, second, Mrs. Caroline Land McBee in Mississippi.
3. Mary Johnson, b. November 4, 1801, married Anthony Doherty.
4. Issac Johnson, b. November 1, 1803, married Charlotte McDermott and became the thirteenth governor of Louisiana from 1846 to 1850.
5. Robert Johnson, b. April 3, 1805, d. in 1827 in Louisiana, was named for his grandfather Munson.
6. Joseph E. Johnson, b. October 4, 1806, d. 1838 in Louisiana.
7. Charles Llewlyn Johnson, b. August 1, 1808, married Martha Cuerton, d. 1851.
8. Ann Mills Johnson, b. March 8, 1810, d. 1830.
9. Tullia Robinson Johnson, b. January 26, 1814, married John A. Harbour.
10. John H. Johnson, b. December 16, 1815, d. 1819 in Louisiana, was named for his father.

Much credit for the genealogy of the Munsons of Louisiana goes to May Wilson McBee, a genealogist and historian of Louisiana and Mississippi in the early 1900s. She was the wife of John Harbour McBee, who was the great-grandson of both Tullia Robinson Johnson and Mrs. Caroline Land McBee, the second wife of William H. Johnson.⁶¹

Telfair Munson married Leah N. Whitaker. The date is unknown, but it was probably close to the year 1800. Both had died by 1833, at which time Telfair would have been at least 59 years old. Leah Whitaker was the daughter of William and Sarah Moore Whitaker. The children of Telfair and Leah Munson were as follows:

1. Robert Munson, (the first son was named for his grandfather).
2. William W. Munson, (the name William Munson again) married November 22, 1837, Matilda Adeline Howell.
3. Henry Horatio Munson (another Henry).
4. Charles W. Munson, married Mary Anne Perry.
5. Louise M. Munson, married John M. Gray.
6. Samuel T. Munson (the name Samuel Munson again).
7. John Munson
8. Mary Ann (Marian) Munson
9. Llewlyn Munson

Louise, Samuel, John, Mary Ann, and Llewlyn were all minors in 1833, which indicates that Louise was not born before 1813, and John, Mary, and Llewlyn were minors as late as 1844, more than ten years after the death of their parents. This would mean that John was not born before 1824, at which date Telfair would have been approximately fifty years old. All of the children were probably born and raised on the Munson plantation near St. Francisville, and as far as is known, all remained in that area.

The known descendants of Robert Munson and of Telfair and Leah Munson are shown on the accompanying chart.

⁶¹ Tullia Robinson Johnson married John A. Harbour, and their daughter, Mary Dalton Harbour, married the son of Caroline Land McBee (Johnson), in 1851, in St. Francisville. These were the grandparents of John Harbour McBee.

Chart 3
The Munsons of Louisiana



Robert¹ Munson, b. circa 1750 SC

+**Winifred¹ (--?--)**, m. circa 1772

— **Telfair² Munson**, b. circa 1774, d. 1833 LA

+**Leah N.² Whitaker**, m. circa 1800, d. 1833 LA

— **Robert³ Munson**, b. West Feliciana Parish, LA

— **William W.³ Munson**, b. West Feliciana Parish, LA

+**Matilda Adeline³ Howell**, m. 22 Nov 1837 West Feliciana Parish, LA

— **William Ruffin⁴ Munson**

+**Warrena Martha⁴ Cole**, m. West Feliciana Parish, LA

— **Roberta⁵ Munson**

+**Dr. R.S.⁵ Neyland**, m. LA

— **Jennie⁵ Munson**

+**T.M.⁵ Beale**, m. LA

— **Marion Ruffin⁵ Munson**

+**Eunice⁵ Mills**, m. LA

— **William Warren⁶ Munson**

— **Gilbert⁶ Munson**

— **Brook⁵ Munson**

+**Joseph⁵ Connell**, m. LA

— **Joseph Eugene⁴ Munson**

+**Alice⁴ Dennett**

+**Mary Ella⁴ Hays**

— **Mary Dennett⁵ Munson**

+**Warren N.⁵ Christopher**

— **Dorothy⁵ Munson**

+**N.N.⁵ Branch**

+**Laurence⁵ Lovell**

— **Lillian Hays⁵ Munson**

+**Washington T.⁵ Wallace**, m. LA

— **Robert Jackson⁵ Munson**

+**Orelle⁵ Boone**, m. Rapides Parish, LA

— **Robert⁴ Munson**

— **Florence⁴ Munson**

+**Monroe⁴ Morriss**

— **Elizabeth⁵ Morriss**

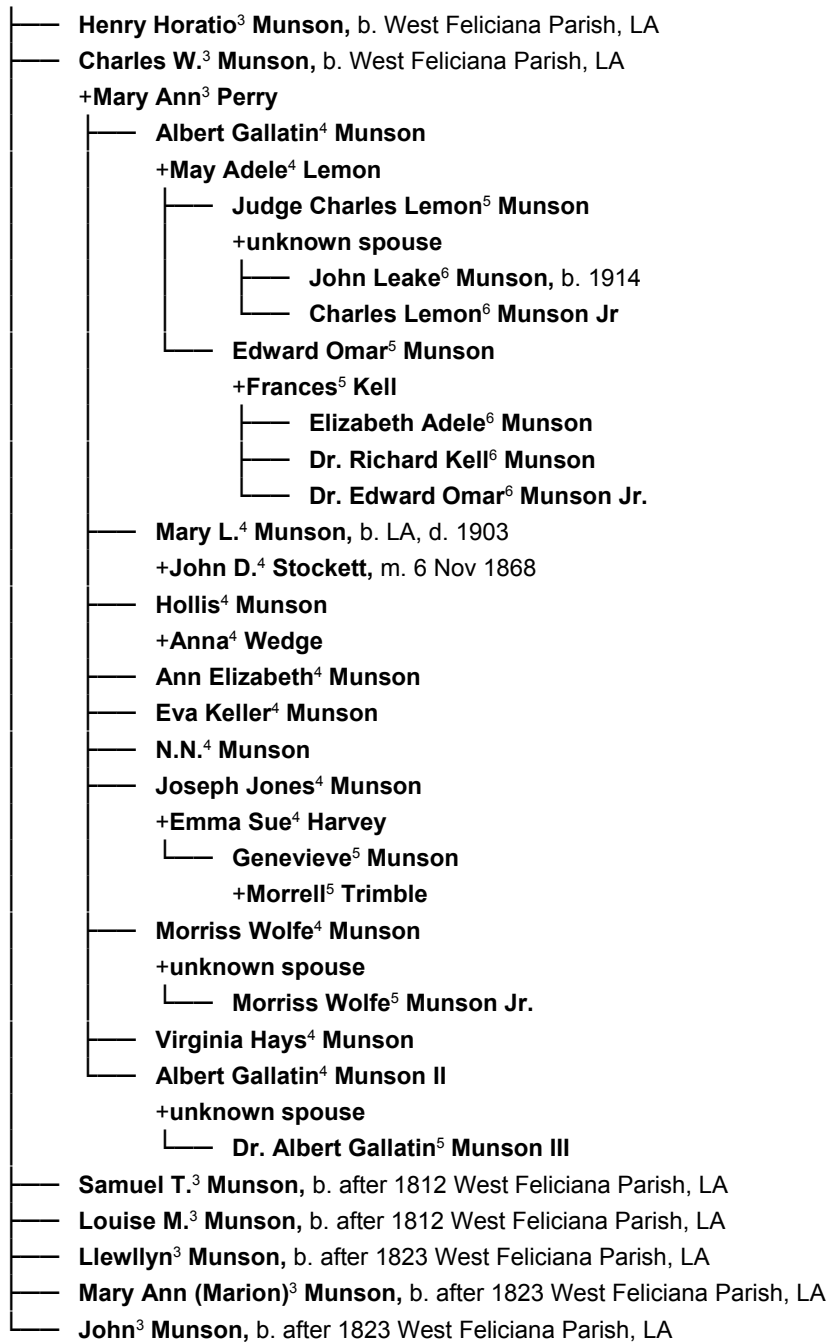
+**Littleton⁵ Lewis**

— **Monroe⁵ Morriss**

— **Mary⁵ Morriss**

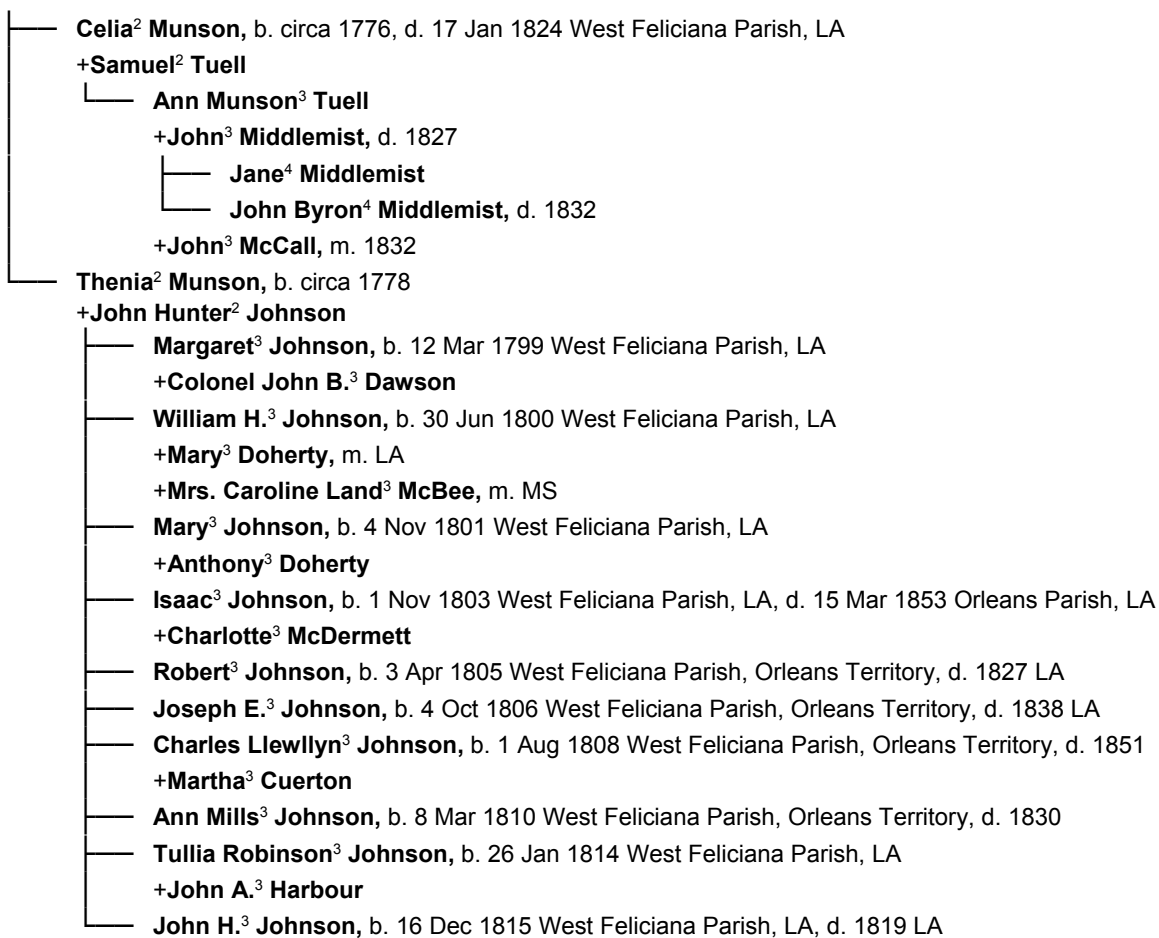
(Chart 3 continued on next page)

(Chart 3 continued)



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(Chart 3 continued)



Chapter 7

The Early Years of Henry William Munson — 1793–1817



Henry William Munson was born in the Natchez District of New Spain, now southwestern Mississippi, in 1793. He spent his early years in Spanish territory and probably later in the Mississippi Territory of the United States, always in the border area of today's Mississippi and Louisiana. In 1810, at the age of 17, he may have been present with members of his family and friends in the West Florida Revolt against Spanish rule. In 1813, at the age of 20, he participated against the Royal Army of Spain in the Battle of Medina near San Antonio, was injured, and escaped back to Louisiana with the aid of a revolutionary Spanish officer named Mordella. In 1817, at the age of 24, he married Ann Binum Pearce in Louisiana.



Henry William Munson, the second known child of Jesse Munson, was born in the Natchez District of New Spain, probably at or near the village of Villa Gayoso, on January 15, 1793. His older brother, Micajah, had been born in South Carolina in 1788 or 1789. His younger half-brother, Jesse P. Munson, was born in 1800.

It is not known for whom Henry William Munson was named. Early sons were often named for a father, an uncle, or a grandfather and early records show several William Munsons (see Inset 10). It is interesting to note that Henry William Munson named his first four sons Samuel, Henry, Robert, and William; and his first cousin, Telfair, the son of Robert Munson, named his first three sons Robert, William, and Henry. This lends some support to the thought that the William Munson recorded in the Natchez District in 1785 may have been the father or a brother of Jesse and Robert, and in any event there must have been a William and a Henry somewhere in the family's recent past. Recent research suggests the possibility that Henry William Munson may have also been named for Henry Hunter, the leader of the Munson migration from South Carolina to the Natchez District just nine months before the birth of Henry William Munson.

While there are no definite records of the location of his home or the extent of his education at any time during his youth, it has long been assumed that Henry William Munson spent his early years on the family farm near Bayou Sara in what is now West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana. His mother must have died before 1799, and he apparently had a stepmother for some time thereafter. There are no known records of Jesse's marriages or wives. Jesse appears to have been poor and unsuccessful for all of these years, and he sold his 561-acre land grant in 1801 for a price of one peso per acre. Henry William would have been eight years old at that time. Wherever

Inset 10
The Many William Munsons



William was the most common name for men in the early Munson families of the South. The next most common were Samuel and Robert.

A William Munson was a resident in North Carolina in 1745, and a William Munson was recorded in the Natchez District of New Spain in 1781. A William Munson was recorded in South Carolina in 1801 (but not in the 1800 census), and again in the census of 1810. In the 1820 census there was a William Munson and a William Munson Jr., and in 1830 a William Munson (assumed to be Jr.). In the 1840 census there was only a Robert and a Jane Munson, but this Robert Munson's will shows that he had a son named William, and this William is recorded in the 1850 census. Also there was a William Munson in the 1820 census of Kentucky.

Our Henry William Munson was born in the Natchez District in 1793, and it is assumed that he was named for one of these other William Munsons. The name has continued in both the Munsons of Texas and the Munsons of Louisiana.

Henry William Munson named his first son Samuel, but he named his second son Henry W. Munson (II). This son did not survive childhood. He then named his fourth son William Benjamin. Henry William's son Mordello named his first son Henry William Munson (III), and this man's brother, George Caldwell Munson, named a son Henry William (IV). This Henry's son, George McCauley Munson, named his son Henry William Munson (V), living today in Angleton, Texas.

In the Munsons of Louisiana, Robert Munson had two grand-children named William, William W. Munson and William H. Johnson. William W. Munson named a son William Ruffin Munson, and William Ruffin had a grandson named William Warren Munson, living today in Baton Rouge, Louisiana—and there well may have been others.

Inset 11
The Several Samuel Munsons



The relationships of the several Samuel Munsons are one of the unsolved mysteries of the Munson family genealogy. A Samuel Munson Sr. is first found as a taxpayer in Virginia in the 1770s. Census records show a Samuel Munson Sr. and an Isaac Munson in Fayette County, Kentucky, in 1790, about the time that Jesse and Robert “removed from South Carolina to Kentucky, and then removed again to Mississippi.” It appears that this Samuel Munson Sr. might have been their brother—even possibly their father. The 1800 Kentucky census shows a Samuel Munson and an Isaac Munson in the same area. The 1810 census shows a William Munson and an Allen Munson with families, but no Samuel. These may well be the next generation—children of Samuel Sr. or Isaac.

Two Samuel Munsons appear to have moved to Mississippi to join their relatives there by 1810. It seems plausible that these could have been Samuel Munson Sr. and a Samuel Elder Munson. In the Woodville, Mississippi, archives the will of Wright Munson, dated 1813, reads “to well-beloved son, Samuel Elder, now known as Samuel Munson, whom I claim as my begotten son and heir, 100 acres of land adjoining Archibald Rhea.” This wording leaves the relationships open to speculation. In 1816 a Samuel Munson (together with Nausworthy Hunter and Joseph Hunter) was appointed by the court in Wilkinson County “to appraise the estate of Jesse Munson, late of said county, deceased,” (which appraisal Henry William Munson presented to the court in December, 1816). A Samuel Munson is listed as an inhabitant of Wilkinson County in the 1816 census of the Mississippi Territory. It seems that these references may have been to Samuel Munson Sr., likely a close relative to Jesse.

On May 13, 1817, in Rapides Parish, Louisiana, a Samuel Munson (probably Samuel Elder) sold 100 acres of land “on the banks of Bayou Sarah” to Andrew Rhea. This appears to be the same land that Wright Munson bought from Andrew Rhea in 1813 and passed on in his will (dated 1813) to Samuel Elder Munson in 1816.

In the probate of the will of a Samuel Munson (probably Samuel Sr.) in Rapides Parish, Louisiana, in 1817, the heir is named as Samuel Elder Munson. No relationship is given. Samuel Elder Munson and wife Martha are found in Rapides Parish in 1817, and after the administration of the estate of another Samuel Munson there in 1819 (surely Samuel Elder), records show a Martha Munson buying and selling land. The fact that Henry William and Ann Munson named their first child (born in Rapides Parish in 1818) Samuel Munson suggests a close family relationship.

Numerous guesses can be made as to the relationships of the various Samuel, William, and Wright Munsons to Robert and Jesse. Surely some of them are brothers, and one might be their father. The names Robert, Jesse, Samuel, and William appear to have been repeatedly used over several generations, but the answers will not be known until further successful research is completed.

they lived thereafter, Henry William received good schooling, for in later years he appeared to have had a good elementary education in reading, writing, and arithmetic.⁶²

Family tradition relates that Henry William Munson was a boyhood friend of Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederate States of America from 1861 until 1865. Jefferson Davis was born in Kentucky in 1808, and while he was still a baby his family moved to a small plantation in Wilkinson County, Mississippi Territory. He was a graduate of West Point in 1828, a participant in the Mexican War of 1846-48, United States Secretary of War from 1853 to 1857, and an influential United States Senator from Mississippi prior to the secession of the Confederate States. His boyhood home near Woodville is now an historic showplace open to visitors. Since he was about fifteen years younger than Henry William Munson, it is not possible that they were true boyhood friends. More likely, their families may have been neighborhood friends, and family tradition twisted this into “boyhood friends.”

Henry William Munson lived his entire life on the Spanish-American and Mexican-American frontier, and the entire twenty years of his adult life were involved in the convulsive political evolution of this area. His earliest years were spent in an area under Spanish administration, and as his father had done before him, he chose to move to Spanish (by then Mexican) territory soon after his homeland became a state in the United States. He spent the remainder of his life as a resident of Mexican territory.

His first taste of Anglo revolt against Spanish rule came at the age of 17, at the time of the West Florida Revolt of 1810. Close members of his family, and possibly he himself, were involved in this rebellion, and it occurred within a few miles of his probable home.⁶³

In 1813, at the age of 20, he was again involved in revolution against Spanish rule in the famous Battle of Medina. This battle was the termination of the Magee-Gutierrez Expedition, the first major effort to free Texas from Spanish control. This expedition has been described as “the first Anglo-American thrust by arms into the Spanish border lands, a quest that once launched would not end until their manifest destiny had planted their flag on the shores of the Pacific.”⁶⁴

Family tradition relates that Henry William Munson participated in the Battle of Medina, was injured, and escaped when a Spanish officer named Mordella saved his life. In fond memory and appreciation of this lifesaving act, Henry William Munson named his fifth son Mordella (later changed to Mordello),⁶⁵ and that name has remained one of the most popular and often-used names for both boys and girls in the Munson and the Caldwell families. No less than seven Munsons, four Caldwells, and at least five descendants of other admiring relatives and friends have borne that name.

⁶² See Chapter 5 for the Munsons' early years in the Natchez District.

⁶³ See Chapter 6 for details of the West Florida Revolt.

⁶⁴ Ted Schwarz, *Forgotten Battlefield of the First Texas Revolution*, Eakin Press, Austin, Texas, 1985, p. 5.

⁶⁵ The spelling as Mordella or Mordello was frequently interchanged in earlier generations. Only in recent generations has Mordella always signified female and Mordello male.

The Magee–Gutierrez Expedition of 1812–1813⁶⁶

The Magee-Gutierrez Expedition is an example of the numerous and almost continuous wild and bizarre military and political events that occurred during the years of the westward expansion of the United States.

The most northeasterly Spanish Province of *Tejas*, though inhabited by settlers of Spanish descent for over a century, was nonetheless thinly populated and far from the sites of authority. Spanish rule was distant and loyalties were fragile. In 1806 a treaty was made between Spanish General Simon de Herrera and U. S. General James Wilkinson attempting to resolve the border dispute between the newly acquired Louisiana Territory and Spanish Texas. Unable to reach agreement on a border, they declared the territory between the Sabine River and tiny Arroyo Hondo, near Natchitoches, to be neutral ground with no governmental authority.

On September 16, 1810, at the Mission of Dolores in the State of Chihuahua, Father Miguel Hidalgo challenged his local subjects and the people of Mexico to assert independence from their Spanish rulers. The initial revolution that he led spread over Mexico, including the short-lived Casas revolt in *San Antonio de Bexar* in the Province of *Tejas*, but it soon collapsed. Hidalgo was captured by the forces of Ygnacio Elizondo and sent to Chihuahua for execution, but this September 16 is still celebrated today as Mexican Independence Day. Many of the revolutionaries fled to safety in the Neutral Ground or across the border into Louisiana. By 1812 the Neutral Ground had acquired a population including many thieves and desperados. It was necessary for traders and mule trains passing through this territory to travel with a guard, and U. S. General Overton kept a force at Natchitoches for this purpose.

Also in Natchitoches in the spring of 1812 was William Shaler, a special United States agent, but more apparently a personal representative of U. S. Secretary of State James Monroe. Since 1810 he had served in Cuba, where he had acquired the acquaintance and admiration of the Cuban-Spanish revolutionary leader Jose Alvarez de Toledo. In 1812 Shaler had been instructed by Monroe to proceed from Havana to Mexico to obtain information concerning the various revolutionary efforts there. Unable to enter Mexico through the port of Vera Cruz, he proceeded to New Orleans and Natchitoches, from where he planned to enter Mexico. In New Orleans, and later in Natchitoches, Shaler met Jose Bernardo Gutierrez de Lara, a Mexican of Spanish descent, a native of Revilla on the Rio Grande, and an ardent Mexican revolutionary. Gutierrez had been active in the abortive Mexican revolutionary efforts of 1810 and had fled to Louisiana for safety.

Jose Gutierrez had traveled to Washington and Philadelphia and met with the highest U. S. officials, including Secretary of State James Monroe and President James Madison, to discuss Mexican independence from Spain. There he had met and consulted extensively with Jose Toledo. He had marveled at the U. S. sights, the large booming towns and factories, the diligent and loyal workers, and the good fortune they enjoyed. His conclusion was that good government by good people produced these wonders, and his spirit burned to bring this to his countrymen in Mexico.

⁶⁶ The primary sources for this section are Ted Schwarz, *Forgotten Battlefield of the First Texas Revolution: The Battle of Medina, August 18, 1813*, Eakin Press, Austin, Texas (1985); Julia Kathryn Garrett, *The Green Flag over Texas*, Jenkins Publishing Company, Austin, Texas (1969); and John Henry Brown, *History of Texas From 1685 to 1892*, (1892), Reprinted From The Original Edition by Jenkins Publishing Company, Austin, Texas (1970).

Evidence indicates that European intrigue in America was still alive and that Britain and France also had an interest in these outlying Mexican territories. This only added to the desire of some parties in the United States to acquire the territory of Texas. In Natchitoches, in the Spring of 1812, Gutierrez and Shaler were quietly at the heart of the frenzy of rumors anticipating an invasion of Texas. They were awaiting only the anticipated declaration of war between the United States and Britain as the excuse for their invasion.

Thereupon entered the needed leader, 24-year-old Augustus William Magee. Just out of West Point where he had graduated third in his class, he had served under General James Wilkinson, who considered him a young man of promise. In 1811 Wilkinson had requested the Secretary of War to promote Magee to the rank of first lieutenant, but the promotion was not awarded. This was a stab at Magee's youthful ambition and pride from which he never recovered. In the first months of 1812, Magee was with Overton's forces at Natchitoches engaged in clearing the Neutral Ground of bandits. Here Magee came in contact with the westward-gazing adventurers, listened to the fabulous descriptions of Texas, and acquired a knowledge of the distracted conditions in Mexico. On June 22, 1812, he resigned his position in the United States Army because he felt "dissatisfied with the service and personally slighted."

Magee immediately became the organizing leader of the revolutionary army, visiting New Orleans to acquire needed supplies, and attracting young men from Louisiana and Mississippi to the cause, while Gutierrez was the nominal leader to attract the support of the exiled Mexicans. The stated goal of the expedition was to free Mexico from the yoke of Spain, but the different participating leaders may have had differing goals. Each volunteer was promised forty dollars a month and a league of land to be assigned in the future Mexican Republic. It was not an army of only rough-shod adventurers—there were three Virginians of respectable standing, Reuben Ross, Henry Perry, and a Mr. Lockett; Joseph Carr of Mississippi; and Samuel Kemper of Louisiana. Samuel Kemper, a resident of West Florida since 1801, had figured in the West Florida Revolt in 1810 and was very possibly an acquaintance of the Munsons.

There can be little doubt that Henry William Munson was aware of these events and was a friend or an acquaintance of many of the volunteers. It is not known at what point he joined the expedition. Munson family tradition does not tell of his having been a member of the Expedition, but only of his participation in the Battle of Medina and his escape from the resulting massacre. It is possible that he succumbed to the early frenzy and joined the expedition at its inception, or that he was a member of one of the many groups of reinforcements that joined the expedition during the following twelve months. However, as will be discussed later, it appears most likely that he joined the expedition in its last month, with the fateful arrival of Colonel Henry Bullard and Commanding General Toledo.

In June of 1812 the U. S. Congress declared war with Great Britain, and in August, with Gutierrez in nominal charge but Magee in actual control, the army of conquest easily took undisputed possession of Nacogdoches. They remained until September, when, with about 400 men—Americans, Mexicans, and Indians—they departed for Bexar. Receiving word that the Spanish forces were preparing an ambush, they turned south to *La Bahía* (Goliad). Arriving there on November 7 and finding the fort vacated, the invaders hoisted a green flag, the first flag of Texas independence.

Several days later they found themselves surrounded by Spanish troops under the command of Generals Manuel Maria de Salcedo and Simon de Herrera. Supposing that Magee would take the old Bexar road from Nacogdoches, the Spanish troops had left *La Bahía* intending to

intercept the invaders at San Marcos. Discovering their miscalculations, they had returned to *La Bahía*. On November 23 a severe engagement occurred with the Spanish troops retreating after suffering heavy losses.

The Spanish forces then decided to starve the garrison into submission, surrounding the place and maintaining a state of siege. Magee's men found an abundance of corn in the fort, and as beees were plentiful in the surrounding country and could be brought in by night, they could have held out for a long time. During this time the health of Magee rapidly declined and he died in early February of 1813. It is reported that he suffered from tuberculosis. Colonel Samuel Kemper then took command with Gutierrez de Lara still the nominal Mexican leader.

At daybreak on February 10, 1813, a fierce general engagement occurred. Three times the Spanish forces approached the fort and were repulsed. Finally being driven to the opposite side of the river, they raised the siege and retreated to Bexar. Major Reuben Ross soon returned from an expedition to Louisiana with a party of twenty-five Americans and thirty Coushatta Indians. Thus victorious and reinforced, Kemper set out to pursue the enemy to Bexar with about 600 men.

General Herrera took a position below the Salado River on the road from Bexar to *La Bahía*. Herrera had received reinforcements and had about 1,200 men in this battle, known as the Battle of Rosillo (also the first Battle of Salado). The American leaders planned for a simultaneous attack, but the Indians, not understanding the arrangements, charged too soon. They suffered severely in the hand-to-hand fighting, but in their desperation they killed a great number of the enemy, including officers. The Americans and Mexicans then entered the battle and in twenty minutes the enemy was routed. The Spanish lost heavily in dead, injured, and prisoners, as well as arms, ammunition, artillery, baggage, horses, and mules.

With the Royal Spanish Army having retreated to Bexar, the rebels proceeded on April 1, 1813, to contest the town. Anti-Spanish propaganda distributed in the town by agents of Gutierrez, Shaler, and the American press, plus the successes and promises of the invading army, had left many inhabitants in a state of uncertain loyalties. Throughout this period of history, the Texas natives of Spanish descent (called *Tejanos* by Schwarz) appear to have had vacillating loyalties.

On April 4 Manuel de Salcedo sent a flag of truce and requested a parley. Colonel Samuel Kemper refused all terms except the surrender of the army and the delivery of the city into his possession. These terms were finally accepted, and the Americans marched into the city as the Royalists marched out, leaving their arms stacked. The red and gold flag of Spain was hauled down and replaced by the green flag of Texas. Every vestige of Spanish power, for the moment, had been removed from the Province of Texas.

Gutierrez de Lara, having achieved his dream, just as quickly destroyed it. On April 3, 1813 (some say April 4), there occurred an atrocious butchery of fourteen Spanish officers, including Salcedo, Herrera, and Manuel Antonio Cordero by order of Gutierrez de Lara. They were delivered up to Juan Antonio Delgado and taken to the battleground of Salado where their throats were cut and their bodies left on the prairie.

On April 6, 1813, a declaration of independence was issued, and the province was given the name of the State of Texas. Local *Tejanos* from the leading families of Delgado, Arocha, and Leal had joined with Gutierrez to form the leadership group. The declaration provided for the formation of a provisional government. Gutierrez was named president of the government, and

was empowered to appoint a ruling *junta* of seven, which was invested with the power to write a constitution and to form a government. Local leader Tomas de Arocha was named president of the ruling *junta*. The only two non-Mexican members were the Frenchman Massicott and the American Hale. Kemper and the other leading Americans were excluded.

The task of writing a constitution faced Gutierrez and the *junta*, but untrained in democratic statecraft, they could not cross the frontier of freedom. The dictatorial and corrupt political system of the Spanish regime, after some remodeling, became the political machine of the Mexican State of Texas.

Gutierrez did, however, fulfill one of his promises. Within the month American volunteers were notified that each was to receive a grant of one league of land (4,428 acres) for each six months of service. A land office was opened in which volunteers filed their claims. Titles to land grants made to these men can be found in the archives of the Texas State Library in Austin. There is no record of such a grant to Henry William Munson.

Shocked by Spanish brutality and excluded from the ruling *junta*, a number of American officers, including the able Samuel Kemper, soon left the endeavor and returned to Louisiana. In Nachitoches, Kemper made his personal report to William Shaler, while his place as leader of the Americans in Bexar was taken first by Colonel Reuben Ross and then by Major Henry Perry.

On June 18, 1813, Spanish Lt. Col. Ygnacio Elizondo, with about a thousand troops, appeared on Alazan Creek, a mile west of Bexar. He had marched from the State of Chihuahua in the west on orders from his superior, General Joaquin de Arredondo, to await Arredondo's arrival at Bexar, but not to engage in battle. Unable to resist the urge to be a hero, he sent a demand to the leaders in Bexar to surrender. Perry returned a blunt refusal, and during the night he moved his men out to such close proximity to the Spaniards that, at dawn on the twentieth, while they were engaged in their morning devotions, he burst upon them with complete surprise.

The contest lasted for about four hours, when in much disorder the Spaniards fled from the field with Elizondo barely escaping capture. His loss was estimated at 350 men killed, 130 taken prisoner, and an enormous amount of munitions and stores abandoned. Perry, incredible as it may seem, lost, by one report, only twenty killed and forty-four wounded.⁶⁷ This result was partly due to the unity of leadership and the spirit of the rebels, and also to the superiority of the American rifles to the muskets then in use by the Spanish troops. This is known as the Battle of Alazan. The blundering Elizondo lost no time in recrossing the Nueces River and retreating to the Rio Grande; his withdrawal again left not an armed Royalist in Texas.

It is ironic that in the face of such an overwhelming victory, multiple disasters were brewing. There is no doubt that Kemper's reports to Shaler did not bear well for Gutierrez. Shaler apparently decided that Gutierrez was not the man to govern the State of Texas and to lead the movement for the eventual total conquest of Mexico. For these endeavors he selected his old friend, Jose Alvarez de Toledo, who was then, less than accidentally, residing in Nachitoches.

Shaler sent 24-year-old Colonel Henry Adams Bullard to Bexar as his special representative. His purpose was to effect the replacement of Gutierrez by Toledo. Bullard was accompanied by Colonel Samuel Kemper, by James Biddle Wilkinson, the son of General James Wilkinson, and

⁶⁷ In all battles, different authors quote different figures. These are from John Henry Brown, *The History of Texas*.

some six or seven other Americans.⁶⁸ Twenty-year-old Henry William Munson was very possibly one of these men. Several of these men had grown up in the Natchez District together and may have been together at the West Florida Revolt. Colonel Bullard did arrive in Bexar in June of 1813, was appointed Secretary of State of the State of Texas by Gutierrez, and from that position maneuvered to have Gutierrez removed from office and replaced by Toledo.

General Toledo arrived in Bexar on August 1, 1813, and the *junta* was immediately assembled to invest him with leadership. Gutierrez and his followers begged to be allowed to remain in command until after the impending conflict with the Royalists, as it was then known that Generals Arredondo and Elizondo were on the march toward Bexar with several thousand soldiers. Gutierrez argued that such a major change at such a critical time would be disastrous—and he was correct. The *junta* was paralyzed in its indecision. On the third day the army demanded a decision. Gutierrez was removed from command and exiled to the United States. On August 4 Toledo took command. On the night of August 6, when few could view the tragedy of lost dreams, Jose Bernardo Gutierrez de Lara moved slowly out of the city with his family.

The Mexicans' hero was gone. In his place was a foreigner, a Spaniard, and a stranger to all. Achievements of three years of Gutierrez's heroic efforts were to be annihilated in fourteen days of animosity and confusion. The Mexican troops in Bexar were disconsolate. The leader of this disaffection was Miguel Menchaca, a hero of Alazan but a bitter enemy of Toledo. Toledo's strategy was to reorganize the army into two distinct divisions, the *Tejanos* and Mexicans with their Indian allies under Menchaca and Miguel Musquiz, and the Americans under Perry and Kemper. Various reports indicate that he had about 300 or 400 American volunteers, 800 to 900 Mexicans and *Tejanos*, and about 100 Indians. Toledo tried, but unity was missing and time was short.

The Battle of Medina — August 18, 1813⁶⁹

The numerous early reports of the Battle of Medina were written over a period of half-a-century by participants and from hearsay. All are incomplete, some appear to be biased, and most contain numerous contradictions. These stories were repeated in history books for over a century to build an incomplete and inaccurate story of the battle. Ted Schwarz spent much of his lifetime researching the facts, and his resulting manuscript was edited and published posthumously by his colleague, Robert H. Thonhoff, in 1985. This book is the newest and best source of information on this battle, but dates and events will vary in every version.

Before Schwarz's book appeared in 1985, the often-told story of the Battle of Medina was a thrilling, if chilling, episode. Generally accurate in many respects, it was told as follows. Receiving word of the advancing enemy, Arredondo took a position in an oak grove about ten miles west of the Medina River and about thirty miles from Bexar. There he threw up breastworks in the form of a V with the open space toward Bexar. Elizondo was sent to meet the Americans, to engage them in battle, to feign a retreat, and to lure them into the ambush. The plan worked perfectly.

⁶⁸ As reported by John Henry Brown, *History of Texas*. Ted Schwarz, in *Forgotten Battlefield of the First Texas Revolution*, reports a party of about forty.

⁶⁹ Information for this story is taken from the following sources: Ted Schwarz, *Forgotten Battlefield of the First Texas Revolution. The Battle of Medina, August 18, 1813*; Julia Kathryn Garrett, *The Green Flag over Texas*; and John Henry Brown, *History of Texas*.

It was a hot August day and the sun beat down mercilessly. After crossing the Medina, the rebels encountered Elizondo's advanced men. The Americans rushed to the attack, with the Mexicans reluctantly following. After a brief encounter, Elizondo gave ground and retreated in good order, until, such was the fierceness of the pursuit, his men turned and fled pell-mell into the lines of the ambush.

Toledo, discovering the intended ambush and seeing that the Americans were entering it, ordered a retreat. Confusion followed. The left wing obeyed, but Kemper, Perry, and Menchaca swore there should be no retreat and were soon reeling under a destructive fire from front, right, and left. During the battle Menchaca was killed and the Mexicans fell into disorderly retreat, but the Americans and Indians did not flinch. The battle lasted for several hours. The Americans, on the verge of success, suddenly broke and fled. They were beaten by heat, fatigue, and the sight of a thousand comrades dead.

Another version reports that Arredondo's cavalry was at the point of retreat when Musquiz, in a sudden change of allegiance, deserted from Toledo's ranks and carried his Mexican company over to the enemy. He reported that the Americans had been abandoned by their Mexican allies and were fainting from heat, thirst, and fatigue. Arredondo accordingly made a last furious assault upon the Americans, who were checked, thrown into confusion, and compelled to yield.



Schwarz's extensive research confirms and expands much of this account, but it also corrects important parts of it, and throws a very different light on the happenings during the crucial battle.



The Battle of Medina is the bloodiest battle ever fought on Texas soil. More men died for Texas than at the Alamo, Goliad & San Jacinto combined.

supply for men and animals was essential. Through continuous, detailed reconnaissance, Toledo's scouts kept close watch on Arredondo's forces. For two days Toledo personally scouted the area and selected a site and a plan for the impending battle. In the early morning of August 18 he moved his troops into battle formation among oak trees situated between two hills on the edge of the deep sandy area known as the *encinal de Medina*. The two armies were about six miles apart on opposite sides of the *encinal*. Toledo had full information on the Spanish position, and he felt

It shows Toledo to have been an able general, but lacking the necessary discipline and unity among his officers and men. Schwarz reports that after Toledo took command on August 4, 1813, he attempted to lead his army out of Bexar to meet the approaching Spanish army on August 5, but several groups refused to follow, and Toledo returned to the city. Unity was never achieved, but because of the impending threat to all, the entire army left Bexar on August 15, with about 1,200 to 1,400 men. Best estimates place the Spanish forces at around 2,000, but accounts vary enormously.

The rebel army left Bexar on August 15 in the hottest weather imaginable, crossed the Medina riverbed on the next day, and camped for two nights at a good watering spot a few miles beyond the Medina. A water

that his position was unknown to Arredondo. He planned to ambush the advancing Spanish forces in the sandy area on that day

An unforeseen incident and the lack of discipline among Toledo's officers apparently foiled his plan. One lone Spanish horseman, separated from his patrol and innocently riding alone, became aware of the rebel's presence, was fired upon by them, and quickly wheeled his horse and returned to the main army. Arredondo therewith sent Elizondo with a patrol to scout the enemy's position but with instructions not to engage them. As the patrol approached the rebels' ambush position, firing commenced, the Spanish troops retreated, and the confident rebels pursued them into the sandy *encinal*. As the vigorous pursuit continued, Elizondo received reinforcements, and another engagement occurred with the Spanish again retreating.

Toledo, sensing that his troops had left their water supply, were personally dragging their artillery through the deep sand (their draught animals not having been prepared for the advance), and were abandoning their position of strength, ordered a retreat. His main officers, Menchaca, Perry, and Kemper, remembering their earlier overwhelming successes and flushed with the sense of another victory, refused to obey the order, and the vigorous attack continued. When Elizondo's forces reached Arredondo's main army, the latter had hastily taken up concealed battle positions in an oak grove, and a vicious four-hour battle ensued. Schwarz's findings do not support the story that Arredondo had planned an ambush or that breastworks in the form of a V had existed. It is now thought that this was reported by the defeated Americans on their return to Louisiana as an excuse for their defeat.

Details of the actual battle are incomplete and conflicting, but all agree that casualties were severe. It appears that both sides may have essentially exhausted themselves at about the same time. One source reports the strange sight of the remains of both armies simultaneously preparing to retreat in assumed defeat. When Miguel Menchaca was shot and severely injured (he died later in the day), the Mexicans whom he had led apparently retired from the battle. Another report tells that at the height of the battle, Miguel Musquiz successfully led his men around the flank of the Spanish forces, where he either defected or was captured. He reported to Arredondo that the Americans were exhausted and beaten, whereupon Arredondo, who had reportedly mounted a fresh horse in preparation for his retreat, ordered a new attack which won the day. A 19-year-old junior officer cited for bravery in Arredondo's forces was Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna. It is evident from history that in this battle he learned vital lessons that served him well for the rest of his career.

Upon his return to Louisiana, Captain Wilkinson reported that the rebels had silenced all of the Spanish artillery by killing the operators, had occupied the ground which the Spanish had first occupied, and just fifteen minutes more would have given them a complete victory; but that their men—hot, thirsty, exhausted, and having suffered severe casualties—gave up the fight, broke, and ran. Immediately after the battle Arredondo recorded that an estimated 600 enemy lay dead on the field and that his 100 prisoners were then being executed. In a later report he raised the total number of enemy dead to 1,000, and he reported that half of the survivors of the battle were captured and killed during their retreat toward Bexar.

All of the known American leaders escaped back to Louisiana. It is reported that when they saw the retreat begin, they turned their horses and fled in haste. It seems very probable that Henry William Munson was a member of this group. The Munson legend relates that Henry William was injured and that Mordella saved his life. It is not known if this lifesaving act was on the field of battle or during the retreat.

Arredondo had won and Spanish vengeance began. Wounded rebels on the battlefield as well as those who tried to flee were sabered. The first fugitives to arrive at Bexar shouted that all were fleeing before Arredondo. Many local rebel families quickly packed a few belongings and by the late afternoon of August 18 a group of about three hundred persons were fleeing toward Nacogdoches and Louisiana. Toledo, Bullard, Perry, Kemper, Wilkinson, and Henry William Munson were somewhere among them. Another survivor of interest was William Orr, who appears again later in the Munson story.

On their arrival, Arredondo and Elizondo paraded victoriously in the streets of Bexar. Elizondo, with 500 cavalymen, was ordered to pursue the fugitives, to sweep all of Texas free of rebels, and to seize Nacogdoches. In Bexar and *La Babia* hundreds of *Tejano* and Mexican rebel families were imprisoned—the men were shot and the women put to hard labor. It was reported that on September 3, 1813, 327 insurgents were executed in Bexar. For fifty-four days the retribution continued.

Meanwhile, Elizondo was sweeping eastward. Reports of the events on his campaign vary greatly, and many may be embellished. Some examples are repeated here. Every day Elizondo overtook and captured some fleeing rebels. *Tejanos* and Mexicans were shot or held prisoner—Americans, by strange agreement, were released to return to Louisiana. A reason given was the desire to create good relations with the American government. It seems possible that the American party may have been overtaken and that Mordella may have negotiated their release.

Near the Trinity River, Elizondo captured a band of Republican families including the prominent Bexar names of Delgado, Arocha, and Leal. Juan Antonio Delgado, who had been responsible for the execution of Salcedo and Herrera, was shot instantly and left on the prairie. The most prominent rebels, including Tomas de Arocha, who had been chairman of the Bexar *junta*, were bound and marched before Elizondo. Elizondo condemned the men to death whereupon they were led before their weeping families, shot, and denied a burial. One report relates that near the Trinity he overtook and captured a group of rebels and marched them to a grove. A deep ditch was dug for a grave, across which a piece of timber was laid. After tying the men together, ten at a time, he had them placed on the beam and shot, their bodies falling into the trench.

On September 7, 1813, having executed seventy-one insurgents and holding over 200 prisoners, Elizondo began the return march to Bexar. While they camped beside the Brazos River, a captain from Spain, made insane by the days of brutal tension, killed the cousin of Elizondo and wounded Elizondo while he was resting in his tent. Word was sent to Bexar for medical help and the march was resumed, but, upon reaching the San Marcos River, Ygnacio Elizondo's turbulent existence ended. He was buried on the bank of the river.

Ted Schwarz reports that ninety-odd Americans are thought to have crossed the Sabine, though the names of only about twenty are known. General Toledo declared that with 2,000 such troops as the Americans under Perry he could plant the Republican flag in the City of Mexico. Henry Perry escaped to participate in the Battle of New Orleans on January 5, 1815. He soon thereafter joined another invasion expedition into Texas, where he lost his life. Henry William Munson and Colonel Henry Bullard escaped to continue the Munson story in Louisiana.

Munson family records tell that a lost article from a Texas newspaper published at the time Mordello Stephen Munson was being urged to run for governor in 1888, related that Henry William Munson was injured in the Battle of Medina and that he escaped with the help of a Spanish officer named Mordella. This Mordella was a nephew of the Spanish General Felix

Trespalacios, who soon thereafter became the Governor of the Spanish Province of *Tejas*. History further records that late in the year 1819, Dr. James Long, also from the Natchez area, was undertaking yet another attempt to free Texas from Spanish rule. His party again included the names of Bernardo Gutierrez de Lara, General Felix Trespalacios, and his nephew Mordella. While stationed at the fort at Bolivar Point, just to the north of Galveston Island, this Mordella attempted to organize a conspiracy against the expedition and was exposed, tried, convicted, and hanged for treason on the northeast end of Galveston Island.

Henry William Munson's Return to Louisiana

Little is known of Henry William Munson's activities between late 1813 and his marriage to Ann Binum Pearce in 1817. On his return to Louisiana he was approaching his 21st birthday. Noting his high regard for education, his later success in business, and his leadership in his community in later years, it seems possible that he may have spent these years advancing his education, possibly in the field of law, and possibly under the guidance of Henry Adams Bullard. This Judge Bullard, a Harvard graduate, advanced to become a district judge, a member of the Louisiana Legislature, the U. S. Congress, and the Louisiana Supreme Court. Munson tradition tells that he became president of the New Orleans Law School, where he taught Henry William's son, Mordello Stephen Munson, in 1847. Recent research reveals that he was the first dean of the law school of the new University of Louisiana (now Tulane University) in 1847.

When Henry William Munson's father, Jesse, died in Mississippi in 1815 or 1816, the court in Woodville appointed Nausworthy Hunter, Joseph Hunter, and Samuel Munson as appraisers of the estate. However, on December 20, 1816, Henry William Munson filed with the court the inventory of the estate of Jesse Munson—"the appointed persons having refused to render an inventory"—and signed as administrator. The estate consisted of one sorrel horse, three beeves, and three promissory notes. Why had the court-appointed appraisers, two Hunters and a Munson, refused to render an inventory? Possibly they found no inventory. It is also of interest to note that the name Jesse never again appeared in this Munson family. One's imagination can run wild when trying to guess the circumstances of Jesse Munson.

On May 12, 1817, Henry William Munson and Ann Binum Pearce of Rapides Parish, Louisiana, were married. He was 24 years old, and she was one month past her 17th birthday.

Ann Pearce was usually known as Nancy by her family. She was descended from a very old and distinguished southern American family dating back to their arrival in Jamestown, Virginia, in about 1609. She was born in Screven County, Georgia, on April 17, 1800, the seventh and last child of William Pearce and Sarah Bray. Her mother died about one year after her birth, and her father moved the family to Rapides Parish, Louisiana, in 1803. He obviously had considerable wealth because he established a plantation on Bayou Boeuf near the present town of Cheneyville. The plantation was named Lunenburg, and it had a large colonial brick plantation home. One would assume that this was where the wedding took place.

Henry William Munson may have met Ann Pearce through friends on his travels to and from Texas in 1813; he may have met her during his travels around Louisiana between 1813 and 1817; or he may have known the family through Joshua Pearce, Ann's uncle, who had moved his family from Screven County, Georgia, to the Natchez area in 1807. In any event, thus began the union which led directly to the large family of the Munsons of Texas.

Chapter 8

The Story of the Pearce Family⁷⁰



Ann Binum Pearce, the “grandmother” of all of the Munsons and Caldwells of Texas, was descended from an old and distinguished southern American family. It is reported that in 1607 or 1609, a William Pierce (or Pearce)⁷¹ arrived in the colony of Jamestown, Virginia, the earliest permanent English settlement in America. His descendants migrated to the Carolina Colony in the early eighteenth century, were among the first settlers in Screven County, Georgia, in 1768, and moved to the newly acquired Louisiana Territory in 1803. There, 17-year-old Ann Pearce met Henry William Munson and they were married in 1817.



In 1606 King James I of England granted a charter to the London Company for settlement and development of the territory of Virginia (extending from present day Pennsylvania to South Carolina) in the new world of America. The London Company was a business with plans to make money by establishing a trading post and searching for gold and silver. In 1607, after five months at sea, the 104 original settlers—120 set out from England and sixteen died at sea—sighted land near Chesapeake Bay and sailed thirty-two miles up the James River to a site which they named Jamestown.

These early settlers were not prepared for life in the wilderness, and many of them died of hunger, malaria, and lack of shelter, or were killed by the Indians. The colony barely survived the “starving time” during the first two winters under the leadership of John Smith, who returned to England in 1609. In 1610 the colonists abandoned the colony and boarded ships to return to England, but at the entrance to Chesapeake Bay they met the ships of Lord Delaware bringing supplies and new colonists, and all returned to Jamestown under the leadership of John Rolfe.

In 1612 the colonists began the profitable raising of tobacco. In 1614 John Rolfe married Pocahontas, the daughter of the powerful Indian chief Powhatan, and the struggling colony enjoyed peace with the Indians until Powhatan died in 1618. In 1619 the first black slaves were introduced to work the tobacco farms, and in that year the Virginia House of Burgesses, the first representative assembly in the new world, was established. The thriving colonists established

⁷⁰ Information on the early Pearce family is taken from George Stafford, *Three Pioneer Rapides Families*, Claitor’s Publishing Division, Baton Rouge, La., 1968; and from the *Munson Papers* as follows: photocopies in the files of Erma Munson Rich of pages from two books, i.e. Agnes Tedcastle, *The Beville Family of Virginia, Georgia, and Florida*, 1917; and *McCall-Tidwell and Allied Families* (no other identification shown). See Appendix 1.

⁷¹ The spelling of the name was interchangeable in the early years.

plantations inland on both sides of the James River, and in 1622 a severe Indian raid killed about 350 colonists. Famine and disease further reduced the population to about 1,200 persons. The Munsons' ancestors—William Pierce, his wife Jane, and their children—were among the survivors.

Bits of information show one or several Pierces or Pearces joining the earliest settlements at Jamestown.⁷² In 1607 or 1609 a William Pierce arrived in Virginia, coming across the sea with Sir Thomas Gates on the ship *Sea Venture*. His wife, Mrs. Jone [Jane] Pierce, followed in the *Blessing*. In 1619 a land patent was granted to “Master Pierce who has undertaken to transport to Virginia great multitudes of people with store of Cattle.” A letter dated April 11, 1623, describes Lieutenant Pearce as “the fairest in Virginia,” and a document dated May 29, 1623, names Lieutenant Pierce as “governor of James Town.” In 1623 and 1624 Captain William Pierce and wife Jane were living at James Town. In 1620, Jane, the daughter of Captain William Pierce, married John Rolfe as his third wife. William Pierce and John Rolfe owned lands on Mulberry Island in the James River, and William Pierce was one of the most prominent men of the Colony. In 1629 Mrs. Pierce visited England after spending twenty years in America. This indicates her arrival date to be 1609.

J. C. Hotten's *List of Emigrants to America* reports that on January 24, 1624, William Pearce owned a plantation on Mulberry Island with thirteen servants. He was a member of the “Council” (i.e. of James City County) in 1631. And further, Hotten records that “Captain William Pearce patented 200 acres of land nere Mulberry Island in the corporation of James Cittie in 1636,” and that on August 1, 1635, “Steeven Pierce, aged 30, was licensed to go beyond the seas on the ship *Elizabeth* of London with Christopher Browne, Master.”

One of William Pearce's descendants, Stephen¹ Pearce Sr., was born in Virginia and emigrated to the Carolina Colony early in the eighteenth century. There he married a Miss Lanier of the family of poet Sidney Lanier of Georgia. They had three sons: Stephen², Joshua², and William Leigh², the last being born in about 1740 in North Carolina. Joshua² was the ancestor of the Munsons of Texas (see Chart 4).

Nothing is known of Stephen², the eldest brother. He may have died young.

The youngest son, William Leigh², received a liberal education and was one of the early exponents of the cause of independence for the colonies. He became a captain in the First Continental Artillery and a member of the Sons of Liberty in Savannah. *The Cyclopedia of Georgia*, edited by ex-Governor Allen O. Chandler and General Clement A. Evans, says of William Leigh Pearce: “His first service was as aid-de-camp to General Greene. At the battle of Eutaw Springs, he distinguished himself by his bravery for which he was given a sword by Congress, and was promoted to rank of major.” In the years 1786-1787, he served as a delegate to the Continental Congress, and in 1787 he was a member of the Federal Convention that convened in Philadelphia to write the U. S. Constitution. He died on December 10, 1789, at about the age of 49, just five months too soon to witness the inauguration of the first President of the United States.

Stephen¹ Pearce's second son, Joshua², was Ann Binum Pearce's grandfather. He was born around 1730 in North Carolina, and in about 1752 he married Hannah Green, probably also of North Carolina. They had four known children: William³ (Ann Binum's father), born about 1754,

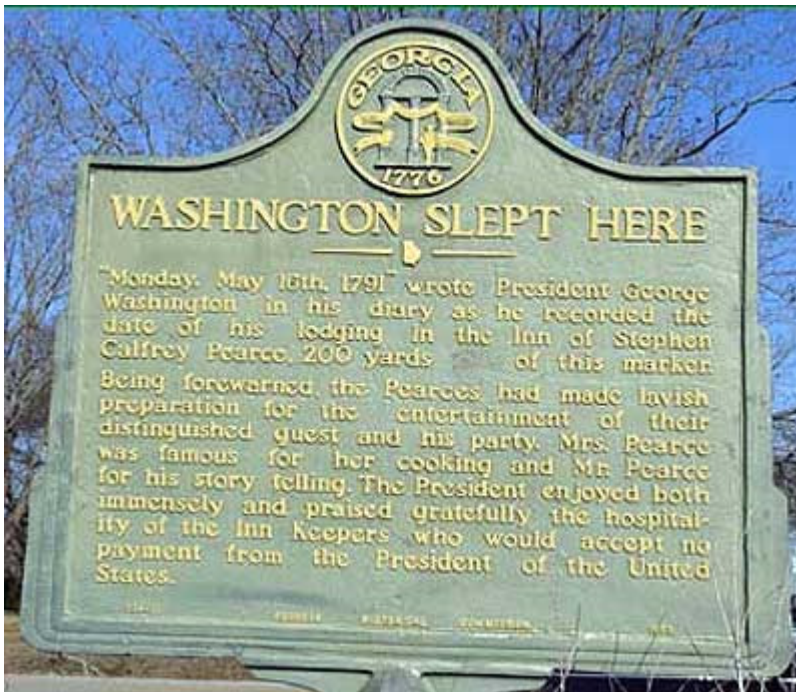
⁷² All quotes and data in this section are from the notes of Erma Munson Rich, *Munson Papers*, see Appendix 1.

Joshua³, Stephen Calfrey³, and Sarah³. Old Joshua², as he came to be known, appears in Georgia in July of 1768, making application for a grant of 150 acres of land on Buck Creek in St. Matthew's Parish. His application stated "That he had been in the Province of Georgia for four months from North Carolina, had no lands granted to him previously in Georgia and had a wife, six children, and negroes." He received a Royal land grant from King George III in 1769.

Old Joshua² was appointed Surveyor of Roads for Effingham County in 1777. In 1778 a Georgia Act was passed under which five commissioners were appointed from each county as representatives to the State. The five commissioners from Effingham County included Joshua Pearce.

In 1782, when the Assembly met in Augusta, a sweeping *Act of Attainder and Amercement* (loss of civil rights and punishment) was passed. This was apparently an act of retribution against those who had supported the British crown. Many whose names were found on this list charged as Tories were men who had positions of trust during the early years of the Revolutionary War and were leading men in the State. Joshua Pearce Sr. appears in this list. His property was not confiscated and after three years of military service he was restored to citizenship. In many cases where the father had been a Loyalist the sons were Whigs, and many on these lists were not clearly Tories or Loyalists at all. This is further indication of the split and uncertain loyalties of the British subjects in America during the American Revolution.

Quoting from *McCall-Tidwell and Allied Families*: "Joshua was a leader of Methodism in the State of Georgia. He was a man of great intelligence and energy, a planter of importance, and deeply interested in his state and nation. His reputation still endures in several Georgia counties—Effingham, Screven, Bullock, and Burke—with veneration and respect."



One of the dearest family traditions of the Pearce family tells how Old Joshua² Pearce operated a highly-regarded inn on his homestead in St. Matthew's Parish; and how Pearce's Inn was made historic by the overnight visit of President George Washington in the course of his memorable ride from Savannah to Augusta in 1791, during his visit to the South. Today a Georgia state historical marker marks the spot and relates the story. It is located in Screven County on State Highway 24 between the county seat of Sylvania and the Savannah River. Then in 1825 Stephen

Calfrey³ Pearce, the son of Joshua², entertained the Marquis de LaFayette in the same room of this same old inn on LaFayette's visit to the South.

Old Joshua² Pearce raised three sons and a daughter. Son Stephen Calfrey³ married Mary Wills of the prominent Wills family of South Carolina. He maintained his father's plantation and position in Georgia. They raised seven known children who founded the sizable Pearce family of Georgia. The youngest, Mary, was married in 1810 to Paul Beville Jr. One of their descendants, Agnes Beville Vaughn Tedcastle, wrote the Beville genealogical history, *The Beville Family of Virginia, Georgia and Florida*, in about 1917. This book contains much of the older Pearce genealogy related here.

Joshua² Pearce's second son, Joshua³, moved with his family from Screven County, Georgia, to the Mississippi Territory in 1807. He received grants of land in the Natchez District and founded the Mississippi branch of the Pearce family. It seems very possible that he may have become acquainted there with the Munsons and this might have been the link of introduction between Henry William Munson and Ann Binum Pearce.

Our ancestor, William³ Pearce, the eldest son of Old Joshua² Pearce and Hannah Green, was born in Beaufort County, North Carolina, in about 1754. He was a revolutionary soldier, certified as a member of the First Battalion, Georgia Line by General Elijah Clarke in 1784, and listed as such in Smith's *History of Georgia*. With his parents and his brothers, he was one of the early settlers of Screven County, Georgia, in 1768. Book No. 1 of the Screven County deed records in the courthouse in Sylvania, Georgia, contains the accounts of many land transactions of these Pearces between the years 1794 and 1820. Interestingly, Screven County, Georgia, lies adjacent to and directly across the Savannah River from the Briar Creek farm owned by Wright Munson in 1800. Both lie on the main emigrant route from the Carolinas to Georgia. It seems possible, in fact probable, that some of the Munsons may have known the Pearces when they each lived along the main roadway in adjacent counties on opposite sides of the Savannah River.

William³ Pearce married Sarah Bray in about 1780. Sarah Bray, was descended from Reverend Thomas Bray (1656-1729), an Anglican clergyman who was graduated from All Souls College, Oxford, England, in 1678. He was assigned to Maryland, where he met severe Quaker opposition, but he became an influential religious leader of his time.

William and Sarah Pearce had seven known children, all born in Screven County, as follows:

1. William⁴, b. 1782, married Francis Tanner (1812), d. 1842.
2. Stephen Samuel⁴, b. 1783 – d. 1833. married (1) Sally Goodwin Bray (1805) (2) Annie Grimball Tanner Brown
3. Delia⁴, b. 1787, married John Dunwoody (1807), d. 1829.
4. Mary (Polly)⁴, b. 1790, married Silas Talbert, d. 1867.
5. James⁴, b. 1792, married Rhoda Tanner.
6. Joshua⁴, b. 1795, married Ester Tanner (1825), d. 1879.
7. Ann Binum⁴, b. April 18, 1800 m. (1) Henry William Munson, May 12, 1817 (2) James P. Caldwell, May 12, 1835 d. September 6, 1865, San Marcos, Texas.

Sarah Bray Pearce died in Georgia on June 6, 1801, when Ann was just over one year old. In 1803 William³ Pearce moved with his children to Rapides Parish in the United States' newly acquired Louisiana Territory and established a plantation on the west bank of Bayou Boeuf near the town of Cheneyville, Louisiana. The location of his plantation, named Lunenburg, is shown on early maps of the Bayou Boeuf country.

In 1805 Ann Pearce's brother, Stephen⁴, was married in Georgia to Sally Goodwin Bray, possibly a relative of his mother. In 1808 this couple moved to Rapides Parish and established

Magnolia Plantation on the east bank of Bayou Boeuf. There they raised a family of eleven children. Stephen's three brothers all married girls named Tanner, and when Sally died, Stephen married a Tanner. Several Tanner plantations are shown on the early map of Bayou Boeuf



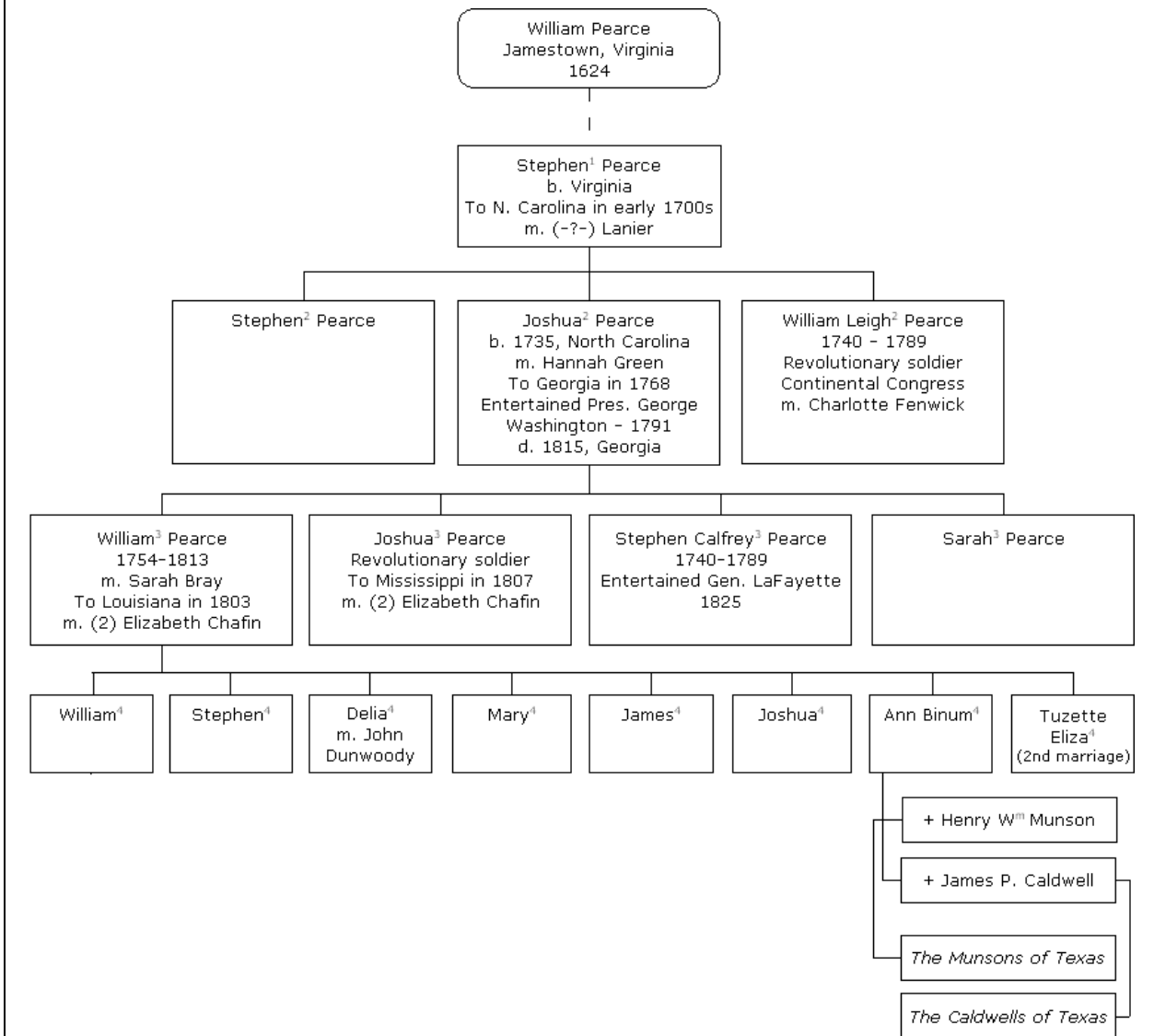
country. The descendants of these marriages account for the large Pearce family of Louisiana. It was surely one of these descendants who years later was named Mordello Pearce after his cousin, Mordello Munson.

Some years later William³ Pearce married Elizabeth Chafin, and they had one child, Tuzette Eliza Pearce, born in 1811. This was Ann's half-sister Tuzette, often mentioned in letters. Tuzette Pearce married Leonidas Alonzo Roberts in 1827, and she died in 1839.

William³ Pearce died on his plantation on November 6, 1813, at the age of about 59. Family tradition tells that while a brick chimney on his home was under repair, bricks accidentally fell on his head and killed him. Ann was 13 years old at the time and her half-sister Tuzette was barely two. This accident occurred only about two months after Henry William Munson had returned from the Battle of Medina and about three and one-half years before Henry William and Ann were married. Family tradition also tells that William³ Pearce buried much gold around his plantation home, but subsequent diggings have failed to discover it.

Ann Pearce was left an orphan, living with her stepmother and baby half-sister at Lunenburg Plantation near the present town of Cheneyville, Louisiana, until she married Henry William Munson in 1817. Of interest also is the observation that only a few miles north of Magnolia and Lunenburg Plantations was a plantation named Oakland. This was the name that Henry William and Ann Munson chose in 1828 for their new plantation home in Texas. One can wonder if this might have been their home in Louisiana from 1817 until their move to Texas in 1824.

Chart 4
The Pearce Genealogy



Chapter 9

Henry William Munson and Ann Binum Pearce and Their Move to Texas 1817–1828



After Henry William Munson and Ann Binum Pearce were married in 1817, they lived in Louisiana for about seven years. There they had four sons, the first three of whom died before reaching the age of two. In 1824 the family moved to the Trinity River in the Atascosita District⁷³ of Mexico (now Liberty County, Texas). Mordello Stephen Munson was born there in 1825. The family lived there for about four years before moving on to the Austin Colony in what is now Brazoria County, Texas, in 1828.



Henry William Munson and Ann Binum Pearce were married on May 12, 1817, presumably at the Pearce plantation near the present town of Cheneyville, Rapides Parish, Louisiana. Henry William was 24 years old and Ann was barely 17. Her father had died three years earlier and she had probably been living with her step-mother, Elizabeth Chafin Pearce, and her baby half-sister, Tuzette.

Little is known of Henry William and Ann's first seven years of marriage. It is known that they were living in Rapides Parish in 1820, and it is assumed that they lived there from the time of their marriage until their move to Texas in 1824. One wonders if they lived at Lunenburg, the Pearce Plantation; at nearby "Oakland Plantation," a few miles up the Red River; or elsewhere. It is known that they had four sons during these seven years, and herein lies one of the saddest stories of Munson history. On October 22, 1818, son Samuel was born and on August 2, 1819, baby Samuel died. On September 12, 1820, son Henry W.⁷⁴ was born and in November of 1821, baby Henry died. In 1822 son Robert was born and in 1823 baby Robert died. On February 24, 1824, son William Benjamin was born, and he, their fourth son, lived and grew to maturity.

The naming of these sons is interesting and may provide a clue to Henry William's recent ancestors. The second was named Henry W. for his father, the third was named Robert for

⁷³ The spelling is interchangeably Atascosita or Atascosito. Atascosita first appears on a 1757 map by Bernardo de Miranda, a Spanish explorer. Later a Spanish mission was established at a site on the Trinity River known as *El Atascosita y Los Tranquillos*. This appears to be the original and proper Spanish spelling, and was the name on the 1826 census. Henry William Munson's letters and Miriam Partlow's 1974 book, *Liberty, Liberty County, and the Atascosito District*, use Atascosito. In 1831 the district was reorganized and its name changed to *Libertad* (Liberty) District.

⁷⁴ This baby is considered by the family to be Henry William Munson II.

Henry William's admired uncle, and the fourth was named William Benjamin, probably for Ann's father, William Pearce. No son was ever named Jesse, but the first was named Samuel. Could this have been for a brother and/or the father of Jesse and Robert—the early Samuel Munson Sr., who was in Fayette County, Kentucky, in 1790 and apparently in Mississippi and Louisiana (together with a Samuel Elder Munson) in 1810-1817?⁷⁵

The 1820 U. S. census for Rapides Parish lists Henry Munson with a household of one male, 16-26 years old, and one female, 16-26. Their first child, Samuel, had died in 1819, and the second child, Henry, was born in November of 1820, after the date of the census.

Between February and September of 1824, Henry William and Ann moved to the Atascosita District, State of *Coahuila y Tejas*, in the newly independent Republic of Mexico. With them on this move were baby William Benjamin, just a few months old; Henry William's brother, Micajah, and half-brother, Jesse P.; Micajah's wife, Elizabeth Everett, and their two daughters; and possibly William Everett, Elizabeth's brother. Thus all of the descendants of Jesse Munson and their families moved to Texas.



Detail of an 1824 map of Texas. Rapides (Louisiana) and the approximate location of the Trinity settlement in the Atascosita District of *Coahuila y Tejas* are highlighted.

It is interesting to remember here that the 1829 records of the Court of Equity in Barnwell County, South Carolina, in a proceeding on the estate of Wright Munson, state: "... and when Overstreet heard [Wright] Munson was dead he had himself appointed [administrator]. The Munson heirs never have appeared or sent for their money, and defendant does not know who they are or where they are but understands they live in Texas."⁷⁶ This suggests that Wright could have been their father—or a childless brother.

A compelling reason for their move was surely free Mexican land—one league⁷⁷—4,428 acres for each family—under the new Mexican land-grant policy. Another reason may have been the bad experiences with the deaths of Henry and Ann's first three sons in Louisiana, while continuing economic hardships were usually a contributing reason for such moves.

⁷⁵ See Inset 11 for a discussion of the various Samuel Munsons.

⁷⁶ See Chapter 4, pages 29-32.

⁷⁷ In Spanish Texas times, league was used both as a distance and as an area measure. As a distance, one league equaled approximately three miles. As an area measure, one league of Texas land was one square league (by distances), or 4,428 acres. A smaller measure of distance widely found on early maps is a vara. One vara in Texas is 33.33 inches – almost three feet. The 1908 map of the division of Mordello Munson's plantation shows all dimensions in varas. The vara remains the official land measurement in Texas according to the Texas General Land Office.

The approximate date of their move to Texas comes from an 1824 letter, the oldest document in the Munson family collection, written by Delia Pearce Dunwoody, Ann Munson's sister, from Rapides Parish, Louisiana, to Mrs. Nancy B. Munson. Ann was called Nancy by her family and even signed some legal documents with this name. The letter reads:

Bayou Beouff, february 28th—1825

Dear Sister

It is with great pleasure that I have the pleasing sight to behold your Dear companion [Henry William] once more and likewise feel thankfull to hear the welcome news that you and your Dear little son are yet alive and blesst with a reasonable share of health. I felt uneasy about you for we have not heard any strait accounts from any of you since you left red river [Rapides Parish]. I feel sorry that my letter which was rote in september [1824] did not go to you. Mr. Garner promist me faithfully that he would send it to you. We all wondered among ourselves what was the reason you did not rite tho perhaps if you had of rote the letter might get miscaried—I had the fever a few days past but thank the lord I have got able to go about again... Mr. Dunwoody has had a few attacks of the third day chill and fever but he do not lay up much for it... Kiss my Dear little William for me... I remain your ever affectionate loving Sister til death.

Delia Dunwoody

The reference to “your dear companion” is surely to Henry William, who appears to have made a trip to Rapides Parish and visited the Dunwoodys and probably carried this letter back to his wife. Since son William Benjamin was born in Louisiana on February 24, 1824, and Delia Dunwoody refers to her letter of September, 1824, one can place the time of the move between these dates.

Mexican Independence and New Land-Grant Policies⁷⁸

The events that led to the Munsons' move to Texas were woven from the successful Mexican struggle for independence from Spain and the resulting liberal Mexican land settlement policies, as opposed to Spain's policy of expulsion and forbidding of American settlers.

By the early 1800s relations between the inhabitants of Mexico and their rulers from Spain had reached a sad state. In Spain the government was in shambles from years of war and defeat by the armies of Napoleon. In Mexico care was taken that native-born citizens, no matter how capable nor how noble, would not hold any important office. Corruption in every department—civil, military, and ecclesiastical—was shameful.

Over several decades numerous independent revolutionary groups had sprung up in local areas but were soon defeated by the Royalist armies financed from Madrid. In the summer of 1820, the only organized Mexican revolutionary forces still in the field were in the mountains between Mexico City and Acapulco under Vicente Guerrero and others; plus a small body in the mountains to the east of the capital city—followers of Guadalupe Victoria.

On the Royalist side was a rising young officer, Augustin de Iturbide, a full-blooded Spaniard born in Mexico. In 1820 he was placed at the head of a Royalist force ordered to crush the remaining revolutionary forces. Iturbide, however, being born in Mexico, discerning the deep and

⁷⁸ The material for this section is taken mostly from John Henry Brown, *History of Texas*; and Eugene C. Barker, *The Life of Stephen F. Austin*.

growing reactions in favor of Mexican independence, and after being invited by the opposition, resolved to be the one to lead the revolution. It was his desire to divorce Mexico from Spain, to form a new monarchy, and to be the leader with royal dignity and power. To achieve success it was necessary for him to secure the cooperation of the revolutionary leaders and the immensely powerful church dignitaries, and so he did.

On February 24, 1821, having taken a presumed military position at Iguala on the road to Acapulco, he issued the “Plan of Iguala,” which declared, among other items, the following principles:

- First, the independence of Mexico.
- Second, the Roman Catholic religion should be supported perpetually — “The nation will protect it by wise and just laws, and prohibit the exercise of any other.”
- Third, the abolition of all distinction of classes and the union of Spaniards, Creoles, Indians, Africans, and Castilians, with equal civil rights for all (an end to slavery).

This manifesto, first approved by Iturbide’s officers, was enthusiastically received by his army, who thereafter marched under the flag of three guarantees: “Independence, Religion, and Equality.” Guadalupe Victoria, Vicente Guerrero, and the other old chieftains embraced Iturbide’s standard. The whole country was aglow with enthusiasm and from every quarter men were hastening to swell the ranks. Defeat and disaster engulfed the Royalists everywhere and on April 24, 1821, Spain and Mexico signed the Treaty of Cordoba in which Spain accepted the Plan. On September 27, 1821, Iturbide peacefully and in triumph entered the capital of Mexico City and soon established himself in the viceroy’s palace.

He immediately formed a ruling *junta* and called a *Cortez* of citizens to meet on February 24, 1822. But again, as so often has occurred in history, the successful military leader was not sufficiently skilled in statecraft to successfully carry out his dreams—or maybe the fatal flaw lay in the nature of his dreams: dreams of personal grandeur rather than of good government. In any event divisions quickly developed, followed by acrimonious debate and threats of armed revolt. Many of the older leaders withdrew support and retired to their homes, but on May 18, 1822, mobs in the city beseeched Iturbide to become emperor, and, in a badly divided country, Iturbide was installed as Emperor Augustin I of Mexico on July 21, 1822.



It was during this period of turmoil, on April 29, 1822, that Stephen F. Austin arrived in Mexico City hoping to obtain Mexican approval of his father’s Spanish colonization plan for Texas. With capital politics at fever heat, he found it impossible to secure immediate consideration of his claims. To further complicate matters, he found Haden Edwards of Kentucky, Robert Leftwich of Tennessee, Green DeWitt of Missouri, and General James Wilkinson, late of the United States Army, also in the city seeking permission to establish American colonies in Texas. Austin insisted that his claim was prior and peculiar in its merits and should receive consideration aside from the general legislation. With his power fast eroding, Iturbide suddenly dispersed Congress and appointed a *junta* composed of thirty-five members, and the question of colonization was referred to that body. The *junta* passed a colonization law and it was approved by Iturbide on January 4, 1823.

This was the first colonization law enacted by Mexico, and it had a profound effect on the future of Texas. It abrogated the royal order of Philip II of Spain prohibiting foreigners in Texas, and decreed that foreigners who professed the Roman Catholic religion should be encouraged to immigrate and would be protected in their lives, liberty, and property. To encourage immigration, the government promised to give out of vacant public lands one labor of land (177 acres) to each farmer and one league (4,428 acres) to each stock-raiser. As an added inducement, immigrants were to be relieved of all tithes, taxes, and duties for six years. Eight years later, the termination of this liberal grant with the imposition of duties was a factor in bringing on the Texas Revolution. There was to be no buying or selling of slaves, and all children born of slaves were to be free at the age of fourteen. These slavery provisions were never enforced in Texas.

The law provided that immigrants might come individually on their own or be introduced by *empresarios* (agents). For each two hundred families introduced, an *empresario* was to receive for his own account three *haciendas* and two labors of land, which equaled fifteen leagues and two labors, or 66,774 acres—but, however great the number of immigrants introduced, any one *empresario* could not acquire more than 200,322 acres. From this it can be assumed that a major motivation for the rash of *empresario* applications was the prospect of money to be made from future land sales to new settlers.

On the approval of this law on January 4, 1823, Austin, who had been in the city over nine months, pressed his claim for a special confirmation of the grant given to him and his father by the Spanish authorities in 1821. Jose Manuel de Herrera, Minister of Foreign and Internal Relations under Iturbide, manifested warm friendship for Austin and zealously advocated his claims, and on February 18, 1823, the grant was confirmed. But as Austin was preparing to leave for Texas, a counter-revolution occurred driving Iturbide from power, the colonization law was annulled, and Austin found it necessary to postpone his departure.

During the previous nine months, the opponents of Iturbide had steadily gained strength outside Mexico City. Generals Vicente Guerrero, Nicholas Bravo, and Guadalupe Victoria had gathered their old followers hoping to force a new regime. Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, once one of Iturbide's strongest young lions, soon joined them. Iturbide found himself so abandoned and helpless that on March 19, 1823, he disbanded the government and formally abdicated the throne. He was exiled to Italy, but returned to Mexico in disguise in July of 1824. His identity was betrayed by an old friend, and he was turned over to the custody of none other than Jose Bernardo Gutierrez de Lara, the author of the butcheries at San Antonio in 1813, and Augustin Iturbide was executed on July 19, 1824.⁷⁹

On the downfall of Iturbide, the old Congress reassembled and named an executive council consisting of Generals Guadalupe Victoria, Nicolas Bravo, and Pedro Negrete. A new assembly was elected and on October 4, 1824, they proclaimed a new constitution, afterwards known as the Constitution of 1824.

These were the birth convulsions of the Republic of Mexico.

In March of 1823 Stephen F. Austin felt unwilling to await the first meeting of the new Congress scheduled for August, so he immediately pressed the merits of his case upon the newly elected executive council of Victoria, Bravo, and Negrete, and on April 14, 1823, they reaffirmed the actions previously taken. This final confirmation gave Austin a land grant containing no

⁷⁹ August 24, 1824, has also been given as the execution date.

limitation as to territory, nor was a time fixed in which to colonize the first three hundred families—privileges conferred upon no later *empresario*. Austin left for home on April 28, 1823, and reached the settlement on the Brazos about the middle of July after an absence of sixteen months. He was welcomed by his colonists who had already received the joyous news. This perseverance, together with his following performances, certainly entitles him to the admiration of every Texan today.

The Munsons Move to Texas

When the news of the triumph of the “Plan of Iguala” and the resulting immigration policies became known in Louisiana, many Americans who had fled before the Spanish raids of recent years began to return to their homes at Nacogdoches, the Brazos, and the Trinity settlements. Then, as the news spread in 1823 of Austin’s success and of the liberal land grants available to individuals as well as *empresarios*, other families decided to move to Texas. These included the families of Henry William and Micajah Munson.

Henry William Munson had passed across the breadth of Texas, from Louisiana to *San Antonio de Bexar*, in June of 1813. Traversing this virgin countryside in the month of June, a young man with dreams for his future might have observed some very pleasing sights that were not soon forgotten: rich, flower-filled grasslands intermixed with stately trees; flat and rolling landscapes well suited to farming and travel; many rivers and streams; an abundance of wildlife; and a pleasant June climate. On his return to Louisiana after his narrow escape from the Battle of Medina, he may even have crossed the Trinity River at the Atascosita crossing. When the news of the new Mexican land-grant policies spread through Louisiana in 1823, Henry William may have already known the area that he coveted.

Sometime around mid-1824 the Munsons emigrated from the State of Louisiana, in the United States of America, to the banks of the Trinity River in the Republic of Mexico. The move seems amazingly reminiscent of the emigration thirty-five years earlier of brothers Jesse and Robert Munson from the new state of South Carolina to free land in the Natchez District of New Spain. As stock-raisers with slaves, Henry William and Micajah staked claims to adjacent plots of 4,428 acres each on the west bank of the Trinity River. Their land was just south of the Coushatta Indian village and the river-crossing of the Old Atascosita Road from Louisiana to *La Bahía*.

The exact location of these plots can easily be identified today. Henry William never received title to his claim and moved his family to Austin’s Colony in the future Brazoria County in 1828. Micajah died before 1828 and before titles to the land were finally granted. However, on January 27, 1831, the Mexican Government granted to “Elizabeth Munson, widow of M. Munson, deceased, native of U. S. of the north and residing in this dept. since 6 years...” title to one league of land in the Atascosita District, described as “adjoining and below the league of land surveyed for Henry W. Munson.”⁸⁰ Today this league is shown as the “Elizabeth Munson Survey” on the original land grant map of Liberty County published by the Texas General Land Office. All abstracts of title in this survey trace their ownership back to this grant. If the Henry W. Munson league was adjacent and to the north, it is shown on this General Land Office map as the “Town of Liberty, South League,” and would today include much of the towns of Liberty and Dayton, Texas.

⁸⁰ Volume D, page 340, Deed records, Liberty County, Texas.

These claims were the locations of the first homes of the Munsons in Texas. In the approximate center of the Elizabeth Munson Survey, among scattered oaks and underbrush, there stands today a monument set during the Liberty Bicentennial Celebration in 1956 marking the location of the first homestead of Elizabeth and Micajah Munson.⁸¹

These new homes of the Munsons were immediately less than satisfactory. A letter dated January 29, 1825, from J. Iiams to Stephen F. Austin reads as follows:

Sanja Cinto January 29th 1825

Dear Sir:

Messrs Henry and Micajah Munson living at present on this side trinity and being somewhat disappointed in their Settlement by the overflow that river desire of me to enquire of you whether they can be admitted into your Colony and obtain the title of Land.

If they can be admitted they wish to have Lands near me on Cedar buyo... and they will commence settlement immediately they are men of respectability having each a family and about 17 Slaves each with good stock of Cattle etc. etc. They also wish to enquire whether more Land can be granted in proportion to the number of Slaves... please write me a line on the above Subject and if they will be accepted direct the survey as they are desirous to have it accomplished...

J. Iiams

No move was made as a result of this inquiry.



Ann Binum Munson was pregnant again. On April 25, 1825, she gave birth to her fifth son in a period of five and one-half years. She was 25 years old. Early records suggest that this son may have been named Stephen Mordella Munson, probably to be known as Stephen. This is not surprising, because Stephen had been a common name in the Pearce family for many generations, and Mordella was the name of the Spanish officer who had saved Henry William Munson at the Battle of Medina. The 1826 census of the Atascosita District, signed by his father, lists him as Stephen B. Munson. The middle initial is surely a careless error, noting that his brother's name, immediately preceding, was William B. Munson. In his early years, his name was interchangeably written as Mordella or Mordello. For instance, his name on the roll at Rutgersville College in 1842 was Mordella S. Munson, and many early Brazoria County legal documents show his name as Mordella. Throughout his adult life he was known as Mordello Stephen, although it was frequently written as Mordella.

Family tradition tells that Mordello Stephen Munson was the first white child born at the old Coughatta Indian village on the Trinity River. Here, in 1825, began the seventy-eight-year lifespan of this illustrious member of the Munsons of Texas. His impact was such that at least six separate contemporary families named sons Mordello or daughters Mordella for him, and in 1980 a grandson of one of his great-grandsons was named Luke Mordello Munson, and, in 1984, a grandson of another of his great-grandsons was named Ryan Stephen Gray.



⁸¹ Miriam Partlow, *Liberty, Liberty County, and the Atascosito District*, The Pemberton Press, Austin, 1974, p. 302.

Events of the following few years show Henry William Munson to have been one of the leaders of the Trinity community. A continuing problem was that while Mexican authorities were granting land titles to settlers in Austin's Colony, no action was forthcoming to grant titles to homesteads in Atascosita. The distance from San Antonio and from the new capital of Saltillo was far, the district had no established government or single leader, and the Mexican administration moved slowly in such matters. This continued to plague the residents and finally contributed to Henry William Munson's decision to leave the area for Austin's Colony on the Brazos.

The year 1826 was a time of severe land and settlement frictions throughout East Texas, which led to the Fredonian Rebellion of January, 1827. During this year, possibly prompted by these threatening events, the citizens of Atascosita organized their district under the Mexican colonization laws. They elected neighbors George Orr and Henry William Munson (both survivors of the Battle of Medina) as joint *Alcaldes* (chief municipal officers), took a census, set their boundaries, and held an election to determine the preference of the population on joining the Austin Colony or the Nacogdoches District. During this period, Henry William Munson served as an examining judge for the district and was at times referred to in documents as Judge Munson. It is obvious that he had a good education, and his involvement and leadership leads one to believe that he might have had some legal training between 1813 and 1817.

The now famous Atascosita Census of 1826, dated July 31, lists 331 names of white men, wives, and children and is signed by Matthew G. White, Joseph W. Brown, George Orr, and Henry W. Munson.⁸² The total population was 407 as the names of the 76 slaves were not listed. The census is of great historical value in establishing the names, numbers, and ages of residents, their occupations and the states of their birth, and the number of slaves. This is the source of the important Munson family information that Micajah Munson was born in South Carolina between approximately August 1, 1788, and July 31, 1789. The data listed on the Munsons are as follows:

Name	Age	Slaves		Where born	Occupation
		Over 14	Under 14		
Munson, Micajah B.	37	8	5	S. Carolina	Saddler, Farmer & Stockraiser
Everett, Elizabeth	32			N. Carolina	Wife of Micajah B. Munson
Munson, Ann Eliza	6			Louisiana	Daughter
Munson, Martha	3			Ditto	Ditto
Munson, Henry W.	33	9	8	Mississippi	Farmer & Stockraiser
Pearce, Ann B.	26			Georgia	Wife of Henry W. Munson
Munson, William B.	2			Louisiana	Son
Munson, Stephen B.	1			Texas	Ditto

Henry W. Munson owned the largest number of slaves in the district, and Micajah owned the second largest number. The census presents many interesting facts concerning the people and the times. Of the 104 heads of families listed, only six were born outside the United States, and these were from Ireland, England, Italy, and only one from Mexico. It was an Anglo settlement. Almost every type of occupation needed for existence on the frontier was present, and most men

⁸² The original document is in the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C. A reprint was published for the Liberty County Historical Survey Committee (Liberty County Historical Museum) from Vol. 1, No. 4 (Fall, 1963), *Texana* (Magazine).

listed multiple occupations. There was a physician but no ministers, as the latter were prohibited by law unless they were Roman Catholic. Although every colonist was required to declare that he was loyal to the Roman Catholic faith, almost none were. Many of the inhabitants listed in the census and their descendants had important roles in the events of Texas independence and the later history of Texas. One such descendant was Texas Governor Price Daniel, and others include every member of the Munsons and Caldwells of Texas.

The original census document itself has had an interesting history. Originally it was sent to Stephen F. Austin, and he no doubt forwarded it to Mexican officials. At this point its whereabouts is lost in history for almost a century, at which time, in April, 1921, it appeared for sale by Bernard Quaritch, Ltd., in London, England. The Manuscripts Division of the U. S. Library of Congress purchased nine items from Quaritch for 290 pounds and 14 shillings (about \$1,162). Among these was the original Atascosita Census of 1826. The document is now in the Library of Congress, where it may be observed and used.

The results of a vote on September 10, 1826, showed that a majority of the residents desired to be added to Austin's Colony. The results of the vote were sent to "Col. Stephen F. Austin, St. Felipe de Austin," signed by Joseph W. Brown, Duncan St. Clair, George Orr, *Alcalde*, and Henry W. Munson, *Alcalde*, and a petition to this effect was forwarded to the political chief in San Antonio. At this time Austin was busy establishing the boundaries of his colony. This task was completed on March 7, 1827, with the eastern boundary being the west bank of the San Jacinto River, less than twenty miles from the Munson homesteads. Orr and Munson believed all to be in order by September 28, 1826, when they wrote to Austin:⁸³

...As we are now to be under your wing we hope you will find it convenient to call on us with the commissioner and put us quickly in a way to know where our lands are—we shall be grievously disappointed if the Commissioner does not visit us and set us to rights.

Munson followed with a letter on November 15, 1826, in which he defined the limits of the District as agreed upon by the inhabitants. Munson wrote to Austin:

The Atascosito District is bounded as follows viz. On the West by the Colony of San Felipe de Austin on the north by the District of Nacogdoches, on the east by the reserved lands on the Sabine, on the south by the Gulf of Mexico including all Islands and Bays within three leagues of Sea Shore.

To Col. Stephen F. Austin

Sir Above is stated the limits of the Atascosito District as it was agreed on at the meeting of the inhabitants here and as we suppose ought now to stand... if there be any error or defect in defining the limits you will alter or supply it in the translation——
Atascosito District Nov. 15th 1826

Henry W. Munson

The petition was finally approved in August of 1828, the same month in which Henry William contracted to move to a plot in Austin's Colony. George Orr expressed the gratitude of

⁸³ This and following letters are from Eugene C. Barker, *The Austin Papers*, Barker Texas History Center, University of Texas, Austin; and the *Munson Papers*, see Appendix 1.

the settlers in a letter to Austin dated February 18, 1829. The letter from Orr, who was clearly less educated than Munson, reads as follows:

...Grate Satisfaction to hear the Good Tidings that thru your feling and kind Gratitude that you have perservered in obtaining a Grant for the Lands in this Sacsion of Contra from the honorable Government and I think the Settlers on this River Should never For Get you as their faithful friend.

The district was never joined to the Austin Colony, but in 1830 the Mexican government finally took steps to issue land titles to the colonists, and the Elizabeth Munson Survey of 4,428 acres was approved in January of 1831.

The Fredonian Rebellion⁸⁴

Henry William Munson was a participant in suppressing the Fredonian Rebellion in January of 1827. This conflict grew out of an unsuccessful colonization effort in a large area of East Texas centered at Nacogdoches. The disputes appear, at times, to have reached to the Munson lands on the Trinity.

After Mexico gained its independence from Spain in 1821, it established its northeastern most state as the Province of *Tejas*, with the capital at *San Antonio de Bexar*. The first governor was Felix Trespalacios, the uncle of the Spanish officer Mordella. By an act of the Federal Congress on May 7, 1824, the previously separate Provinces of *Tejas* and *Coahuila* were united into one state, the State of *Coahuila y Tejas*, with the capital in Saltillo. This was to cause hardships for the new settlers of Texas. The first Mexican federal colonization plan was published on October 4, 1824, and the State of *Coahuila y Tejas* adopted the plan on March 24, 1825. All of the *empresario* grants in Texas except the first of Stephen F. Austin's, a total of twenty-five, were made under this law. Of these twenty-five grants, most came to naught, the exceptions being those of Green DeWitt, Robert Leftwich (known as Robertson's colony), and Martin De Leon.

The Fredonian Rebellion resulted from problems arising out of one of these grants. The Edwards brothers, Haden and Benjamin, had been respected residents of Kentucky and Mississippi, where they were wealthy planters. An *empresario* contract to introduce settlers to East Texas for an *empresario* fee was granted to Haden Edwards on April 15, 1825. The area of his grant included most of the land in East Texas to the east of the Austin Colony. It extended to within ten leagues (thirty miles) of the sea and to within twenty leagues of the Sabine River. This apparently included the Trinity settlement at Atascosita where the Munson families had settled just one year earlier. Under his grant Edwards agreed to introduce eight hundred families and act as commander of the militia, but also to respect and protect all who owned land with proper titles. Here an explosive problem was created. Many Spanish families had lived here for decades, but without land titles; while new American settlers had come expecting to claim 4,428 acres of free land under Mexico's colonization law, but no titles had been issued. Now the Edwards brothers claimed that this land would have to be purchased from the *empresario*, or the settlers would be expelled and the land sold to others.

⁸⁴ The material for this section is taken from Eugene C. Barker, *The Life of Stephen F. Austin*, Edmund Morris Parsons, "The Fredonian Rebellion," *Texana* (Magazine), Spring, 1967; Archie P. McDonald, *Nacogdoches, Wilderness Outpost to Modern City, 1779-1979*, Barker Texas History Center, University of Texas, Austin; and John Henry Brown, *The History of Texas*.

The Edwards grant included the old settlement of Nacogdoches, first settled in 1716 and thereafter followed by many periods of turmoil. The area contained Spanish residents of all stripes; many claiming land ownership, some with titles but most probably without documentation. In addition, the grant included territory north of Nacogdoches in which the Cherokees and other Indians recently expelled from the United States had been settling. Indian representatives, too, had gone to Mexico City in 1822 to petition for land titles, but being unsuccessful (due to a misunderstanding, according to history), their land had been granted to Edwards.

Finally receiving the grant after three difficult years in Mexico City, Haden Edwards returned to the United States, made extensive arrangements for introducing families, and then moved with his family to Nacogdoches in September of 1825. Learning that many older Spanish claims were being asserted, he twice posted stern notices to all such claimants to exhibit their titles in order that the true might be respected and the false rejected. Since good titles were scarce, this step aroused fear and opposition among natives and settlers alike.

Edwards found the entire local government to be unofficial, so he ordered an election to be held on December 15, 1825. The *Alcalde* candidates were Samuel Norris, who had the support of the local Mexicans, and Chichester Chapin, who was Haden Edward's son-in-law. An influential local rancher, Jose Antonio Sepulveda, possibly acting as interim *Alcalde*, presided. The results of the election were disputed and each candidate claimed to have been elected. In March of 1826 the Political Chief in *San Antonio de Bexar*, Jose Antonio Saucedo, ruled in favor of Norris and declared that, if necessary, the militia would be used to put him in office. He was then allowed to take office peacefully, and Norris and Sepulveda, now in control, became the local officials.

The Edwards brothers set an *empresario* fee of \$520 per league and began to put their plan into effect, evicting at least one claimant and selling his land to a newcomer. Both Edwards brothers had numerous visits and regular correspondence with Stephen F. Austin. At the start this dialogue was friendly and cooperative, but as troubles mounted Austin sided with the settlers and the government. He reported to Haden Edwards that the settlers on the San Jacinto (neighbors to the Trinity settlers) were greatly inflamed by threats attributed to Edwards that he would drive them from their lands unless they paid him his price. On March 10, 1826, Austin wrote to George Orr on the Trinity, apparently in response to such fears, advising caution. A letter dated March 4, 1826, from Haden Edwards to George Orr at Atascosita contained a receipt for \$120 paid to Edwards, possibly an initial payment on Orr's land.⁸⁵ Austin wrote to Haden Edwards in March of 1826 as follows:

I will here, with perfect candor and in friendship remark that your observations generally are in the highest degree imprudent and improper...

The truth is, you do not understand the nature of the authority with which you are vested by the government, and it is my candid opinion that a continuance of the imprudent course you have commenced will totally ruin you, and materially injure all the new settlements.

Most of the year of 1826 saw escalating hostilities between the Edwards brothers and the several other factions. While Haden Edwards was on a visit to the United States, his brother, Benjamin, wrote to Governor Victor Blanco in San Antonio concluding with a denunciation of

⁸⁵ This and the following letter are from Eugene C. Barker, *The Life of Stephen F. Austin*, pp. 155-157.

the local authorities (Norris and Sepulveda) in which he characterized them as corrupt, treacherous, and utterly unworthy. On October 2, 1826, Governor Blanco answered Benjamin Edwards's letter, reciting the facts as he claimed to have gained them and concluding as follows:

In view of such proceedings, by which the conduct of Haden Edwards is well attested, I have decreed the annulment of his contract and his expulsion from the territory of the Republic... He has lost the confidence of the government, which is suspicious of his fidelity; besides it is not prudent to admit those who begin by dictating laws as sovereigns. If to you or your constituents, these measures are unwelcome and prejudicial, you can apply to the Supreme Government; but you will first evacuate the country, both yourself and Haden Edwards; for which purpose I this day repeat my orders to that department...

Victor Blanco

On November 22, 1826, a local militia of thirty-six armed settlers led by Martin Parmer entered Nacogdoches. They arrested Norris, Sepulveda, and Haden Edwards, charging them with high crimes, placed them in jail, and named Joseph Durst to the position of *Alcalde* until an election could be held. A court of five men was named to try the offenders. Norris was impeached with a long list of crimes including corruption, oppression, extortion, treachery, and murderous intent. Sepulveda was found guilty of forgery, treachery, inciting to theft, and swindling. No charges were brought against Edwards and he was released. Norris and Sepulveda were also released under orders to never hold public office again.

By December 15, 1826, the Edwards' group had determined to defend their position by arms and to overthrow the local Mexican government and establish a new nation. Steps were taken to organize armed forces, and a pact of support was made with the nearby Cherokee Indian leaders, John Dunn Hunter and Richard Fields. The Americans assumed the designation of *Fredonians*, and on December 16, 1826, Benjamin Edwards rode into Nacogdoches under a red and white flag inscribed "Independence, Liberty, and Justice." The object was a declaration of independence from Mexico and the establishment of the Republic of Fredonia. A line was designated north of Nacogdoches with all land to the north to belong to the Indians and to the south to the Americans. A war was to be fought until the achievement of independence. The effort was primarily that of the Edwards brothers and a few supporters—their forces never reached over one or two hundred, and support was tepid. Many settlers returned to Louisiana, not wanting a showdown with the Mexican government.

By January 1, 1827, Austin had written to neighboring districts concerning the dangers in Nacogdoches. On January 7 George Orr wrote to Austin asking for information and instructions. The Atascosita District residents chose to take early action—they lived within the disputed district and probably felt more threatened. At the suggestion of Austin, they formed a militia of thirty-one men on January 16. Henry W. Munson is listed as a lieutenant, second in command, on the Muster Roll of Captain Hugh B. Johnston's Atascosita Company. The names of George Orr and Micajah Munson are not on the roll. The volunteers served from January 16 to February 17, 1827.⁸⁶

About December 11, 1826, between one and two hundred Mexican troops had left San Antonio for Nacogdoches, traveling by way of San Felipe de Austin where they arrived on

⁸⁶ Miriam Partlow, *Liberty, Liberty County, and the Atascosito District*, p. 72-76.

January 3, 1827. There their leaders consulted with Austin while they were delayed for three weeks due to heavy rains. A delegation from the Austin and DeWitt colonies was sent to negotiate with the *Fredonians*. Their mission failed. Archie P. McDonald writes of Austin: "... loyal to the government and intolerant of anything which jeopardized his own arrangement with it, he had tried to counsel Benjamin Edwards against such rash acts..."⁸⁷

On January 22, 1827, Austin issued the following stern notice:

To the Inhabitants of the Colony:

The persons who were sent... from this colony... to offer peace to the madmen of Nacogdoches, have returned—returned without having affected anything. The olive branch of peace which was held out to them has been insultingly returned, and that party have denounced massacre and desolation to this colony. They are trying to excite all the northern Indians to murder and plunder, and it appears as though they have no other object than to ruin and plunder this country. They openly threaten us with massacre and the plunder of our property.

To arms, then, my friends and fellow-citizens, and hasten to the standard of our country!

The first hundred men will march on the 26th. Necessary orders for mustering and other purposes will be issued to commanding officers.

Union and Mexico.

S. F. Austin

The Mexican army left San Felipe de Austin for Nacogdoches on January 22, and Austin's militia followed a few days behind. The Atascosita Company proceeded up the Trinity River by orders from Austin. The total force converging on Nacogdoches numbered about 150 men.

Colonel Peter Ellis Bean, Mexico's Indian Agent for Texas, preceded the army for the purpose of consulting with those Indian leaders who were not in agreement with Hunter and Fields, and who were more sympathetic to the Mexicans. On January 25 he met with these Indian leaders at the Trinity River crossing and gained their allegiance. They were joined on January 26 by the company from Atascosita. Bean then led these men, about seventy in all (and presumably including Henry William Munson) toward Nacogdoches. Finding no *Fredonians* remaining there, they pursued the rebels, unsuccessfully, to the Sabine.

When the *Fredonians* had become aware of the approaching armies, they sent runners to the Cherokees to call for assistance. The Cherokees, split between leaders and caught between the promises of the two sides, had switched allegiance, and Hunter and Fields had been murdered. Realizing the hopelessness of their position, the few remaining *Fredonians* had abandoned Nacogdoches on about January 28, 1827, and retired across the Sabine to Louisiana.

Historians report that a number of prominent colonists were present when the main Mexican army occupied Nacogdoches, and that they aided in the protection of all who remained in the town. It is presumed that Stephen F. Austin and Henry William Munson were among these men. Austin's militia was immediately discharged to save expenses, but the Atascosita men may have remained for some days, as they were not discharged until February 17. Norris was reinstalled as *Alcalde*, and Austin himself remained in Nacogdoches for more than a month to help restore

⁸⁷ Archie P. McDonald, *Nacogdoches, Wilderness Outpost to Modern City*.

order. This may have been the occasion when Austin and Munson became personally acquainted and discussed Munson's future move to the Austin Colony.



When Henry William Munson returned home and left the militia on February 17, 1827, his wife was again pregnant. Sometime in the year 1827 she gave birth to the only daughter that they were to have among their eight children. They named her Amanda Caroline Munson. Similar to the other such tragedies which befell their babies, this daughter was to survive for only about one year.

In November of 1827, Henry William Munson was one of the signers of a petition to Don Bustamante, Commander General of Internal States (of Mexico), again asking to be part of Austin's Colony as the settlers in the Atascosita District could not obtain title to their lands. The experiences in the Fredonian fiasco had probably emphasized the need for good titles, and failure of action here must have been the last straw. Family tradition tells that Henry and Micajah both planned to move their families to Austin's Colony, but that Micajah died (possibly before the Fredonian Rebellion), and his wife, Elizabeth, decided to remain behind with her two daughters.

On August 27, 1828, at the plantation home of future neighbor, John McNeel, Henry William Munson signed an agreement with Stephen F. Austin to buy land on Gulf Prairie in the Austin Colony and to move there within four months. This land was in Austin's fourth and last *empresario* contract (dated on maps as May 31, 1828, but finally approved on July 17, 1828). For the first time, it allowed *empresario* settlements within ten leagues of the coast.

There followed in November of 1828 the barge trip taken by Henry William, Ann, William Benjamin, Mordello Stephen, Amanda Caroline, and twenty slaves down the Trinity, across Galveston Bay and the Gulf to the Brazos River, and up the Brazos to the area of Jones Creek. Amanda Caroline died en route and was buried at sea. And thus the Munsons of Texas arrived at their home in the future Brazoria County

Chapter 10

Jesse P. Munson and Micajah and Elizabeth Everett Munson



Micajah was the older brother of Henry William Munson; Jesse P. Munson was their younger half-brother. Jesse P. Munson appears to have lived much of his life as a bachelor, while Micajah married Elizabeth Everett in Louisiana, where they had two daughters. In 1824, all of these Munsons moved with the Henry William Munson family from Louisiana to the Trinity River in the Atascosita District of Mexico. Micajah died there in about 1827 at about the age of 38. Elizabeth remarried, first to neighbor George Orr and then to Major Samuel Whiting, and died in about 1846. Through one of their daughters, Micajah and Elizabeth Munson have many descendants living today, in Mississippi, in Liberty County, Texas, and elsewhere. Jesse P. Munson spent many years as a sugar-maker in Louisiana. He moved to Brazoria County, Texas, in 1846. He may have been married and divorced earlier, but he is known to have married Mrs. Susan Hughes in Brazoria County when he was about the age of 72. He died there sometime thereafter.



Our original Jesse Munson is known to have had three children. The first, Micajah Munson, was born in South Carolina in 1788 or 1789. The second, Henry William Munson, was born in Mississippi in 1793. The third, Jesse P. Munson, a half-brother, was born in 1800. All three apparently moved from Mississippi to Rapides Parish, Louisiana, after their father's death in 1815 or 1816, and then they all moved together to the Trinity River settlement in Mexico (now Liberty County, Texas) in 1824. Thereafter their paths diverged.

The Life of Jesse P. Munson

Little is known of the life of Jesse P. Munson. No record has been found of him prior to a letter written by William Benjamin Munson (a son of Henry William Munson) from Oakland Plantation in Texas to his brother Mordello in 1846. William wrote:

Uncle Jesse very suddenly made his appearance a few days since from Louisiana. You do not recollect him of course, he came to Texas with Father [1824] and lived with him a year, he then returned to Louisiana and has been living on the Mississippi river above New Orleans ever since. He is a half-brother of Father's, seems to be a good sort of a man though very illiterate. He will stay with us this winter.

The next record of Jesse P. Munson is in the 1850 census of Brazoria County, where he is recorded on August 26th as an unrelated member of the George Souter household. His

occupation is listed as “sugar maker.” Several weeks later, on September 13th, he was in Liberty County, Texas, where he is recorded as a member of the household of William and Martha Orr. Martha Munson Orr, his niece, was the daughter of his brother, Micajah Munson. Jesse P. Munson’s occupation is listed as “sugar boiler.” A later article in the *Texas Historical Quarterly* describes Jesse Munson as “the best sugar maker in Brazoria County.” He had undoubtedly learned the art of sugar-making in Louisiana during his twenty-one years there. During the time that he stayed with the Munson family at Oakland Plantation, he likely helped with the sugar-making there and at neighboring plantations before going on to the Orr household in Liberty County. Oakland Plantation was then one of the leading sugar plantations and sugar mills in Texas.

The timing of Jesse P. Munson’s arrival in Liberty County suggests he had gone there for the sugar-making season that would begin in late October or early November. However, it is possible he was there for a visit and returned to Brazoria County, where his services would be more in demand, by the start of the 1850 season. The following year, expenses for Peach Point Plantation’s sugar crop include \$192.00 paid to Jesse Munson for making 96 hogsheads of sugar, and he was overseer of Peach Point from January 1 to October 19, 1852, when he began to make up the sugar crop of 1852.⁸⁸ For most of the 1850s he lived with the Mordello Munson family at Bailey’s Prairie, leaving for sugar-making or other jobs at neighboring plantations as occasions arose, but always returning when the work was completed. He spent part of his time with Gerard and George Munson at Oakland Plantation, and is recorded as a member of their household in the 1860 census. According to the diary of Sarah K. Munson, he stayed with her and the children a great part of the time that Mordello was away during the Civil War. Many references are made to him in her daily diary, and also in her letters to her husband in the Confederate Army. Once she told of Jesse being injured when a horse fell with him. She reported that when it was necessary for her to make a trip to Houston, Uncle Jesse stayed with the children. In a later letter she reported, “Uncle Jesse finally left.”

According to the Minutes of the District Court of Brazoria County, a Jesse Munson was granted a divorce from his wife, Clara C. Munson, on April 11, 1859. It would seem that this may well have been our Jesse P. Munson. In any event, the same court records reveal that he married Mrs. Susan Hughes on May 25, 1872. He would have been about 72 years old. Susan Hughes was the former Susan Stringfellow, who had been married earlier to Allen Harrison and to Joseph Hughes. Susan was a neighbor of the Souters in 1850, which is perhaps how she and Jesse met. Records reflect that Susan Hughes Munson died in January, 1877, when Jesse would have been about 77 if he was still living.

The date of Jesse P. Munson’s death is not known. Recollections in the Munson family tell that Jesse P. lived his last years as a gentleman of leisure at Phair, Texas, a small settlement just to the southeast of present-day Angleton. This was long before the town of Angleton was founded, and Phair would have been an isolated prairie community. Family tradition tells that Jesse P. Munson was buried in the Stratton Ridge Cemetery at Phair, but no proof of this is known.

⁸⁸ Volume 26, Number 2, *Southwestern Historical Quarterly Online*, <<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/publications/journals/shq/online/v026/n2/issue.html>> [Accessed Thu Apr 27 22:00 17 CDT 2006].

Micajah Munson and Elizabeth Everett and Their Family⁸⁹

No record has been found of Micajah B. Munson, the first known son of Jesse Munson, from the date of his birth in South Carolina in 1788 or 1789 until July 1, 1812, when, at about the age of 23, he was commissioned constable of Wilkinson County, Mississippi Territory. This was about the time that the Magee-Gutierrez Expedition was beginning and about a year before the time that it is thought that Henry William Munson joined that expedition. This also indicates that Micajah moved from South Carolina to Mississippi with his father and was raised there.

The next record of Micajah is September 21, 1818, when Pierre LaBorde sold “land and crop” in Avoyelles Parish, Louisiana, to Micajah B. Munson “because Munson had improved the property.” Avoyelles Parish lies just to the east of Rapides Parish and a short distance west of Wilkinson County, Mississippi. Micajah’s land was on the northeast side of Bayou Boeuf not far from the Pearce Plantation and Cheneyville.

There were at about this time also a Samuel Munson and a Samuel Elder Munson living in Rapides Parish. Evidence indicates that the entire Jesse Munson family moved from Wilkinson County, Mississippi, to the vicinity of Rapides Parish, Louisiana, around the time of the deaths of Jesse and Robert Munson in 1815 or 1816 and the marriage of Henry William Munson and Ann Pearce in 1817. Henry William and Ann’s marriage may have been a cause of this, and the absence of any land ownership by father Jesse in Mississippi or Louisiana probably contributed.

Around this time, probably between 1817 and 1819, and probably in Louisiana, Micajah Munson married Elizabeth Everett. She was born in Martin County, North Carolina, in about 1794. Two children were born to them in Louisiana—Ann Elizabeth in about 1820 and Martha Caroline in about 1823. The 1820 census of Rapides Parish shows Micajah Munson with a household of one male aged 26-45, one female aged 16-26, one male aged 16-26, one male under 16, and one female under 10. The male under 16 might have been William Everett, a brother of Elizabeth Everett Munson, as he was with them in the Atascosita Census of 1826 at the age of 21. The male 16-26 years old could have been Jesse P. Munson, born in 1800, who was also found with them in later years in Liberty County, Texas. It appears that Jesse P. lived with older half-brother Micajah’s family after the death of his father in 1815 or 1816.

In 1824 Micajah moved with the entire family to the Atascosita District, and the 1826 census listed him as a saddler, farmer, and stockraiser with thirteen slaves. On July 8, 1826, Micajah appointed William F. Cheney of Cheneyville, Louisiana, as his lawful attorney in all affairs in Rapides Parish.

Micajah and his brother had planned to move from the Trinity River to Austin’s Colony, but Micajah died September 1, 1826,⁹⁰ almost two years before Henry William signed a land purchase agreement with Stephen F. Austin on August 7, 1828. Elizabeth Everett Munson did not make the move and a document dated January 27, 1831, in the Atascosita District states that “Elizabeth Munson, widow of M. Munson, deceased, Native of U. S. of the north and residing in this department since 6 years appears and gives the above information and asks that the application for a grant of 4428 acres be approved.” The approval was recommended by Hugh B. Johns[t]on

⁸⁹ Additions and corrections in this section were contributed by Jane Rogers Matthews, a third great-granddaughter of Micajah and Elizabeth Everett Munson.

⁹⁰ The date of Micajah Munson’s death is found on a petition regarding his estate. The document, written in Spanish, was signed by Henry W. Munson on September 23, 1828, at Nacogdoches.

from the Town of Liberty on May 3, 1831, and the land was described as “adjoining and below the league surveyed for Henry W. Munson.”⁹¹

Miriam Partlow⁹² reports the following story which is not present in the Munson records:

George Orr, having divorced his wife, married the widow Munson and moved to her league on the west side of the Trinity River. Both were quite wealthy. While having a bee tree cut on the Munson place, it fell on Orr and killed him. In the meantime, his first wife, Tilpah Berwick... married the caretaker of her plantation... Benjamin Franklin. By a special Act of the Congress of the Republic of Texas, approved on January 26, 1839, the children of George and Tilpah (Priscella) Orr, Thomas, William and Martha Orr, were declared to be their legitimate children and heirs “capable in law of inheriting their parent’s property, in the same manner as if they had been born in lawful wedlock.” Evidently this couple had not previously confirmed their marriage vows before Father Muldoon or some other Catholic clergyman.

The above-mentioned William Orr (son of George Orr) later married Martha Munson, the only surviving daughter of Micajah and Elizabeth Munson.

According to Munson records, Elizabeth Everett Munson’s second marriage (third considering the above quotation) was to Major Samuel Whiting on Saturday, January 27, 1838,⁹³ at Magnolia Hall, the residence of A. Y. Yates, Esq. on Galveston Bay. Jane Rogers Matthews writes:

Whiting was a Mayflower descendant and an early member of the... Atascosito District of Mexico. In the years of the revolution against Mexico, Whiting became part of the Texas Navy, also serving in the cavalry under William Travis whose diary calls him a fine soldier. He held a powerful position as Loan Officer for the Texas Navy. Whiting ran for the office of mayor in Houston, Texas and lost.

Samuel Whiting was a printer in both Houston and Austin during the days of the Republic of Texas and was at one time appointed Public Printer for the Republic. He was editor and publisher of the Houston *National Intelligencer*, the Austin *Daily Bulletin* and he printed the first issue of the Austin *City Gazette*. Matthews continues:

Whiting often used his paper for his own advantage and was too critical of the Texas army in their destruction of personal property. In particular, he lamented the loss of his favorite bay mare to the Texas army and made a critical observation of Samuel Houston who often drank heavily. As a result, Whiting’s publishing bills for papers, which contained the minutes of the Republic of Texas, were not covered by Sam Houston when he came into office as the President elect of Texas. By then, in 1840, Elizabeth had died and Major Whiting left Texas for New York and California.

A. Y. Yates, Whiting’s cousin, played an important role in the Texas Revolution, being Loan Commissioner. Nothing further is known of this marriage, but Elizabeth Munson Whiting may

⁹¹ *Munson Papers*, see Appendix 1.

⁹² Miriam Partlow, *Liberty, Liberty County, and the Atascosito District*.

⁹³ The wedding date is given as Thursday, January 18, 1838 in the January 17, 1838, issue of the *Telegraph and Texas Register* on file in the Eugene C. Barker Texas History Center, University of Texas, Austin.

According to the 1850 census for Liberty County, Texas, Martha was then married to William Orr, son of George and Tilpah Berwick Orr, and Jesse P. Munson was living with them.⁹⁴ Rogers writes:

The Orr home, Orr Inn, was the official office for the Mexican officials who visited the colony under the Mexican control of Texas. William Orr was a cattle raiser and died young leaving Martha Caroline, or “Marthy,” with one daughter, Amelia Caroline, who lived to be seven years of age.

William Orr died sometime between 1850 and 1854. Martha Munson then married Isaiah Cates Day of Liberty County sometime around 1855. At that date she would have been only about 32 years old.

Isaiah Cates Day was the founder of Dayton, Texas, a town three miles west and across the Trinity River from Liberty, and just north of the Munson league where Isaiah and Martha lived. It was originally called West Liberty, and was considered part of the original town of Liberty. Sometime after 1854 West Liberty became known as Day’s Town, and in the mid-1880s, it was officially renamed Dayton.⁹⁵

Isaiah Cates Day, born in Tennessee in 1812, was a cattle raiser who saw the value of the railroads and gave the labor of his men to set the tracks between Houston and Dayton (probably the Texas and New Orleans Railroad that was completed in 1860). His cattle were registered in four counties, and he registered brands for each of his children and grandchildren. Isaiah had been previously married to Rachel Whitlock, daughter of William Whitlock and Mary White who had moved from Nacogdoches to the Atascosita District before 1826. Isaiah and Rachel had three children, Amanda Louisiana who married Young Lafayette Ridley, Mary Elizabeth who married Landon Clay Chambers, and James H. Day who died unmarried at sixteen years of age.

Isaiah and Martha Munson Day had two children, Martha (Mattie) Emily Day, born June 9, 1857, and a second child who died when only one day old. Martha Munson Day died January 15, 1860, in Liberty County at about the age of 37. The earliest marked grave in the Old French Cemetery at Dayton, Texas, is that of Martha Day.⁹⁶ Isaiah Cates Day died in Dayton March 10, 1879, at age 66.

Mattie Day, the only surviving grandchild of Micajah and Elizabeth Munson, married Joseph William Davis, born in LaSalle Parish, Louisiana, in 1859, to Moses Davis and Amanda Baldwin. Amanda had previously been married to a Denson and a Darby, and had children by both. Moses Davis was born in Georgia in 1808 and died in Coldspring, Texas, in 1866. His father was Moses Davis of Virginia who fought in the American Revolution before moving to Georgia. Joseph’s mother Emily was the daughter of James Baldwin and Elizabeth White of Georgia. Amanda’s grandfather, William Baldwin, married Elizabeth Kimbrough, daughter of William Kimbrough. William Baldwin and William Kimbrough were veterans of the American Revolution. The Baldwin Plantation burned twice during the conflict sending the family to Wilkes County, Georgia, as one of the settling families.

⁹⁴ Several weeks earlier Jesse P. Munson had been enumerated in the 1850 census for Brazoria County.

⁹⁵ Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. “DAYTON, TX,”

<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/DD/hgd2.html> (accessed April 30, 2006).

⁹⁶ Texas Historical Marker text.



Joseph William and Martha Emily "Mattie" Day Davis

William Owens Baldwin, William's son, married Celia Fitzpatrick whose father, Benjamin Fitzpatrick, was the governor of Alabama. This brought the families together after the loss of William Baldwin's father, David, and his brother from fever during their fight in the siege of Augusta. William Baldwin wrote a song called "Wait for the Wagons" to encourage Governor Fitzpatrick not to run for President of the Southern States, but instead to retire to his country home. According to the *Antebellum Papers* on the Fitzpatrick family, this is what the governor did.

Joseph William Davis was a student in one of the first classes at Baylor College in Waco. After his marriage to Martha Emily Day, they had a home in Houston where Joe owned a carriage company, and another in Dayton where he owned a lumber mill. He was a member of the Free Masons and had completed his thirty-second degree. He never received the coveted Mason award in Europe that he had earned as he died of cancer of the throat before it could be presented.

Joe Davis was a pioneer in the oil business. He named his company J.W. Oil Company, and later changed it to Paraffine Oil. He sold the company to Joe and Frank Bonner who later sold their holdings to Humble Oil.

Joe and Mattie Day Davis had six children as follows:

1. William Denson Davis b. January 1875
2. Mannie Willis Davis b. October 22, 1876
3. Mary Cates Davis b. October 8, 1878
4. Lady Eugenia Davis b. July 1884
5. Mosie Marshall Davis b. September 19, 1887
6. Douglass Rice Davis b. September 11, 1888

Joseph William Davis died in Dayton, Texas, in 1917 and is buried in Glenwood Cemetery in Houston. Mattie continued to live in the Dayton home until 1926 when it was destroyed by fire. Daughter Mosie and her three daughters were at Mattie's for the Christmas holidays when the Davis home burned. Mosie told the girls to put on their shoes and socks; the house was on fire. The only objects saved were a porcelain bird and a chair handmade by Micajah Munson. Mattie sat on the chair and watched as her home burned to the ground. Soon after, Mattie moved in with her unmarried daughter Cate who had her own home in Dayton. Martha Emily Day Davis died in February 1940, at age 82, and was laid to rest beside her husband in Glenwood Cemetery.

Descendants of Joseph W. and Martha E. Day Davis

William Denson Davis, oldest child of Joe and Mattie Day Davis, was born January 1875 in Coldspring, Texas. He was named for his father's half-brother, Colonel William Denson of Galveston. "Denny," as he was called, married Mabel Entzminger, and they lived in Dayton, Texas. He and Mabel had three children, Mattie, Mabel and Joe Dan. Denny Davis died in 1913 at age 38, and is buried in Linney Cemetery in Dayton.



Joe and Mattie's second child and oldest daughter, born October 22, 1876, was named **Mannie Willis Davis** for her grandmother, Amanda Baldwin Davis, and Joe's half-brother, Willis Darby. Mannie was 16 years of age when she met her future husband, William Benjamin Bradshaw from Simpson County, Kentucky, who was in Dayton, Texas, building a two-story Queen Anne house for the Davis family. By 1898 the Bradshaws were living in Seguin, Texas,

where William was running the seed mill and lumberyard. William and Mannie Davis Bradshaw had four children, Mary Modena, Joe Davis, Willie Alice, and Enola who died of diphtheria at age seven.

Mary Modena Bradshaw was born prematurely on December 24, 1898, in Seguin, after her mother had slipped on ice on her way home from church. She weighed just over a pound, but miraculously survived. She married Emmett Nelson, had six children, and was an English teacher and poet. Modena died June 11, 1976.

Joe Davis Bradshaw was born October 22, 1908. He was a striking young man at six feet, five inches tall with clear blue eyes and a ready smile. He married Gladys Barkley and had three sons and a daughter. On February 10, 1944, shortly before he was to leave home to serve in the Air Force, Joe was working on his pasture fence when a disturbed neighbor woman, thinking he was fencing her in, killed him with her shotgun.

And since on San Jacinto's field
 You glorious victory won
 And freedom from Tyrant hands
 You wrestled for your sons
 The world entire has honored you
 But Texas more than all
 For 'twas for her you fought so well
 And hers your dauntless soul
 That bid you rise. She loved you men;
 She loved your courage bold.
 Part 1 of "Untitled"
 By Modena Bradshaw
 4/21/1918

Willie Alice Bradshaw was born September 18, 1910, in Dayton, Texas. Alice was Valedictorian of her class, and entered the University of Texas at age fifteen. She married E.A. Rogers in Houston in 1934 and became his partner in the Art Engraving Company. They made the engraving plates for all three Houston newspapers. The Rogers had three daughters. When they divorced, Alice became an editor for the *Houston Chronicle*, and then for the in-house *Houston Club Magazine*. She was a pioneer woman in advertising, and won the Silver Medal award from the Federation of Advertising. In addition, for over fifty years she wrote and edited the *AdVents* newsletter for the Houston Advertising Federation, and served as their secretary.

William Benjamin Bradshaw died April 27, 1917, at age 52. Mannie Bradshaw died his widow on June 19, 1948 in Houston, and is buried in Dayton Cemetery.



Mary Cates Davis, third child and second daughter, was born October 8, 1878 in Coldspring, Texas. She was named for her great-grandmother, Mary Cates Day, mother of Isaiah. Cate, who never married, lived in Dayton. Her mother moved in with her after losing her own home to fire during the 1926 Christmas holidays.



Lady Eugenia Davis, fourth child and third daughter, born July 1884 in Coldspring, Texas, is said to have named herself. She married George Colice Langlois. The Langlois had twins who did not survive infancy, and two daughters, Laura Cates and Mosie Marie, who both died tragically. Lady Eugenia had an interest in genealogy, and joined the Daughters of the American Revolution under her ancestor, William Baldwin of Wilkes County, Georgia. Lady Eugenia Langlois died December 5, 1958 in Dayton, and is buried in Glenwood Cemetery in Houston.



Mosie Marshall Davis, fifth child and fourth daughter, was born September 19, 1887, in Dayton, Texas. She was named for her grandfather, Moses Davis. Mosie married John Bell Ferguson Jr., son of independent oilman John Bell Ferguson and Leila Trimble of Amite,

Mississippi. Leila Trimble was the daughter of Judge James Trimble of Tennessee who in 1818 had taught law to Sam Houston in his Nashville office. John and Mosie Davis Ferguson had three daughters, Leila Rosalie, Lady Nan and Janis.

Leila Rosalie Ferguson was born in Brazoria County, Texas, September 19, 1909. She married James Henry Frazier. Leila at age 96 (April 2006), lives in Houston. Lady Nan Ferguson, was born November 5, 1911, and died in October 1993. She married E.V. LaCour of Lake Charles, Louisiana. Youngest daughter, Janis Ferguson, was born July 25, 1918. She married Duane William Allan of Gulfport, Mississippi.

Leila and Lady Nan Ferguson were students at Sophie Newcomb College in New Orleans. The three sisters were lovers of art and music and their lives reflect this, particularly in their needlework designs.

In 1961 the James Bell Ferguson Jr. family was living in Mississippi City, Mississippi. Mosie Davis Ferguson was then the only living great-grandchild of Micajah and Elizabeth Munson. Mosie Ferguson died July 19, 1984, in Lake Charles, Louisiana, and is buried in Gulfport, Mississippi.



Douglass Rice Davis, youngest child and second son, was born in Houston, Texas, on September 11, 1888. He was named for the Davis' Houston neighbors, Judge Douglass and William Marsh Rice. Douglass married Hilda Pickett, daughter of Colonel E.B. Pickett. They had four children, Ellen Rose, Dorothy, Hilda Ann and Douglas Rice Jr., all born in Coleman County, Texas.

Ellen Rose Davis, born August 10, 1914, married Robert Browning and had three children, Charles Robert, Mary Elizabeth and Richard Davis. Ellen Rose Browning died March 29, 1988, at age 73; Dorothy Davis, born June 9, 1916, married Milton Sipes and had two children, Stephen Douglass and Shelly. Dorothy Sipes died June 29, 1995 in Liberty County, at age 79; Hilda Ann "Missy" Davis, born November 13, 1919, married Kenneth Gonzales and had two children including a daughter, Barbara who was born in Liberty County in 1943. Douglass Rice Davis Jr., born April 5, 1924, married Patsy Ann Brown and had two sons and two daughters, Douglass III, Raymond Earl, Margaret Ann and Susan Elizabeth. After the birth of Douglass III in Guadalupe County, the family returned to Dayton, Texas, where the younger three children were born. Douglass Rice Davis Jr. died January 30, 1989 in Liberty County, at age 64.

Douglass Rice Davis (I) died in 1940 in Dayton, and is buried in the Liberty County Cemetery.



Several generations of Liberty County young ladies who descended from Micajah and Elizabeth Everett Munson attended a finishing school run by Swedish women who were expert at needlework. There they learned tatting and cutwork and French lace making, as well as embroidery. Only Mosie Davis attended Mulholland School in San Antonio when it became available to young ladies.

Micajah and Elizabeth Everett Munson had six great-grandchildren and eighteen great-great-grandchildren, five of whom died young, and one, Leila Ferguson Frazier, who is living in 2006. Thus Micajah and Elizabeth Munson have a large family of descendants through their daughter

Martha Munson and her daughter Mattie Day. Chart 5 outlines the descendants of Micajah and Elizabeth Everett Munson.

Chart 5
The Descendants of Micajah and Elizabeth Everett Munson

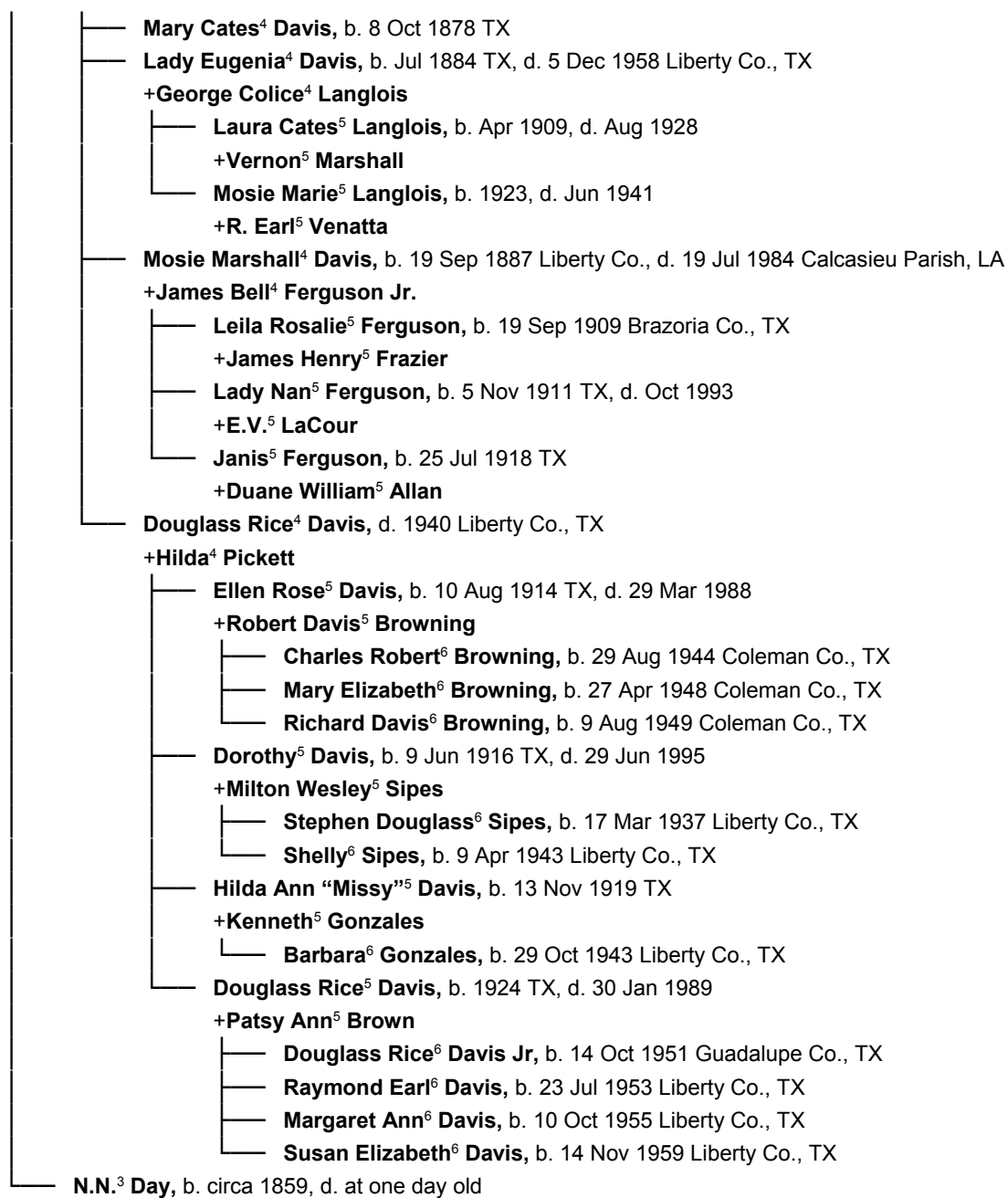


Micajah B.¹ Munson, b. between 1788 and 1789 SC, d. 1 Sep 1826 Atascosito District, Coahuila and Texas
 +**Elizabeth¹ Everett**, b. circa 1794 NC, m. between 1817 and 1819 LA, d. 3 Feb 1840 Liberty Co., TX

- ├── **Ann Eliza² Munson**, b. circa 1820 Rapides Parish, LA, d. circa 1836 Atascosito District, Texas
- ├── **Martha Caroline² Munson**, b. circa 1823 Rapides Parish, LA, d. 15 Jan 1860 Liberty Co., TX
- └── +**Edmund² Pruett**, m. circa 1842
 - ├── **Elizabeth³ Pruett**
 - ├── **Lucinda³ Pruett**
 - └── +**William² Orr**, m. before 13 Sep 1850
 - ├── **Amelia³ Orr**
 - └── +**Isaiah Cates² Day**, b. circa 1812 TN, m. circa 1855
 - ├── **Martha Emily 'Mattie'³ Day**, b. 9 Jun 1857 Liberty Co., TX, d. Feb 1940
 - └── +**Joseph William³ Davis**, b. circa 1852 LaSalle Parish, LA, m. 1873, d. 1917 Liberty Co., TX
 - ├── **William Dennison⁴ Davis**, d. 1913 Liberty Co., TX
 - └── +**Mabel⁴ Entzminger**, b. circa 1883 KS, m. circa 1904
 - ├── **Mattie⁵ Davis**, b. circa 1905 TX
 - ├── **Mabel⁵ Davis**, b. circa 1907 TX
 - └── +**Otto Gustav⁵ Radenz**, b. 24 Sep 1897 TX, m. circa 1928
 - ├── **Martha Ann⁶ Radenz**, b. 2 Aug 1932 Harris Co., TX
 - └── **Joe Dan⁵ Davis**, b. 1909 TX
 - ├── **Mannie Willis⁴ Davis**, b. 22 Oct 1876 TX, d. 19 Jun 1948 Harris Co., TX
 - └── +**William Benjamin⁴ Bradshaw**, b. 21 Oct 1864 Simpson Co., KY, d. 27 Apr 1917 TX
 - ├── **Mary Modena⁵ Bradshaw**, b. 24 Dec 1898 Guadalupe Co., TX, d. 11 Jun 1976
 - └── +**James Emmett⁵ Nelson**
 - ├── **Anne Elizabeth⁶ Nelson**, b. 16 Jul 1926 Harris Co., TX
 - ├── **Lois Margaret⁶ Nelson**, b. 28 Jul 1928 Harris Co., TX
 - ├── **Richard David⁶ Nelson**, b. 3 Jun 1931 Harris Co., TX
 - ├── **Robert William⁶ Nelson**, b. 29 Jan 1933 Harris Co., TX
 - └── **John Thomas⁶ Nelson**, b. 18 Mar 1935 Harris Co., TX
 - ├── **Joe Davis⁵ Bradshaw**, b. 22 Oct 1908 TX, d. 10 Feb 1944
 - └── +**Gladys Ozell⁵ Barkley**
 - ├── **Robert Joe⁶ Bradshaw**, b. 4 Oct 1933 Montgomery Co., TX
 - └── **Leila Virginia⁶ Bradshaw**, b. 14 Jan 1936 Liberty Co., TX
 - ├── **Enola⁵ Bradshaw**
 - └── **Willie Alice⁵ Bradshaw**, b. 18 Sep 1910 Liberty Co., TX, d. 3 Oct 1993 Harris Co.
 - └── +**Evert Arnold⁵ Rogers**, b. 9 Jun 1910 St. Clair Co., IL, d. 14 Mar 1970 Harris Co.
 - ├── **Jane Alice⁶ Rogers**, b. 1 Sep 1937 Harris Co., TX
 - └── +**Allen Russell⁶ Matthews Jr.**
 - ├── **Diana Lynn⁷ Matthews**, b. 15 Feb 1957 Harris Co., TX
 - ├── **Nancy Elizabeth⁷ Matthews**, b. 18 Oct 1970 Bexar Co., TX
 - └── **Roger Allen⁷ Matthews**, b. 10 Apr 1959 Harris Co., TX
 - ├── **Elizabeth Anne⁶ Rogers**, b. 30 Dec 1938 Harris Co., TX
 - └── **Nancy Lynn⁶ Rogers**, b. 12 Nov 1942 Harris Co., TX

(Chart 5 continued on next page)

(Chart 5 continued)



Chapter 11

Henry William and Ann Munson at Oakland Plantation 1828–1833



Henry William and Ann Munson moved their family from the Trinity River to Austin's Colony in what is now Brazoria County, Texas, in 1828. They named their new home Oakland Plantation. While here they had two additional sons: Gerard Brandon and George Poindexter Munson. In 1832 Henry William took part in the Battle of Velasco, often considered the first battle of the Texas Revolution. In 1833, at the age of 40, Henry William Munson died at Oakland Plantation of "the fever."



Stephen F. Austin's first *empresario* grant was approved by the Mexican Government in Mexico City on April 14, 1823. This allowed him to settle 300 families in an area of South Texas near the Brazos River. It contained no limitation as to territory, except that no colonization could take place within ten leagues (thirty miles) of the Gulf of Mexico, nor was a time fixed in which the colonization had to be completed. In effect this was but an approval of the privileges granted to Moses Austin, Stephen F. Austin's father, under the expiring government of Spain on January 21, 1821. Stephen F. Austin returned to his colony in July of 1823, and soon thereafter Governor Luciana Garcia of the Province of *Tejas* appointed Felipe Enrique Neri, known in history as the Baron de Bastrop, as commissioner to set apart lands and issue titles to the colonists.⁹⁷

In an official order issued on July 26, 1823, the governor gave the name of San Felipe de Austin to the prospective capital of the colony. San Felipe was his own patron saint, and the name Austin was added as a graceful compliment to the *empresario* and to distinguish the capital from the many towns and *haciendas* in Mexico with the name San Felipe. Austin selected a site on a bluff overlooking the Brazos River at the Atascosita Crossing (near the present town of Sealy in Austin County) and laid out the town. It grew rapidly and was the political center of the colony (and of most of the Anglo settlements in Texas) until the time of the Texas Revolution in 1836. After that time its importance steadily declined and today the site is only a Texas historical park.

The Baron de Bastrop arrived and entered upon his duties of supervision of surveying, recording of field notes, and preparation of land titles. No titles were issued in 1823, but 272 were granted in 1824. Austin's original quota was being quickly filled just at the time Henry William and Micajah Munson and families were moving to the Trinity River area to each claim a

⁹⁷ Historical material in this chapter is taken primarily from John Henry Brown, *History of Texas*; and Eugene C. Barker, *The Life of Stephen F. Austin*.

plot of 4,428 acres of free land. The free land may have been the reason they did not join the Austin Colony at that time.

In historical perspective, the rapid success of Austin's colonization, the efficient issuance of titles, and his cooperation with the Mexican authorities are impressive. His calm persistence and lack of antagonism together with his considerable administrative skill and his attention to important details were the necessary ingredients for success. He required applications and reviewed prospective settlers carefully, selecting for character, leadership, and industry. It was greatly to his credit and to the benefit of the State's future that he built a colony of solid citizenry. These first 300 families are remembered in Texas history as the "Old Three Hundred."

Under the new Mexican colonization law of March 24, 1825, Austin eventually entered into three additional colonization contracts. The first, dated May 20, 1825, called for settlement of an additional 500 families in his existing colony. The second, dated November 20, 1827, called for settlement of another 100 families on the east side of the Colorado River. Then on July 17, 1828, Austin was granted the unusual permission to settle 300 families on the ten coast leagues theretofore reserved, making a grand total of 1,200 families to be introduced. All contracts were fulfilled with carefully selected settlers.



Munson family tradition tells that Austin notified Henry William Munson in the summer of 1828 that he had selected a fine site for him to purchase on "Gulf Prairie" and invited Munson to come over and inspect it. This land



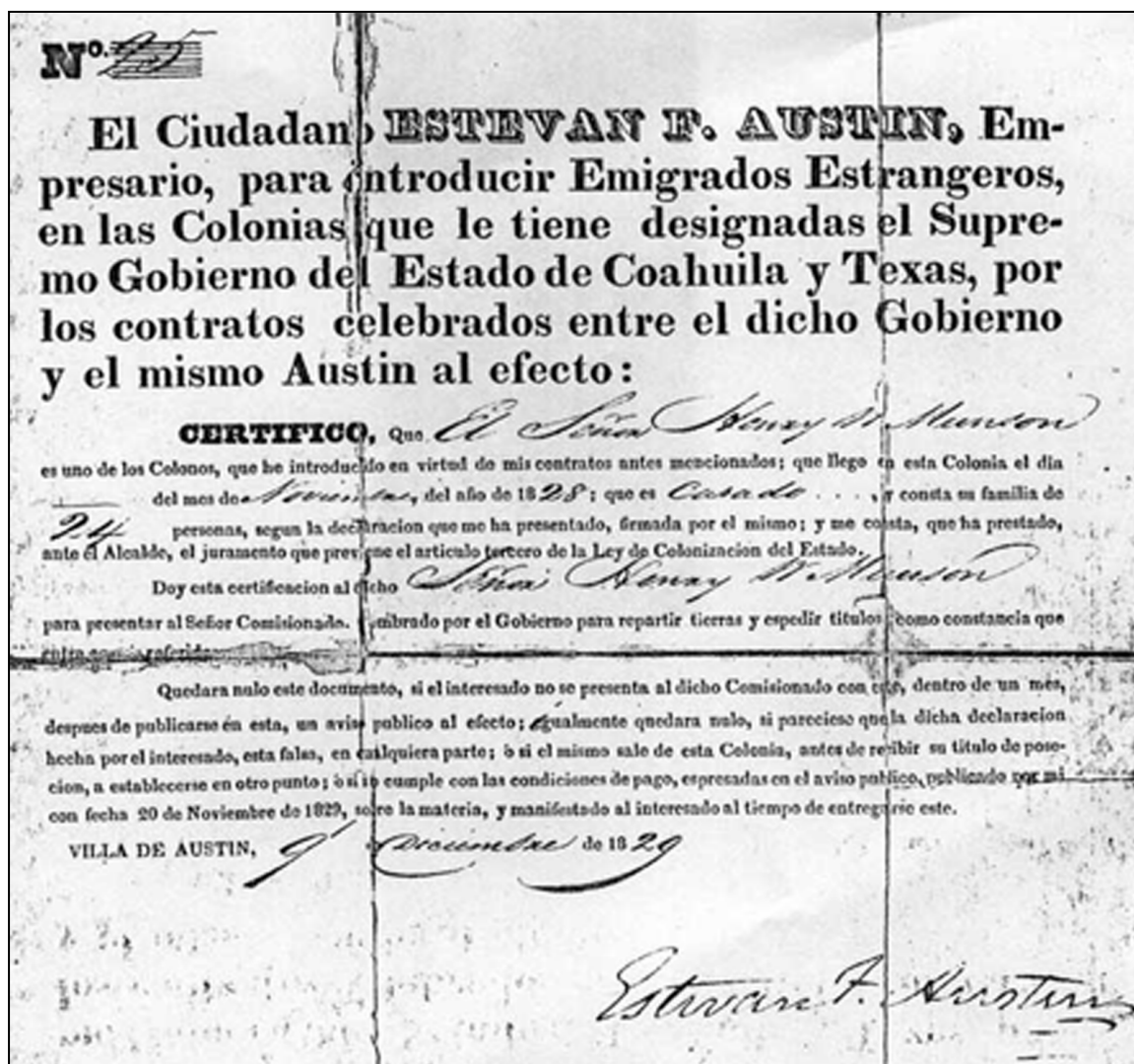
Texas Historical Marker at Oakland Plantation

was in Austin's last grant of "ten coast leagues," in which he reserved well over twelve leagues (53,000 acres) of the best land for himself. Apparently Munson and Austin inspected this site together in late August, because on August 27, 1828, they signed a contract at the neighboring McNeel homestead. Henry William agreed to buy approximately 354 acres of rich gulf-prairie land for the price of "one dollar per English acre, payable one year from the first day of January next," and to move his family there within four months. The land straddled the headwaters of Jones Creek just west of the Brazos River and about eight miles from the Gulf of Mexico. The general area was called Peach Point because of the many wild peach trees that bloomed there each spring. The November, 1828, move

was confirmed with a formal certificate in Spanish, signed *Estevan F. Austin*.

On this land Henry William and Ann Munson and their nineteen slaves built a successful cotton and cattle plantation. They named their new home Oakland Plantation. It is interesting to

note that there had been an Oakland Plantation in the Natchez District and one in Rapides Parish, Louisiana, when Henry William had lived in each place. It is not known at what date the attractive two-story Oakland Plantation home was built. The home was referred to as a mansion in letters written by friends. Years later it was destroyed by fire (one report says in about 1858), but large cisterns still mark its location on the prairie. In the 1840s Oakland became one of the many large sugar plantations in Brazoria County. Collapsed remains of the brick sugar mill and the pit from which the bricks were made are still landmarks today.



Certificate granting the "Señor Henry W. Munson" family entrance to Austin's Colony

The plantation was bounded on one side by the Thomas Westall plantation and on another by that of David Randon. Its major money products over the years were cotton, cattle, hogs, sugar, and molasses, shipped mostly to markets in New Orleans. It was undoubtedly a nearly self-sufficient plantation for the family and their slaves, with chickens, hogs, sheep, beef and dairy cattle, corn, vegetables, and fruit from the plantation—from the natural surroundings there was an abundance of pecans, blackberries, fish, oysters, clams, ducks, geese, turkey, rabbits, squirrel, deer, and other game. Finally, after much tragedy and hardship, the Munsons had found a fertile

and healthful plantation, and the family thrived. It is interesting that for the next 177 years, up to this day, none of this land has left the ownership of the family.⁹⁸

Henry William and Ann Munson's last two sons were born here: Gerard Brandon Munson on September 20, 1829, and George Poindexter Munson on June 4, 1832. Both were named for respected early judges, governors, and leaders of Mississippi who were contemporaries of Henry William Munson when he lived there.⁹⁹ This again probably reflects Henry William's personal values. (See Insets 13 and 14 for short biographies of Gerard Brandon and George Poindexter).

But Henry William's years of success and peace were few. To see his family and his plantation grow and thrive must surely have been the most enjoyable years of this life; but it was to be only a few years before political turmoil heightened between the colonists of Texas and their Mexican government, and tragedy was to strike him at an early age.

Anahuac — the Beginnings of the Texas Revolution

Under the Mexican constitution which went into effect in 1824, the first presidential term was filled by the true patriot Guadalupe Victoria. In the election in September of 1828, it was recorded that Vicente Guerrero received a large majority of the popular vote, but when the Electoral College met, Manuel Gomez Pedraza received the vote of ten of the eighteen states' delegates. Before the April, 1829, inauguration, the followers of Guerrero, headed by Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna and Lorenzo de Zavala, fomented a revolution, marched upon the capital, and installed Guerrero as president with an unprincipled military officer, Anastasio Bustamente, as vice-president. Before the end of 1829, Bustamente had led a successful revolution against Guerrero, assumed the presidency, and Guerrero was captured and put to death. Bustamente assumed dictatorial powers and entered upon a highly contentious regime. The measures that he and his government promulgated led directly to the revolution by the Texas colonists and to Mexico's loss of the territory of Texas.

On April 6, 1830, Bustamente issued a decree, passed by the Congress, reversing the existing immigration laws. It included the famous eleventh article which essentially forbade any further immigration of North Americans into Texas. This was clearly a reaction to the increasing American population in Texas and to the fact that in 1825, 1827, and 1829 the United States, through its minister to Mexico, had made efforts to purchase the whole or a part of Texas from Mexico.

Bustamente especially wanted to enforce the thirteenth article of the April decree, which established a customs system and taxes on imports after seven years of duty-free imports. The initial colonization agreement had granted five years of duty-free imports. To enforce this decree he established garrisons and erected forts at various points in Texas. The commanders of these posts were headed by Colonel Jose de las Piedras with 350 men at Nacogdoches. Juan Davis Bradburn, with 150 men, built and occupied a fort at Anahuac at the mouth of the Trinity River on Galveston Bay. Lieutenant Colonel Domingo de Ugartechea, with 130 men, built and garrisoned a fort at Velasco on the east side of the mouth of the Brazos River. There were also Mexican troops stationed at San Antonio and Goliad, and Fort Teran was established on the Neches River.

⁹⁸ At last notice (late 2005) the land was for sale.

⁹⁹ See Chapters 14 and 15 for short biographies of these two men.

To make matters worse, these troops were to be supported by receipts from the custom houses and other taxes levied upon the inhabitants. It approached a replay of “taxation without representation,” a policy previously proven not to be the way to handle enlightened colonists in a far-off land. By early 1831 these encampments were in place, and their effect was constant harassment of the colonists, enforced by military power.

Bradburn’s actions at Anahuac, especially, were a series of annoyances, indignities, and oppressions to the population. Before the close of 1831 he issued an order closing to the colonists all gulf ports except the one at Anahuac. This action promised to be absolutely ruinous to the settlers in Austin’s, Robertson’s, and De Witt’s colonies, dependent as they were on the mouth of the Brazos and the landings on Matagorda Bay.

The reaction of the colonists, it appears in retrospect, was a model of a calm but firm response. The people of the Brazos, after consultation, chose Dr. Branch T. Archer and George B. McKinstry to proceed to Anahuac, present the colonists’ position to Bradburn, and demand a revocation of the order. Bradburn first refused the request, but after a few earnest words from Archer indicating that in the event of a refusal an appeal to arms would be made, he changed his mind and the order was rescinded. The ambassadors returned home with the hope that no further oppressions would occur, and a brief period of calm followed.

In 1831 the governor of the Province of *Tejas* had finally commissioned Francisco Madero to issue titles to the unhappy settlers on and near the Trinity River. Such commissioners were given the authority to organize municipalities where none existed. Madero exercised this authority by organizing the much needed municipality of *Libertad* (Liberty) with Hugh B. Johnson as *Alcalde*. The people were gratified at this recognition of their needs, and the Elizabeth Munson grant of 4,428 acres was finalized.

But Bradburn saw in this act a usurpation of his authority, and he arrested and imprisoned Madero, dissolved the new municipality, and appointed a new *Ayuntamiento* (council) with its seat at Anahuac. Other annoyances by Bradburn and his soldiers were numerous and of almost daily occurrence. By the spring of 1832 these occurrences had spread alarm over the country. During the confrontations that followed, Bradburn arrested and imprisoned a number of the most prominent citizens of the Trinity settlement including William B. Travis, Patrick C. Jack, Samuel T. Allen, and fourteen others. In this alarming state, William H. Jack of San Felipe de Austin visited Bradburn and sought the release of his brother and fellow prisoners, or their transfer for trial to a civil tribunal. Bradburn’s only answer was that the prisoners would be sent to Vera Cruz to be tried by a military court.

William H. Jack returned to the Brazos, reported the result of his mission, and raised his voice for forcible intervention to rescue his brother and friends. Messengers spread the news over the country and men hastened to the suggested point of rendezvous near Liberty in early June of 1832. From Brazoria came John Austin, Henry S. Brown, William J. Russell, and George B. McKinstry, all community leaders, with a few other men. John Austin (no relation to Stephen F. Austin) was then *Alcalde* of Brazoria, second in authority in the Austin Colony, and undoubtedly a friend of the Munsons. When a sufficient number had assembled, calling themselves *Texians*,¹⁰⁰ they elected Francis W. Johnson as their captain.

¹⁰⁰ This may have been the first use of the term *Texian*. Early colonists and leaders in the Texas Revolution used the term to describe the Anglo-American settlers.

Family tradition tells that Henry William Munson participated in the confrontations at Anahuac and Velasco, but no known record shows his participation at Anahuac. His wife, at 32 years of age, was expecting their eighth child, and son George Poindexter Munson was born on June 4, 1832.

The *Texians* immediately proceeded on a march from Liberty toward Anahuac, and along the way they surprised and captured twenty of Bradburn's cavalry. They made their main camp at Turtle Bayou. Arriving at Anahuac the next day, their leaders met with Bradburn to no avail. After two or three days of nervous confrontation, it was agreed that the *Texians* would return to Turtle Bayou and the two sides would exchange prisoners, which was the primary goal of the *Texians*. Their Mexican prisoners were released and a commission was sent to receive the *Texian* prisoners. The next day firing was heard at Anahuac and a command hastened down. Bradburn had refused to honor the agreement and had attacked the commissioners, who had retreated in good order.

Back at Turtle Bayou the command held a mass meeting and adopted the *Turtle Bayou Resolutions*, the first set of resolutions by the *Texians* condemning the Mexican government. The Resolutions recited the many tyrannical acts of Bustamente resulting in the subversion of the legal constitution. Santa Anna had, on January 2, 1832, pronounced against Bustamente and in favor of the Constitution of 1824. The *Texians* pledged support to "the well deserving patriot, Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna."¹⁰¹ On examining the position of the enemy, it was deemed imprudent to attack without artillery. Captains John Austin, Henry S. Brown, William J. Russell, and George B. McKinstry were sent to Brazoria to secure reinforcements and three pieces of artillery known to be there.

At this point, Colonel Jose de las Piedras, Bradburn's superior at Nacogdoches, approached with about 150 men, having been appealed to by Bradburn for aid. After a full interchange of views during which he was informed of the outrages of Bradburn, and realizing the resolve of the colonists, Piedras agreed to release all of the prisoners, put Bradburn under arrest, and send him out of the country. All of this was done and the armed citizens left for their homes.

The Battle of Velasco¹⁰²

While the above events were taking place, John Austin, Henry S. Brown, William J. Russell, and George B. McKinstry had reached Brazoria, aroused the people, secured artillery and a naval vessel, and developed a plan to sail for Anahuac by water to gain the release of their countrymen. On June 20, 1832, a meeting was called and approximately one hundred citizens signed "to become a part of the military of Austin's colony and to hold themselves in readiness to march to any point on the shortest notice." A committee of thirteen, which included William H. Wharton, David Randon, Henry W. Munson, and Major James P. Caldwell, was appointed to prepare resolutions to "promote the good order and happiness of the colony." After deliberating, this committee reported: "... the steps... taken were precipitate... [and] had at the same time gone so far... [that] the only course left for us to pursue was to take up arms and go on with the undertaking..."¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ John Henry Brown, *History of Texas*, Vol. 1, p. 180.

¹⁰² Material in this section is taken primarily from John Henry Brown, *History of Texas*.

¹⁰³ *Munson Papers*, see Appendix 1. The source of these quotes is unrecorded.

As they moved down the Brazos River to the gulf, Lieutenant Colonel Ugartechea at Velasco inquired as to their cargo and, on learning that it included two cannon, refused permission for them to pass. This new aspect of the confrontation gave additional grounds for dissatisfaction and brought on the first armed battle between the *Texians* and the military power of their rulers. These confrontations at Anahuac and Velasco are often considered the first battles—the Lexington and Concord—of the Texas Revolution.

There was a hasty reassemblage of the citizens. Henry William Munson was there, leaving his wife and his three-week-old son. His neighbors, Andrew and James Westall and John and Sterling McNeel, were there. The famous J. Brit Bailey and two of his sons, Smith Bailey and Gaines Bailey, were there; and James P. Caldwell was there. Also present were the future leaders of Brazoria County: William Wharton, Henry Smith, and Edwin Waller. The 112 volunteers were organized into three companies—forty-seven men under John Austin, the senior officer; forty-seven under Henry S. Brown, second in command; and eighteen men in the marines under William J. Russell on the schooner *Brazoria*. Henry William Munson was with Russell among the marines. James P. Caldwell was in Austin's company.

The fort at Velasco stood about 150 yards from both the river and from the gulf shore. It was built with circular outer walls consisting of rows of posts six feet apart filled between with sand, earth, and shells. Inside these walls was an embankment upon which musketeers could stand and shoot without exposing anything but their heads. In the center was an elevation enclosed by higher posts on which the artillery was placed and protected by bulwarks. Between the fort and the beach was a collection of drift-logs thrown up by the sea.

June 25, 1832, arrived and the battle plan was arranged. Russell, on the schooner *Brazoria* with two small cannon, a blunderbuss, and eighteen riflemen, was to drop down abreast of the fort after nightfall. Brown, with forty-seven riflemen, was to proceed to the east, then move southwesterly along what is now Surfside Beach and take a position behind the drift-logs. Austin was to approach from the north and take a position within easy range of the fort, each of his men being provided with a portable palisade made of three-inch cypress planks supported by a movable leg. When in position, Brown was to open fire and draw fire from the fort while Austin's men arranged their palisades.

At about midnight an accidental shot by one of Brown's men revealed their presence and the battle began, the guns of the fort sending forth a blaze of light. Brown's men were in a position to avail themselves of the flashes of light from the fort without exposure on their own part, but those under Austin, which included James P. Caldwell, soon realized that their position was untenable. To escape annihilation they took a position immediately under the wall of the fort and could not be seen or reached by the enemy, nor could they see the persons at whom they wished to fire.

The schooner *Brazoria*, on which Henry W. Munson was stationed, had come immediately abreast of the fort when Russell turned loose his pieces, discharging slugs, lead, chains, scraps of iron, and whatever else they had been able to pick up for the occasion. The contest raged until daybreak, by which time Austin's men had dug pits in the sand for protection. Thereafter the unerring, experienced riflemen of Austin, burrowed as they were in the sand, and of Brown, among the driftwood, did fearful execution to the defenders of the fort, picking off their heads or their hands as they dared to expose them. So accurate was the marksmanship of these

frontiersmen that by nine o'clock more than two-thirds of Ugartechea's men were dead or wounded.¹⁰⁴

On the morning of June 26, Austin sounded a call for a parley and demanded the surrender of the fort. Ugartechea asked for but two conditions—that his officers be allowed to retain their side arms and that the survivors of the fort be allowed to peacefully leave the country. These concessions were promptly made and the fort surrendered. The casualties of this first battle were, on the part of the *Texians*, seven killed and twenty-seven wounded; and on the part of the Mexicans, forty-two dead and seventy wounded—112 casualties out of 150 combatants.⁹⁷ Crowned with victory, these citizens expected to proceed to the aid of their friends at Anahuac, but hearing of the favorable settlement there, they dispersed and returned to their homes.

One of the injured at Velasco was James P. Caldwell. He returned to Oakland Plantation with his friend, Henry William Munson, where Ann Munson nursed him back to health. From there he proceeded on his way, but the occasion was not forgotten.

Stephen F. Austin and the Beginnings of Brazoria County

The term “Brazoria” was coined by Stephen F. Austin in about 1828. The original name of the Brazos River was *Brazos de Dios* (Arms of God), and the early settlers used it as their main highway of transportation. Among the earliest settlers in this area were Brit Bailey, Asa G. Mitchell, and Josiah H. Bell. In 1824 Josiah H. Bell obtained the first land grant along the Brazos River in this area, and the spot of his settlement became known as Bell's Landing, though the official name was Marion, then as Columbia, and today as East Columbia. In 1828 a town was begun by John Austin about nine miles down river from Bell's Landing, and Stephen F. Austin gave it the name *Brazzoria* because “... I know of none [no name] like it in the world.”¹⁰⁵ In 1832 this area was in the Mexican Department of Bexar, Jurisdiction of Austin, John Austin, *Alcalde*.¹⁰⁶ By July of 1833 it had become the Jurisdiction of Brazoria, with Henry Smith as *Alcalde*. As of March 1834, all of Austin's Colony fell within the newly created Department of the Brazos. The following month the capital of Brazoria Municipality was moved by popular vote from the town of Brazoria, Municipality of Brazoria, to Columbia, and the municipality was renamed Columbia. When counties were created from the Mexican municipalities by the First Congress of the Republic of Texas in 1836, Columbia Municipality became Brazoria County, its current name.

Stephen F. Austin's sister, Emily, married James Bryan in 1813 in Missouri, where they had three sons: William Joel, Moses Austin, and Guy Morrison Bryan, and a daughter, Mary. James Bryan died in 1822, and Emily then married James F. Perry, and they had three children: Samuel Stephen, Eliza, and Henry Perry. In about 1830 Stephen F. Austin wrote to James F. Perry in Missouri urging him to take Emily and the children to look at land at Peach Point and to meet the Westalls, McNeels, Munsons, Calvits, and Whartons. He wrote, “I mean to make a Little World there of my own... We shall all be happy when we are collected at Peach Point.”¹⁰⁷ In

¹⁰⁴ This version is from John Henry Brown, *History of Texas*. Many historians are convinced that Brown grossly exaggerated Mexican losses in most encounters. For example, *The Handbook of Texas* states that in the Battle of Velasco the Mexicans had five dead and sixteen wounded out of a force of between 90 to 200 men. The true results will probably never be known.

¹⁰⁵ *History of Brazoria County*, Brazoria County Federation of Women's Clubs, April, 1940.

¹⁰⁶ As the population of Coahuila and Texas grew, it became necessary to create political divisions within the state. These divisions were called departments and municipalities, and each had its own capital and political chief.

¹⁰⁷ Eugene C. Barker, *The Austin Papers*.

1831 the Perrys moved to Texas, first to San Felipe de Austin, then to a plantation deeded to them by Stephen F. Austin at Chocolate Bayou, and in 1832 to their new home at Peach Point Plantation. In his later years, Austin, who never married, called the Perry plantation his home and spent as much time there as possible. Part of this home and his office still stand there today. When he died in 1836, he was buried in the Peach Point Cemetery beside the grave of his neighbor, Henry William Munson. Years later his grave was moved to the State Capitol in Austin.

The Bryan and the Perry children were raised in the Perry home at Peach Point, and their families have been prominent citizens of Brazoria County for over 150 years.¹⁰⁸ These families have been neighbors and life-long friends of the Munson and Caldwell families up to this day. After the death of James F. Perry, Samuel Stephen Perry became proprietor of Peach Point Plantation and Mordello Munson became his legal and business advisor. Stephen Perry named a son Mordello Perry in honor of Mordello Munson, and Mordello named a son Milam Stephen in honor of Stephen Perry. The Perry descendants still live on the original homestead in Jones Creek, Texas, today.

In 1832 Ann Raney came to Texas from England and remained in Brazoria County for several years. While there she kept a diary which affords much information on the life and people of the times. This is known as *Ann Raney's Diary*.¹⁰⁹ One excerpt from her diary while she lived with the David Randon family at Peach Point is as follows:

I went to spend the day with Mrs. Munson, a neighbor of Mrs. R [Mrs. Randon, a sister to Sterling McNeel] and an excellent woman. I met with Miss Emeline W [Westall]... a young lady who was very good looking and vain in her charms. She was a good girl fond of a romp. Her sister married Mr. G. McN [McNeel]. Emeline was about eighteen years old, quite a pleasant girl. I had met her at the town of Brazoria often before and at many balls and parties. She had been the Belle of the country before our arrival, and it was said quite a favorite with Mr. S. McN. She got into a play with me, and as I was still weak in the lack of strength, I begged her to desist. She replied, "I intend to whip you, Miss R., for taking my beau from me, and I wish you had stayed at Brazoria and not come in our neighborhood." I was nearly exhausted when at last I succeeded in throwing her down, and I sat on her person and paid her up in her own coin by tickling her. She cried, "Let me up Old England, and I will never trouble you any more." I said, "Will you acknowledge you are whipped?" "Yes, yes," she cried, "I am whipped by old England." At this moment whilst we still lay on the floor, and I still sitting on the top of her body, in came Mr. Munson [Henry William] and Mr. S. McN from behind a door in another room, laughing heartily at us both, and having overheard all that passed between us and had seen us fighting. I felt ashamed and left the room to recover my breath which was nearly exhausted. Emeline now ran out of the room also.

The Last Years of Henry William Munson

During his last years, Henry William Munson was a successful planter and stockman. He acquired additional large tracts of land—one on the Bernard River, one between the Brazos River and Oyster Creek north of Bell's Landing, and another on the Navidad River.¹¹⁰ A letter dated February 1, 1833, from a Mr. J. Matthews, stated that he was unable to pay the note owed to Mr.

¹⁰⁸ Marie Beth Jones, *Peach Point Plantation, The First 150 Years*, Texian Press, Waco, Texas, 1982.

¹⁰⁹ *Munson Papers*, see Appendix 1.

¹¹⁰ Any investigation of the acquisition and disposal of these tracts has not been done.

Munson because his crop turned out badly, and he asked for an extension. A statement dated April 11, 1833, from G. Logan listed new plantation equipment purchased by Mr. H. W. Munson and repairs made to other plantation machinery. Henry William was also investing money for the estate of his late brother, Micajah, as there is a list of notes in the estate of Henry W. Munson with the notation that they belonged to the estate of Micajah Munson. There is also a statement signed by S. Whiting indicating that he had received money due Elizabeth Munson from H. W. Munson.

The year 1833 was a year of disaster for the Brazoria area and for the Munsons. It is referred to as “The Year of the Big Cholera.” Heavy and continuous spring rains turned the entire gulf coast region into one giant flooded river. Crops were ruined, plantings were impossible, and livestock and wild animals were drowned, their decaying carcasses littering the landscape. The bacteria which cause Asian cholera, *Vibrio comma*, a frequent visitor to Mexico and the southern United States, thrived in this environment. Cholera is very contagious, causes severe diarrhea and intense vomiting, and the victim often dies within a short time. James A. Creighton, in *A Narrative History of Brazoria County*, reports of this time: “Health conditions became unbelievable. Velasco was practically depopulated. Brazoria a charnel house with perhaps eighty reported dead.” This was the most severe cholera epidemic ever recorded in Texas and Mexico. It was reported that in Mexico City over 10,000 residents died of cholera in the summer and fall of 1833. Brazoria County lost many leading persons to cholera including John Austin and his two children; Thomas, James, and Emeline Westall; two sons of Josiah H. Bell; Dr. C. G. Cox; D. W. Anthony, editor of the only newspaper in Texas; and possibly John McNeel, Mary E. Bryan, Brit Bailey, and Henry William Munson.

Henry William Munson died on October 6, 1833, at Oakland Plantation at the age of 40. The cause of his death, as passed down through family tradition, was yellow fever. In *A Narrative History of Brazoria County* it is listed as cholera. In discussing this period in his book, *Texas*, James Michener says of the 1833 cholera epidemic: “Called alternately *the plague*, or *cholera*, or the *vomiting shakes*, or simply *the fever*...” This last term apparently sufficed for a description of either cholera or yellow fever, so we probably shall never know.

A bill for Henry William Munson’s coffin from Haley & Carson, dated October 8, 1833, gives the cost as \$16.00. He was buried in the Peach Point Cemetery. Family tradition places the spot beside a huge live oak tree¹¹¹ near the grave of Stephen F. Austin, who died three years later, in 1836. James P. Caldwell was buried here in 1856. Two state historical markers at the entrance to the cemetery tell brief stories of the lives of Henry William Munson and James P. Caldwell.

Henry William Munson’s last words to his wife were, “Educate my children.” This request was fulfilled to the fullest, as sons William, Mordello, Gerard, and George were sent first to local private schools and then to secondary schools and colleges in Texas, Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, and Illinois.

Henry William Munson left an estate appraised at \$26,825.00 including 9,699 acres of land as follows:

554 acres at Oakland Plantation
2,479 acres bought from Bryan at \$3 per acre

¹¹¹ In the late 1980s, members of the Munson Cemetery Association successfully negotiated to place a headstone at the reported site of the grave of Henry William Munson.

2,222 acres in Gray & Moore League
4,444 acres on the Navidad

Mary Austin Holly, writing at the time, referred to Ann Pearce Munson as “the wealthy widow Munson”;¹¹² but she was left with a most difficult situation—alone in a frontier world of political turmoil with a large plantation, many slaves, and four young sons: William Benjamin aged 9, Mordello Stephen aged 8, Gerard Brandon aged 4, and George Poindexter aged one—and she was but 33 years old.

¹¹² James A. Creighton, *A Narrative History of Brazoria County*, p. 49.



Stephen F. Austin tomb

Henry William Munson headstone

Henry William Munson's grave marker (modern) and Stephen F. Austin's tomb at Peach Point Cemetery.

Henry William Munson and James Peckham Caldwell Texas Historical Markers near the entrance to Peach Point Cemetery.



The Henry William Munson Texas Historical Marker (on the left in the above photograph).

Chapter 12

Ann “Nancy” Munson, James P. Caldwell, and the Caldwell Family 1835–present



Henry William Munson died at Oakland in 1833, leaving Ann with the plantation and four young sons. In 1835 she married Major James P. Caldwell, whom she had nursed back to health after his injury at the Battle of Velasco in 1832. They lived at Oakland Plantation until 1852, when they moved, for health reasons, to San Marcos, Texas. James Caldwell died in the yellow fever epidemic of 1856 at the home of Mordello Munson while on a visit to Brazoria County. Ann died in San Marcos in 1865. Their son, Robert Milam Caldwell, married Mary Elizabeth House and they raised six children. Two of their sons married Munson sisters who were their half-first cousins. From all of these Caldwell children have come the large family of the Caldwells of Texas.



In the fall of 1833, Ann Munson was left a widow in a revolutionary frontier area of Mexico with a 554-acre cattle and cotton plantation, several dozen slaves, and four young sons. She very probably had a close and supportive friend in James Caldwell, whom she had nursed back to health after the Battle of Velasco just one year earlier. On May 12, 1835, James Caldwell and Ann “Nancy” Binum Pearce Munson were married by a “statement of intent,” and he became proprietor of Oakland Plantation and “father” to the four young Munson boys. A document on file in the Brazoria County Courthouse records the marriage as follows:¹¹³

Department of Brazos
Jurisdiction of Columbia

Be it known that we, the parties Jas. P. Caldwell and Nancy B. Munson,¹¹⁴ of lawful age, of said Jurisdiction, and State of Coahuila and Texas, wishing to unite ourselves in the Bonds of Matrimony, and there being no Priests to celebrate the same; therefore I, Jas. P. Caldwell, do agree to take and by these presents do take, Nancy B. Munson, to be my lawful wife, and as such to love, cherish, support, and protect her, forsaking all others, keeping myself true and faithful unto her alone; and I, Nancy B. Munson, do hereby agree to take, and by these presents do take, James P. Caldwell, to be my lawful husband, as such to love, honor, and obey him, forsaking all others, keeping myself true

¹¹³ Record of Marriage Licenses, Volume A, pages 35 & 36, Brazoria County Courthouse, Angleton, Texas.

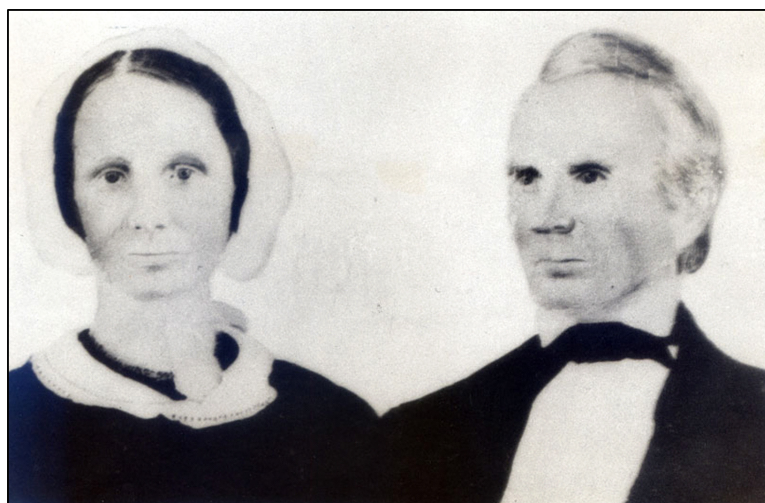
¹¹⁴ Ann Pearce Munson appears to have been called Nancy by her family.

and faithful unto him alone, and we both bind ourselves mutually to each other in the sum of \$10,000.00 to have our marriage celebrated by the Priest of this Colony, or by some other person authorized so to do as soon an opportunity offers, all of which the parties promise in the name of God, in the presence of the subscribing witnesses and of Silas Dinsmore, Primary Judge of the Jurisdiction.

In testimony whereof we have this day set our hand and seal this 12th day of May, 1835.

Jas. P. Caldwell
N. B. Munson

Witness:
A. Brigham
P. D. Grayson
Sterling McNeel
S. Dinsmore



Ann Pearce Munson Caldwell and Major James P. Caldwell

James Peckham Caldwell was born in Baltimore, Maryland, on January 6, 1793, just nine days before the birth of Henry William Munson in Mississippi. He migrated from Baltimore to Kentucky, and in 1831, as a 38-year-old widower, he moved to the Austin Colony with his sister, Jane Caldwell Calder, and her son, Robert J. Calder Jr. A letter from James P. Caldwell to Stephen F. Austin dated May 10, 1831, reads: “To Mr. S. F. Austin *Empresario* I have emigrated to this Colony... James P. Caldwell 36 years of age widower A native

of Kentucky. Jas P. Caldwell”¹¹⁵ The location of his Texas residence is not known, but it appears to have been in what is now Brazoria County. It is reported in Caldwell family tradition that he became a “bosom friend” of Stephen F. Austin.

In 1830 Henry Austin, a cousin of Stephen F. Austin, came to Texas and settled on a league of land on the east side of the Brazos River about ten miles above Bell’s Landing. He laid out a town to be called Bolivar. The town never developed, but his plantation and the area retained that name for some years. A few years later his widowed sister, Mary Austin Holley, spent some years with him. Her published letters and diary contain valuable descriptions of the frontier conditions of that time. After meeting James Caldwell at Peach Point in 1838, Mrs. Holley wrote in her Diary that she had known Major Caldwell in Hopkinsville, Kentucky—“a genteel man.”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Gifford White, *Character Certificates in the General Land Office of Texas* from the files of the General Land Office - Austin. (It seems likely that the age given in this report has been erroneously transcribed—his birth date of January 6, 1793, is widely recorded in Munson and Caldwell records.)

¹¹⁶ Mary Austin Holley, *The Texas Diary, 1835-1838*, ed. by J. P. Bryan.

Although only a new arrival, James Caldwell took an active part in the conflicts with the Mexican authorities in the following year. On June 20, 1832, he was appointed a member of a committee, along with Henry William Munson, William H. Wharton, and others, to prepare recommendations for steps to be taken against the oppressive Mexican authority at the Velasco fort. On June 21, on the orders of *Alcalde* John Austin, Caldwell, with Messrs. Westall, Reese, and McKinstry, terminated the operations of the Mexican customs office at Brazoria, disarming Senor F. Duclor and relieving him of his duties. On June 22, signing as adjutant, he informed John Austin that Jacob Ramesburgh of Brazoria had two fine rifles that he refused to furnish to the militia. On June 25, the day before the Battle of Velasco, he enlisted as #153, and his nephew, R. J. Calder, enlisted as #158 on the muster roll of men in camp near the mouth of the Brazos.

James Caldwell was in John Austin's Company at the Battle of Velasco in 1832.¹¹⁷ This was the company which assaulted the fort from the north with wooden ambuscades, met withering fire, and took shelter under the shadow of the walls of the fort. This company was the most exposed and suffered the most injuries, and Major Caldwell suffered an injury to his leg. After the battle, on June 28, James P. Caldwell was listed on the roll of "men in camp." As Caldwell may have lived alone, friend Munson took him to his home for recovery, and Nancy Munson nursed him back to health. James Caldwell retained a limp from this injury for the remainder of his life.

On November 8, 1834, James Caldwell served as secretary at a meeting in Brazoria called to consider sending a delegate to a planned convention in *San Antonio de Bexar* the following week. Caldwell voted "no" with the majority, and no delegate was sent.¹¹⁸

In March of 1835 Caldwell was one of the six men who set in motion the organization of the Holland Lodge which, unlike the earlier attempts of Stephen F. Austin and Joel Poinsett, survived Mexican opposition and the turmoil of the Revolution of 1836 to become the foundation of Freemasonry in Texas.

On May 12, 1835, James Caldwell and Ann Munson were married, and their first child, Robert Milam Caldwell, was born on June 25, 1836, just two months after the Battle of San Jacinto.

No records have been found showing Ann and James Caldwell's activities during the battles of the Texas Revolution, which included campaigns near Oakland Plantation in the spring of 1836. Family tradition tells that because of his injured leg, James Caldwell remained at home as an "official" of the *Texian* revolutionary government to look after the women and children.

In April of 1836, General Santa Anna, pursuing the ragtag *Texian* troops with supreme confidence, moved out ahead of his own large army. He led a contingent of choice troops across the Brazos River at Fort Bend (now Richmond) and proceeded toward the San Jacinto River en route to the fort at Anahuac. From there he planned to consolidate his position and expel all remaining Anglos from Texas. General Vicente Filisola, second in command, was left with the main army on the west bank of the Brazos. General Urrea's army, under orders from Santa Anna, was marching from Matagorda Bay along the gulf coast to Brazoria and Columbia, presumably passing within a few miles of Oakland Plantation. These military actions, together with wildly circulating rumors of pending disaster, so frightened the settlers that most of them hurriedly packed their belongings in wagons and fled eastward toward Louisiana in the famous Runaway

¹¹⁷ See Chapter 11 for details of the Battle of Velasco.

¹¹⁸ See Eugene C. Barker, *The Life of Stephen F. Austin*, pp. 400-403 for details of this convention.

Inset 12
Sam Houston at the Battle of San Jacinto¹¹⁹



After the smashing victories at the Alamo and Goliad, General Santa Anna was supremely confident that Texas had been saved and that he had only to sweep eastward to Anahuac and Nacogdoches to clear all Americans out of the province and resettle it with Mexican families. He gave orders to his several armies to execute all prisoners and men bearing arms, to burn all buildings, and to drive all Americans out of Texas. To achieve this his combined armies consisted of over 7,000 men. The *Texian* Army had varying numbers around 1,000, sometimes fewer.

After crossing the Brazos River at San Felipe de Austin on his retreat, General Sam Houston led his men to an encampment on the east side of Buffalo Bayou across from Harrisburg. The Mexican army reached the Brazos at Fort Bend, where a confident Santa Anna took command of an elite division and moved ahead of the army toward Anahuac, leaving General Filisola with about 5,000 men at the Brazos. When, on April 18, 1836, General Houston's scouts captured a Mexican courier and learned that Santa Anna was encamped on the east side of the San Jacinto River with a single division, Houston was elated. Suddenly he had achieved exactly the battle plan he had hoped for—to defeat and capture Santa Anna was his only hope of saving Texas.

On the morning of April 19, the Texian troops were paraded, and General Houston addressed them in perhaps the most eloquent and soul-stirring speech of his life. He concealed nothing. He told them where the Mexicans were and that Santa Anna was in command; that they would now cross the bayou and confront him, whether two or five to one; and he declared that the time had come when they would take the hazards and trust in the God of battle. He said that if any were present who shrank from this issue, they need not cross the bayou. He told them that some must perish, but that it was glorious to fall in such a cause; that their slogan would be “Remember the Alamo! Remember Goliad!” and their motto “Victory or death,” for there would be no chance of retreat. But, he said, “There will be no defeat. Victory is as certain as God reigns. I feel the inspiration in every fiber of my being. Trust in the God of the just and fear not!”

Every man able to walk clamored to cross the bayou, and sick men wept at being left. A draft had to be resorted to in order to secure sufficient men to guard the camp and to take care of the sick and the munitions of war.

In later years Judge Patrick Usher, who heard this speech, reported: “I had been impatient for two weeks—wary of wading through mud and water—often hungry and sometimes mad, but, while General Houston spoke and towered with constantly ascending eloquence and earnestness, I was reminded of the halo encircling the brow of our Savior; and in concluding, had he personally called upon me to jump into the whirlpool of Niagara as the only means of saving Texas, I would have made the leap.”

The battle at San Jacinto took place at four-thirty in the afternoon on April 21, 1836. Houston had 783 men. Santa Anna, having received reinforcements the previous day, had about 1,500. The battle lasted for eighteen minutes. The *Texians* lost two killed and twenty-three wounded six mortally. The Mexicans lost 630 dead, 208 wounded, and almost none escaped. Santa Anna was captured and the story of the Munsons of Texas was changed forever.

¹¹⁹ This story is taken from John Henry Brown, *History of Texas*, Jenkins Publishing Company, Austin, Texas, partly quoted and partly paraphrased. This book is recommended reading for all who are interested in Texas history.

Scrape. When the news of the victory at San Jacinto on April 21, 1836, reached them, they drifted back to their homes. Ann and James Caldwell had been married for less than a year and Ann was seven months pregnant. Their four Munson sons were twelve, ten, six, and three. Whether the family joined the retreat, participated in the conflicts, or remained at Oakland is not known. *The Handbook of Texas* records that Guy M. Bryan, then 15 years old, accompanied his mother, Emily Austin Bryan Perry, from Peach Point Plantation on the Runaway Scrape, so it could be expected that their Caldwell neighbors probably joined them.



Henry William Munson lived at Oakland Plantation for only five years, and James Caldwell was proprietor for about seventeen. He built it into a successful cotton, sugar, cattle, and hog plantation. In the late 1830s and early 1840s the plantation owners of Brazoria County, who had depended mostly on cotton as their cash crop, began to successfully grow sugar cane. From time to time they had tried numerous other cash crops, including corn, wheat, figs, oranges, and indigo, but with little success.¹²⁰ James Caldwell was a leader in the experimental cultivation of sugar cane, and had one of the first sugar mills in the area. Oakland Plantation, along with many other plantations in the county, became a leading sugar plantation of Texas during the decade of the 1840s. It was once referred to as “the best sugar plantation in Brazoria County.”¹²¹ James Caldwell’s tax rendition for 1840 included town lots in Velasco and Columbia, thirty-three slaves, thirty horses, 1,200 cattle, a four-wheel carriage, a gold watch, and a wooden clock.¹²²

A large, two-story, white, frame house was built, either by Munson or Caldwell. A red brick sugar-house was built near the center of the plantation, with a row of slave houses nearby. The location of the sugar-house is easily identified today by a large pile of collapsed bricks, its only remains, and a large pit from which the bricks were made. The plantation home burned at an unknown date (one family tradition says about 1858), but the current Caldwell owners of Oakland can identify the locations of the plantation house and slave quarters. In 1847 James Caldwell enlarged the plantation by the purchase of about 200 acres from his neighbor, the widow of Andrew Westall. This brought Oakland to its present size of 770 acres, and none of it has ever been sold.

Like many of the early settlers, James Caldwell had a penchant for acquiring large tracts of land. In the southwest corner of Brazoria County there are two surveys named “J. P. Caldwell Survey,” but, for reasons not understood, these are not recorded in the list of original land grants on record in the Texas General Land Office. One of these parcels, 1,010 acres on Cedar Lake Creek on the Brazoria-Matagorda County line, is recorded in the Brazoria County land records as “Abstract No. 165 - J. P. Caldwell original grantee.” It is swampy coastal land and the entire parcel, still intact, is now owned by the United States of America as part of the San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge. The other parcel is a half league, 2,214 acres, on the beach between the Brazos and the San Bernard Rivers. The confirmation of this grant was not made until 1870, to his heirs, whose descendants still own the land today.

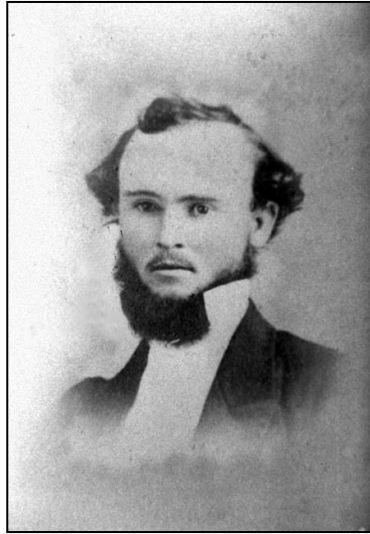
¹²⁰ A continuation of this searching over the next century has made cattle and rice the leading agricultural products of the county today.

¹²¹ Private notes of Erma Munson Rich, *The Munson Papers*, see Appendix 1.

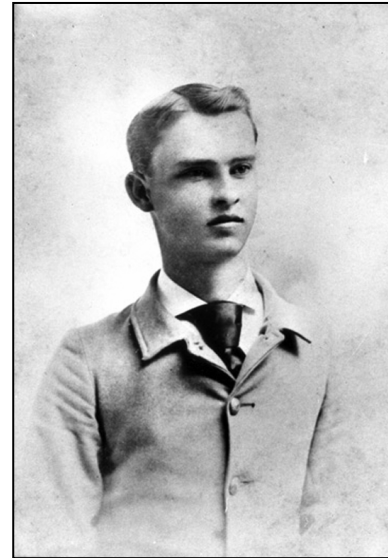
¹²² These details of the career of James P. Caldwell were supplied by his great-granddaughter, Sarah Mordella “Della” Caldwell Hanly of Rosharon, Texas.



Thomas William Caldwell I



Robert Milam Caldwell I



Robert Milam Caldwell II



**Maud Munson
Caldwell**



**Georgie Caldwell and Sarah
Munson Caldwell**



**Sarah Mordella Caldwell (seated),
Sarah Munson Caldwell and
children of James Pearce Caldwell**

Records indicate that James Caldwell also acquired other tracts during these years, but they also indicate that he was not always careful with his records. An ad in *The Planter* in Brazoria, Texas, in 1834 reads, “Lost - deed to one-half league of land in Brazoria County, Certificate No. 58 - J. P. Caldwell.” Then in 1857, soon after the death of James Caldwell, Mordello Munson contracted with J. Douglas Brown as follows:

...to locate, survey and obtain title to one-half league of land in Brazoria County granted to James P. Caldwell by the Board of Land Commissioners on January 25, 1838, Certificate No. 28. The payment for successful Patent of Title of said land to be paid by Munson and heirs of J. P. Caldwell to be one-third of such land patented. Witnessed by Guy M. Bryan and Stephen S. Perry.

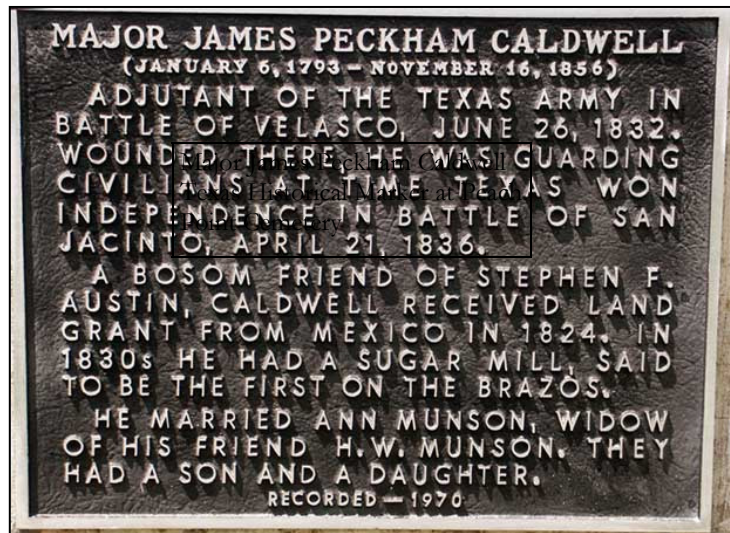
Either or both of these could have been the beach land on which the grant was not confirmed until 1870.

And further, an 1866 document reads: “Mordello S. Munson hires R. C. Doon of Jasper County to locate survey and obtain title to one-half league of land in Jasper County in the name of J. P. Caldwell. Pay will be deed for 177 acres of said land.” Jasper County is on the Louisiana border north of Beaumont. Also in later years, James Caldwell and his son, Robert Milam Caldwell, after moving to Hays County near San Marcos, acquired numerous large ranches in central Texas.

Just as Henry William Munson and James Caldwell had a strong love for ownership of land, so many of their children, their grandchildren, and their great-grandchildren have retained that love to this day. Almost all of Henry William Munson and James Caldwell’s Oakland Plantation, the Caldwell’s Rosharon Plantation, and Mordello S. Munson’s Ridgely Plantation are still owned by their great-grandchildren or their great-great-grandchildren today.

At Oakland, James Caldwell became stepfather to the four Munson boys, ages 2 to 11. He was apparently a loyal, loving father and a strict disciplinarian. Many years later Mordello told the story to his grandchildren that he never wanted to see any of his sons or grandsons whipped “because he had received

enough whippings as a youth to serve for several generations.”¹²³ Mordello’s brother, William Benjamin, wrote to Mordello in 1847: “... you spoke of Mr Caldwell wanting you to study law in Lexington - and no where else - he wants you without reference to expense to go and study where you can do best - his only motive is your prosperity and success - and if you think you can



Texas Historical Marker at Peach Point Cemetery

¹²³ From the writings of Mary Kennedy Giesecke, granddaughter of Mordello Munson, *Munson Papers*, see Appendix. 1.

do better elsewhere - he says go... he will send you money in a short time - he has been all that I could have expected of a Father to me and I shall ever feel grateful to him..."¹²⁴ As evidence of his feelings, Mordello, after naming his first son Henry William, named his second son George Caldwell Munson.

James Caldwell also carried out the dying wish of Henry William Munson—"Educate my children." He provided the Munson boys with as fine an education as was available at that time, at much effort and expense to himself. All their descendants can be forever thankful to him for this. His letter to Lexington, Kentucky, dated October 8, 1846, reads:

Dear Mordello

I... will write you more fully soon. I will send you a Dft for \$100 during this month.

I am pleased to learn that you have gone into the College. You will know, Mordello, that anything I have said to you in my letters has been from the purist motives - your own happiness, success and prosperity in the world...

My cane crop is fine - my cotton nothing - corn fine - I own Mr. Talbert's fine dun horse, Boots, which you rode when here, and which you shall have... Let me know how you get along. Do ask Rv. H. B. Bascum to show you my letter. I never did write him on my life - but of you...

Mother has been very sick but may be recovering again. I will send you more money in Jany - We all give our love to you, mother especially.

Jas. P. Caldwell

It is of interest that the above-mentioned "Rv. H. B. Bascum" is the only known reference to a name similar to "Bascom" in any Munson records or memories. It may be the origin of this name in the family—Mordello named his seventh child Walter Bascom, and this name became common for sons in the family.



James Caldwell and Ann had two children of their own. Robert Milam Caldwell was born on June 25, 1836, at Oakland, and Mary Jane Caldwell on August 12, 1841, at Velasco, probably while the family was spending the summer at the beach. Mary Jane died near San Marcos in Hays County on June 4, 1858, at the age of 16. Robert Milam married Mary Elizabeth House of Houston, became a successful rancher in Hays County, and raised a family of six children. Five of these married and had families of their own, thus forming the large family of the Caldwells of Texas.

James Caldwell was a devout and active Methodist and established the first Methodist Church in Brazoria County. This church stood at the same location as the Presbyterian Church now stands next to the Peach Point Cemetery. Caldwell was active in the establishment and operation of the first college in Texas in 1840, the Methodist sponsored Rutgersville College near La Grange. Three of his Munson stepsons attended this college during its early years. In some of his letters, every person is referred to as "Brother." This is apparently his correspondence with other Methodist lay leaders.

On or about April 16, 1852, James Caldwell and Ann with their two children moved from Oakland Plantation to the "Valley of the San Marcos" in Hays County, Texas. It is written that

¹²⁴ *Munson Papers*, see Appendix 1.

they moved for reasons of Ann's failing health. For some years prior, many letters referred to Ann's illnesses. She had endured fifty-two years of rough frontier life and had given birth to ten children. Gerard was in his early twenties and was named "manager" of Oakland Plantation. Mordello, married and living at Bailey's Prairie, was named "curator." George P., almost twenty, apparently stayed at Oakland and helped with its operation. James Caldwell frequently wrote letters of advice and encouragement.

Little is known of the Caldwells' activities in Hays County, but they returned to Brazoria County for visits. In October of 1856, Ann, James, and Mary Jane Caldwell left their Hays County home on a visit to their families in Brazoria County, driving through the country (by wagon, no doubt) by way of Houston. It is assumed that they had come to attend the wedding of Gerard and Ann Eliza Westall on October 13, 1856. While on this visit, James Caldwell became ill with yellow fever and died at the home of his stepson, Mordello Munson, at Bailey's Prairie, on November 16, 1856, at the age of 63. He was buried in the Peach Point Cemetery across the road from Oakland Plantation beside the graves of his friends, Henry William Munson and Stephen F. Austin.

George Poindexter Munson accompanied his mother and half-sister on their trip back to San Marcos, arriving there on December 19, 1856, "being the ninth day after leaving home."¹²⁵ The Caldwell family continued to live in Hays County. Mary Jane died there on June 4, 1858, just two months before her seventeenth birthday, and Ann Pearce Munson Caldwell died there on September 6, 1865, at the age of 65. Ann and Mary Jane are buried in San Marcos. Her obituary is a worthy tribute to a gallant pioneer woman. Comments in old letters and diaries are most complimentary of her fine character and personality.

The Descendants of James P. and Ann Munson Caldwell

Robert Milam Caldwell I, the son of James and Ann Caldwell, was the only child to perpetuate the Caldwell family. He grew up in Hays County and married Mary Elizabeth House in Houston on March 18, 1860. They resided near San Marcos all of their lives. Mary House was the daughter of the Houston banker and mayor, T. W. (Thomas William) House, with whom Mordello Munson did much banking business during the 1850s and thereafter. The Houses also owned a large ranch in Fort Bend County. Mary House's brother, Edward M. House, became a national figure as the personal advisor to U. S. President Woodrow Wilson throughout World War I. Mary House's mother was born Mary Shearn; her parents were Charles Shearn and Mary Pode. Charles Shearn was Chief Justice of Harris County for six years. He was primarily responsible for the building of the first Methodist Church in Houston, named the Charles Shearn Methodist Church.

Robert Milam Caldwell I acquired several large ranches in central Texas and became a successful and wealthy rancher. Robert Milam and Mary House Caldwell had six children, all born in or near San Marcos, Texas, as follows:

1. James Pearce Caldwell
2. Thomas William Caldwell I
3. Mary House Caldwell
4. Mordella "Della" Caldwell I

¹²⁵ Letter from George P. Munson to Mordello Munson, *Munson Papers*, see Appendix 1.

5. Georgie Caldwell
6. Robert Milam Caldwell II

Robert Milam Caldwell I died in San Marcos on October 18, 1884, at the age of 48. His will is recorded in Hays County with the inventory of his lands, cattle, carriages, etc. His wife, Mary Elizabeth House Caldwell, died January 7, 1885, in San Marcos.

Chart 6 shows all known descendants of the Caldwells of Texas.



James Pearce Caldwell was born October 4, 1864, and died on November 15, 1935, at Coleman, Texas. He married Fanny Ellen Scofield and they raised a family of four children. James Pearce Caldwell was a successful Texas rancher and operated the San Marcos Ranch and the Blanco Ranch at Coleman, Texas.



Thomas William Caldwell I was born on June 7, 1867, and died on April 29, 1927, at Velasco, Texas. He married Mordella Stephen “Maud” Munson, a daughter of his father’s half-brother, George Poindexter Munson I, hence his own half-first cousin. There is a curious difference in the records regarding the name of Maud Munson Caldwell. Most records and most members of the family state that her name was Mordella Stephen Munson, and that she adopted the name “Maud” and was universally known by that name. However, her marriage license on file in Houston, Texas, dated February 29, 1896, shows her name as Miss Maudella Munson, and a legal affidavit on the entire Caldwell family prepared by a niece, Mary Elizabeth Caldwell Merrem, and filed in 1968 in the Brazoria County records, records her name likewise. The reason for this difference is not known. Some descendants feel that Maudella might have been a name or nickname, used by her or her fiancé, combining Maud and Mordella, while others feel that it was a recording error.

Thomas William and Maud Caldwell first lived at the T. W. House plantation in Fort Bend County, where he managed the plantation, and later in Velasco. On the death of Ann Caldwell in 1865, Oakland Plantation was left to George P. Munson I, who was then living at and managing the plantation. Gerard had been killed the year before, and Mordello owned the large Ridgely Plantation at Bailey’s Prairie. On the death of George P. Munson I without a will in 1878, Oakland was presumably left to his three children: George P. Munson II, Maud Munson Caldwell, and Sarah Munson Caldwell. Following many difficult years of unprofitability, mortgages, near defaults, and family disputes, ownership eventually went to Maud and “Will” Caldwell and then to their descendants, who still own it today. Maud and Will Caldwell raised a family of four children in Velasco, all of whom married and raised families. There are now many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.



Mary House Caldwell was born on February 20, 1869, and died on August 24, 1930, in Velasco, Texas. She attended college in Boston, Massachusetts, where she met and married Ernest Dean Dorchester. They returned to Texas to live, and Dean Dorchester held various jobs in Houston and Velasco.

Velasco was a popular summer, beach resort, and there were many resort property owners there, including Mordello Munson. It is reported that Dean Dorchester and his brother, Craig, who worked for the local railroad company, took it upon themselves to completely replat the “new” town of Surfside right over the old plan of Velasco. With new streets, blocks, and lots, the previous land owners were largely ignored. In the early 1900s the sons of Mordello Munson brought a formal complaint against this confiscation of their land, and in settlement of their claims they were awarded about a dozen Surfside town lots that their descendants still own today. Some of these lots have been identified as the site of the Mexican fort at Velasco and the Battle of Velasco in 1832. A Texas historical commission is endeavoring at this time to obtain ownership of this land for the purpose of reconstructing a model of the fort and creating a state park.

The Dorchesters raised two children: Ernest Dean II and Muriel. Their descendants include Ernest Dean Dorchester III and Ernest Dean Dorchester IV.



Mordella “Della” Caldwell I was born on March 31, 1870, and died on March 2, 1908, in Mineral Wells, Texas. She married Edmund G. Minor and they raised three children. Their oldest son, Edmund G. Minor II, married Lola Murray, a granddaughter of Mordello Munson. They both had Ann Munson Caldwell as a great-grandmother. Daughter Julia Minor married William Wesley Young and they raised four children. There are now many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Son Milam Caldwell Minor married Mary Margaret Lee and they have two children and four grandchildren, including Edmund G. Minor III and Edmund G. Minor IV.



Georgie Caldwell, the youngest daughter of Robert Milam I and Mary House, did not marry.



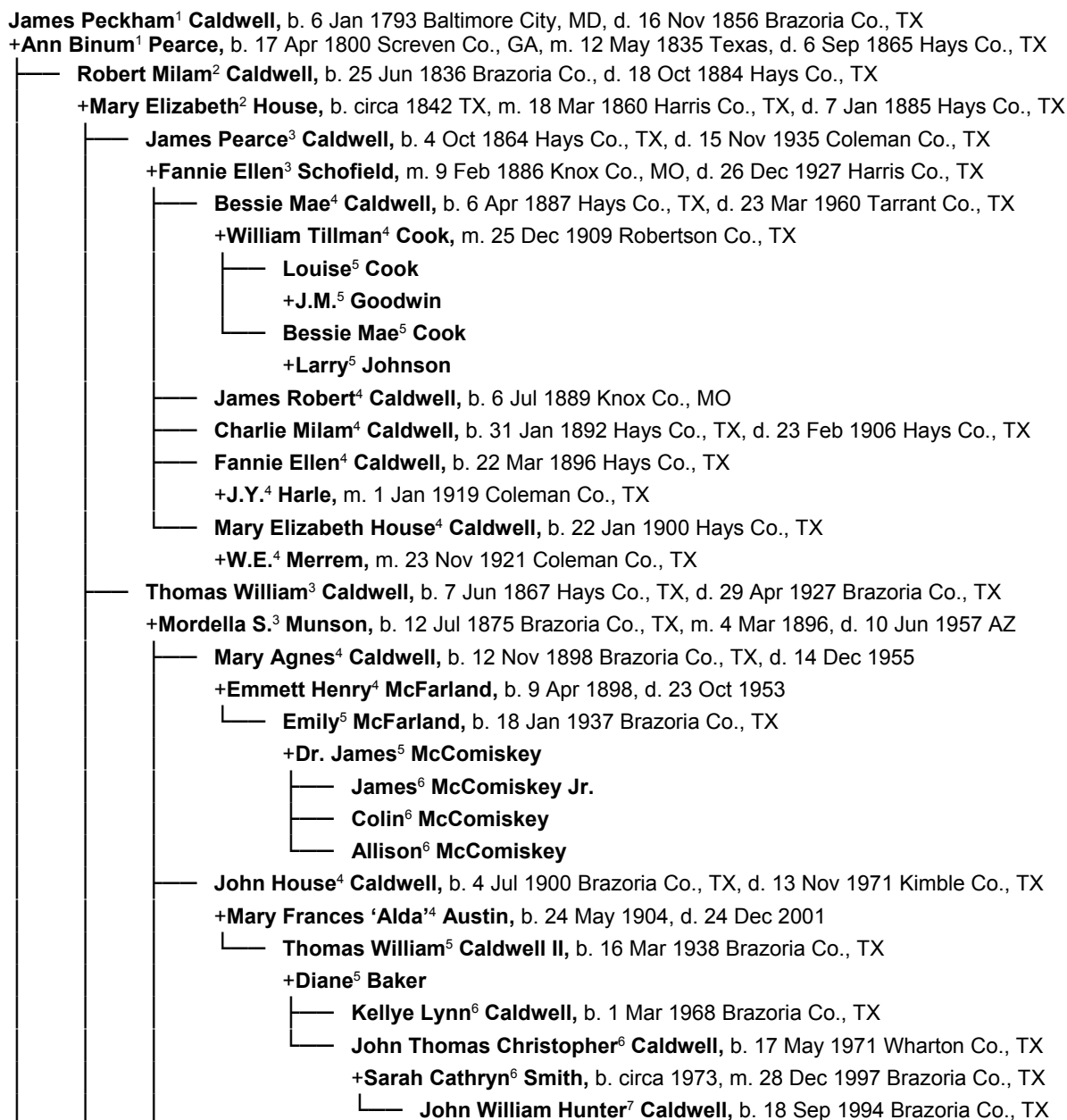
Youngest son **Robert Milam Caldwell II**, born May 20, 1875, was only nine years old when his parents died. He moved to Houston with the House family and attended the Sherman Military School in Houston. He first married Effie Frost, who died at the time of the birth of their first child, Effie Caldwell, in about 1900. Effie Caldwell grew to adulthood, married Thomas Marsh, and lived in San Antonio. They have one son and two grandchildren.

Robert Milam Caldwell II then married the sister of the wife of his brother, Thomas William. She was Sarah Kimbrough Munson III, the second daughter of George Poindexter Munson I, and again her husband’s half-first cousin. Sarah was single and was living with her sister, Maud, and T. W. Caldwell on the T. W. House Plantation in Fort Bend County. Milam and Sarah caught a train to Houston and were married in 1903 by a Presbyterian Minister named Rev. Caldwell. In 1905 they bought a ranch at Sandy Point, near Rosharon, and had their house moved from Fort Bend County, near Juliff, to its present location. They lived and ranched at the Sandy Point Plantation where they raised four sons and a daughter. Robert Milam Caldwell II died in Brazoria County on February 8, 1937.

Milam and Sarah Caldwell hired a governess, Miss Gussie Eastman from New Orleans, for the children, who then included Edmund and Julia Minor, who were living at the ranch after their mother’s death. Miss Gussie remained with the family until the family moved to Houston in

1915. This move was made so that the children might enter school there. The family continued to spend weekends and summers on the ranch at Sandy Point. Several members of the family still reside there today, and Sarah Mordella “Della” Caldwell Hanly proudly retains a hickory doll-bed given to her by Miss Gussie and a poster-bed used by James and Ann Caldwell.

Chart 6
The Caldwell's of Texas



(Chart 6 continued on next page)

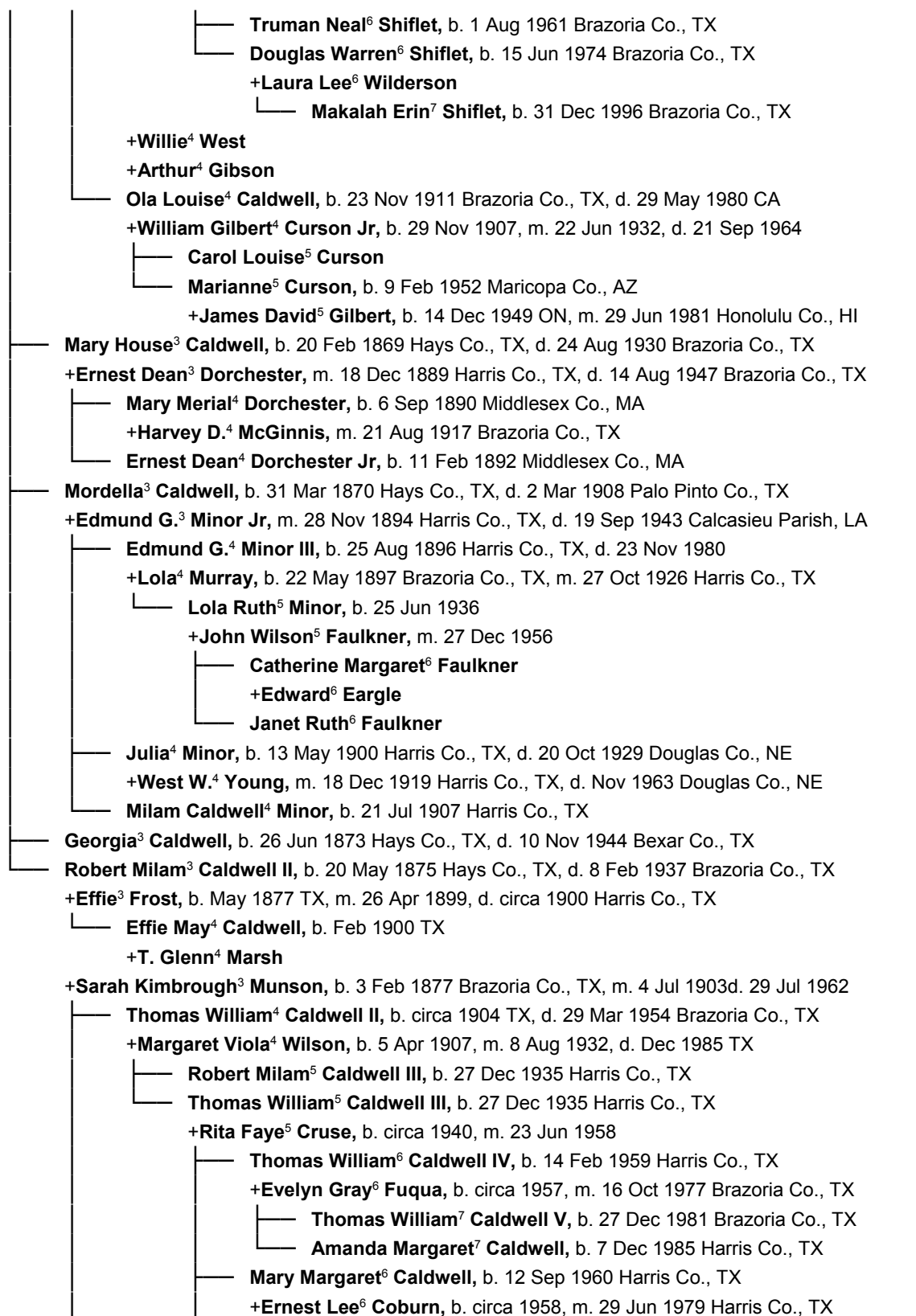
(Chart 6 continued)

Ethel Maude⁴ Caldwell, b. 15 Oct 1906 Fort Bend Co., TX, d. 16 Aug 1998 Brazoria Co.
+Truman⁴ Henley, m. 23 Apr 1927

- Juanita⁵ Henley**, b. 22 Feb 1928 Brazoria Co., TX
 - +Teddy Carroll⁵ Lovelady**
 - Teddy Carroll⁶ Lovelady Jr.**, b. 28 Nov 1946 Brazoria Co., TX
 - +Crystal Carleen⁶ Bane**, b. circa 1950, m. 19 May 1969 Dallas Co., TX
 - Douglas Carroll⁷ Lovelady**, b. 20 May 1969 Dallas Co., TX
 - Shannon Kay⁷ Lovelady**, b. 13 Oct 1970 Kaufman Co., TX
 - Nicholas Heath⁷ Lovelady**, b. 2 Sep 1972 Ector Co., TX
 - +Tom Cortez⁵ Henry Jr.**
 - Delores Yvonne⁶ Henry**, b. 28 Jun 1953 Harris Co., TX
 - Pamela Aileen⁶ Henry**
 - Elena Verlene⁶ Henry**
- Barbara Yvonne⁵ Henley**, b. 24 Jan 1930 Harris Co., TX
 - +Robert Edward⁵ Freeman**
 - Ethel Susan⁶ Freeman**
 - Kenneth William⁶ Freeman**, b. 27 Jul 1950 Brazoria Co., TX
 - +Deborah Jane⁶ Fischer**, b. circa 1956, m. 22 Nov 1994 Brazoria Co., TX
 - Jared Paul⁷ Freeman**, b. 21 Jul 1989 Brazoria Co., TX
 - Grady Edward⁶ Freeman**, b. 10 Feb 1962 Brazoria Co., TX
 - Robert Paul⁶ Freeman**, b. 27 Feb 1964 Brazoria Co., TX
- Mary Louise⁵ Henley**, b. 4 Nov 1932 Brazoria Co., TX
 - +J.W.⁵ Shiflet**
 - James Walter⁶ Shiflet**, b. 11 Sep 1953 Brazoria Co., TX
 - +Brenda Sue⁶ Hust**, b. circa 1957, m. 12 Apr 1974 Brazoria Co., TX
 - Heather Chasity⁷ Shiflet**, b. 1 Apr 1975 Brazoria Co., TX
 - +Wanda Jean⁶ Mitchell**, b. circa 1964, m. 8 Jan 1983 Brazoria Co., TX
 - James Wesley⁷ Shiflet**, b. 28 Mar 1983 Galveston Co., TX
 - +Patricia Ann⁶ Tucker**, b. circa 1963, m. 8 Sep 1988 Brazoria Co., TX
 - James William⁷ Shiflet**, b. 27 Jan 1990 Wharton Co., TX
 - Amana Renee⁷ Shiflet**, b. 14 Jan 1992 Brazoria Co., TX
 - Mary Nell⁶ Shiflet**, b. 19 Dec 1954 Brazoria Co., TX
 - +Ray L.⁶ McGinty Jr.**, b. circa 1951, m. 11 Sep 1974 Brazoria Co., TX
 - Kimberly Renee⁷ McGinty**, b. 7 Oct 1975 Harris Co., TX
 - +Valean John⁶ Vintila**, b. circa 1956, m. 13 Nov 1981 Brazoria Co., TX
 - Amelia Louise Raeann⁷ Vintila**, b. 22 Feb 1982 Brazoria Co., TX
 - Sabreena K'Lee⁷ Vintila**, b. 25 Oct 1989 Brazoria Co., TX
 - Janet Marie⁶ Shiflet**, b. 18 Aug 1959 Brazoria Co., TX
 - Roy J. Neal⁷ Shiflet**, b. 30 Jan 1985 Galveston Co., TX
 - J'Mee Chianne⁷ Shiflet**, b. 8 Mar 1994 Galveston Co., TX
 - +Allen Lee⁶ Davenport**, b. circa 1959, m. 4 Dec 1991 Brazoria Co., TX
 - Ethan Allen⁷ Davenport**, b. 28 Jun 1990 Galveston Co., TX
 - Bryan Jameson⁷ Davenport**, b. 7 Mar 1992 Brazoria Co., TX

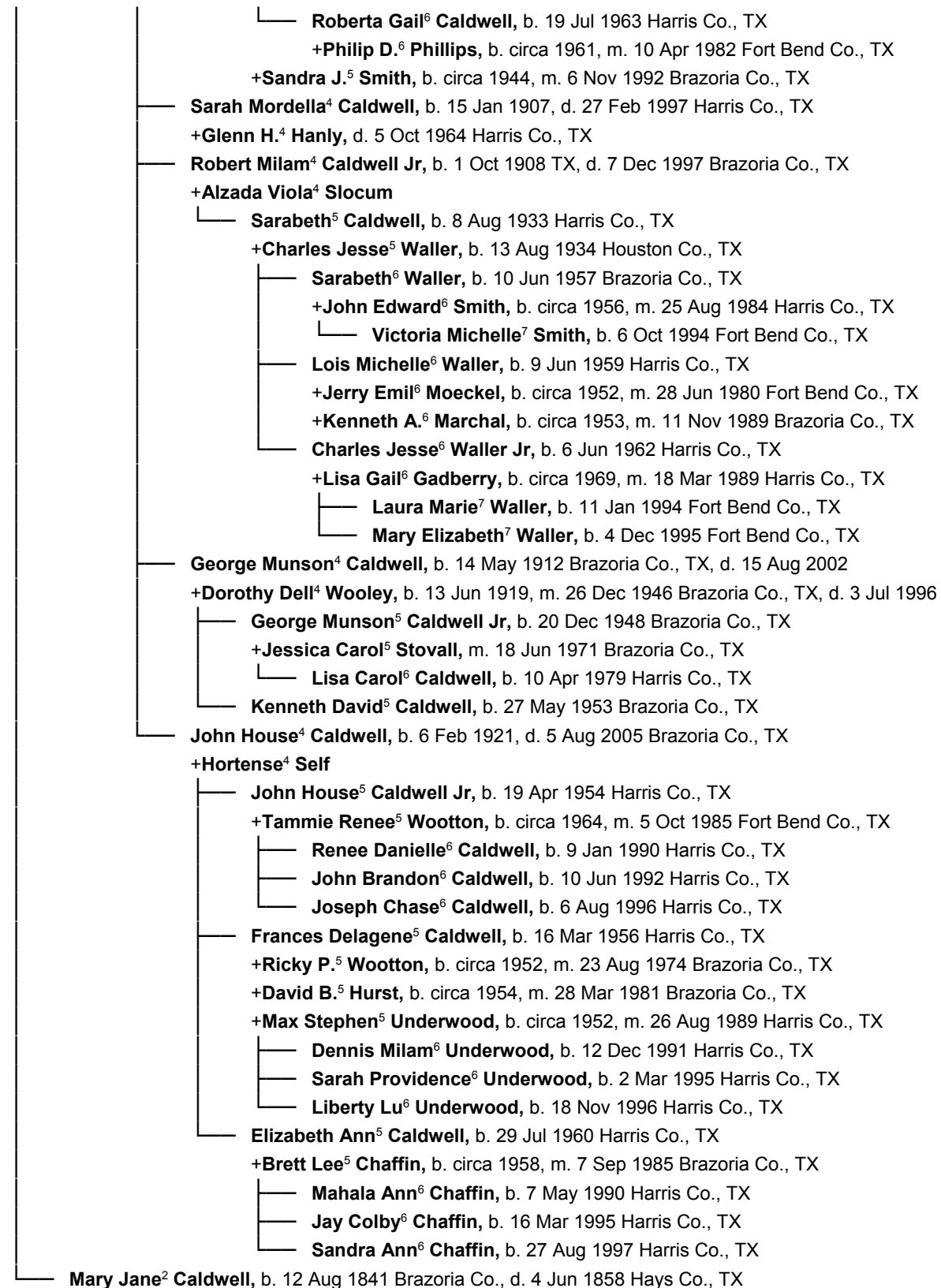
(Chart 6 continued on next page)

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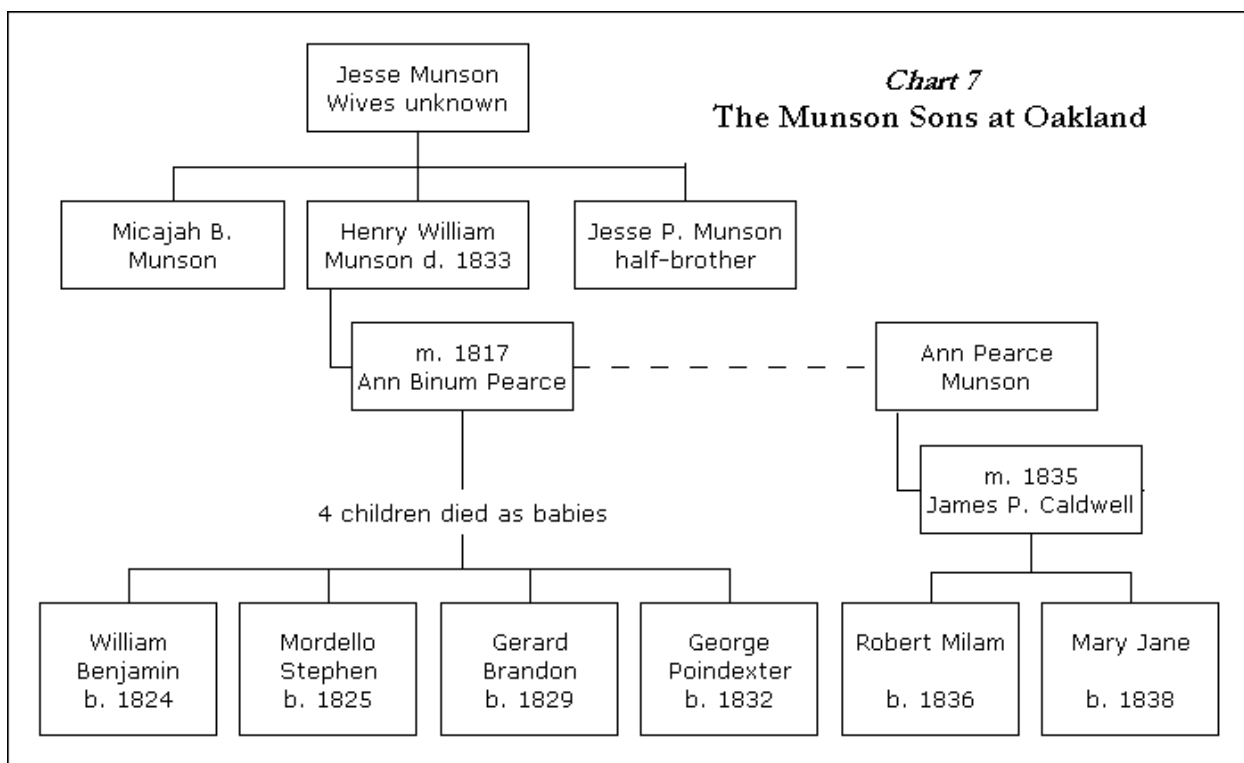


Chapter 13

The Munson Sons at Oakland — 1828–1848 and William Benjamin Munson and George Ann Sutherland



The four Munson sons and the two Caldwell children were raised at Oakland Plantation by Ann and James Caldwell. Public schools were non-existent and early private schools were one-room, one-teacher schools. The Munson sons attended early private elementary schools in Texas and Kentucky, and then attended colleges in Texas, Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Illinois, and New Orleans. All received good educations at much trouble and expense to their stepfather, James P. Caldwell. William Benjamin Munson married George Ann Sutherland in 1848 and acquired the first Munson land at Bailey's Prairie in that same year. He and his wife both died in the spring of 1849, leaving no children.



It appears that the Munson sons' childhood years at Oakland Plantation were pleasant years despite occasional severe family and political upheavals, such as the death of their father, the remarriage of their mother, and the Texas Revolution. The family spent the summers at Old Velasco on the gulf, while the slaves ran the plantation. This was the practice of many plantation owners because of the hot, humid, and unpleasant summer weather inland as compared to the more pleasant sea breezes at the beach. The Munson families continued this practice until after 1900, and they still love to visit Surfside Beach, the site of Old Velasco.

A document written by Ernest Dean Dorchester in 1936 describes these early times in Old Velasco:¹²⁶

The home life of these rich plantation owners was almost feudal. All labor was performed by slaves, open-house hospitality was general and there was much entertaining. The young men had their fine horses, their pack of hounds, and in season indulged in hunting and fishing. Everybody had his negro servant. During the winter months, relatives and friends from the old states came to visit, and some married and remained.

In the fall of the year, after the crops had been harvested, everybody went to the race track, which was located about a mile up the river [from the Gulf] on the big bend. There was a pavilion for people, fine horses competed, and much money changed hands. This immediate section became immensely popular and continued year after year. Many vessels entered the port from New Orleans and North Atlantic cities. Ice even came in from Boston, and while cargoes of cotton and molasses were shipped out, manufactured articles so badly needed in this country were shipped in to find their way to the distant plantations.

On the plantation the boys learned early about the use of horses, guns, and dogs. They learned to hunt, and they acquired a willingness—even an eagerness—to join in the battles in later years against the Indians and against the Mexicans. They played among themselves, and probably with the black children. Correspondence in later years indicates that they felt care and compassion for the Blacks within a quasi-family relationship, but clearly in laborer and servant relationships. Despite slavery's obvious inequities, the Munson sons were born into and grew up knowing only a slave society, and, accepting it, they practiced it, fought for it, and gave it up with much regret.

James Caldwell carried out the dying wish of Henry William Munson—he provided the Munson boys with a fine education. In the final settlement of Henry William's estate in 1848, a listing of the educational expenses for each son was given, and that amount in dollars was charged against that son's share of the inheritance. Although there was a spread of five and a half years in age, the three older boys, William Benjamin, Mordello Stephen, and Gerard Brandon, appear to have attended the first ten years of school together. Similarly, in later years, the two younger boys, George Poindexter Munson and Robert Milam Caldwell, although four years apart, appear to have attended school together for many years. Each of the early elementary schools was conducted by a single teacher. The list of schools attended by the older boys illustrates the difficulty of obtaining elementary education at that time:

¹²⁶ Ernest Dean Dorchester, *A Historical Sketch of the Old Town of Velasco, Munson Papers*, see Appendix I.

1833-34	Thomas J. Pilgrim—Gulf Prairie School
1836-37	Fayette Copeland—Liverpool
1837	M. Newell—Velasco
1838-41	Mr. & Mrs. James D. Rumsey—Hopkinsville, Kentucky
1842-43	Rutersville College, La Grange, Texas

Henry William Munson and James F. Perry made arrangements for a plantation school for their children. They hired the esteemed teacher Thomas J. Pilgrim, who had been teaching at San Felipe de Austin, to come to Peach Point. Their contract with Pilgrim called for him to “render his services... in the capacity of teacher... [for] as many scholars as shall be sent to him, and in such a house as they shall construct for him on the Prairie between Thomas Westalls and James F. Perrys—obligating himself to teach every other week six days, the other five, and as many hours each day as they shall think proper...” Munson and Perry further agreed “to construct a comfortable house for the accommodations of the School and to dig a well which shall be completed by the 1st of Sept next [1833] and in remuneration for his services, to furnish... board and washing and to give him the amount of tuition but Should such tuition not amount to five Hundred Dollars all deficiency they promise to make up at the expiration of the year...”¹²⁷ The school opened for the 1833 school year, just a month before Henry William’s death, and the three Munson boys, aged nine, eight, and four, were enrolled. Total tuition expense paid to Pilgrim by Munson was \$95.66 for each child, and this appears to have been for two years. The boys could surely walk to and from this school. Pilgrim was still there in May of 1834, but the school was probably closed by 1835, and Pilgrim operated a school at Bell’s Landing¹²⁸ in 1835 and 1836. It is recorded that Guy Bryan attended this school, and the Munson boys may have also. In 1836-37 the Munson boys attended school at Liverpool, south of the present town of Alvin, with Mr. Fayette Copeland. Liverpool was too far from Oakland for daily transportation, and there were almost no roads in that area of the county, so the boys surely boarded at the school. The expense for tuition, room, and board was \$93.00 each.

A letter to Col. M. S. Munson from a Mr. Fayette Copeland, postmarked May 31, 1897, Chico, Texas, states that his grandfather, Fayette Copeland, taught school at Liverpool in Brazoria County in the winter of 1836-37 and died there in the summer of 1837. This, no doubt, created an immediate educational crisis, and in 1837 the boys attended school with M. Newell in Velasco. As the tuition expense was only \$14.00 each, this must have been a less than satisfactory educational opportunity, and the boys may have been out of school in the spring of 1838.

There was then apparently no satisfactory schooling for them in Texas, and the three (William, Mordello, and Gerard) were sent to the school of Mr. & Mrs. James D. Rumsey in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. Ann and James P. Caldwell, whom the boys called “Pa,” made the trip with the boys to Hopkinsville and visited with the Rumseys and other friends there. The boys were then aged 14, 13, and 9, and they attended this school for three years, from 1838 until 1841. A letter home from 14-year-old William Benjamin, written in beautiful penmanship, dated Hopkinsville, Ky, Nov. 27, 1838, reads:

¹²⁷ Marie Beth Jones, *Peach Point Plantation*, p. 70.

¹²⁸ The Pilgrim school was probably at Columbia, the prairie town two miles west of Bell’s Landing, where the Bell family had moved in 1826. In *Peach Point Plantation*, Jones wrote that the school was within a mile of the Bell Place.

Dear Parents,

I now take this opportunity of writing you a few lines. We are all well and learning tolerably fast. We have not received a letter from you since you left Mills Point, and we are very uneasy... thinking that something has happened to you. I have wrote three letters to you... I am now reading Latin and studying the Arithmetic and English Grammar. Mr. and Mrs. Rumsey are very kind to us and treat us well... Gerrard and Mordello send their love to all as well as Myself... I have had another fight but we both were well whiped by Mr. Rumsey... The Indians are coming through here every week or two in bodies of a thousand together...¹²⁹

Your affectionate son,
W. B. Munson



In 1840, Rutgersville College, the first institution of higher learning in Texas, was opened on a hill-top location about four miles north of La Grange, Texas. This was only about sixty miles from Oakland, and the three Munson boys, aged 18, 17, and 13, were enrolled there in 1842. James P. Caldwell was an active Methodist, and in 1837 the Methodist Church sent Dr. Martin Ruter, formerly president of Berea College in Kentucky, to Texas as a “foreign missionary.” Within ninety days he organized twenty Methodist missions. Among his many efforts was a recommendation to establish a Methodist college in Texas. After Ruter died at Washington-on-the-Brazos in 1838, his Methodist associates continued his efforts and opened Rutgersville College in January of 1840 on four leagues of land granted by the Republic of Texas. While the college lasted only until 1856, it is reported that present-day Southwestern University in Georgetown and Southern Methodist University in Dallas developed from this original Methodist organization.

The three Munson boys are listed on the roll of Rutgersville College in 1842, where Mordello is listed as Stephen Mordello Munson. Another student was George Ann Sutherland of Jackson County, Texas, just to the south of Brazoria County near Matagorda Bay. In 1847 William Benjamin Munson and George Ann Sutherland were married in Texana, Jackson County. Her brother, William D. Sutherland, was killed at the Battle of the Alamo, and the Sutherland family Bible is preserved in the Alamo where one may read the entry of the marriage of William Benjamin and George Ann.

In the fall and winter of 1842 Mordello took time off from school to accompany General Alexander Somervell on the Somervell Expedition to Mexico. This military expedition was in retribution against the Mexican occupation of San Antonio earlier that year. Mordello was 17 years old. The expedition gathered at San Antonio, proceeded to the Rio Grande, and culminated in the Mier Expedition and the famous black bean drawings and executions.¹³⁰ In September and October William Benjamin was very ill and stayed with his family at Velasco. On September 24, 1842, he entered in his diary “Mort in the Army.”

After leaving Rutgersville in 1843, the three boys went East to different schools and their lives took different paths, but they remained the closest of brothers and friends throughout their lives. William Benjamin and Mordello Stephen seemed to be unusually close and affectionate brothers—their close ages plus many years together in school must account for this.

¹²⁹ This was during the times of “The Trail of Tears,” when the Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, and other Indians of the southeastern states were being forcibly resettled in the Indian Territory of Oklahoma.

¹³⁰ See Chapter 16 for details.

The three brothers attended different Methodist sponsored colleges east of the Mississippi River. Gerard attended Emory University at Oxford, Georgia; William Benjamin attended McKendree College at Lebanon, Illinois; and Mordello first attended La Grange College at La Grange, Alabama. Mordello then attended Transylvania University at Lexington, Kentucky, and finally the New Orleans Law School for a year or two. Information on the education of son George Poindexter Munson and the Caldwell children is not known.

William Benjamin Munson and George Ann Sutherland

In March of 1844, while William Benjamin, aged 20, was attending McKendree College at Lebanon, Illinois, he wrote to his parents:

My Dear Parents,

I am getting along with my studies very well and will get through in one year. I have concluded with Dr. Finley not to commence Greek but obtain a good Latin and English education. My ambition does not aspire to any occupation better & more honorable than a common Planter, and with the Education I can acquire by a years assiduous & diligent study I think I will be ready to commence the business.

There is some excitement in this Country about the annexation of Texas. The Abolition principle seems to be prime obj. with them and the advocates of that doctrine oppose it strongly unless Texas should make application as a free state and send her slaves to Mexico or Liberia. Oh, I want to see you all. I am tired of staying from home and if ever I get back you will have no trouble in keeping me...

Your Affectionate Son
W. B. Munson

Concerning his return home in the fall of 1844, an article in the Columbia, Texas, newspaper, *The Planter*, reported on Friday, November 15:

Arrival of the Mier Prisoners... While our head and heart are full of this subject, we will but pause to pay tribute of acknowledgement to a young gentleman whose benevolent conduct deserves to be commemorated in letters of gold. We allude to our fellow citizen, MR. WILLIAM MUNSON, who happened to be at New Orleans on his return from college, when the prisoners arrived there, divided among them every dollar of which he was possessed, and took a deck passage with them. Truly, such actions are their own reward.



After Texas won its independence from Mexico at San Jacinto in 1836, Santa Anna and other leaders in Mexico never totally recognized its independence and hoped to regain control of the lost territory. In 1836 a majority of Texans voted in favor of joining the United States, and the Mexican Government warned the United States that if Texas were admitted to the Union, Mexico would declare war. James K. Polk was elected president in 1844 and declared himself in favor of annexing Texas. Texas was admitted to the Union as the twenty-eighth state on December 29, 1845, after long years of arguments over the slavery question. The conditions under which Texas entered the Union included: (1) the state would keep its inappropriate and vacant land; (2) Texas might divide itself into as many as five states; and (3) the United States would settle all questions of boundaries with foreign countries. Of all the first forty-eight states,

only Texas retained the ownership of its public lands. With later massive oil discoveries, this contributed for a century and a half to its image of wealth and to its low state taxes.

Item (3) above, the question of boundary disputes, helped lead the United States into the Mexican War of 1846-48. Texas and the United States claimed the Rio Grande as their southern boundary, but Mexico claimed that Texas had never expanded beyond the Nueces River. At the same time the United States, driven by its dedication to the doctrine of *Manifest Destiny*, was actively trying to buy from Mexico the areas then known as New Mexico and California. It has been reported that the United States offered Mexico \$25,000,000 for these territories.

In the spring of 1846, President Polk ordered General Zachary Taylor, who was stationed with 3,900 men on the Nueces River, to advance to the Rio Grande. Soon after he reached the Rio Grande, a Mexican force crossed the river to meet him. On April 24 a small body of American cavalry was defeated by a body of Mexicans. News of the battle gave President Polk the opportunity to say that Mexico had invaded American territory and shed American blood on American soil, and he thus declared war on Mexico on May 13, 1846. On May 18, after winning two initial battles at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma, Taylor crossed the river and occupied Matamoros. After waiting for new troops, he moved his army up the river and marched against the important city of Monterrey. William Benjamin Munson and Guy M. Bryan were members of the “new troops,” and they may have participated in some of the campaigns that followed.

A letter written to Mordello from his mother on June 14, 1846, concerning William reports, “He went to the Trinity and brought Martha [Munson] and the two children to see us, got ready and with Guy [Bryan] and some others set out for General Taylor’s army, three weeks since he left and not a word from him.”

William must have left the army due to illness, as on October 8, 1846, William wrote to Mordello from Brazoria County as follows:

Dear Brother, An opportunity offers to send to Galveston and I embrace it by writing to you. I should have written long since but I have been sick for six weeks and not able to get out of my bed during that time. I had a rising on my thigh and it broke two days since and I am now able to get about on crutches, and will soon be well. Mother has been very sick but is recovering rapidly. The rest of the family are well.

Your aff. Brother
W. B. Munson

At the conclusion of the Mexican War, Santa Anna resigned as president of Mexico, and Mexico accepted the Rio Grande as the border and ceded to the United States, for \$15,000,000, the land that now comprises almost all of the states of New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, and California. The victorious and popular General Zachary Taylor became president of the United States. Others who participated in the war were Ulysses S. Grant, William T. Sherman, George B. McClellan, Robert E. Lee, Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson, and Jefferson Davis. It proved to be a training ground for the generals who were to oppose each other in the War Between the States.



In a letter to Mordello at Lexington on August 8, 1846, William wrote that he and George Ann planned to marry “Jany next,” however they did not marry until May 13, 1847. On May 21, 1847, William wrote to Mordello:

My Dear Brother,

I have just finished reading a letter from you to Mr. Caldwell and I feel so much rejoiced to hear from you and to learn of your recovery and more than all the joyous prospect of soon having you with us—you can scarcely imagine the pleasure I have in anticipation of your presence—And it is perhaps heightened more at my being able to present you a sister—yes, a dear, sweet sister—and if it be true that my brother Mordello will, despite of us all and his own good inclination, live a bachelor life—he will find in George Ann a kind and affectionate sister. We were married on the 13 of May—and are now at our dear Mothers—Oh! how I wish for you... I have bought of Mills the place Russell lived on and will take my dear wife to her new home in a week or two. I gave Mills eleven hundred and eleven acres of the Oyster Creek tract for the place and all say I made a firm trade—I am satisfied it is better for me—the improvements are worth 3,000 dollars and the land is fine including 500 acres—I am told you have an idea of commencing your practice in New Orleans but of course did not correct the report—you would not I know leave your native state for the simple reason that your practice would be worth more for a few years elsewhere. No, you must live in Texas—and if you apply yourself I feel satisfied that your relatives will at some future day feel proud of your successes...

The County is rapidly improving and the sugar raising has taken root with most of the planters. Mr. B. McNeil & Mills plant no cotton this year—and have erected some of the finest sugar houses ever seen—There will be about 3000 tthds of sugar raised in Brazoria Co. this year—I would like to write you a long, very long, letter—but your sister George Ann will not let me have the time—she keeps stopping me—Mother is very proud of her new daughter and I assure Billy is of his wife—it looks strange to see and think of my being married... Stephen Perry was Groomsman—we had a fine wedding—I wish you had been there—we danced until daylight—you spoke of Mr. Caldwell wanting you to study law in Lexington—and no where else—he wants you without reference to expense to go and study where you can do best—his only motive is your prosperity and success—And if you think you can do better elsewhere—he says go—and there prosecute your study—he will send you money in a short time—he has been all that I could have expected of a Father to me and I shall ever feel grateful to him—

Write soon and believe me—ever your aff. brother,

W. B. Munson

This purchase of “the place Russell lived” was the first purchase of land by the Munsons at Bailey’s Prairie and was the beginning of the Mordello Munson Ridgely Plantation. “Mills” refers to D. G. and Robert Mills, prominent bankers, planters, and land traders in Brazoria and Galveston. There are many records of their ownership of land in the Bailey’s Prairie area, and it appears that at one time or another they owned and traded most of the land in that area, sometimes more than once.

William Benjamin states that his purchase contained 500 acres, but by best present reconstructions it appears to have contained about 368 acres. It also appears that ownership problems arose immediately and that William Benjamin and George Ann did not move there. There were several ownership disputes and a major law suit involving portions of this and adjoining land in the years following. Land in those times was a very cheap commodity, about one or two dollars or less per acre; surveying was not prevalent; and it is easy to understand that

titles, boundaries, and acreages were often in dispute, especially if the buyer was not careful and precise on the matter.¹³¹

William Benjamin's purchase was almost the exact tract of land owned today by the descendants of Mordello's son, Joseph Waddy Munson. It was inherited by Joseph Waddy in the 1907 family division of Ridgely Plantation, and has been owned by his descendants ever since. The "Oyster Creek tract" referred to by William Benjamin appears to have been a large tract of 3,590 acres, between the Brazos River and Oyster Creek, some miles north of Bell's Landing. The remainder of this property was split between brothers Mordello and George in the settlement of the Henry William and William Benjamin estates in 1848. What became of these tracts is not known.

Thus the Munsons first arrived at Bailey's Prairie.

But, alas, William Benjamin and George Ann were not to live for another year. Another letter from William to Mordello, dated June 10, 1847, from Brazoria to Lexington, reads as follows:

My Dear Brother,

Yours of last date came to hand a few days since and although I had just written to you, yet I feel that I am compelled to correct certain statements made in a prior letter... I am confident that I was too hasty—and that my remarks were partly from anger—and a belief that I was badly treated... There is only one thing that I am unable to see thoroughly—my removal from home...

I am now at Mothers but will not remain long—Russell and myself did not agree and I rented the place to him for the year. I know that I can make more trading than I could have done on the plantation. You can scarce imagine the pleasure your last letter gave me—to know that you were getting on so well—that your standing among your classmates was a desirable one, and that you had many friends—all these things gave me a pleasure—and I hope and feel satisfied that your success at home may be the same. Your friends here, all, have high expectations of your success...

I am, as you may well conjecture, well pleased with my little wife. She is a perfect little saint—(but I must not say too much of her lest you should accuse me of filling up my letter with a description of a school girl that you knew all about) but I really think you will be well pleased with your sister—she often speaks of her brother Morty—and is as anxious to see him as any of us. She says give my very best respects and love to Brother Mordello—

Brother, do not stay long in Louisiana. I know it will be hard to get off—but you have many relatives at home, and your duty calls on you to stay with them... I hope you have held out voluntarily against the wiles of "The By belle" you spoke of in yours. Recollect there are Girls in your own state that are acknowledged superior to the belles of Lexington. Your friends are well—Mother's health is much improved—bring me a grey horse if you can get one without much trouble.

Your aff. brother

W. B. Munson

Records do not tell if William Benjamin and George Ann ever lived in their home at Bailey's Prairie. Family tradition says that they did live there and that they both died there within a few months of each other in early 1848. The Munson Bible gives the date of George Ann's death as February 22 and that of William Benjamin as March 18; but the Caldwell-Munson Bible gives the

¹³¹ See Chapter 18 for details of later Bailey's Prairie land acquisitions and conflicts.

date of her death as July 22. It would be most romantic to imagine that when William lost his beloved bride there was nothing left to live for; but it's easier to imagine that in those days of terribly contagious diseases they may have both died of the same infectious illness, whatever that might have been. William was buried in the Peach Point Cemetery beside his father. It is not known if George Ann was buried in Brazoria County, or possibly at her home in Jackson County. William was only 24 years old, and they left no children.

Chapter 14

Gerard Brandon Munson and Ann Elizabeth Westall



Gerard Brandon Munson, the seventh child and sixth son of Henry William and Ann Munson, was born at Oakland Plantation on September 20, 1829. After attending various private schools and Emory University in Oxford, Georgia, he returned to Texas in 1849 to help his stepfather, James P. Caldwell, manage Oakland. He assumed management of the plantation in 1852, when his "parents" moved to San Marcos, Texas, for their health. He married a neighbor, Ann Elizabeth Westall, in 1856. Gerard and Ann, often called Annie, had four children. Gerard was shot and killed in 1864 by Confederate soldiers who were stealing hogs from the plantation. When Annie died a few years later, Mordello and Sarah Munson took the children and raised them at their Bailey's Prairie home. Only one of these children, Mollie, married and had descendants.



Gerard Brandon Munson was the first of Henry William and Ann Munson's children born at Oakland Plantation. He was named for Gerard C. Brandon, a prominent plantation owner and civic leader in the Natchez District, who was elected governor of Mississippi in 1827 and 1829 (see Inset 13). Gerard C. Brandon had been elected to his second full term as governor just one month before Henry William and Ann named their sixth son Gerard Brandon Munson. Gerard C. Brandon was born in the Natchez District in 1788, and was only four years older than Henry William Munson, so they very well may have been friends as boys or young men. This also suggests that Henry William Munson must have followed Mississippi politics, even after his move to Texas.

Gerard Munson attended local schools and Rutgersville College (see Chapter 13), and in August of 1847, at the age of 18, he was enrolled at Emory College in Oxford, Georgia. Emory College was organized in 1836 as a Methodist college, and this is undoubtedly why James Caldwell sent his son there. It is interesting that he went there, while brother William went to McKendree College in Lebanon, Illinois, and Mordello to La Grange College in La Grange, Alabama. In a letter to William dated October 23, 1847, Gerard wrote admiringly of Dr. [James] Longstreet (later a famous Confederate General), Dr. Finley, and Dr. Means as members of the faculty. He also wrote:

I have concluded - with the advice of you and all other friends and relatives - that a regular course of studies would be a better now [and] in the future for me - and I have therefore concluded that what time I have to spend in obtaining this most precious gift

Inset 13
About Gerard C. Brandon¹³²



Gerard Chittocque Brandon was the eldest child of Gerard Brandon, who was born in Ireland, fought in the American Revolutionary War, and immigrated to the Natchez District immediately after the war, as did Jesse and Robert Munson.

Gerard C. Brandon was born in September of 1788 at his father's Selma plantation, about nine miles south of Natchez. He may have been a boyhood friend of Henry William Munson. He attended college at Princeton and William and Mary, graduating from the latter with highest honors. He began the practice of law at Washington, Mississippi, in about 1812. In 1816 he married Margaret Chambers of Bardstown, Kentucky, and abandoned the practice of law for the life of a planter and civic leader. His home was Columbia Springs Plantation near Fort Adams, Mississippi.

He was always active in Mississippi politics. He was a member of the state constitutional convention in 1817, was Speaker of the House in 1822, and was elected Lieutenant-Governor in 1823 and 1825. In each case the governor died in office and Brandon completed the term as Acting Governor. He was then elected Governor by large majorities in August of 1827 and again in 1829, and he completed these two terms. He was solicited to accept the United States Senatorship at the close of his term as Governor, but he declined.

He is noted as having opposed the further introduction of black slaves, a not uncommon sentiment in Mississippi in his day. During his first term as Governor, he submitted the resolutions of several state legislators regarding the abolition of slavery.

Gerard C. Brandon was married twice and had a total of eight sons and two daughters. His eldest son was named Gerard Brandon. Munson family historian Erma Munson Rich corresponded with his descendants in Natchez, Mississippi, in the 1950s. Gerard C. Brandon died at his home near Fort Adams, Mississippi, on March 28, 1850 at the age of 61.

¹³² From Dunbar Rowland, *Mississippi*, The Reprint Company, Spartanburg, South Carolina, 1976.

which can be bestowed [upon] mankind in general – that I will myself try and get as complete a knowledge of all the languages as the time I have to spend upon this all important subject will admit.

He also inquired about his “sister George Ann.” It seems that he might very well have been present at her wedding to his brother, William Benjamin, on May 13, 1847.

A year later, in his letter dated October 10, 1848, from Oxford, Georgia, he wrote:

Dear Parents... my health is tolerable good and I am now engaged in my college exercises - our college has been thrown back a great deal by the loss of one of our professors - but this place is now filled by one of our last Graduates, but not withstanding this loss she is still increasing to out strip any of her sothern rivals of the south - both in the number of her students and the superiority of her Faculty. I received your letter sometimes since and the amount which you had inclosed within - but as Kentucky money does not pass here without discount - I have not yet made use of it - but as there is a great many men from Kentucky and Tennessee who drive hogs and horses through this place every winter and will be glad to change Georgia money for it - I will therefore have a good chance of getting rid of some as the weather turns a little colder. I need hardly say anything to you about money affairs as you must know that I stand greatly in need of some.

This writing hardly sounds like that of a 19-year-old college student. The sketchy nature of his early education was showing.

In a later letter he wondered, “... how soon I could come Home – not that I dislike this place – not so – I like it as well as I could like any place away from home.” But he was eager for “that Happy period to arrive – as I begin to want to see home pretty badly.” He wrote that Bishop Andrews was going to attend the [Methodist] conference in La Grange [Texas] and would pay the family in Texas a visit. He also reported that a Mr. Aycock and two other men were leaving for Texas, apparently to settle there.¹³³

The records of “old Emory College,” now a junior college at Oxford, Georgia, and a branch of Emory University in Atlanta, show that Gerard B. Munson left the college in August of 1849. He was then 20 years old and probably returned immediately to Oakland Plantation to assist James Caldwell with the management of the plantation. James and Ann Caldwell and their two children moved to the “Valley of the San Marcos” in 1852, and Gerard assumed full management of the plantation. His younger brother, George Poindexter Munson, appears to have spent much of his time there over the next ten years. From San Marcos James Caldwell wrote letters of instructions and encouragement.

Living alone was apparently not for Gerard, for on October 13, 1856, at the age of 27, he married Ann Elizabeth Westall, daughter of the late Thomas H. Westall, owner of the adjoining plantation. The Westalls had been neighbors to the Munsons and the Caldwells since 1828. Gerard and Annie had four children at Oakland as follows:

- | | | |
|----|------------------------|---------------|
| 1. | Ann Elizabeth (Lizzie) | b. about 1858 |
| 2. | William Pearce | b. about 1860 |

¹³³ These letters were recently in the possession of Mrs. Allie Daniels of Del Rio, Texas, a granddaughter of Gerard Munson.

- | | | |
|----|--------------------|----------------|
| 3. | Mary (Mollie) | b. about 1862 |
| 4. | Gerard B. (Geddie) | b. May 1, 1864 |

Late in the evening of March 22, 1864, Gerard was riding on his horse in the woodland pasture of the plantation, when he was shot in the head and killed. His body was not found until the next morning, and his horse was found tied to a tree about one-half mile from his body, which had been very carefully arranged. Camp Wharton, a Confederate Army camp, was located about four miles from Oakland and soldiers from that camp regularly shot and stole hogs from the plantation. Mrs. Westall, the daughter of Confederate Colonel J. Bates, sent a note to the colonel informing him of the death of Gerard. Colonel Bates was in command of all of the military forces in that part of the country and immediately began an investigation of the murder. During this investigation, one of the men involved escaped from Camp Wharton, after which General Magruder ordered that the other men involved be turned over to civilian authorities. Affidavits taken by the civilian authorities during the month of May, 1864, accused the soldier named Pankey, who had escaped, of being the man who fired the shot. Colonel Bates stated that “there was much excitement in the Camp and community against the perpetrators of the crime.”¹³⁴

On March 30, 1864, Sarah K. Munson wrote to her husband, Mordello, who was in the Confederate Army as follows: “George and some others have gone to San Antonio to put some regiments there on the look out for him [Panky] as it was thought he was with a band of deserters on the Colorado.” At this time Mordello was participating in the final campaigns of the War in Louisiana. His return letter dated April 6, 1864, from “Near Mansfield” reads:

My Own Dear Wife,

Your letter of 30th March was received yesterday, which is the only one that has reached me. In it you allude to the murder of my Brother, having previously written particulars. George’s letter has not reached me. Sarah, you may imagine, but cannot know the crushing influence of this sad intelligence upon me. Had Gerard been killed in battle or died a natural death, it would have been severe enough, but to be murdered, I know not how, that his murderer still lives, almost deprives me of reason. Send for George, tell him to write me particularly the circumstances, the name of the fiend, with a minute description of him. My Brother’s murder shall be avenged if I live. Write to Anne, tell her how much I feel for her, that she must regard me as her own Brother, that Gerard’s children whilst I live shall be to me as my own. Tell her that I will write to her after awhile. I cannot do it now. It costs me dearly even to write you upon a subject that harrows up my soul. Then my Mother, Sarah, you write her for me. I cannot do it, tell her so. The murdered form of Gerard is constantly before me. Write me for God’s Sake whether the assassin is in custody, it is my duty and should be my privilege to kill him. There is no phisical suffering that I would not gladly endure to accomplish it—”

An indication of the number of hogs which had been killed and stolen by the soldiers is shown in the following affidavit:

¹³⁴ Private notes of Erma Munson Rich, *The Munson Papers*, see Appendix 1. The present location of the cited affidavits is not known.

The State of Texas
County of Brazoria

Personally appeared before me, James Brougham, Justice of the Peace, County of Brazoria, State aforesaid, the subscriber, Mrs. A. E. Munson, to me well known, who upon oath solemnly sworn that their has been killed and consumed by the troops stationed at Camp Wharton, Brazoria County, and as aforesaid, 12,600 (twelve thousand six hundred) lbs, 90 (ninty) Head of Hogs, belonging to her husband, Mr. G. B. Munson, lately killed in this neighbourhood, and for which their never was received any pay or certified account whatever.

Witness: A. E. Westall Signed: Mrs. A. E. Munson

Sworn & subscribed to before me this 11th day of April, A.D. 1864, in the County and State aforesaid. J.P.B.C.

The reply from General Slaughter was that “accounts for depredations committed by soldiers cannot be allowed only by an act of Congress.”¹³⁵

All of this was taking place while Annie was in an advanced state of pregnancy. Her fourth child, a girl, was born five weeks after Gerard’s death. The daughter was named Gerard Brandon Munson and was always known as “Geddie.” On May 10, 1864, Sarah Munson wrote to Mordello that Annie had another girl about two weeks old. Annie and the children continued to live on the plantation. Her Westall family members were near, and a brother, Thomas, was staying with her immediately after Gerard’s death.

George Poindexter Munson now had to take over the management of Oakland Plantation, as Robert Milam was in Hays County, Mordello was in the army, and James Caldwell was dead. An entry in the diary of Sarah Munson on October 18, 1864, reads, “George is here. He came over yesterday with those men who killed Pankey.” After the marriage of George Poindexter Munson and Agnes Davis in February of 1866, they lived at Oakland with Annie and her children during the last year of Annie’s life. That there were problems with the arrangement is indicated in a letter dated October 29, 1866, from Sarah K. Munson to Mordello, who was then serving in the Texas State Legislature in Austin, as follows:

I have not heard from George since he left, though I think they are getting along badly again... Annie told me that if she could get some of her mother’s land, which she was expecting to do, that she was going to leave there if George and Agnes was going to remain, that it was impossible to live with them. I guess this is a mutual sentiment.

Annie Westall Munson died in September of 1867, three years after the death of her husband. It is thought that they were both probably buried in the neighboring Peach Point Cemetery, but there are no known markers or records as evidence.

Their four children, aged nine, seven, five, and three, were given a home with their Uncle Mordello and Aunt Sarah at Bailey’s Prairie, and Mordello was appointed their guardian. During the following years he carried out his pledge that “They shall be as my own.”

¹³⁵ Private notes of Erma Munson Rich, *The Munson Papers*, see Appendix 1. The present location of the cited affidavits is not known.

Gerard and Annie's first child was named **Ann Elizabeth** and was always known as "Lizzie." The dates of her birth and death are not recorded. Although records show that she was a minor in 1878 when some Westall property was sold, she appears as an only child at age three in the 1860 census.¹³⁶ One record states that she died young, but in 1878 she was approximately 20 years old. She never married and tradition tells that Lizzie was always very much loved by the many Munson cousins with whom she was raised.

Gerard and Annie named their second child and only son **William**¹³⁷ for Gerard's deceased older brother, William Benjamin. This is one of the many instances where a Munson named his son for his brother, which illustrates again their close familial relationships. Son William P. Munson lived at Bailey's Prairie the greater part of his life and never married. In September of 1892 Mordello gave as the reason for selling some cattle at a low price that he wanted the money for his nephew, William, to repair the old home. William was staying with the George P. Munson Sr. (II) family in Columbia at the time of his death, which was about 1924.¹³⁸ George and Louise arranged and paid for his burial in the Munson Cemetery at Bailey's Prairie.

Gerard and Annie's youngest child, **Geddie**, was a mentally afflicted child. The explanation might be found in a letter from Gerard to Mordello about a month before Gerard's death and about three months before Geddie's birth. The letter reads:

Oakland Plantation, Feb. 19, 1864

Dear Brother

...we have had a troublesom time with the Measels and we are not yet through with them. Annie is just out of bed but has a terrible cough which I fear will prove serious to her. Our children are allmost well of it and getting allong verry well.

It is now well known that measles in an expectant mother can have disastrous effects on the child.

Geddie had a happy childhood growing up on Mordello's Bailey's Prairie plantation with the fourteen other children. She attended the school on the plantation where she learned to read and write. She had her own special animals to care for and to love. When she was older she lived for a time with her sister, Mollie, in Houston, but was unhappy and homesick to return to the plantation. Her Uncle Mordello provided her with a small home and nurse, and she lived near the old home place for the remainder of her life. She died in the 1890's, probably 1899, and is buried in the Munson Cemetery near her home.

Mary, the third child of Gerard and Annie, was the only one to leave descendants. Always known as "Mollie," she attended a private school in Houston, where she met and married George T. Brown. They had two children, Mordello Ray Brown and Pearl Brown. They lived in Houston, where she died February 21, 1918, at the age of 55 or 56. She is buried in Houston.

¹³⁶ Unless Lizzie was born prematurely, her age as recorded in the 1860 census is probably incorrect. However, the census does prove she was the oldest child. In the 1870 census, her age is recorded as twelve years which is probably correct.

¹³⁷ William's middle name, Pearce, is found in Gerard's will, and may indicate that he was named for his great-grandfather William Pearce.

¹³⁸ Joe U. Munson Sr., who was born in 1912 and often stayed with "Cousin Willie" at Bailey's Prairie, remembered that he was about twelve years old when William died.

Mordello Ray, known in later life as Ray M. Brown, married and lived in San Antonio. He had a son, H. K. Brown, who was an engineer and lived in Downer's Grove, Illinois, in the 1950s. A granddaughter, Barbara Brown Anderson (Mrs. Robert E. Anderson), was living in Abilene, Texas, in 1958.

Pearl Brown married Walter Allen Daniels in 1919 and they lived in Del Rio, Texas. "Allie" Daniels was for years the bookkeeper for Del Rio Wool and Mohair Company. They had one daughter, Mary Daniels, born May 27, 1921, who was living in Ohio in 1952. Pearl died sometime after December, 1952, the date of her last correspondence with the Munsons.

Chapter 15

George Poindexter Munson and Agnes Davis and the George P. Munson Family



George Poindexter Munson was the eighth and last child of Henry William and Ann Munson. He was born at Oakland Plantation on June 4, 1832. His father died when George was sixteen months old, and George was raised by his mother and his stepfather, James P. Caldwell. George enlisted as a private in the Confederate Army in 1861, and served until the spring of 1864 when his brother Gerard was killed. In 1866 George married Agnes Davis, and they lived at several locations in Brazoria County including Oakland Plantation Velasco, Austin's Bayou, and Bailey's Prairie. They had four children of whom three grew to adulthood. Their only son, George P. Munson II, married and gave rise to the "George P. Munson family" of today. Their two daughters, Maud and Sarah, married two half-first cousin Caldwell brothers, Will and Milam, giving rise to the large family of Munson-Caldwells of Brazoria County.



George Poindexter Munson was named for George Poindexter, a prominent lawyer, soldier, judge, governor, and senator of early Mississippi. George Poindexter, about twelve years older than Henry William Munson, came to Natchez as a young "Jeffersonian" lawyer-politician in 1802 and became a leading legal and political figure in the Territory while Henry William was in his teens. Henry William must certainly have been an admirer and follower of Poindexter, must have admired him as a role model, and his later naming a son for him tells much of Henry William's values and aspirations.

George was only three years old when his mother married James Caldwell, and he was raised at Oakland Plantation by his mother and stepfather. He may have attended school near the plantation and in Velasco as the older boys had done, but there are no records of his attendance or of the expenses. In later years he was in school in Egypt, Texas, in Wharton County with his half-brother, Robert Milam Caldwell, who was four years younger. In a letter from Milam to James Caldwell from Egypt, Texas, the boys were asking permission to leave school early for the Christmas holidays. Milam wrote:

...our school will be out christmas. I want to now if we cant get of a little beforehand. George and myself have both got the lepracy [severe loneliness]. I never wanted to see home so bad in my life... I am a little distrest to know wether we can get away from this place or not—home sweet home.

Inset 14
About George Poindexter¹³⁹



George Poindexter was born in 1779 in Virginia, where he was orphaned at an early age. He studied law but was obliged to begin his practice without completing his studies. In 1802 he migrated to the Mississippi Territory, soon after its administration was taken over by the United States, and opened a law office in Natchez. He immediately attracted attention in his profession and in politics by his remarkable force of character and by his unwavering loyalty to the principles of Thomas Jefferson.

Soon after his arrival, Poindexter was appointed attorney general for the Territory by Governor William C. C. Claiborne. In 1805 he was elected to the Territorial General Assembly and in 1807 as the Territorial delegate to the U. S. Congress. There he served three terms during the administrations of Jefferson and Madison. Though he had no vote, his fierce debate on issues was a force in the U. S. Congress.

He was appointed a Territorial Judge for Mississippi by President Madison in 1813 and participated with Andrew Jackson in the Battle of New Orleans in 1814. He remained a Judge until 1817, and it was written "As a judge he was able, prompt, impartial, unrivaled in talent, and, at the same time, unsurpassed by any lawyer in the State in legal learning." It was during these years as delegate to Congress and Territorial Judge that Henry William Munson acquired his admiration of George Poindexter.

In 1817, as Mississippi gained statehood, he was the leading member of the state Constitutional Convention. He served as Chairman of the Committee, and, it was written, "the constitution may, without injustice to others, be said to have been shaped almost entirely by the hand of Mr. Poindexter." The instrument is remarkable for simplicity, clearness, brevity, and proper scope, viz: the statement of fundamental principles and institutions, leaving details to legislation.

In the same year Mr. Poindexter was elected without opposition as the first member of the U. S. House of Representatives from the State of Mississippi. In 1819 he was elected Governor of Mississippi, where he served until 1822. In the year 1822 he was defeated in the election for the U. S. Congress; and he lost his young son, his wife, and his health. He was crippled and a partial invalid for the remainder of his life.

In 1830, his health somewhat restored, he was named to the U. S. Senate upon the death of Senator Robert H. Adams. He served in the turbulent times of Andrew Jackson, Calhoun, and Clay, and was a bitter enemy of Jackson. In 1835 he was defeated for re-election and spent his last years in the practice of law in Jackson, Mississippi, where he died in 1853. During many of his years in Mississippi, his home was the plantation "Ashwood", near Woodville.

The Washington correspondent for the Philadelphia Inquirer once wrote of George Poindexter, "As a man of talent, he had but few equals in the United States. His education was finished and classical; his reading was extensive and varied; there was not a subject in the sciences, literature, history or politics, with which he was not familiar..."

¹³⁹ From Dunbar Rowland, *Mississippi*, The Reprint Company, Publishers, Spartanburg, South Carolina, 1976.

On the back of the letter is the notation, "Milam's first letter." The date of the letter might have been around the mid-1840s when Milam would have been about nine and George about thirteen years old. The school in Egypt was under the supervision of the Rev. Mr. Hord with Mr. Wilson as headmaster. This was probably one of the early Methodist schools in Texas, as the Rev. Jesse Hord was sent to Texas as a missionary by the Methodist Church before 1840.

In the spring of 1852, when he was 19, George was attending school in the vicinity of San Marcos, where his parents had recently moved. James Caldwell wrote Mordello Munson that George had arrived at their home in Hays County on Friday evening, May 20, "having ridden 56 miles that day," and that "George will leave on Monday and the session will be out in July." He added that he hoped George "will go to Bastrop to study medicine."

After the death of James Caldwell on November 16, 1856, at the home of Mordello Munson at Bailey's Prairie, George accompanied his mother and his half-sister, Mary Jane, on their trip back to Hays County. George wrote to brother Mordello, "the trip was pleasant," and that they "were nine days on the road."¹⁴⁰ In the same letter he wrote that his mother wanted him to remain there until the next fall but "I can't consent to do so." He asked if there was "a chance to get Stroble's Place." The marriage of brother Gerard and Annie Westall and their residence at Oakland was possibly the reason for George "wanting a home of my own," even though, he wrote, he knew he always had a home. The "Stroble Place" must not have been available, as he spent the next few years at Oakland Plantation, assisting with work there, and at Bailey's Prairie. In the diaries of Sarah K. Munson, there are many mentions of the trips George made between the two plantations.

George P. Munson's Confederate Service — 1861–1864¹⁴¹

In 1861 at age 28, George enlisted in the Confederate Army. He enrolled and mustered into service on June 1st at Camp Colorado near Coleman in West Texas as a private in Company B (Captain William A. Pitts' Company), First (McCulloch's) Regiment, Texas Cavalry (also known as First Regiment, Texas Mounted Riflemen). This was the first regiment in Texas to be mustered into Confederate service in 1861. On March 4, 1861, Confederate Secretary of War Leroy Pope Walker directed Benjamin McCulloch to raise a regiment of ten companies of mounted riflemen to protect the Texas frontier between the Red River and the Rio Grande. McCulloch, hoping for a command east of the Mississippi River, turned the colonel's commission over to his brother, Henry Eustace McCulloch. This was not only the first regiment in the state organized for Confederate service, but the original commission to Ben McCulloch was one of the first in the Confederacy.

Though proof is lacking, George may well have been the first from Brazoria County to enlist. If not, he was certainly among the first. Information in Creighton's *History of Brazoria County* is that volunteer enlistments did not commence in that county until the fall of 1861. Furthermore, the ten companies of the First Regiment, Texas Mounted Riflemen, were not recruited anywhere on the Gulf Coast.¹⁴² One can only guess, then, why George enlisted so far from his home, and almost eight months before his brother Mordello enlisted at Galveston in January 1862. It is

¹⁴⁰ A distance of less than 200 miles, a four hour drive today.

¹⁴¹ Unless otherwise noted, all information relating specifically to George P. Munson's Confederate service is from *Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers who Served in Organizations from the State of Texas*, micropublication M323 (Washington: National Archives), Rolls 3, 169, 368.

¹⁴² The counties were Bexar, Travis, Gonzales, Bell, Comanche, Bosque, Rusk, Bureson, and Lamar.

tempting to think he was caught up in the recruitment efforts on a trip to or from Hays County where his mother Ann lived with her son Milam Caldwell and his family, but apparently he enlisted at Camp Colorado several months after those efforts had ceased.

One significant point is, of the three Munson brothers, George was the least encumbered. Mordello and Gerard each had a wife and young children, as well as a plantation to run, and George was only assisting Gerard at Oakland. With few responsibilities at home, it may have been a sense of duty in combination with a restless desire for adventure that drove George to the Texas frontier.

George's service as a member of Company B is documented, though the records are not complete. The Company Muster Roll, dated September and October, 1861, reports that he was absent on detached service at Fort Mason (near the town of Mason) from 26 October 1861. The Regimental Return for July, 1861, shows him "on express to Camp Cooper (about 17 miles south of Throckmorton)," and the September 1861 Regimental Return, on detached service to Fredericksburg since the 24th of the month.

In a letter to Major Samuel Boyer Davis, Assistant Adjutant General, dated December 26, 1861, Colonel McCulloch, writing from the headquarters of the West Military District in San Antonio, requests a transfer for George:

George Munson a private in Co" B,, 1st Regiment of Texas Mounted Riflemen wishes to be transfered to Capt Perkins' Company of Col Bates Regiment.

Mr Munson is a young man of property who lives on the Brosos where his property is and desires to be connected in the service with those whose special business it is to defend his property and home, he is a good reliable man and soldier that will do his duty any where he may go, is justly entitled to the favourable consideration of his officers, and as I cannot see that any injury could be done the service by the transfer respectfully ask that it may be granted, and if so that a copy of the order be sent to Capt Perkins at once.

Colonel McCulloch followed up with a letter written from Houston, 20 January 1862:

George Munson a private in Co" B,, 1st Regiment of Texas Vol Riflemen provisional C.S. Army desires a transfer to Capt Perkin's Co of Col Bates' Regiment.

Mr Munson is an excelent young man, and a good soldier, who has a large interest in land and negroes in the lower Brasos, and all his relations are living near Col. Bates's Camp, many of whom are in that Regiment, under these cercumstances and believing that Genl Hebert would readily consent to the transfer I directed Capt Pitts Co "B,, to permit Mr Munson to report to Capt Perkins and now respectfully ask for an order of transfer which I have before done in another communication to you I think.

George probably knew Colonel Joseph Bates. He was a politician and soldier who in 1854 moved to a large plantation on the west side of the San Bernard River in Brazoria County, where he engaged in farming and ranching until his death.

Although he received a transfer by way of a special order dated 24 January 1862, George was not immediately given the assignment he had requested. Instead, he was transferred to DeBray's Mounted Battalion and ordered to report to Atchison's Company (26th Texas Cavalry, Company G (Atchison's), DeBray's Regiment, Davis' Mounted Battalion). Considering that Mordello had enlisted in Company G the day before, this was either an amazing coincidence, or the result of a last minute request for which there is no extant documentation, probably the latter.

From Galveston, Mordello wrote to his wife, Sarah, of George being with the company on the night of February 9, 1862, when they expected a ship of Admiral Ambrose Burnside's fleet to bombard Galveston. This proved to be a false alarm. From Galveston, George, like Mordello, moved eastward, and in 1863 was in Opelousas, Louisiana, near the Atchafalaya River, where there was heavy fighting. In a letter to Mordello he wrote that he had been ill and in the hospital, and that he was worried about Mordello since he had not heard from him in about three months. In the summer of 1863, after hearing that Mordello had been with the Confederate forces at the siege of Vicksburg and had been captured and released, he wrote: "As you got home safe I am selfish enough to rejoice that you was captured. I hope you will stay there."

At an undetermined date, George joined Colonel Bates' regiment, the one to which he had previously requested a transfer. Whether this was a transfer, reorganization or re-enlistment is not known. At the outbreak of the War Between the States, Joseph Bates was appointed a colonel in the Confederate Army. He raised a regiment that later became, after several reorganizations, the Thirteenth (Bates's) Texas Infantry. He was placed in command of the coast defenses between Galveston and Matagorda Island and established headquarters at Velasco. From May to September 1863 he and his regiment served in Louisiana under Major General Richard Taylor. For a time Bates was commander of the post at Brashear City.

Probably near the end of 1863, George joined Company H of Colonel Reuben R. Brown's Thirty-fifth Texas Cavalry. Brown was elected lieutenant colonel of Colonel Bate's Thirteenth Texas Infantry and saw service on the Texas coast between Galveston and Matagorda Island, primarily near Brown's home at the mouth of the Brazos. In 1862 he was given command of an independent cavalry battalion, the Twelfth, made up of companies from Bates' regiment. Toward the end of 1863 Brown was promoted to colonel and organized and commanded the Thirty-fifth Texas Cavalry, a consolidation of his own and Major Lee C. Rountree's battalions. This regiment served in Texas until it was transferred to Louisiana in the spring of 1864 and saw action in Brigadier General Henry E. McCulloch's brigade of Walker's Texas Division during the Red River Campaign. Brown's was one of two regiments named the Thirty-fifth Texas Cavalry, the other being that of Colonel James B. Likens.

George was at home on leave at the time Gerard was killed—March 22, 1864. He had been at Bailey's Prairie all that day visiting with Sarah Munson and the children. Mordello had returned to the army a few weeks earlier and was in Louisiana. George had to assume the responsibilities for the Munson family in connection with this tragedy. A few days after the murder, George, accompanied by some friends, went to San Antonio to alert the regiments there about the escape of the soldier named Pankey. George then went to San Marcos to see his mother. Ann Caldwell, at the age of 64, was ill and was to live only another year and a half, and it was George's sad duty to tell her about the death of Gerard.

Upon his return home, George was busy for the next few weeks securing witnesses to testify at the civilian investigation. The investigation was held on May 17 and 18, 1864. Thereafter, George may have had a deferment from further service in the army, or service may have been voluntary. He now had to assume supervision of Oakland Plantation. There was much to be done for Annie and the children, and Sarah Munson would need assistance and company from time to time. An entry in the diary of Sarah Munson on October 18, 1864, states, "George is here. He came over yesterday with those men who killed Pankey." Two years later, on February 13, 1866 at Oakland Plantation, George P. Munson, at the age of 33, married Agnes Davis.

Traditionally, “Agnes Blakely Davis was an unusual person for her time and place. She was born on February 22, 1842, in Mobile, Alabama, the daughter of Isaac S. Davis of New York and Matilda Blakely of Montreal, Canada. Isaac and Matilda Davis were devout Roman Catholics, and Matilda had been disowned by her Blakely father because of her Catholicism. Agnes completed what was then a good education for ladies at Ursuline Academy in Galveston. After her schooling, Agnes had to make her own way by teaching. Mordello Munson engaged her to tutor his children at Bailey’s Prairie about the time of the Civil War. It was there that George P. Munson met and courted her. Agnes was an intellectual person, and family tradition tells that she contributed articles to national magazines in the East.”¹⁴³

The Real Story of the Davis Family

Family tradition, as wonderful as it may be, is rarely accurate in all its details. Research on the Davis family by Marianne Curson Gilbert of Phoenix, Arizona, and to a lesser degree, Laura Munson Cooper of Arlington, Texas, both great-granddaughters of Agnes Davis Munson, illustrates the truth of that statement.

Matilda Agnes Davis, her name as recorded in her baptism record and the family bible, was born February 22, 1850¹⁴⁴ (not 1842) on Government Street in Mobile, Alabama. She was the sixth of seven children, and second of that name born to Isaac S. and Matilda Blakely Davis. (The first Matilda Agnes was born in 1843, and died in 1849). Agnes, therefore, was just shy of her sixteenth birthday when she married 33 year old George Poindexter Munson in 1866.

As an interesting side note, on an otherwise intact page in the Davis family bible, there is a hole near the inside margin where the year of Agnes’ birth was written. Although it can’t be proven, it appears to be the result of a deliberate act to conceal her age. There are two theories other than natural deterioration of the paper. First, Agnes, having lost the last of her immediate family by age thirteen, and on her own by age fifteen, felt it necessary to conceal her age to better make her way in the world. One has to wonder if Mordello and Sarah would have hired her to tutor their children, or if George would have given her a second glance, had they known her true age. On the other hand, it is almost incomprehensible that a fifteen year old could successfully pass as a twenty-three year old schoolteacher. The second theory is that Agnes’ daughter Maud, who next owned the bible, wanted to conceal that her mother married so young, and to a man more than twice her age. The latter theory arises from the fact that in 1943 Maud burned her mother’s diary because of several things Agnes had written.¹⁴⁵

Matilda Agnes Davis’ Jewish Roots

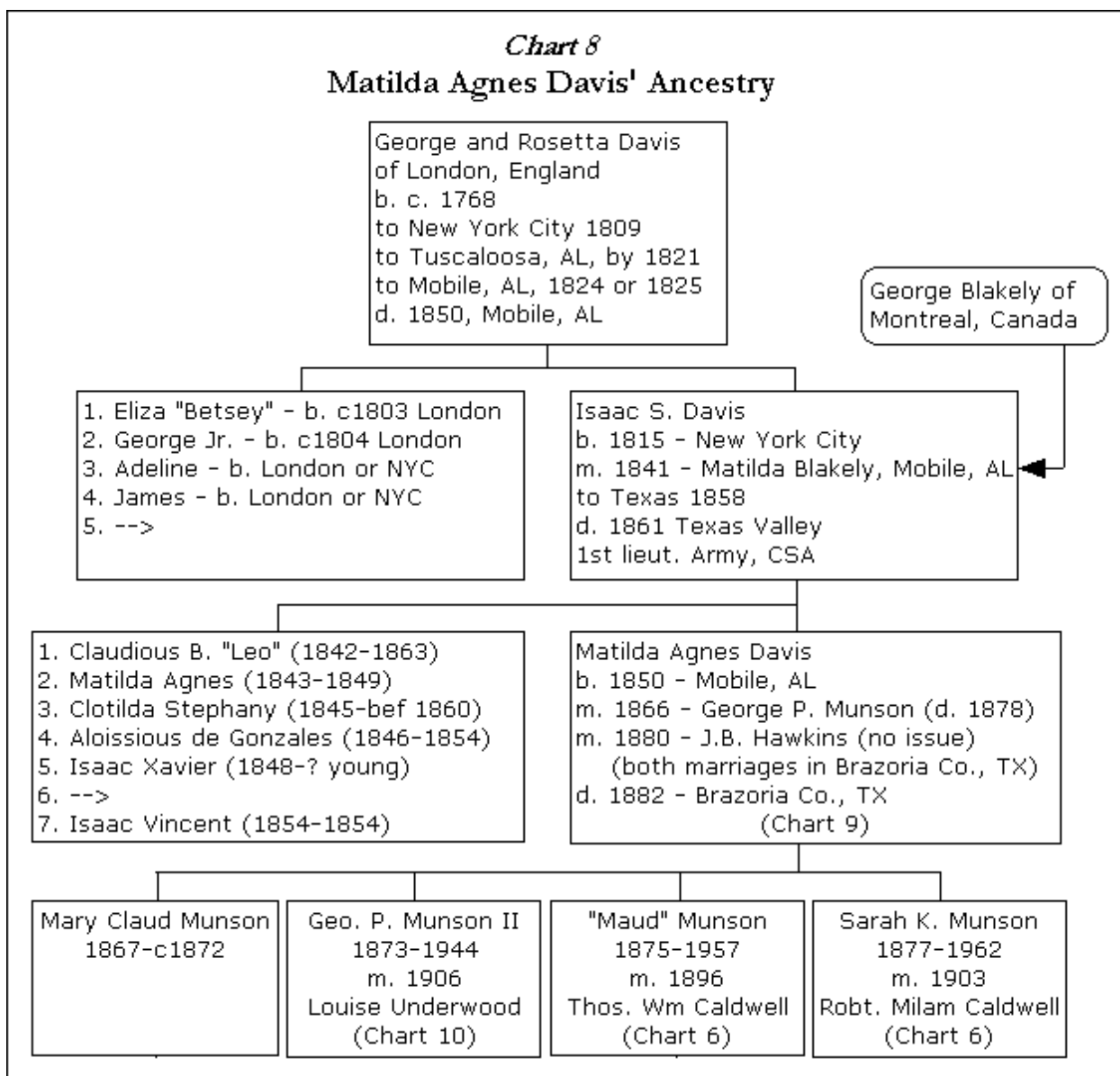
Agnes’ grandparents, George and Rosetta Davis, were English Jews who came to this country from London about 1809. They lived in New York City and Tuscaloosa, Alabama, before moving to Mobile in late 1823 or early 1824. In 1825 George began referring to himself as “ORIGINAL George Davis” to distinguish himself from others of the same name, and the title stuck. He was involved in various pursuits, but was best known as an auctioneer. By all accounts,

¹⁴³ Information contributed by Catherine Munson Foster for the 1987 edition.

¹⁴⁴ Mobile Catholic Records, Baptism: 565, The Catholic Center, Archdiocese of Mobile, Mobile, Alabama.

¹⁴⁵ Ruth Anna Munson read the diary and afterward witnessed its destruction. Maud disapproved of her mother’s unladylike behavior—riding horseback astride behind George is one of the things mentioned—and she was also concerned with Agnes’ accounts of her second husband’s eccentricities and cruelty, especially toward George II.

he was a unique and colorful character. George and Rosetta are buried in Mobile in the Jewish section of the old Magnolia Cemetery.



George and Rosetta Davis had five children. The youngest was Agnes' father Isaac born May 8, 1815, in New York City.¹⁴⁶ Isaac was studying medicine in Mobile when the Florida War (Second Seminole War) broke out in 1835. Although very young, he joined a company and served out his term with honor. Afterward, he returned to Mobile where he was a merchant and auctioneer. He joined several fire companies, founded one, and was a member of the "Can't Get Away Club," a voluntary society in Mobile founded in 1839 by gentlemen to provide healthcare to yellow fever sufferers.

¹⁴⁶ It should be noted that while there is ample evidence that Isaac's father was named George, and that "Original George Davis" had a son Isaac, nothing has been found that specifically states they were father and son. However, there is overwhelming circumstantial evidence.

In 1841 at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Mobile, Isaac S. Davis married Matilda Sophia V. Blakely, daughter of “Col. George Blakely, late of Quebec, Lower Canada.”¹⁴⁷ Research of the Blakely family has so far been a disappointing exercise because so little has been found. In Isaac’s obituary, Matilda’s father is called “Councilia George Blakely.” It also says he was “nearly connected to General Ross”¹⁴⁸—probably Major General Robert Ross who is famous as the British general whose troops burned Washington, D.C. in 1814. If accurate, George Blakely was almost certainly of Scots-Irish origin, and therefore, probably Presbyterian. This would seem to support the family tradition that he disowned Matilda for marrying a Catholic, but records do not support that tradition.

Isaac and Matilda’s marriage record in the Mobile Catholic records reads as follows (emphasis added):

In the year of our Lord **one thousand eight hundred & forty one**, & on the eleventh of April I the undersigned Cath. Priest of Mobile, certify that I have joined together in the bonds of matrimony Isaac S. Davis & Matilda S. Blakely – the license of the court having been obtained dispensation from the publication of the banns and **disparitate cultus granted** & two witnesses present. In faith whereof I have signed. James McGarahan.

“Disparitate cultus (*disparitas cultus*) granted.” simply means that permission to marry in the Catholic Church was granted even though **one** of the parties was either of another faith, or an un-baptized Catholic. To support tradition, that person would have to be Matilda. However, at the time of their marriage in 1841, Isaac was a Jew:

In the year of our Lord **one thousand eight hundred and forty two** and on the twenty fourth of December, i the undersigned vicar general of the right Rev. Bishop of Mobile certify that i have baptized with the [] rites of church Isaac Davis, aged about twenty eight years, who **abjured judaism and joined the catholic church**. Godmother Margaret Berranjan. in faith whereof i have signed[,] J. Bozin.¹⁴⁹

The only possible conclusion is it was Matilda, not Isaac, who was Roman Catholic at the time of their marriage. According to her obituary Matilda was a convert, but she only appears in the Mobile Catholic records in regard to her marriage and the births of five of her seven children. Whatever the complete story may be, the facts render family tradition of disownment inaccurate, either wholly or in the details.

The Davis Family in Texas

In the depression that followed the financial panic of 1857, “Capt. Davis lost a fortune, but seemed to bear it without a murmur, as coming from the hands of Divine Providence.”¹⁵⁰ The following year Isaac and Matilda moved from Mobile to Galveston¹⁵¹ with the only two of their seven children to survive more than a few years—Claudious, who was called Leo, and Agnes.

¹⁴⁷ Marriage notice, Mobile *Daily Commercial Register and Patriot*, Mobile, 12 April 1841, p. 2.

¹⁴⁸ Isaac Davis Obituary, Galveston *Weekly Civilian*, Galveston, 20 August 1861.

¹⁴⁹ Mobile Catholic Records, Baptism: 1313, The Catholic Center, Archdiocese of Mobile, Mobile, Alabama.

¹⁵⁰ Isaac Davis Obituary, Galveston *Weekly Civilian*, Galveston, 20 August 1861.

¹⁵¹ Supposedly they moved to Texas with the intention of making Galveston their home, but the family was living in San Antonio when the 1860 census was taken.

When Texas seceded from the Union in 1861, Isaac “was the first to raise a company to protect Galveston, but was ordered to the Rio Grande. The day previous to his departure he was attacked by severe illness, but said he would be carried aboard the vessel before he would resign.”¹⁵² He was commissioned 1st Lieutenant in Captain August A. Tomlinson’s Company F, Infantry, Rio Grande Regiment, John S. “Rip” Ford, commanding,¹⁵² but died of his illness in July 1861, probably in Cameron County, at age 46. Leo had enlisted, probably at the same time as his father, and was also ordered to the Rio Grande. He drowned June 21, 1863, at Sabine Pass at age twenty. Their deaths are recorded in the family bible.

When Isaac and Leo left Galveston, Matilda and Agnes moved to the Ursuline Convent. Matilda died there “after a long and painful illness, borne with Christian fortitude” in August 1862.¹⁵³ She is buried in Galveston, but there is no stone that marks her grave.¹⁵⁴

Agnes probably remained at the convent where, according to family tradition, she received a fine education. Though no record exists that proves Agnes attended Ursuline Academy, information from the Ursuline archivist is that there exists very few records for that time period in Galveston.

Just how or when Agnes ended up in Brazoria County is not known, but it may have had some connection to the arrival in Brazoria of Reverend Peter Berthet.

The first record found of Father Berthet is a letter dated 9 March 1861 from Liberty, Texas, in which he mentioned, among other things, that the Ursulines are well and that their pupils increase every day. He was in Liberty at least until the end of May 1864. In August of that year, he was in France, but wrote a letter to Bishop Odin in New Orleans in which he expressed a desire to return to Texas even though his family and friends wanted him to stay. He wrote the next month that he loves the old France but still prefers Texas. He returned in January 1865, and was assigned the mission in Brazoria. In a letter from there on 12 June 1865, to Archbishop John Mary Odin, C.M., in New Orleans, Father Berthet wrote that he was preparing to set up a Catholic school at Brazoria. He had recently been given the mission that included “all the country from the railroad at Galveston to Colorado and from the Gulf to the railroad from Columbus to Houston.”¹⁵⁵

Some of the students from Ursuline in Galveston may have been transferred to Brazoria when the new school opened, or some of the older students may have gone there as teachers or aides. The latter seems plausible because Agnes was hired as a tutor for Mordello and Sarah Munson’s children at Ridgley Plantation, even though she could not have been more than 15 years old. It was while she was working at Ridgley that she met George P. Munson. They were married by Father Berthet in 1866, a little over a week before Agnes’ sixteenth birthday.

George P. and Agnes Davis Munson — 1866–1878

After Gerard’s death, George was manager of Oakland Plantation, and George and Agnes lived at Oakland with Annie Munson and her four children. Annie died one year later in

¹⁵² “Confederate Muster Rolls;” Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives Commission; Austin, No. 1344.

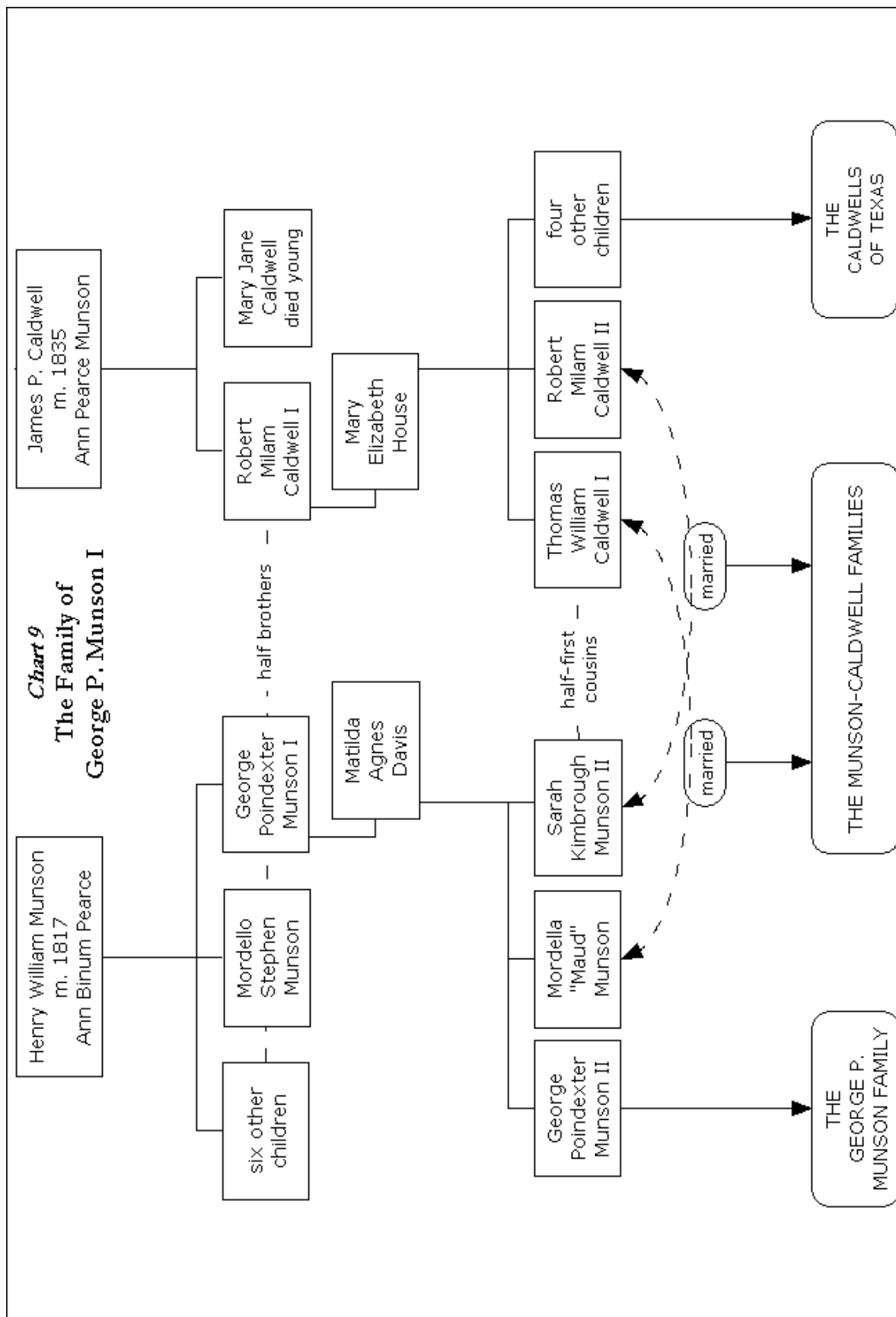
¹⁵³ Matilda Davis Obituary, the *Galveston News*, Galveston, 26 August 1862.

¹⁵⁴ Following the 1900 storm, the grade level of Galveston was raised and only those gravestones that families paid to have reset were preserved.

¹⁵⁵ Notre Dame Archives.



George P. and Agnes Davis Munson



September of 1867, and her children were taken into the home of Mordello and Sarah Munson. With brothers William and Gerard and parents James and Ann Caldwell having died, George and Mordello were the only adult Munsons left alive. With Mordello firmly established at Ridgely Plantation at Bailey's Prairie, Oakland was inherited by George. Despite many very difficult times, the 770 acres are still owned by his descendants today.

In 1869 George and Agnes moved to a house "on the Beach." He wrote to his half-brother, Milam Caldwell, on December 4, 1869, that they had a "pleasant little home" and that he had leased Oakland Plantation to a Mr. Mimms for five years. The old home, he wrote, was badly in need of repairs and it was almost impossible to get help of any kind.¹⁵⁶ This was soon after the end of the Civil War—all slaves had been freed, economic conditions were depressed, and carpetbaggers and scalawags were problems. In ten years Texas had gone from one of the most prosperous states in the United States to one of the least prosperous. It was perhaps while they were living at the beach that Agnes taught at Oyster Creek School. A year or two later George and Agnes were living at Austin's Bayou in the eastern part of Brazoria County, in the vicinity of Liverpool. Agnes also taught school there for a while.

George and Agnes' first child, a daughter Mary Claud, was born June 8, 1867, at Bailey's Prairie,¹⁵⁷ perhaps at Ridgely Plantation. If so, Sarah Munson did not record the event in her diary. Claud, as she was called, was undoubtedly named for Agnes' older brother Claudious (Leo) who had drowned several years earlier at Sabine Pass while serving in the Confederate Army. The next five and a half years with no recorded children were followed by the birth of three children in rapid succession. On August 21, 1873, their second child, a son, was born at Austin's Bayou.¹⁵⁸ He was originally christened George Blakely Munson, after his grandmother, Matilda Blakely, whose father had disowned her because of her religion. When George became older he objected to being so named and took his father's middle name Poindexter.¹⁵⁹ Because his father died young, George II was known as George P. Munson until his son was named for him, after which he was known as George P. Munson Sr. and his son, George III, as George P. Munson Jr.

George, Agnes, and the children¹⁶⁰ visited Mordello's family at Bailey's Prairie as often as possible. In one undated letter from Austin's Bayou, Agnes wrote to Emma Munson, eldest daughter of Mordello and Sarah, that they hoped to spend Christmas at Bailey's Prairie.

Early in 1875 George and Agnes moved from their Austin's Bayou home to a new home at Bailey's Prairie. Their new home was on a ridge about three-fourths of a mile south of the home of Mordello and Sarah on land owned by Mordello. It was on this same site that their son, George II, later built his first home. On November 1, 1877, Mordello conveyed by deed to his younger brother, George, a tract of land comprising 100 acres in the southwest corner of the Cornelius Smith Survey. It is not known if this was a gift or was part of the division of the estate interests. This tract was intended to include the location of the ridge where Agnes and George had their home, but did not, due to an error in the field notes. At their Bailey's Prairie home,

¹⁵⁶ This seems to indicate that the two-story home was still there in 1869.

¹⁵⁷ The date and location are recorded in the Davis family bible.

¹⁵⁸ Conflicting dates are recorded. This date is given by his granddaughter, Catherine Munson Foster, from the family bible.

¹⁵⁹ In the 1880 census, seven year old George appears as "Geo. P. Munson." At such a young age, it is unlikely he was aware of the issue, if indeed one existed. A more likely scenario is that his name was changed to honor his father following George Sr.'s untimely death.

¹⁶⁰ Claud probably died before George was born, and if so, "children" is not correct.

George and Agnes had two additional daughters, Mordella Stephen “Maud” Munson, born July 12, 1875, and Sarah Kimbrough Munson III, born February 3, 1877. These namings indicate their fond feelings for their brother and sister-in-law.

Agnes and George’s first daughter, Claud, died before she was five years old and is buried in the Munson Cemetery at Bailey’s Prairie. George P. Munson I died on April 19, 1878, in Columbia, Texas, at the age of 45 and is buried in the Munson Cemetery. Agnes Munson was remarried to J. B. Hawkins in July of 1880. The marriage was a stormy affair. Entries in Agnes’ diary told of her husband’s sudden and unexplained trips to one of the Carolinas. Upon his return from one of these trips, he caught her trying to get into a locked trunk that he had forbidden her to open. A huge row ensued. Other entries told of his abusive treatment of young George. She died in Columbia, perhaps in childbirth,¹⁶¹ on February 25, 1882, and is buried in Old Columbia Cemetery in West Columbia.

After Agnes’ death, Mordello and Sarah gave a home to the three children: George P. II (aged 10), Maud (aged 8), and Sarah III (aged 6). Sarah’s diary describes their arrival. Sarah’s son, George, and his young wife, Hannah (Adriance), had been living at Ridgely since their marriage in 1878. On February 23, 1882, they and their baby daughter, Lydia, had made the move to the “Van Place,” the first children to move away from the plantation. An entry in Sarah’s diary dated February 26 reads, “Sabbath, Emma’s birthday... We heard this morning of the death of Mrs. Hawkins. Poor Agnes how sad I feel to hear that she is gone, and feel for the poor little orphans.” On the next day she records: “Mr. Munson told Mr. Shapard to tell Mr. Hawkins¹⁶² to send the children out on the train tomorrow. Emma put up the bed and fixed up Doll’s room.” An entry on the next day says, “Waddy went up to meet the little children but they did not come,” and on March 2: “Waddy went to the depot and found the children there, he brought Georgie home [on his horse], and Emma and Armour went up and brought Maud and Bittie down. Poor little things are perfectly delighted to get back. Mr. Munson and the boys went fishing again, caught a nice mess of trout & perch.” On March 4 she wrote, “Waddy sent the wagon for the children’s things this evening,” and on March 7, “I commenced my school again. Have an addition in George, Maud and Bittie.”

Mordello’s eldest son, Henry W. Munson III, then 32 years old, was appointed as the children’s guardian.¹⁶³ Milam Stephen Munson, Mordello’s youngest child, was then 13, and Geddie, the youngest of Gerard’s, who was living at Bailey’s Prairie, was 18. These three newly adopted young cousins were the only small children in the household, and they were given much love and attention by the older children and by their new parents. They attended school on the plantation as the other children had done, and were sent to other schools when older. George P. II attended the new Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas, and the girls were sent to a private school for young ladies in Houston. It was these two Munson daughters, Maud and Sarah, who married their two half-first cousins, the brothers Thomas William “Will” Caldwell and Robert Milam Caldwell II, and gave rise to two large families of Caldwells who are also Munsons. These families are described in Chapter 12.

¹⁶¹ Ruth Anna Munson is “almost certain” that Agnes wrote near the end of her diary that she was pregnant.

¹⁶² J.B. Hawkins died on 18 February 1884, and there was a claim against his estate for money owed his stepchildren.

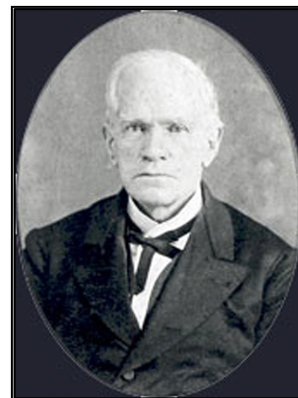
¹⁶³ During her widowhood Agnes and the children continued to live at their home on Bailey’s Prairie, and Agnes recorded in her diary the many kindnesses extended her by Henry William Munson (III).

After leaving Texas A. & M. College, George P. Munson II was a stockman and farmer at his home on Bailey's Prairie for the remainder of his life. On October 10, 1906, at the age of 33, he married Louise Underwood. Louise was born in Columbia (now East Columbia), Texas, the daughter of Joseph Patterson Underwood and Louisa Amanda Barnes Hanks. Joseph Underwood was a prosperous merchant in Columbia, and they had a large home there. This home still stands today as the historic "Underwood House" and is occasionally open for historic tours.

The Underwood Family¹⁶⁴

Ammon Underwood, the grandfather of Louise, came to Texas from Massachusetts in 1834, arriving at Bell's Landing,¹⁶⁵ now East Columbia. He was born at Dracut, Massachusetts, on February 13, 1810, the eighth of nine children by his father's second wife Mercy Durant. According to his journal, his reason for coming to Texas was to "gratify a wild and rambling notion."

Ammon Underwood was the son of Asa Underwood and his second wife, Mercy Durant. Asa was born on August 30, 1754, in Boston, and lived there until he was almost twenty years old.¹⁶⁶ At the age of 20 he marched with Colonel Davis Green's regiment at Cambridge on the alarm of April 19, 1775, eleven days after the "shot heard 'round the world" was fired at Lexington. Also marching to the alarm, but in a different company, was Asa's future father-in-law, Jacob Durant. Both men are listed in records as Dunstable Minutemen—Dunstable referring to "Old Dunstable" that was then claimed by both Massachusetts and New Hampshire.



Ammon Underwood

In Texas Ammon Underwood volunteered for the *Texian* Army in September of 1835, and took part in the march on San Antonio and the Battle of Concepción¹⁶⁷ under the leadership of Stephen F. Austin, James Bowie, James Fannin, and Ben Milam. This was an early battle of the Texas Revolution fought near San Antonio on October 28, 1835. An all volunteer detachment of ninety men repulsed a Mexican cavalry force of about four hundred, losing one man and killing about sixty Mexicans. The *Texian* forces proceeded to capture San Antonio in December of 1835. Ben Milam lost his life in this encounter, and six months later James and Ann Caldwell named their first child Robert Milam Caldwell. This capture of San Antonio by *Texian* forces led to Santa Anna's siege of the Alamo in February and its fall on March 6, 1836.

¹⁶⁴ Information for this section was supplied by Catherine Munson Foster; additions and corrections by Laura Munson Cooper for the 2006 edition.

¹⁶⁵ Founder Josiah Bell named this river port town Marion, but it was commonly called "Bell's Landing." Two miles to the west, he also founded the prairie town of Columbia, now West Columbia, which in 1836 became the First Capital of the Republic of Texas. By 1842, and for many years thereafter, the name Columbia was alternately used for both towns, usually, but not always, according to the relative fortunes of the communities at a given time. On November 16, 1927, postal officials formally recognized the town previously known as Marion, Bell's Landing and Columbia, as "East Columbia," by which it is presently known. Because historic documents, letters, maps, newspaper articles, etc., were not consistent in their nomenclature, considerable confusion arises when researching the area.

¹⁶⁶ Asa Underwood file, no. W26611; *Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty Land Warrant Application Files, 1800-1900*; micropublication M804 (Washington: National Archives), microfilm 2434. The birth date on his gravestone at Woodbine Cemetery, Dracut (now Lowell), Massachusetts, is August 30, 1752, and family tradition says he was born in Woburn.

¹⁶⁷ Ammon was with the main army that Austin brought up an hour after the battle.

After the Battle of Concepción, Ammon Underwood went on furlough and was soon appointed head of the post commissary at Columbia.¹⁶⁸ In 1838 he entered business with Mrs. Catherine Carson, a widow who had come to Texas in 1824 from Catahoula Parish, Louisiana, with her husband, William, and three children.¹⁶⁹ The Carsons were members of Stephen F. Austin's original three hundred colonists and were granted a league of land on the Bernard River.¹⁷⁰ After her husband's death, Mrs. Carson moved to Columbia¹⁷¹ where she made a living operating a boarding house catering primarily to students of the Thomas J. Pilgrim school.¹⁷² She and Ammon Underwood entered into a business partnership and bought the Thomas W. Nibbs property, which included a two-story log house built in 1835. They had the house enlarged and opened a boarding house. The work must have been completed in the latter part of 1838, because on January 7, 1839, Ammon Underwood married Catherine Carson's daughter, Rachel, and the ceremony took place in the new house. This was the origin of the historic "Underwood House," one of the oldest and most beautiful buildings standing in East Columbia, Texas, today.

After their marriage the young couple lived in the house, and it was operated as a boarding house with Mrs. Carson in charge. In 1846 Mrs. Carson married Gail Borden Sr., and he moved into the house. Both the 1850 and 1860 censuses list them all as living there with Ammon Underwood as head of the household.

For many years Ammon Underwood conducted a successful mercantile business in what is now East Columbia. He owned a large brick store near the Brazos River and had his own wharves and loading docks on the water's edge. In addition to being a merchant, he was a cotton factor and owned two working plantations. He was also postmaster at Bell's Landing from 1836 to 1845. His name is included in an article entitled "Wealthy Texans – 1860" in the *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, October, 1967. As with many other wealthy Texans, much of his fortune was lost at the end of the Civil War. When Union troops captured Galveston, they took the cotton in the warehouses there, including a large amount owned by Ammon Underwood. Such merchants also lost heavily from the worthless Confederate money which they held at the end of the War.

After the War, Ammon Underwood continued to operate his store, and he and Rachel continued to live in the Underwood home until December 25, 1875. On that date they deeded the house to their oldest son, Joseph Patterson Underwood and his wife, Louisa, possibly as a Christmas present. The elder Underwoods moved into living quarters over their store, and he represented the Brazoria District in the Nineteenth Texas State Legislature which met in Austin from January 13 to March 31 of 1885. Ammon Underwood died on November 17, 1887, at the age of 77. He is buried in Old Columbia Cemetery in West Columbia, where the State of Texas has erected an historical marker on his grave. Rachel died on February 14, 1896, in Galveston.



¹⁶⁸ "Republic of Texas Claims," pension application, Texas State Library, 1870. Because the application was made years after the names Marion and Bell's Landing had been dropped, it is believed the town referred to in this instance is the river town.

¹⁶⁹ There were five children in the Carson family according to Austin's *Register of Families*, but there is only information on the middle three, John P., William J. and Rachel Jane. The youngest of the unidentified children, a girl, probably died at a very young age; the oldest, also a girl, is somewhat of a mystery as she was born before William and Catherine married. Laura Munson Cooper, a third great-granddaughter of William and Catherine Carson, believes, but can not prove, that she was Harriet Patterson, Catherine's younger sister.

¹⁷⁰ *State of Coahuila and Texas Land Titles*: folder 33, Texas General Land Office (TGLO), Austin.

¹⁷¹ The prairie town, now West Columbia.

¹⁷² See also Chapter 13, p. 139.

Joseph Patterson Underwood was born on February 26, 1845. He enlisted in the Confederate army on January 1, 1863, two months before his 18th birthday. He served until the end of the War in Gibson's Battery of Light Artillery in Wharton's Division. Soon after his return, he entered the mercantile business with his father. On June 22, 1867, he married Louisa Amanda Barnes Hanks. She was born in Pittsboro, North Carolina, on June 3, 1847, the daughter of Dr. John Armstrong Hanks and Euphemia Morris Hanks. She came to Texas in May of 1866 at the age of 18. Joseph said later that when he saw her step off the steamboat at Columbia, he vowed she would be his wife. "Mr. Joe," as he was usually called to differentiate him from his father, who was always Mr. Underwood, continued to operate a store until shortly before his death on February 1, 1925. Louisa Underwood died on February 2, 1912. They are both buried in Old Columbia Cemetery.



Joe Underwood

Joseph and Louisa Underwood had four children: Kate (born February 11, 1869, and died June 8, 1912), Laura (born December 21, 1877, and died September 15, 1960), John Hanks (born January 21, 1879, and died September 16, 1937), and Louise (born July 8, 1880, and died September 5, 1946). Of these, only the youngest daughter, Louise, was ever married. Laura Underwood, Louise's sister, painted with oils and gave art lessons to students, including this writer's mother. This writer has several paintings and drawings signed by his mother and dated 1905, and also two small oil paintings by Laura Underwood—one of the small building in Columbia which served as the first capitol of the Republic of Texas in 1836, and the other of the famous triple-trunked live oak tree in Columbia, under which, according to tradition, the first constitution of the Republic of Texas was adopted. This majestic tree was destroyed in the 1900 storm.

The Family of George P. Munson II and Louise Underwood

George P. II and Louise Underwood Munson built their first home near the southeast corner of the 100-acre plot which he had inherited from his father, and where he had lived as a boy with his parents. In the latter part of 1909, about three years after George and Louise married, their home burned and they lost nearly everything in the house. In 1910 George built their second home a short distance to the north of the first in a grove of ancient live oak trees. George's first cousin, Milam Stephen Munson, with whom he had lived during their teenage years, gave George and Louise the 3.34 acre tract on which the second house was built. The tract lies adjacent to the original 100 acres. It was in this home that George and Louise raised their family.

The seven children of George P. Munson II and Louise Underwood Munson, all raised at Bailey's Prairie, were:

1. George P. Munson III b. November 13, 1907
2. Catherine Munson b. December 31, 1908
3. Joseph Underwood Munson I b. April 25, 1912
4. Laura Louisa Munson b. December 13, 1913
5. John Hanks Munson I b. February 6, 1916
6. Robert Milam Munson b. October 20, 1918
7. Virginia M. Munson b. July 18, 1922

George P. Munson II died on January 6, 1944, at the age of 70, and Louise on September 5, 1946, at the age of 66. Both are buried in the Munson Cemetery at Bailey's Prairie, just across State Highway 35 from where they spent most of their lives.



George Poindexter Munson III was born in the Underwood home in East Columbia, was raised at Bailey's Prairie, and attended Texas A. & M. College. He graduated in 1928 with a degree in civil engineering and an appointment as Second Lieutenant in the U. S. Army Reserve.¹⁷³ He was engaged in the practice of civil engineering all of his life, including seven years in the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. From 1932 until 1941 he was employed by the Texas Highway Department. With war clouds gathering, he was called into active military service in September of 1941 in the grade of Captain, and was assigned as a company commander. In 1943 he was given command of the 843rd Engineer Aviation Battalion, in which assignment he participated in the Normandy Invasion, the liberation of Paris, and the allied advance across Western Europe to Munich, Germany. After the war he remained in the army reserve in the grade of Colonel, and returned to the Texas Highway Department as district maintenance engineer in the Houston District.

He was again called to active duty, for the Korean War, in January of 1952 in the grade of Colonel, and was assigned as commander of the 44th Engineer Group (regiment) at Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri. He was later sent to France as commander of the 20th Engineer Brigade, one of the permanent U. S. Army engineer brigades. He thus commanded, in sequence, a company, a battalion, a regiment, and a brigade.

After the Korean War, he returned to the Texas Highway Department where he was engaged in the design, construction, and maintenance of roads and bridges; and to the Army Reserve where he commanded the 406th Engineer Brigade in the grade of Brigadier General and later the 75th Army Maneuver Area Command in the grade of Major General. He retired from the Army Reserve in 1965 and the Texas Highway Department in 1972.

In retirement General George P. Munson was executive director of the Coastal Industrial Water Authority in Liberty, Chambers, and Harris Counties, in which position he supervised the design, construction, and operation of one of the largest water supply and transportation installations ever constructed in Texas. He retired from this assignment in 1983 at the age of 75.

On July 28, 1930, George married Eula Bee German and they have two daughters: Ruth Munson Blackmore and Sara Munson Deats. There are no grandchildren. Eula Bee Munson passed away in Houston on February 3, 1971, and is buried in the Munson Cemetery at Bailey's Prairie. George married Ethel B. Jungman of Houston on June 19, 1973. Ethel passed away March 2, 1995, and George on January 1, 2000, at age 92. He is buried beside Eula Bee in the Munson Cemetery.



¹⁷³ During its first seventy years, Texas A. & M. College was not only an agricultural and mechanical college but also a major U. S. military school. It was an all male school, and a large number of the students were members of the Corps of Cadets. Upon graduation these Cadets were commissioned as officers in the U.S. Army Reserve, or in certain cases, the Regular Army.



George P. Munson Sr. (II)



Louise Underwood



The seven children of George and Louise Underwood Munson: Johnnie, Catherine, George, Laura, Ginger, Bobby and Joe

Catherine Munson, the second child of George P. Munson II and Louise Munson, was born on December 31, 1908, in the old Underwood home in East Columbia. It seems that Louise always went “home” for the birth of her children, probably to be with her mother, but also to obtain the services of a doctor in East Columbia. Catherine graduated from Angleton High School and attended the College of Industrial Arts, now Texas Woman’s University, in Denton, Texas, graduating in 1929 with a degree in journalism. She worked for the Fort Worth *Record Telegram* and for the *Houston Press*.

On December 30, 1929, she married William Ligon Foster, who worked for General Motors Corporation. After being transferred from place to place in Texas and Oklahoma, Ligon Foster obtained the Pontiac dealership in Angleton, and the family settled there. Ligon served several terms on the Angleton City Council and was mayor from 1973 to 1975. They have three daughters, Louise Foster Krohn, Virginia Foster Monahan, and Kay Foster Xifo, three grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Catherine worked for the Brazoria County Library from 1954 to 1970, as head librarian in the later years. She is best known for her stories and legends of Brazoria County, which she told at speaking engagements to schools, scout meetings, 4-H clubs, and adult groups. In 1977 she published a collection of these tales called *Ghosts Along the Brazos*, which is now in its sixth printing. She contributed substantially to the book *A Narrative History of Brazoria County* by James A. Creighton. For many years she wrote a weekly column for the *Angleton Times*, conducted tours of historical sites in Brazoria County (including the old Underwood home), and worked as a volunteer at the Brazoria County Historical Museum. Catherine passed away 22 September 1995, at age 86, and Ligon on 25 October 1998, at age 93. Both are buried in the Munson Cemetery.



Joseph Underwood Munson Sr. was the third child of George and Louise Munson. He was born April 25, 1912, at the old Underwood home in East Columbia, and was raised at the home on Bailey’s Prairie. He graduated from the West Columbia High School and was the only one of this family who always followed the Munson tradition of keeping a moderate sized herd of cattle in addition to his primary vocation. On September 16, 1935, Joe married Ruth Anna Horn and they have three children: Joe U. Munson Jr., Laura Jane Munson Cooper, and George Kennedy Munson. They have eight grandchildren, ten great-grandchildren and one great-great grandchild.

After high school Joe’s various work experiences in skilled labor led to a position with the Dow Chemical Company in Freeport, Texas. He became Pipeline Superintendent with responsibility for all of Dow’s pipeline operations in the Texas area, as well as consultant to the company on pipeline operations in other areas. He retired from Dow in 1977, after which he was called back frequently for his expertise in the pipeline field. He and Ruth Anna lived in Angleton most of their married life. Joe passed away June 13, 1997, at age 85, and is buried in the Underwood plot in the Old Columbia Cemetery. Ruth Anna lives with her youngest son George and daughter-in-law Margie at Bailey’s Prairie.



Laura Louisa Munson, the fourth child of George and Louise, was born on December 13, 1913, during the big flood of that year. The family was staying at the Taylor place, a large house built high off the ground between East and West Columbia. Dr. Marcus Weems, the attending physician, arrived by boat. Laura graduated from West Columbia High School and attended the University of Oklahoma and the University of Houston. She taught for one term—the only

teacher in a one-room school in a rural district near West Columbia. The school was open for only seven months so the students could help with the farm and harvesting chores. Laura found this a traumatic experience as the students, especially the older boys, were difficult to discipline and their prior education had been poor. She was shocked to find that not a single student in the school knew the name of the governor of Texas.

After this experience Laura gave up teaching and attended business school in Houston. Several previous jobs led her to the position of legal secretary in the law firm of Matthews and Ferguson and for the independent lawyer, Joe Ingraham, who rented space from this firm. Laura and Joe were married on October 29, 1954. Joe Ingraham was appointed U. S. District Judge by President Eisenhower and, in 1969, to a U. S. Fifth Circuit judgeship. Joe passed away May 27, 1990, at age 86, and Laura on September 28, 2005, at age 93. Both are buried in Houston. They had no children.



John Hanks Munson I, the fifth child of George and Louise, has the distinction of being the only child to be born in the George P. Munson home at Bailey's Prairie, where he was born on February 6, 1916. He graduated from West Columbia High School and attended Texas A. & M. College where he studied civil engineering. As a civil engineer in structural, hydraulic, and other design engineering, he worked for the Jefferson Lake Sulphur Company, the City of Freeport, and the Dow Chemical Company.

On May 27, 1939, John married Billie Marshall of Brazoria, Texas. They have one son, John Hanks Munson II, two granddaughters and one great-granddaughter. After working for Dow in Freeport for some years, John Hanks Munson I was transferred to Houston and he and Billie established a home in Sugar Land, Texas. John retired from Dow in 1981 at the age of 65. He passed away on January 3, 1986, at the age of 69, and is buried in the Munson Cemetery. Billie Munson passed away April 28, 2003, at age 84, and is also buried in the Munson Cemetery.



Robert Milam Munson, the sixth child of George and Louise, known to his family and friends as Bob or Bobby, was born on October 20, 1918, in the Underwood house in East Columbia. He graduated from West Columbia High School and attended Texas A. & M. College, leaving to enlist in the Naval Air Force during World War II. After the war, Bob's entire career was spent in the insurance business. He began as a salesman for the Cannan Insurance Company in Angleton. After some years he bought the company and reorganized it as the Munson Insurance Agency, which grew to become the largest such company in the county.

Bob married Jessica Lang on March 4, 1949, and they have three daughters: Suzanne Munson Rhodes, Elizabeth Munson Schumm, and Laura Munson Comola, nine grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren, at this time. On June 1, 1985, Bob sold his business and retired. He passed away in a Houston hospital January 6, 2006, and is buried in the Munson Cemetery. Jessica lives in Angleton.



Virginia Morris Munson, the seventh and youngest child of George and Louise, was born in the Underwood house in East Columbia on July 18, 1922. She was valedictorian of her West Columbia High School graduating class and attended Texas Woman's University in Denton. With

the advent of World War II she enlisted in the WAVES and served in San Francisco and Hawaii. After the war she entered the University of Houston where she earned a degree in education.

On August 7, 1948, Virginia married Creath Morris “Mac” McGee, a partner in the accounting firm of O’Connor, Lawson, and McGee. They have three children: Katherine McGee Fewox, William Morris McGee, and Mary McGee Martin, and one grandchild at this time.

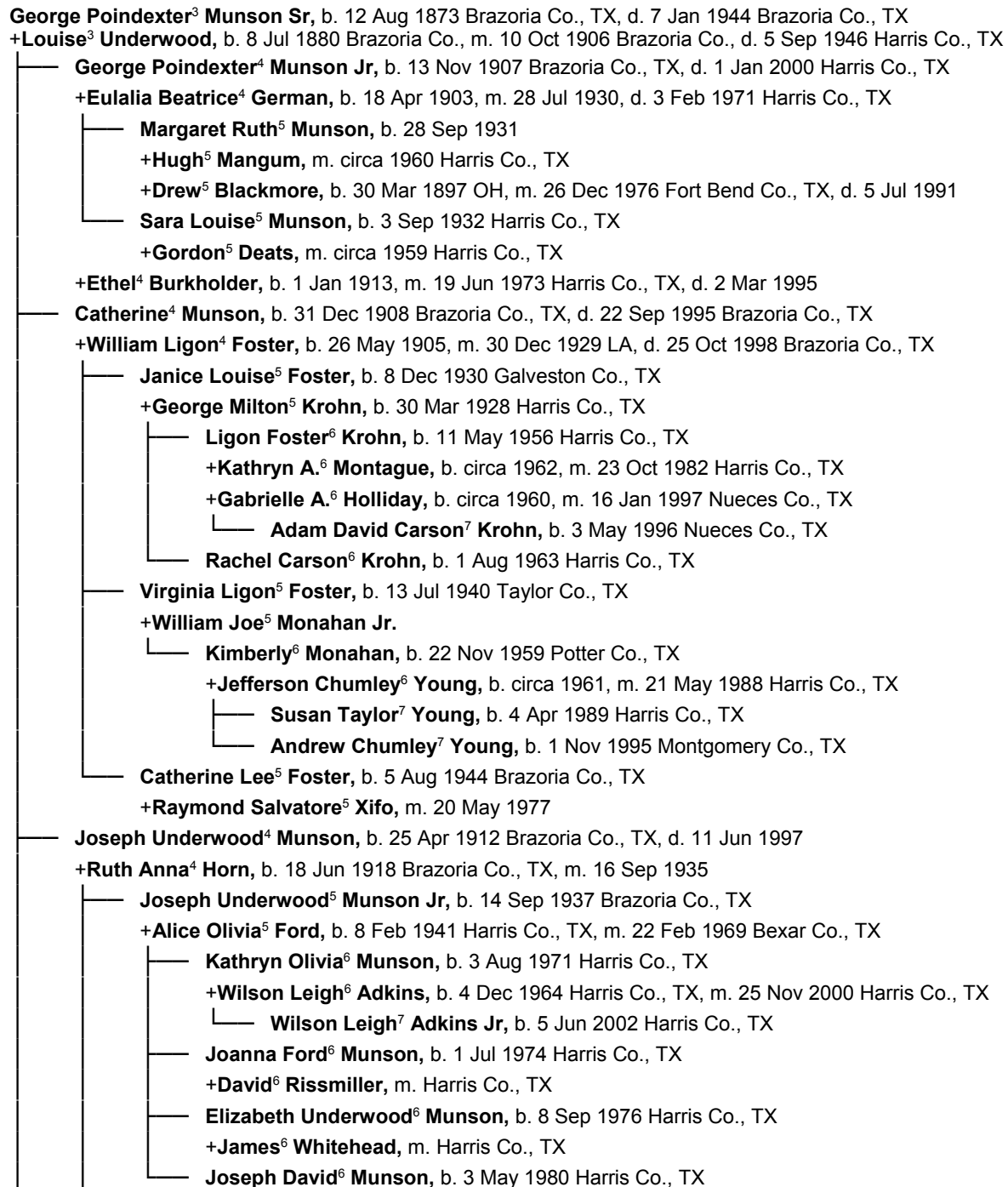
Virginia taught school briefly, then retired to raise her family. Later, with the children grown, she acquired a degree in library science from the University of Houston at Clear Lake. She served as librarian at Atherton, an inner-city, elementary school in Houston, until her retirement in 1984. “Mac” passed away May 9, 2001, at age 89. Virginia lives in Houston.



George P. Munson II, the only son of George Poindexter Munson I, had four sons, and among them they had three Munson sons; but to this date there are only two Munson sons in the next generation to carry on the Munson name. All of the descendants of George Poindexter Munson II are shown on Chart 10.

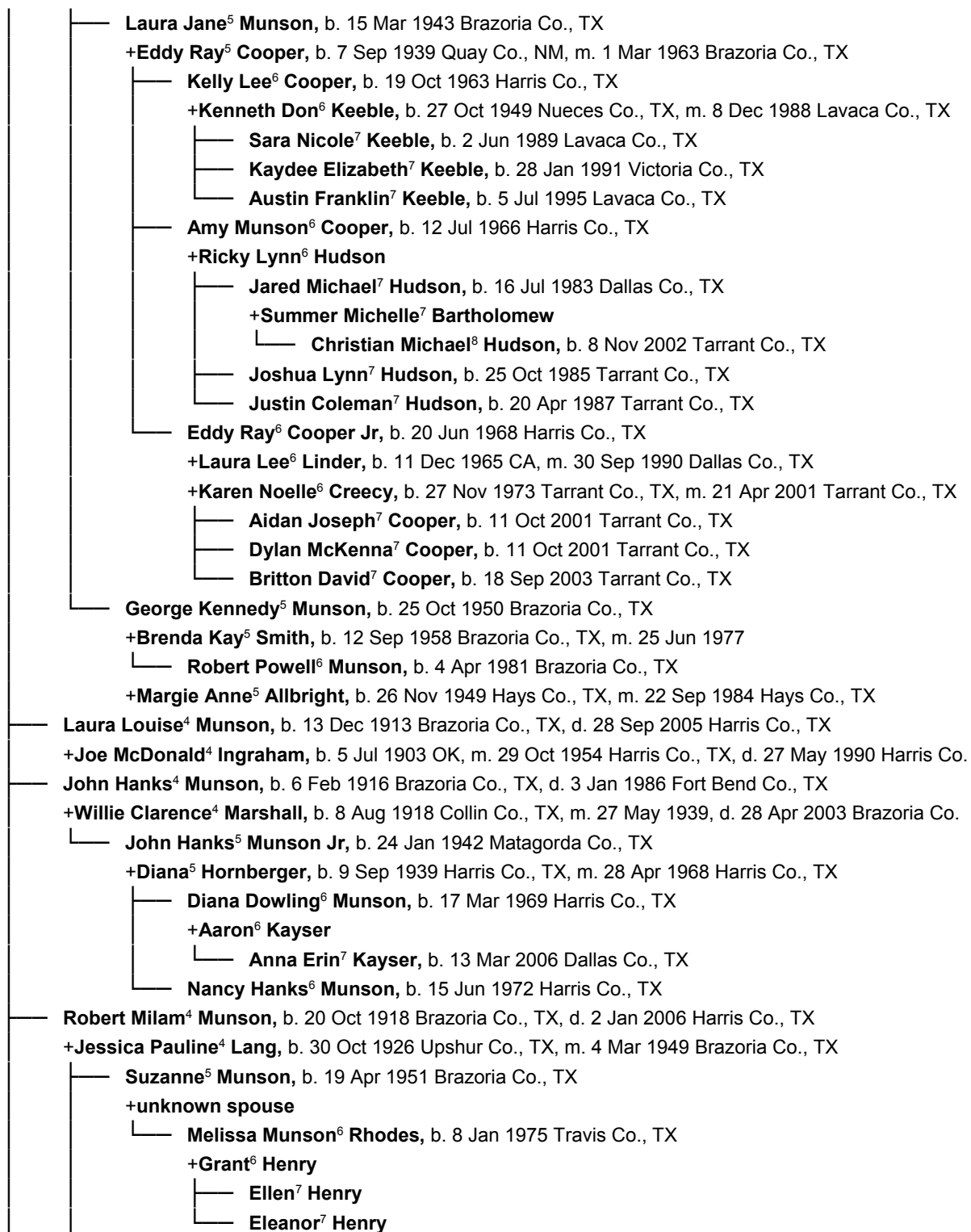
Chart 10

Descendants of George Poindexter Munson Sr. (II) and Louise Underwood



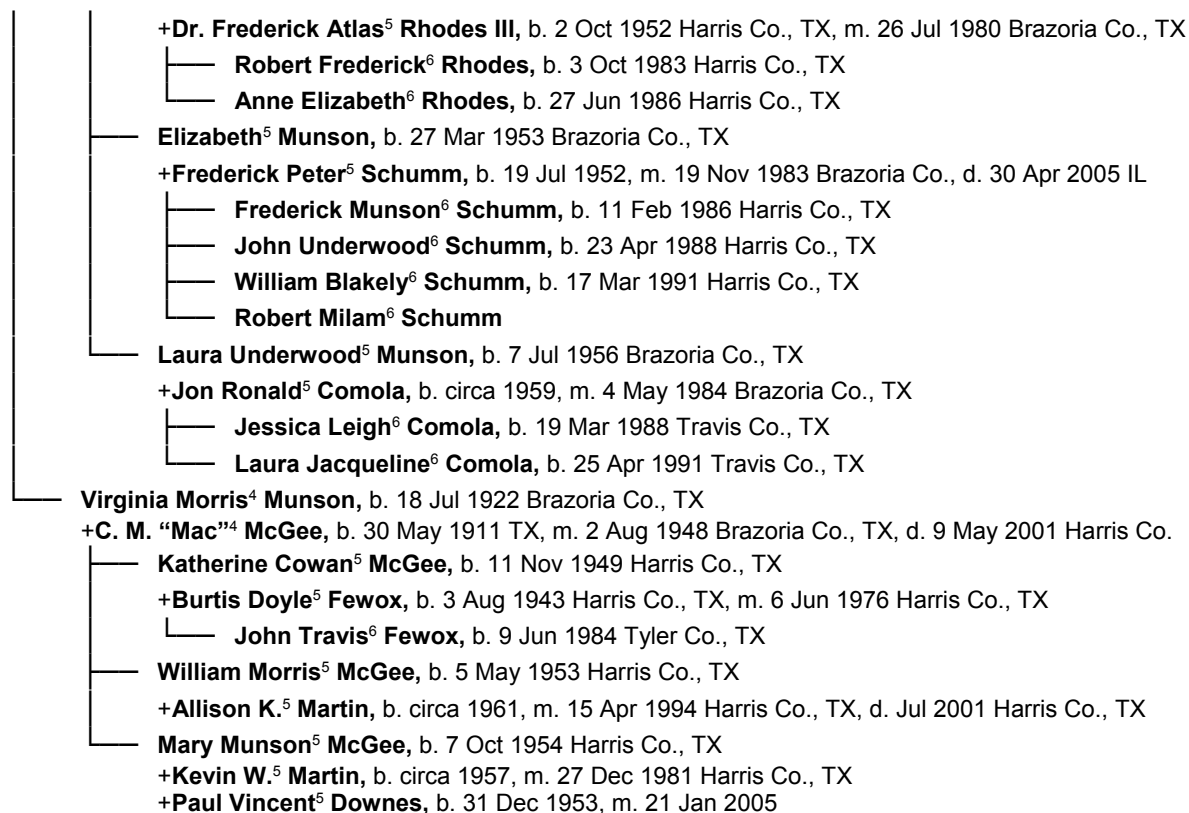
(Chart 10 continued on next page)

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(Chart 10 continued)



Chapter 16

The Education Years of Mordello Stephen Munson — 1838–1849



Mordello Stephen Munson was born in 1825 at the Coushatta Indian village on the Trinity River in the old Atascosita District of Mexico. His young years were spent at Oakland Plantation in the Austin Colony in Mexico's Province of Tejas, where his father died when he was eight years old. After attending several one-room, local grammar schools, he was schooled from 1838 until 1849 at the Rumsey's school in Hopkinsville, Kentucky; Rutgersville College near La Grange, Texas; La Grange College at La Grange, Alabama; Transylvania College in Lexington, Kentucky; and the New Orleans Law School. His education was interrupted in 1842 when, at the age of 16, he joined Texian armed forces when Mexican troops threatened Texas, and he participated later in that year in the Somervell Expedition to Mexico. At the end of the latter campaign, he was wise and fortunate to avoid the disastrous Mier Expedition into Mexico and the famous "Black Bean" incident.



In the settlement of the estate of Henry William Munson in 1848, an accounting for the cost of education of each of the Munson sons was given. The record for Mordello reads as follows:

1833	& 4	To	Acct.	for	Thomas I. Pilgram	Tuition	\$ 95.66
1836	& 7	"	"	"	Fayette Copeland	Tuition & Board	93.00
1837		"	"	"	M. Newell	Tuition & Board	14.00
1838	to 41	"	"	"	James D. Rumsey	Tuition & Board	87.33
"	"	"	"	"	Kincaid & Gant	Store acct	133.80
"	"	"	"	"	Thos. I. Hanks	Ditto	197.87
						Expenses to Kenty in 1838	13.00
						ditto from Kenty in 1840	16.66
1842	to 3	"	"	"	Rutersville College & Board		161.87
1843	To 5	"	"	"	LaGrange, Ala. do do		515.00
1846	Jany				Cash pd you to go to University		260.00
					Ditto paid you by R. Mills		20.00
Dec.	1845				Ditto pd Sorenson & Johnson		12.50
							\$1612.70

After their primary education with various private teachers near their home, Mordello and his two brothers, William and Gerard, attended the school of Mr. and Mrs. Rumsey in Hopkinsville, Kentucky, from 1838 until 1840 or '41. The transportation expense records indicate that they made just one trip to Kentucky and one return trip—thus it appears that they remained there the

entire time. Mordello was probably thirteen years old when they first went, and the exact date of their return to Texas is not known, but Mordello was probably fifteen or sixteen. This appears to have served him as today's high school.

The next records reflect Mordello and his brothers attending the newly established Methodist college, Rutgersville College, near La Grange, Texas. Munson family records indicate their years of attendance were 1842-1843, but a copy of the catalogue entitled "Rutersville College - 1841"¹⁷⁴ lists among the roll of students the names of "William B. Munson, S. Mordella Munson¹⁷⁵, and Gerard B. Munson," all of Brazoria County. As Mordello was at college in La Grange, Alabama, in the fall of 1843, it appears that he attended Rutgersville from the fall of 1841 to the summer of 1843. This appears to have served him as a junior college.

The college year at Rutgersville was divided into two terms of twenty-one weeks each; the first commenced on the third Monday of January, and the second on the third Monday of July. The vacations were from the second Thursday of June to the third Monday of July, and from the second Thursday of December to the third Monday of January. The three Munson brothers may have been there for the fall session of 1841, as they probably had returned from Kentucky earlier in that year. In any event, Mordello spent much of the year 1842 as a volunteer with the *Texian* armed forces in campaigns against the Mexicans. Throughout his life he was extremely loyal to his native Texas and to the Confederate South, and was a dedicated soldier for both.

The *Texian*–Mexican Battles of 1842¹⁷⁶

From the time of the Battle of San Jacinto on April 21, 1836, until November of that year, there occurred intense and confusing political maneuvering among three parties: (1) the leaders of Texas (Houston, Austin, Burnet, Lamar, Archer, Rusk, Smith, Wharton, and others); (2) their prisoner, General Santa Anna; and (3) the highest officials of the United States (President Andrew Jackson and others).¹⁷⁷ At the conclusion of the complex negotiations, each party apparently gained its major goal: Santa Anna gained his freedom, Texas gained Santa Anna's recognition of its independence from Mexico, and the United States gained Santa Anna's acknowledgement of Mexico's permanent release of all land north of the Rio Grande River (which the United States coveted). Many *Texians* wanted Santa Anna to be executed, but historians generally applaud the *Texian* leaders' strategy—a live Santa Anna as their prisoner was a powerful bargaining tool. To seal the agreements, Santa Anna was given a royal trip to Washington, D.C., under *Texian* escort in November of 1836; an audience with President Andrew Jackson; and a return trip to Mexico, where, after several years of political turmoil, he again became president and commander of the army.

During all of these years San Antonio was an isolated frontier community, eighty miles southwest of Austin and about 150 miles, through mostly uninhabited barren country, from

¹⁷⁴ *Munson Papers*, see Appendix I.

¹⁷⁵ This is a further indication that Mordello may have been originally named Stephen Mordella Munson, Stephen for his maternal grandfather, Stephen Pearce, and Mordella for the Spanish officer Mordella at the Battle of Medina. At age 17 he appears to prefer the name Mordella. As an adult, he changed the Mordella to the masculine Mordello, and adopted the name of Mordello Stephen.

¹⁷⁶ These stories of the 1842 battles with Mexico are taken from John Henry Brown, *History of Texas*; Joseph Milton Nance, *Attack and Counterattack: The Texas-Mexican Frontier, 1842*, University of Texas Press, Austin (1964); and William Stapp, *The Prisoners of Perote*, G. B. Zieber and Co., Philadelphia (1845).

¹⁷⁷ Refer to Eugene C. Barker, *The Life of Stephen F. Austin*, pp. 430-446.

Laredo and Presidio del Rio Grande. The inhabitants of San Antonio were about nine-tenths Mexican. Some political leaders in Mexico had not abandoned their hope of reconquering Texas, or at least parts of it, and in early 1842 rumors and news of an impending Mexican invasion reached San Antonio. The *Texian* forces stationed there, estimated at about 100, left as the 700 Mexican troops occupied the town on March 5, 1842. The *Texian* forces retreated thirty-six miles to the hamlet of Seguin, on the Guadalupe River, where they were joined by other volunteers. As scouts spread the word of what was thought to be an army of conquest, armed volunteers gathered at several points. The coastal people from Victoria, Jackson, Matagorda, and Brazoria Counties rallied at Goliad. Among those gathered at Goliad were Major George Sutherland from Jackson County; Captain Alfred S. Thurmond (or Thurmand) from Victoria; and a group from Brazoria County, including William H. Jack, Branch T. Archer, John Sweeny, the McNeels, Andrew Westall, Moses Austin Bryan, James H. Bell and Mordella S. Munson (at 16 years of age).¹⁷⁸

Joseph Milton Nance records these assemblies as follows:¹⁷⁹

Men left their work... saddled their horses, took up their rifles, and headed for San Antonio, Victoria, and other points along the southern and western frontier. All Texas was in a ferment and expected the enemy, several thousand strong, to make an effort to subjugate them or expel them beyond the Sabine, for Santa Anna, having failed once... surely would not come a second time without being well prepared. Accustomed to forays of Indians and robbers, each ranger in the volunteer companies kept always in readiness "a good horse, saddle, bridle, and arms, and a supply of coffee, salt, sugar, and other provisions" to start on fifteen minutes warning in pursuit of the marauders.

Clark L. Owen was elected commander of the men at Goliad, and the men remained in camp for several weeks. Scouts soon brought information that the enemy, after holding San Antonio for a few days, had retreated toward the Rio Grande. Without orders from President Sam Houston to pursue the enemy, which was the wish of many of the men, the volunteers were disbanded on April 2 and returned home. Mordello probably returned to Rutgersville College.

President Houston, in consequence of these incursions of the enemy and the tenuous location of the city of Austin, called a special session of Congress to meet in Houston. Legislation for a war of invasion of Mexico was speedily passed by the legislature with great public support. It was a surprise when the bill was returned with President Houston's veto. The people, in years after, came to realize the wisdom of his judgment of the suicidal absurdity of an organized invasion of Mexico without the money, equipment, or men to sustain such an expedition. President Houston did warn that the Mexicans, in all probability, would continue to harass the *Texian* borders until some retaliatory check was put upon them, and he did not oppose the idea of a volunteer army to contest the Mexicans. After the adjournment of the special session in Houston, President Houston moved the seat of government to Washington-on-the-Brazos, where it remained until 1845, when it was returned to the permanent site at Austin.

Rumors of invading Mexican forces persisted. At daylight on Sunday, September 11, 1842, the people of San Antonio were awakened by the roar of cannon to find that the town was in possession of an army of Mexicans, 957 strong, commanded by General Adrian Woll. Adrian

¹⁷⁸ John Henry Brown, *History of Texas*, Vol. II, pp. 215-216.

¹⁷⁹ Joseph Milton Nance, *Attack and Counterattack: The Texas-Mexican Frontier, 1842*, p. 60.

Woll was a Frenchman who had immigrated to Mexico, fought with Santa Anna in the Texas Revolution, and was now a general in Santa Anna's army. Most of the *Texians* in San Antonio (sixty-two by one report) were captured, detained, and eventually sent to Mexico as prisoners. These captives were a major excuse for the later campaign against Mexico. A few escaped and hastened to Seguin to give the alarm. Couriers were sent to the Lavaca, the Colorado, and the Brazos. They rode day and night spreading the news, and fighting men, as always, rallied in squads, and companies were formed.

By Saturday, September 17, 210 fighting men had gathered near Seguin on the road to San Antonio. It is not known whether Mordello Munson was there. They organized under the leadership of Matthew Caldwell (no known relation to James P. Caldwell) and marched across roadless country to within six miles of San Antonio. There they occupied a strong position and challenged the Mexican forces to come out and engage in combat, being confident that 210 well-entrenched *Texians* could defeat 1,000 Mexicans.

On September 18 General Woll with about 1,000 men and four pieces of artillery proceeded to the scene. After several preliminary skirmishes, a severe battle took place. The well-aimed rifles of the *Texian* sharpshooters took their toll. After a desperate struggle of some twenty minutes, the Mexicans fell back under the protection of their guns. Woll reformed his men on a ridge and returned to San Antonio after sunset. This encounter is known as the Battle of Salado.

While the above described battle was taking place on September 18, several groups of volunteers were approaching to join Caldwell's forces. A company of fifty-three volunteers under the command of Captain Nicholas Dawson (all but two or three from Fayette County, the location of La Grange and Rutgersville College) was approaching from the east. They encountered a body of Mexican cavalry, reported to be 400, who had been sent by General Woll to engage them. Dawson took a position in a small grove of mesquite trees and prepared for battle. In the ensuing battle, Dawson's men were overwhelmed. When it became evident that death or surrender was inevitable, efforts were made to surrender. The enemy made a rush into the grove, and as the *Texians* surrendered their arms, some were cut down. Thirty-six died, fifteen were taken prisoner, and two escaped to tell the tale. This is known in Texas history as the Dawson Massacre.

Later in that day, September 18, 1842, Captains Jesse Billingsly and W. J. Wallace of Bastrop (and John Caldwell, according to one source) arrived with between seventy and one hundred men, including another group from La Grange. It is possible that Mordello Munson was a member of this group. It is known that he was a member of the Somervell Expedition that grew out of this episode, but it is not known when he joined the expedition.

The details of the Dawson battle were unknown to the embattled Caldwell forces except that some persons reported hearing artillery fire in that direction. Since the approaching night was dark and stormy with a continual downpour of rain, nothing was done until morning. When morning came, Colonel Caldwell dispatched a group of men to investigate the gunfire of the previous afternoon.¹⁸⁰ They arrived at the scene, guided by the wounded horses around the grove. As reported by one of the participants: "They counted in the grove forty dead bodies [another source reports thirty-six *Texians* killed] entirely naked, so mutilated with cannon shot, sabre wounds, and lances as to be unrecognizable. The heads of several were nearly severed from their

¹⁸⁰ John Henry Brown, *History of Texas*, pp. 227-228. John Henry Brown was a member of this group.

bodies. The cold rain of the previous night had cleansed them of blood and given the bodies a marble-like appearance. It was simply a horrible sight.”

Colonel Caldwell’s men remained in camp until the morning of September 20, and learning that Woll had begun to retreat from San Antonio, they moved in pursuit. In a hit and miss fashion, the *Texians* followed and chased the Mexican forces for several days, then retraced their steps to San Antonio, meeting on the way the old hero, Colonel Edward Burleson, with a group of new recruits. The Mexican forces reached *El Presidio del Rio Grande* on October 1.

The *Texian* forces reached San Antonio on September 24, and on the next day a meeting was held in front of the Alamo. Colonel Burleson addressed the crowd, recapitulating the repeated outrages of the Mexicans including their holding of *Texian* prisoners, and outlining a plan for a retaliatory expedition into Mexico. He advised those present to return home, recruit horses, procure suitable clothing, supplies, arms, and ammunition, and to rendezvous at San Antonio one month later. This plan resulted in what became known as the Somervell Expedition, of which Mordello Munson was a member; and finally in the disastrous Battle of Mier on Christmas Day of 1842, at which Mordello was not present, to his family’s everlasting thanks.

The Somervell Expedition of 1842¹⁸¹

In support of the views expressed at the meeting at the Alamo on September 25, President Houston ordered two regiments of militia and “the effective force of Matagorda, Victoria, Brazoria, Fort Bend, Austin, Washington, Colorado, Fayette, Gonzales, and Bastrop counties” to San Antonio. He also assigned the command of the expedition to Brigadier-General Alexander Somervell, who immediately proceeded to San Antonio and assumed command. Soon there arrived in San Antonio at least fifteen companies of volunteers from different parts of the country. Arriving on November 3 was a company from Brazoria County numbering sixty men under the command of Captain Shelby McNeel. Mordello Munson, now 17 years old, was a member of this company.

After considerable delay, all things were announced ready, and on November 22 all the camps around the Mission of Concepcion took up the line of march on the road from San Antonio to El Presidio del Rio Grande. There were about 750 men on horses, about 200 pack mules, and about 300 beeves. They camped two nights and one day on the Rio Medina. Then, after crossing that stream and following that road for several miles, they turned to the left, southerly, and moved toward the Laredo road. The whole country was inundated with water, the weather was cold, and a few miles brought them into sandy, post oak country where horses and mules sank to their bodies in quagmire. For three days they floundered through that sort of country, the men verbally abusing the country in general and General Somervell in particular. Just eight miles farther, they claimed, was a firm trail to the Laredo Road.

At night, unable to sleep on the deluged ground, large camp fires were built on little knolls and all kinds of meetings were held—political, theatrical, and comical. That locality became known to the troops as “the bogs of the Atascosa” and “the devil’s eight leagues.” This was approximately the same sandy area where Mordello’s father had fought in the Battle of Medina in 1813 (see Chapter 7). It was common to see pack mules sink until their packs stayed their further descent. A few men would lift them up and start them afresh. Thus, by extraordinary efforts and

¹⁸¹ This section is taken mostly from John Henry Brown, *History of Texas*. John Henry Brown was a member of this expedition.

after great suffering, the army reached the Laredo road, as ancient as San Antonio itself, and always firmly packed.

From there the march proceeded to the Nueces River, which was in flood stage, having overflowed one to two miles on the east side but with dry land on the west bank. A detail was sent forward to build a bridge. With hatchets men waded to the narrow river's edge, from where some men swam to the other side. From both sides trees were felled into the stream, their tops meeting and interlocking. Then came large bushes worked in, getting smaller and smaller until finally the bridge was floored with layers of reed cane and long grass. On December 5, 1842, the main army passed safely over and spent a day or two resting and drying baggage.

A scout command under Captain John C. Hays went forward to reconnoiter, accompanied by Captain Flaco, the brave young chief of the Lipan (Apache) Indians. Flaco, with a few members of his tribe and one other Apache named Luis, accompanied the troops. On this December night there came rain with a cold wind, and at about midnight a general stampede of the horses and mules took place. It was a fearful time—dark as pitch with hundreds of horses and mules rushing blindly and furiously around the camp. Next morning, an hour's search brought in most of the animals, and Flaco arrived with information from Hays that there were Mexican troops at Laredo and that, by a rapid march, they could be captured. There was not a tent in the command, it was a cold, rainy morning with a severe north wind, and it was about sixty miles to Laredo. Leaving a few men behind to seek the missing animals, the command moved rapidly onward. At nightfall a halt was made to rest the animals and take refreshments, after which, abandoning all the beef cattle, the march was resumed. The skies became clear and the stars shone forth in the glory of a beautiful night.

An hour before daybreak, when the troops had surrounded the town of Laredo and awaited the dawn, it was found that not a Mexican soldier was in the place. The Mexicans had received word of the approaching *Texians* and had crossed the river and garrisoned on the west side. This was especially disappointing because the *Texians* had been planning to take prisoners to exchange for those taken by General Woll in San Antonio. It was December 8, and they had been en route from San Antonio since November 22. The troops had little to eat and many of them were destitute of blankets. Many wished to cross the river and engage the enemy, then move rapidly down the river's western bank, inflict punishment whenever possible, recross, and return home. On December 10 the men voted approximately 500 to 190 in favor of crossing into Mexico. This General Somervell declined to do. Dissatisfaction and disgust ran high, and about 190 men, with the approval of General Somervell, left the expedition and returned home. Mordello Munson was not among these.

General Somervell's quandary is summed up by Joseph Milton Nance as follows: "To turn home without engaging the Mexicans in battle would surely bring down upon his head great popular odium. To go on without provisions of any kind and with a shortage of horses, depending upon the country and its inhabitants for subsistence, would likely end in disaster. Likewise, to linger long upon the Rio Grande would allow the Mexicans an opportunity to rally an overwhelming force that might also be disastrous to the Texas army."¹⁸²

General Somervell and the remaining 500 men bore down the river until they came to the mouth of the Salado River, opposite and six miles from the town of Guerrero. The force crossed

¹⁸² Joseph Milton Nance, *Attack and Counterattack: The Texas-Mexican Frontier, 1842*, pp. 528-529.

the river on December 15, and the town surrendered and supplied the soldiers with meager supplies of badly-needed food, blankets, shoes, and other supplies. During the night there came a cold northwest wind with a deluge of rain, and at daylight the group was a shivering mass of humanity, suffering from cold and hunger. They recrossed the river and spent two days gathering beebes for much needed food. The whole command was sullen, indignant, and mutinous.

On the next morning, December 19, 1842, an order was read directing all to prepare at once for a return home. This was the last straw. About 305 men refused to obey. The other 189, sorely perplexed between duty and desire, resolved to obey the legal commander and return home. Included in this group are the names of Captain McNeel, Captain Flaco, Lieutenant Moses Austin Bryan (aged 25), Lieutenant John Henry Brown (aged 22), John Sweeny (for whom the town of Sweeny was later named), James H. Bell (aged 17 and the son of Josiah H. Bell of Bell's Landing), and Mordella S. Munson (aged 17). The march home was a disorderly affair, with some companies breaking off from Somervell's command. Munson family tradition relates that one group of these men, including Mordello, became lost, and Captain Flaco led them to safety. Family records credit Flaco with saving the lives of these men. In appreciation, Mordello often thereafter gave one of his favorite horses the name "Flaco."

The events surrounding the murder of Captain Flaco are recorded differently by different authors. After most of the *Texians* had reached San Antonio, a party composed of Flaco and an old deaf-mute of his Lipan tribe, two Mexicans (one named Rivas), and several *Texians* were driving between thirty and fifty horses toward San Antonio. One version tells that the Lipan deaf-mute was taken sick, and he and Flaco stopped on the Medina River while the white men went ahead. This version tells that two of the white men were seen in Seguin with Flaco's horses a few days later. John Henry Brown relates: "Rivas and the [other] Mexican basely murdered Flaco and the mute and fled with the horses into eastern Texas and Louisiana. The confusion of the times forbade pursuit." Not long thereafter, James O. Rice, after his escape from the Battle of Mier and on his return to Texas, discovered the bodies of the two Indians about twenty miles west of San Antonio near the Medina River. An investigation determined that they had been murdered.

After this expedition Mordello may have returned to Rutgersville College for the January, 1843, term. For his services in this campaign, Mordello Munson received a check for "\$67.50, Public Debt, Republic of Texas," approved and issued by the State of Texas on August 2, 1851.

The Battle of Mier and the Black Bean Incident¹⁸³

Most of the three hundred men who refused to return with Somervell endured a horrible succeeding two years. Under the leadership of Captain William S. Fisher, they moved down the river, and by December 22 they were encamped opposite the town of Mier. On the next day they crossed the river and entered the town, and finding no opposition, they took the priest and *Alcalde* as hostages, requisitioned supplies, and returned to their camp. After waiting two days without receiving supplies, they learned that General Pedro Ampudia with 2,000 Mexican soldiers had arrived in Mier. On the night of December 25, 1842, 261 men crossed the Rio Grande for an attack on the town. A vicious battle raged in the town for about eighteen hours, quieting only at night. By the afternoon of December 26, the *Texians*, overwhelmed by force of numbers and

¹⁸³ Material for this section is from John Henry Brown, *History of Texas*; Joseph Milton Nance, *Attack and Counterattack: The Texas-Mexican Frontier, 1842*; and William Stapp, *The Prisoners of Perote*.

arms, and lacking food, water, and ammunition, reluctantly surrendered. Historians place the casualties on the two sides at from twelve to thirty *Texians* lost, and about 600 to 700 Mexicans killed or wounded. The reasons for this amazing disparity lie in the determination and skill of the individual *Texian* fighters and the superiority of their rifles and marksmanship.

The treatment that followed for the prisoners was some of the harshest in the annals of Texas. They were tied in pairs and marched to Matamoros, where they were paraded in the streets in triumph, with music, banners, and the ringing of bells. On January 14, 1843, they left Matamoros on foot, under heavy guard, for the march to Monterrey, then to Saltillo, and on toward San Luis Potosi, reaching the *hacienda* of Salado on February 10. On the next day they made a successful escape, during which a few lost their lives. They acquired horses and arms and headed for the mountains. This was a mistake, as the mountains could not support them in January. They traveled sixty-four miles the first day, then, being totally exhausted, there followed a horrible ordeal of suffering from cold, hunger, thirst, and illness. They split into several parties, and on the seventh day the majority stumbled onto a body of Mexican cavalry on search for them, and, in total exhaustion, they surrendered again group by group. Several had died in this ordeal.

Again tied in pairs, they were marched to Saltillo, and then the 110 miles to Salado. Soon after their arrival on March 25, 1843, they were informed of a decree from Santa Anna ordering all to be shot. Yielding to objections from a General Mexia (not the better known Jose Antonio Mexia) and some of his officers, the sentence was commuted to “diezmo”—one in ten. General Mexia tendered his resignation, and the order was carried out under the command of Colonel Juan de Dios Ortiz. The *Texians* were placed in line and an interpreter, Alfred S. Thurmond, himself a prisoner, read the sentence. A jar was brought forward containing 170 beans—seventeen black, the remainder white.¹⁸⁴ The roll was called and each man, blindfolded, stepped forward and thrust his hand into the jar. If he drew a black bean, it meant death. The doomed seventeen resolved to die like soldiers. Many tender messages were entrusted to those more fortunate, and fervent prayers and expressions of loyalty to Texas filled the half-hour that closed that gloomy day.

The fortunate ones were separated from the doomed men in an adjoining enclosure, from which they heard the orders to fire and the cries and groans of the dying. The seventeen bodies were buried in a common grave. Some years later, in 1848, the bones were exhumed and returned to Texas, where they were buried with military honors on Monument Hill, now a state park near La Grange. The names of the unlucky seventeen are as follows:

James D. Cocke, Robert H. Dunham, James M. Ogden, William M. Eastland, Thomas L. Jones, J. M. Thompson, Henry Whaling, John S. (or L.) Cash, William N. Rowan (or Cowan), C. M. Roberts, Edward E. Esta (or Esty), James Turnbull, Robert H. Harris, Martin Carroll Wing, Patrick Maher (or Mahoney), and James Torrey. The seventeenth man, James L. Shepherd, did not die when shot. He played dead and escaped, but was later recaptured and shot.

The remaining prisoners were marched to Mexico City, where they were held for almost one year of hard labor, and then to the prison at Perote on the road to Vera Cruz. On September 16, 1844, their number having been diminished by an occasional release or escape and fourteen deaths, the remaining 104 were released by order of Santa Anna. It has been reported that the

¹⁸⁴ From John Henry Brown, *History of Texas*. William Stapp (*The Prisoners of Perote*) was there—he reported 174 beans with seventeen white.

deathbed request of Santa Anna's gentle wife (a sister of former Emperor Agustin de Iturbide), who had shown concern for the condition of the prisoners and had asked for their release, so softened Santa Anna's heart that he consented. The prisoners went by ship to New Orleans (where they were met and aided by William Benjamin Munson on his way home from college (see Chapter 13); and thence back home to Texas, where many of them played important roles in the future history of the State.

Mordello Munson's Further Education

Mordello Munson, having avoided the disaster of Mier, apparently returned to school at Ruttersville. Records indicate that he attended there in 1843, possibly through the spring term. Of Ruttersville he wrote: "Ostensibly we were there to go to school, but we did little else than hunt Indians. Scarcely a week passed that we did not have a skirmish with the Redskins."

He then attended La Grange College in La Grange, Alabama, from 1843 to 1846. This college and town no longer exist. Today a state historical marker located on State Highway 157 (sometimes 57) southeast of Muscle Shoals and Spring Valley tells of the college. It was a Methodist college, the first college chartered by the Alabama State Legislature, and it opened in 1830. The first president, Bishop Robert Paine, served until 1846, so he would have been there during Mordello's attendance. After a change of organization and name to La Grange College and Military Academy in 1858, the entire college and its library of 4,000 volumes and science laboratories (and possibly the town) were burned by the Union Army on April 28, 1863. The college was never rebuilt.

Mordello entered Transylvania University in Lexington, Kentucky, in the fall of 1846. Transylvania, the oldest college west of the Appalachian Mountains, was established in 1780 and was affiliated with the Methodist Church. Stephen F. Austin attended from 1808 until 1810, and his first cousin, Mary Austin Holley, was married to Horace Holley, the president of the university from 1818 until his death in 1827. In later years Mary Austin Holley lived in the Austin Colony in Texas where she wrote her famous diary, *The Texas Diary, 1835-1838*. Mordello could have been influenced to attend Transylvania University by contacts with Stephen F. Austin or Mary Austin Holley, or by James Caldwell's contacts through the Methodist Church. A letter from James Caldwell to Mordello in Lexington dated October 8, 1846, states, "I am pleased to learn that you have gone into the College."

Transylvania University records indicate that Mordello Munson was twice "entitled to tuition in M. C."—in 1846 and 1847. "Tuition" here refers to remuneration for teaching, and "M.C." refers to Morrison College, the academic department that was controlled by the Methodist Church at that time.

Munson records indicate that Mordello also attended the University of Kentucky in Lexington during these years, but that is certainly in error, as this university was first established in 1865. Transylvania University was for a time known as Kentucky University, which might account for the confusion. Family records indicate that Mordello graduated with honors from Transylvania University in 1847 with a degree in law. This also appears to be partially in error. Transylvania records indicate that he received an A.B. degree on August 17, 1847, and his period of attendance would probably not have allowed him to complete a law degree. It seems more likely that his initial law study was from "reading law," a common practice then, and that he probably "read law" for some months before entering the New Orleans Law School.

In a letter dated May 21, 1847, brother William Benjamin Munson wrote to Mordello in Lexington as follows:

I am told that you have an idea of commencing your practice in New Orleans but of course did not correct the reports - you would not I know leave your native state for the simple reason that your practice would be worth more for a few years elsewhere. No, you must live in Texas - and if you apply yourself I feel satisfied that your relatives will at some future day feel proud of your successes - James Bell is in Brazoria in practice with Mr. Towney. This has given him a good practice at once; and he bids fair to become an imminent lawyer. I am sure you can do as well if not better than James Bell.

William's letter of June 10, 1847, reads in part:

You can scarce imagine the pleasure your last letter gave me - to know that you were getting on so well - that your standing among your classmates was a desirable one, and that you had many friends - all these things gave me a pleasure - and I hope and feel satisfied that your success at home may be the same. Your friends here, all, have high expectations of your success - and I am (certain?) of no disappointment so far as talent and industry on your part is involved. Brother, do not stay long in Louisiana. I know it will be hard to get off - but you have many relatives at home, and your duty calls on you to stay with them.

It is clear from this correspondence that Mordello had plans to go to New Orleans, but the purpose is not clear. William's letter mentions "commencing your practice in New Orleans," while family records tell that, after graduation in Lexington, he went to New Orleans to study law under "Judge Henry A. Bullard, then president of the New Orleans Law School." This is said to be the same Henry Bullard who was with Henry William Munson at the Battle of Medina in 1813.

Recent research reveals that the Louisiana Legislature chartered the University of Louisiana (not LSU) in 1846 as a medical school. The law school was started a year later, when Harvard alumnus Henry Adams Bullard, a former justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court, and three others, established the school in New Orleans. On December 6, 1847, Judge Bullard, as dean of the law school, gave the introductory lecture to a distinguished audience, including the first twenty-three students, in the federal court room of the New Orleans Customs House. New Orleans was no small town—it was the fourth largest city and the second largest port in the nation, and had a distinguished collection of judges and lawyers. In 1906 this school moved to the new campus of Tulane University and became the law school of that university, the nation's only university to go from public to private, which it is today.

Mordello was probably a member of that first class in December of 1847, as his plans for going there were recorded in May and June of that year. He likely studied law for some months prior, and he may have practiced law as an apprentice while taking classes during this period. There were sixteen members of the first graduating class in 1848 and twenty-two in 1849. Mordello is not listed among the graduates. He apparently went to Brazoria County at the time of the death of his brother, William Benjamin, (on March 18, 1848), as he filed a petition with the Probate Court in Brazoria County on March 27, 1848, asking for a partition of the estates of his father and his brother, which partition was made on September 21, 1848 (see Appendices IV, V and VI). He then appears to have been at Bailey's Prairie to stay in May of 1849, as he filed a petition with the Brazoria County Court (in Brazoria) on May 11, 1849, asking to be admitted to

the practice of law there. These dates suggest that he may have been in New Orleans from late-1847 until May of 1849.

It appears that Rutgersville College and La Grange College served Mordello as junior colleges, Transylvania University as a senior college, and the University of Louisiana (New Orleans) as a law school.



On April 24, 1848, Mordello had his 23rd birthday. His father had died in 1833, his brother William in March of 1848, and neither estate had been settled. Texas was now in a more stable condition as the twenty-eighth state of the Union, and Mordello had apparently decided to make Brazoria County his home. He desired to acquire a share of his father's estate, start his law practice, and become a planter. Evidence indicates that he also had plans to find a wife and raise a family.

On March 27, 1848, Mordello filed a petition with the Probate Court of Brazoria County asking that his mother, his stepfather, and the legal guardians for his two brothers and his half-brother and half-sister agree that commissioners be appointed by the court to make a partition of the estates of his father and his brother. On the following day, or soon thereafter, all cited parties filed answers in agreement. The texts of these difficult-to-read documents, as transcribed by family historian Erma Munson Rich during the 1950s and 1960s, are given in Appendix III.

On April 1, the court appointed James F. Perry, Wm. Joel Bryan, W. M. Masters, and Thomas Blackwell, or any three of them, as Commissioners to partition the estates of Henry W. Munson and William B. Munson.

The text of the resulting property division, dated September 21, 1848, is given in Appendix IV. Ann and James Caldwell retained ownership of the 554 acres at Oakland Plantation, which was valued at \$7,632.00. Allotted to Mordella S. Munson was a tract of land containing 1,000 acres "being the West end of the tract of 2,479 acres situated on the East Bank of the Brazos River in the County and purchased from the said Wm. J. Bryan." This land, earlier described as "lying near Bolivar," was valued at \$5,000.00.¹⁸⁵ This land extended to Oyster Creek, and was often referred to as "the land on Oyster Creek." Gerard and George, still minors, were allotted together the remaining 1,479 acres near Bolivar and an undivided half of a half league of land (i. e. about 1,107 acres) on the Bernard River, plus some cash.

Curiously, no mention was made in the settlement of the 500 acres at Bailey's Prairie, the "Russell Place," which William B. Munson had reported purchasing from the Mills Brothers (by a trade of "eleven hundred and eleven acres of the Oyster Creek land") in May of 1847.¹⁸⁶ A court petition regarding this Bailey's Prairie land, filed against Mordello in November of 1850 by James Knight of Fort Bend County recites as follows: "That on or about the tenth day of May, A.D. 1849, Mordello S. Munson, a resident citizen of the County of Brazoria, with force and arms, illegally entered upon and took possession of the said three hundred acres of land, without the knowledge or consent of Petitioner, and the Defendant refused to deliver up to Petitioner the

¹⁸⁵ Bolivar Plantation was the home of Henry Austin, the brother of Mary Austin Holley, and a first cousin to Stephen F. Austin. His plantation was on the Brazos River about twelve miles upstream from Bell's Landing. It was apparently on a grant made to Stephen F. Austin on May 31, 1828, and is now a part of the Ramsey State Prison Farm. Henry Austin laid out a town to be named Bolivar, but it was soon abandoned.

¹⁸⁶ See Chapter 13.

possession of the aforesaid tract of three hundred acres of land, although often requested so to do.” This would suggest that someone had presumably also sold this land to James Knight, or at least Knight claimed so.

The text of another document, apparently erroneously dated “Decr. 27, 1860” (possibly meant to be 1850),¹⁸⁷ describing the division of slaves and mentioning other items of family business is given in Appendix V. The slaves herein divided appear to be those from Oakland Plantation. Thirty-six slaves were divided, four were left as undivided property, and one that had been given to Wm. B. Munson years earlier was passed on to M. S. Munson. It thus appears that Mordello received five slaves: the family of “Ralf” and Laura with children Benjamin and Joe, plus the one “boy,” Sam, who had been given to William. Ralph (sometimes recorded as Ralf and Rafe) is found again during the Civil War when Mordello’s letters home to Sarah often contained instructions on plantation management for “Ralph.” It appears that this Ralph became the slave-manager of the plantation.

Another interesting entry in the Minutes of the District Court for Brazoria County, page 913, dated May 11, 1849, reads as follows:

This day Mordello S. Munson made application to the Court to be admitted [as] an attorney and counselor in the courts of this State... It is ordered [that] ... a committee to examine him as to his qualifications [be established] ... and being satisfied as to his qualifications report the fact to the court... It is ordered, that [in that event]... a License issue to him according to law.

It is of interest that the James Knight suit names May 10, 1849, as the date that Mordello occupied the Bailey’s Prairie property, and Mordello’s application for admission to the Texas Bar was dated May 11 of the same year. These dates suggest that this was the month that Mordello moved permanently to Brazoria County.

Mordello now planned to marry Sarah Kimbrough Armour and live on the Bailey’s Prairie property. It is not known what became of the land that Mordello inherited near Bolivar. One indication that it may have gone to Gerard and George, possibly in return for their interest in the Bailey’s Prairie land, is the 1860 (or 1850?) document (Appendix V) which, referring to land, states, “to say the land on Oyster Creek is the property of Gerard B. & Geo. P. Munson...”

Mordello Stephen Munson and Sarah Kimbrough Armour were married on February 6, 1850, and moved to their small home, “the Russell Place,” which they named “Hard Castle.” He was 24 years old—she was but 19. Thus began the Munsons’ long romance with Bailey’s Prairie.

¹⁸⁷ A date of December 27, 1850 (or sometime in the early 1850s) fits most aspects of the document. It is signed by Jas. P. Caldwell, who died in 1856, and R. M. Caldwell, born in 1836, along with Ann B. Caldwell, Gerrard B. Munson, Geo. P. Munson, and M. S. Munson. It names Gerrard as Manager and Mordello as Curator of Oakland Plantation, as if in anticipation of the Caldwells’ move to San Marcos, which took place in 1852. It divides the slaves (and Mordello was probably wanting such division for his Bailey’s Prairie plantation), and it mentions the title dispute on Mordello’s Bailey’s Prairie land, which dispute arose in 1850 and was apparently settled in December of 1851. It also refers to the order of the Probate Court of Brazoria County as “some years since.” This order was issued in September of 1848.

Inset 15
James “Brit” Bailey and Bailey’s Prairie



Bailey’s Prairie, today both a town and a general area, is a well known name in Brazoria County and is deeply imbedded in Munson history and tradition.

James Britton Bailey was born in North Carolina on August 1, 1779 of noble ancestry. His family was of Irish stock, descendants of Kenneth Bailey, whose ancestors included Robert Bruce, one time king of Scotland. Bailey had moved from North Carolina to Kentucky to Tennessee, where times had not been good due to floods and illness. It was in the year 1817 that Bailey, fresh from the War of 1812 and having heard that some people were settling in the Spanish territory of Texas, decided to cast his lot there.

On March 18, 1818, a wagon train led by Brit Bailey, with wife Dorothy and the six children—Gaines, Phelps, Smith, James, Pollie, and baby Pollie,—set out from Tennessee for Texas. Mrs. Bailey’s brother, Smith, and the slaves drove other wagons loaded with household goods. Since New Orleans was the nearest port, they headed there, arriving just in time to load all their belongings on a boat that was leaving for Galveston. They proceeded from Galveston to Anahuac, where Bailey left his family and headed for the Brazos River area. There he received an individual grant of 4,587 acres from the Spanish government. His grant was in the unsettled wilderness between the Brazos River and Oyster Creek. After several weeks he returned for his family. Some of the early settlers were raided and scalped by the local Karankawa Indians, but the Baileys understood the Indians and knew how to trade with them, so they had no serious trouble.

Using local trees and saplings, Brit Bailey built the first house in this area and made this his home—hence the name Bailey’s Prairie. An open hall ran through the center of the building, with two rooms on each side and galleries running the length of the house. The furniture was all handmade. The house was later painted red and became known as the “Red House”. They raised cotton that was shipped to Mexico and, at times, it is said, sold for sixty cents a pound. They built a cotton gin nearby. Game was plentiful—buffalo, deer, turkey, geese and ducks—and corn and vegetables were grown for their table.

Bailey’s land was included in the grant from the Mexican government to Stephen F. Austin in 1823. It is reported that Austin ordered Bailey to vacate, but he refused, and after extensive negotiations Austin “sold” the disputed land to Bailey. It is reported that Bailey and Austin once had a fist-fight on the streets of Brazoria. Bailey received a grant from Austin of one league (4,428 acres) just to the north of his residence—the J. B. Bailey Survey on today’s county maps — while Bailey’s house stood on the present Russell Survey, and Russell’s house was on the Cornelius Smith Survey.

Bailey participated in the Battle of Velasco in 1832 with Henry William Munson and James P. Caldwell. Soon thereafter his daughters urged him to build a house in town (in Brazoria) which he did, but just as it was finished he became ill and died, possibly in the “Big Cholera” of 1833. His son, Phelps, was killed during the Battle of Jones Creek, and son James drowned in the Brazos River.

(Continued next page)

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In 1824 son Smith Bailey purchased from Cornelius Smith about 900 acres of land—the western “quarter” of the Cornelius Smith league—just to the north of Bailey’s home. The full purchase price was \$50.50. In 1850 Mordello Munson bought 300 of these acres from Smith Bailey’s daughter, Lucinda Florence, for \$750.00; and in 1859 he bought the remaining 600 acres from Smith Bailey’s widow for \$2,000.00. The 300-acre plot was the land on which Mordello built his plantation home, named “Ridgely”, and the land that the Munsons now call “the old home place”. All of these lands are still owned by his great-grandchildren.

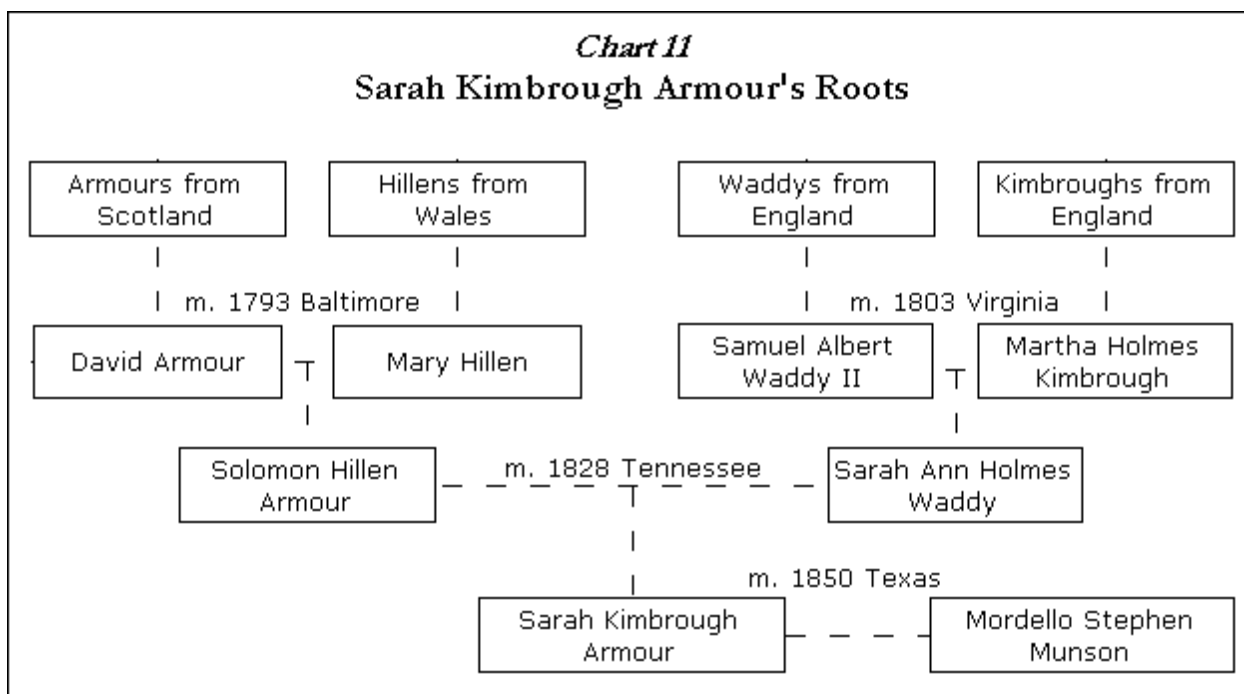
Colorful stories of James “Brit” Bailey abound to this day. A favorite is that Bailey requested that he be buried standing up with his rifle by his side and a lantern and a jug of whisky at his feet. Also, he wished to be buried facing west, because, he said: “All my life I have been traveling westward, and I have never looked up to any man, so I do not want it said ‘here lies old Brit Bailey’, but rather, ‘here stands Brit Bailey.’” Tradition reports that his requests were granted, and a Texas Highway Historical Marker on State Highway 35 west of Angleton now marks the spot and records the story. The entire area is still called Bailey’s Prairie, and any old-timer will tell you that on any dark night one might see a strange, distant light moving across the prairie—the ghost of old Brit Bailey.

Chapter 17

Sarah Kimbrough Armour's Family the Armours, the Hillens, the Waddys, and the Kimbroughs



Sarah Kimbrough Armour was descended from a long line of early American colonists from England, Scotland, and Wales. In the early years her ancestors lived mainly in New Kent and Louisa Counties, Virginia, and Baltimore, Maryland; later some moved west to Tennessee. Sarah, who was sometimes called Sally, was born on September 3, 1831, in Paris, Henry County, Tennessee, the daughter of Solomon Hillen Armour and Sarah Ann Holmes Waddy. Through her father she was descended from the colonial families of Hillen, Hooker, Raven, and Clements of early Maryland; through her mother from the families of Waddy, Kimbrough, Parke, Cooke, and Smith of early Virginia. She, like Mordello, was every bit a descendant of Britannia and of the American colonial South. The several accompanying charts show her known genealogy.



The Armours from Scotland

Sarah K. Armour's great-grandfather, James Armour, was born in Scotland in about 1735, and lived at Mauchline (or Machlin), near Ayr. In 1761 he was married to Mary Smith by the Reverend Auld in Mauchline. Among their children were David Armour, Sarah's grandfather, and Jean Armour.

The Scottish poet and hero, Robert Burns, who was of a lower class and was famously promiscuous, took Jean Armour as his mistress, and she gave birth to two sets of twins, none of whom survived. The story is told that Jean's father so strongly disapproved of Robert Burns that the couple separated and Burns moved to Edinburgh, but later they were reunited and were married on August 3, 1788. They then had two additional children: Francis Wallace and William Nichol Burns. Munson family tradition has told that Jean Armour was the "Jeannie" of Robert Burns' original poem or song, "Jeannie with the Light Brown Hair," but recent research does not confirm this. The song was written in 1852 by the American composer Stephen Collins Foster. Burns did write many poems and songs, including "Auld Lang Syne," and he was the original author of the lines:

O wad some Power the giftie gie us
To see oursels as ithers see us!

Jean's brother, David Armour, was born in Mauchline in 1768. He emigrated to America and arrived in Baltimore on July 29, 1788, at the age of 20. Years later one of his descendants wrote: "My Aunt said it was understood by the older generation that the reason for David Armour's leaving Ayr was because of the affair of his sister Jean with the poet Robert Burns, whom she finally married."¹⁸⁸ In Baltimore, on May 14, 1793, at the age of 25, David married Mary Hillen of the wealthy Hillen family of Baltimore.

The Hillens from Wales

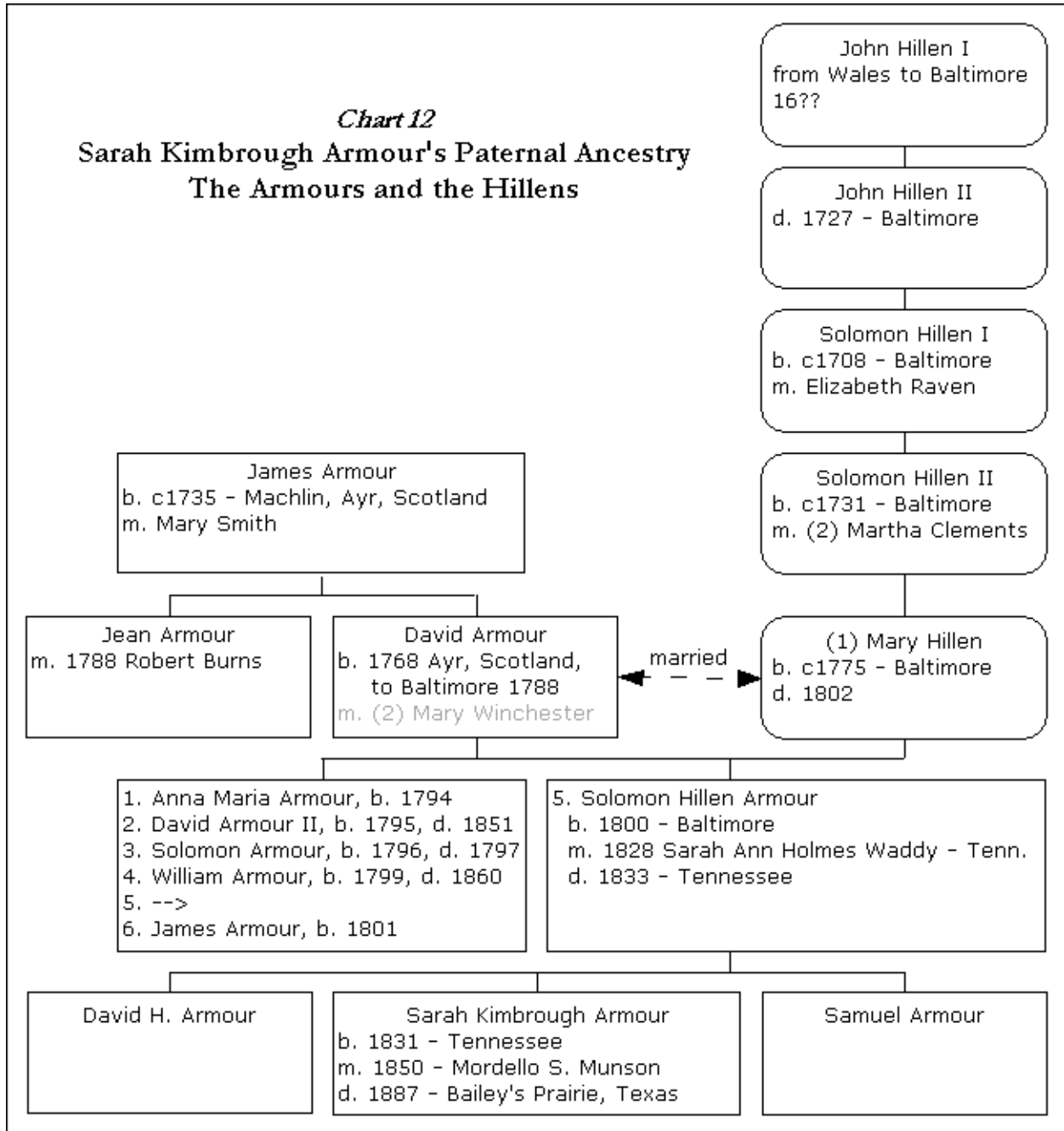
The Hillen family had long roots in Baltimore. John Hillen I had come from Wales at an unknown date, certainly well before 1700. His son, John Hillen II, was the father of Solomon Hillen I, Mary's grandfather, who was born in Baltimore in 1708. Solomon Hillen I married Elizabeth Raven in 1729, and one of their sons was named Solomon Hillen II, born about 1731.

Solomon Hillen II's second marriage, in 1769, was to Martha Clements, a daughter of Colonel Charles Clements. One of their children was daughter Mary Hillen, born in about 1775, who, at about 18 years of age, married David Armour in Baltimore on May 14, 1793.

Family tradition tells that the elegant old Hillen mansion is today the clubhouse of a fine country club in Baltimore.

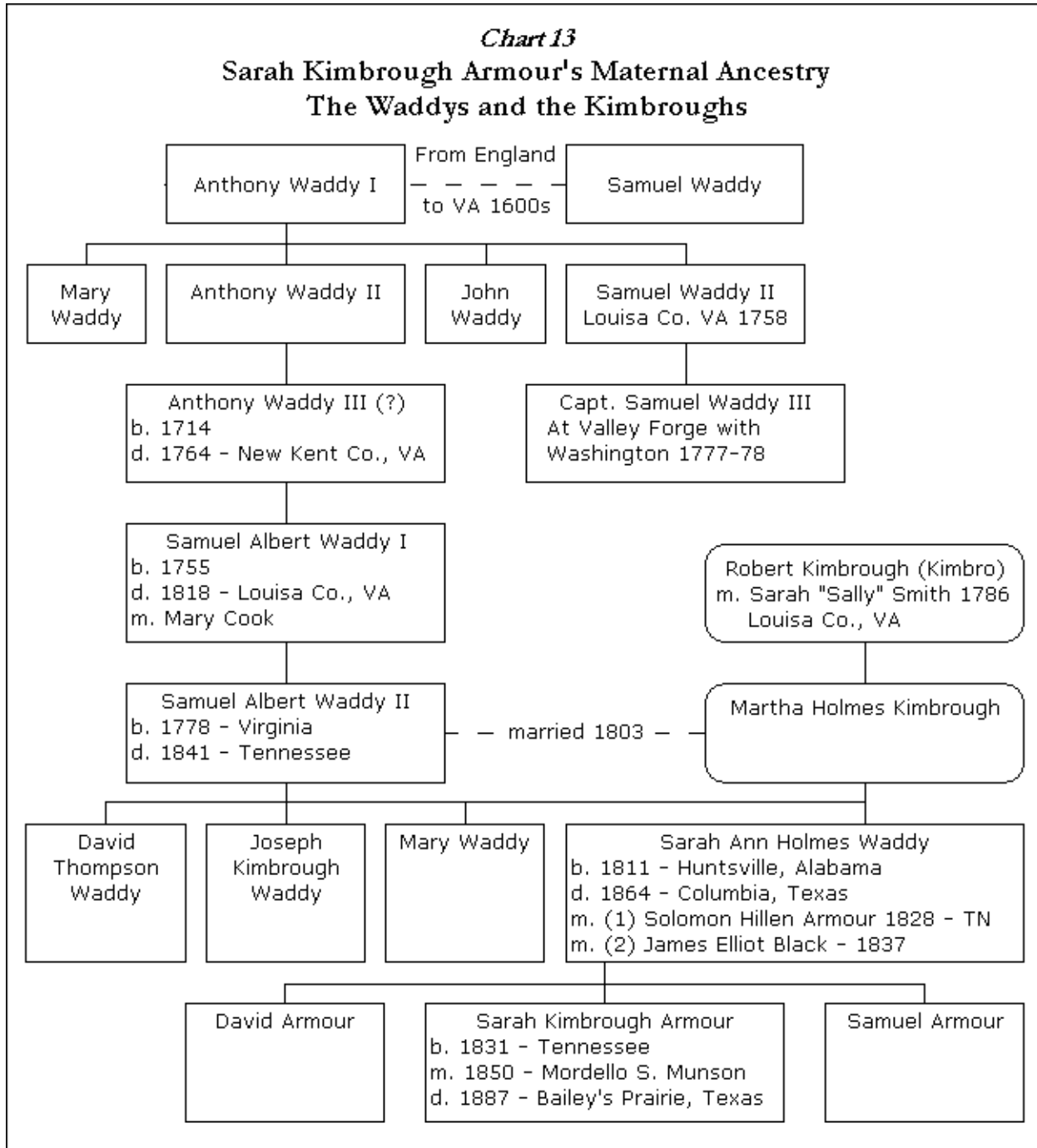
David Armour and Mary Hillen had six children in their nine years of marriage before Mary died in 1802. The fifth of these, Solomon Hillen Armour, the father of Sarah K. Armour, was born in Baltimore on August 29, 1800. Solomon Hillen Armour was named for his maternal grandfather, Solomon Hillen.

¹⁸⁸ Notes of Erma Munson Rich, *Munson Papers*, see Appendix 1



After Mary Hillen’s death, David Armour married Mary Winchester in 1803. Mary became mother to the six Hillen children, and David and Mary Winchester Armour had four additional children.

Sometime before 1828 the family moved to Paris, Henry County, Tennessee, where Solomon Hillen Armour met and married Sarah Ann Holmes Waddy in 1828.



The Waddys from England

Sarah K. Armour, through her mother, Sarah Ann Holmes Waddy, was a descendant of the distinguished Waddy family of early Virginia. Two Waddy brothers, Samuel and Anthony, came to New Kent County, Virginia, in the 1600s from North England near the Scottish border. The earliest known dates are the baptism records of Samuel Waddy's children in St. Peter's Church, New Kent County—Mary Waddy in 1687 and Elizabeth Waddy in 1689. This is the church in which, years later, George Washington married Martha Custis.

Anthony Waddy I, our ancestor, had four children: Mary, Anthony II, John, and Samuel II. Samuel II was known as Captain Waddy in Louisa County in 1758. He had eight children, and one, Captain Samuel Waddy III, is recorded as a brave Revolutionary soldier who spent the winter of 1777-1778 with George Washington at Valley Forge.

Anthony Waddy II, our ancestor, was the father of Anthony Waddy III, who was born in New Kent County on December 14, 1714, and died at the age of 50 in 1764.¹⁸⁹

As the frontier pushed westward, the family moved inland to Louisa County in the mid-1700s, where son Samuel Albert Waddy I was born in 1755. Samuel Albert Waddy I married Mary Cook, raised a family, and died in Virginia in 1818, at the age of 63.

His son, Samuel Albert Waddy II, was born in Louisa County, Virginia, in 1778 in the midst of the Revolutionary War. Samuel Waddy II was married in 1803 to Martha Holmes Kimbrough. She was the daughter of Robert Kimbrough (sometimes Kimbro) and Sarah "Sally" Smith. This is apparently where the favorite name of Sarah entered the family.

The family moved at some later date to Paris, Tennessee. There they raised at least four children: David Thompson Waddy, Joseph Kimbrough Waddy, Mary Waddy, and Sarah Ann Holmes Waddy. Sarah Ann was born in 1811 in Huntsville, Alabama. Samuel A. Waddy II died on March 15, 1841, at about the age of 62.

Solomon Hillen Armour and Sarah Ann Holmes Waddy

Solomon Hillen Armour and Sarah Ann Holmes Waddy were married on February 13, 1828. He was 27—the bride was 17. They had three children before he died on December 21, 1833, at the age of 33:

1. David H. Armour, b. April 3, 1830, d. 187? (Texas?)
2. Sarah Kimbrough Armour, b. September 3, 1831 Paris, Tennessee d. January 31, 1887 Bailey's Prairie, Texas
3. Samuel Robert Armour, b. May 10, 1833, d. May 21, 1834

An account of the day of Solomon Hillen Armour's death is contained in a letter from his brother, David Armour II, in Paris, Tennessee, to David's mercantile partner, John Cromwell, in Jackson, Tennessee. The letter is of interest because it indicates that their father, David Armour I, must have died prior to this date as he is not mentioned.

Paris, Saturday Morning
Sunrise - 21 Dec. 1833

Dear Jno.

Bro. W. [William] wrote to Mother [stepmother Mary Winchester] last night. Bro. Solomon has slept pretty well since then but is extremely low, when awake he appears quite sensible, day before yesterday he was out of his head all day & night - Yesterday he was apparently a good deal better but I have had no hopes of his recovery for a week past & believe he cannot live until Monday morning - We of course do all we can for him to make his situation as comfortable as possible. I am reconciled to the will of

¹⁸⁹ This writer is not convinced that Anthony Waddy II and Anthony Waddy III were not one and the same. A study of dates and generation gaps seem to suggest this possibility.

Providence about him - more especially as I know he is so himself - Oh that we all could die the death of the righteous & may our last end be like theirs; when it may please God to call us away from this world therefore it highly becomes us to live their lives - - - righteously & constantly with fear of God that we may at last thru Grace die triumphantly with faith of Jesus Christ. I am almost worn out sitting up every night - my mind constantly under great anxiety between hope & fear - I must try & be particular & not get sick myself. Were I a single man it would be of no importance but I have too many now depending on me to be indifferent about my life & health - - - Poor Bro. Sol. was too thoughtless of himself in his great anxiety to attend to his business.

I surely hope Mother will not attempt to come here to see Bro. Solomon, it will be exposing herself too much, the weather is too unfavorable & her own health too delicate, & if even she could see him alive, he is so low that it is very doubtful if he would be in his right mind & could not be any ways satisfactory to either of them...

I hope my Dear Wife will endeavour to take care of the family - the best way she can while I am away, & not on any account worry or fatigue herself about anything. If any Pork is delivered while I am away you will have to see a little to it... from present appearances of the weather it will be a good time to salt Pork... must be sure to put saltpetre on hams - shoulders & jowls & to rub the salt in well... send to Albert Waddy 500 dolls [dollars] I borrowed to send to W. Moore - I sent him 800 yesterday... Give my love to your father, to my dear wife & to the children & rest of the family & believe me
Yrs truly D. Armour

In 1833 Sarah Ann Holmes Waddy Armour was left with three babies: aged three, two, and seven months. Daughter Sarah Kimbrough Armour was two. On September 20, 1837, still in Tennessee, Sarah Ann married James Elliot Black. They had two sons: Amos Alonzo "Lon" Black and William Waddy "Will" Black. Some years later the family moved to Brazoria County, Texas, where James Black operated Black's Ferry on the San Bernard River. The move may have been made in the middle 1840s as daughter Sarah K. Armour apparently did not accompany them on the move. Munson records tell that she was visiting her mother in Texas when she first met and later married Mordello Stephen Munson. James Black died on September 21, 1849, and Sarah Ann Black lived in Columbia, Texas, for the remainder of her life.

Sarah Armour Black was very religious and frequently visited and corresponded with her daughter at Bailey's Prairie. An entry in her diary dated March 5, 1863, reads: "My birthday - fifty years ago I was a babe in Huntsville, Alabama, the joy of the household being the first daughter. Little did my dear kind parents think that babe would have to pass through such rough seas and be heir to so many diseases and troubles of almost every kind. But I can truly say the hand of the Lord has been in it all, and I am this night although on a bed of sickness a monument of his goodness & mercy and though I am so sinful he loves and blesses me abundantly... Sarah and children out to see me for which I am thankful." She died in Columbia at 5:45 p.m. on May 5, 1864, at the age of 53. An entry in the diary of daughter Sarah K. Munson on that date reads partially as follows:

On this day, the most grievous day of my life, I was called to the Death bed of my dearly beloved mother, one of my greatest of earthly treasures. Oh that we may meet again where troubles are no more. May the Lord so direct our steps as to lead us to that blessed abode where we shall meet that dear vanished mother to part no more.

Sarah K. Munson had but one brother who attained adulthood. He was David Armour. Little information on his family is known. David seems to have lived in Texas, as “David,” “Lon,” and “Will” are often mentioned in Sarah Munson’s diary and correspondence.

After Sarah K. Armour married Mordello Munson and settled in Texas in 1850, she did not return to her Tennessee home until a trip was made in 1881. Her diary relates that she and her eldest daughter, Emma, made an extended trip to visit her Waddy relatives in Collierville. Letters back and forth refer to the great fun and warm family visits of this trip.

Current Munson files contain many photographs of relatives with only the notation “Collierville, Tenn.” No identifying names are noted and no living Munsons can identify the pictures. (This should be a warning to all to write an identification on all family photographs). The photographs are undoubtedly of members of the Waddy family in Collierville. David Thompson Waddy, an uncle to Sarah K. Munson, became a physician in Collierville and died there in 1892, leaving four children.

Sarah’s aunt, Mary Waddy, married Dr. Reese Bourland in Collierville, and they had three children named Hillen, Joseph, and Sarah Bourland. In later years (in the 1880s) this Dr. Bourland was a Methodist minister in Georgetown, Texas. It is curious that their first son was named Hillen. Mary’s sister, Sarah Ann Holmes Waddy, had just recently married Solomon Hillen Armour. The Waddys, the Armours, the Hillens, and the Thompsons appear to have been very close socially and in business and to have frequently intermarried. The sons of many of these families carried as their given name the family name from another of them; and the Munsons of Texas have continued to use these names, as there have been many Hillen, Armour, and Waddy Munsons in the years that followed.

Chapter 18

Mordello Stephen and Sarah K. Munson Early Years at Bailey's Prairie — 1850–1862



Mordello Stephen Munson and Sarah Kimbrough Armour were married on February 6, 1850. They first lived at Bailey's Prairie in the "Russell Place," which they named "Hard Castle." In about 1855 they built a new home nearby, which they named "Ridgely." There they raised their family and lived the remainder of their lives. Today this is called "The Old Home Place." Mordello was a stockman, farmer, and lawyer; he gradually accumulated a large plantation; and he served in the Texas State Legislature from 1857 until 1861. He was a strong proponent of slavery and secession, and in January of 1862 he left his family and plantation and volunteered for the Confederate Army.



When Mordello and Sarah were married, he was 24 years old—she was but 18. The site of the wedding is not recorded. It may have been held in Brazoria or Columbia, Texas, or at Black's Ferry, where the bride's mother and stepfather lived, or at Oakland Plantation, where the groom's mother and stepfather lived. The new couple began their married life in the small house on Bailey's Prairie known as the "Russell Place," that had been purchased by brother William Benjamin in 1847. This may have been the residence of Mordello for the nine months after he returned from New Orleans and before his wedding. They named the place "Hard Castle," and this was their home for about five years.

Although William Benjamin had written that he had bought 500 acres, there is only an estimated 360 acres in the plot as best identified today. It is now mostly thick woods with some cleared grazing land. Mordello owned five slaves from the division of his father's estate the previous year, and he probably started his plantation immediately with cotton, corn, vegetables, and livestock. He also opened a law office in the county seat of Brazoria, about five miles away.

The location of their first home can be spotted today by the presence of the unusual perennial plant known as "cry-baby myrtle," so named from the shape of the blossoms. These wild plants would be considered a part of the local weed crop today, but they were used as ornamental yard plants in those earlier times. To avoid the frequent floods, this home had been built on a ridge running through the property known as the "cooter back," the slaves' term for "turtle back." In later years the largest cultivated field became known as the "north-field" and the northernmost pointed field as the "point-field." These open spaces can easily be identified today among the huge, native pecan and live oak trees and the wild youpon holly and other underbrush.

The late Lewis Munson supplied the above information as related to him by his father, Milam Stephen Munson, who was the eighth and last child of Mordello and Sarah, and who was born and raised on the property.

The Munsons had always been land hungry, and it did not take Mordello long to start building his plantation. On July 10, 1850, he purchased the adjoining 300 acres to the west from Lucinda Bailey Florence, the daughter of Smith Bailey and the granddaughter of Brit Bailey, for \$750.00. The price represented \$2.50 per acre.

During these years, land ownership records were often indefinite, overlapping, unrecorded, and/or lost; and William Benjamin had apparently not been careful in establishing clear title to his land. On November 15, 1850, a court petition was filed in Brazoria County District Court by James Knight of Fort Bend County complaining against Mordello S. Munson of Brazoria County as follows:

That Petitioner is, and has been, since the tenth day of May, A.D. 1849, the legal owner of three hundred acres of land, situated near Bailey's Prairie, in said County of Brazoria, being a part of the tract of land lately... occupied by William J. Russell, and being a part of the league of land originally granted to Cornelius Smith by the Government of Mexico, and, also, part of the two tracts of land purchased by William J. Russell in the year A.D. 1839 from Robert Scoby, and bounded as follows...

That on or about the tenth day of May, A.D. 1849¹⁹⁰ Mordello S. Munson, a resident citizen of the County of Brazoria, with force and arms, illegally entered upon and took possession of the said three hundred acres of land, without the knowledge or consent of Petitioner, and the said Defendant refused to deliver up to Petitioner the possession of the aforesaid tract of three hundred acres of land, although often requested so to do -

Wherefore your Petitioner prays that the said Mordello S. Munson may be cited to appear at the next Regular Term of your Honorable Court to be holden at Brazoria, in and for said county, to answer this Petition, that the said defendant be condemned to deliver up to your petitioner the tract of land aforesaid, that a writ of possession be granted to petitioner, and that he be quitted in the title and possession of said land.

This suit was dismissed in December of 1851. An entry in the court records dated December 6, 1851, reads: "In this case a rule for costs was taken by the Clerk and the same has not been satisfied, and the plaintiff still failing and refusing to satisfy said rule, it is considered by the Court that this case be dismissed under the rule of costs... the plaintiff and defendant both refusing to pay the Jury fee of three dollars..."

On February 22, 1854, Mordello purchased from S. T. and Mary Angier a thirty-five-acre plot adjoining his land to the south at \$4.30 per acre for a total price of \$150.00. This was a part of the above contested land. Then a curious transaction took place on December 31, 1855. Mordello purchased from the wealthy Brazoria bankers and land-traders, Robert and David G. Mills, 500 acres at the high price of \$10.00 per acre, a total of \$5,000.00. This purchase included most, but not all, of the land in the James Knight petition as well as all of the Angier thirty-five-acre plot. The Mills brothers were the same men with whom William Benjamin had traded in 1847 to acquire the original land. It appears that they had re-entered the picture, and Mordello was paying them generously again to insure his title to the disputed land.

¹⁹⁰ This indicates the date at which Mordello apparently returned to Brazoria County from New Orleans Law School and began his residence on this property.

Some years later, on February 16, 1859, Mordello purchased from Polly Hinds, former wife of Smith Bailey and mother of Lucinda Florence, another adjoining 600 acres to the west at \$3.33 per acre for a total price of \$2,000.00. With this purchase Mordello owned all of the western quarter, and more, of the Cornelius Smith Survey—a plantation of approximately 1,500 acres—and he had paid a total of \$7,900.00 in addition to William B. Munson’s original trade.



Mordello and Sarah’s family was growing during their years at “Hard Castle.” There they had their first two sons: Henry William, born on August 16, 1851, and George Caldwell, born on January 12, 1853.¹⁹¹ Mordello named his first son for his father, Henry William (and his brother William), and the second for his brother George and his stepfather James Caldwell. With his first two sons, he had honored the names of his father, his stepfather, and his two closest brothers. In all he had six sons, and none was ever named for him.

In the operation of the plantation, the slaves tended the fields and the livestock. As fast as he could have more land cleared, Mordello increased the number of his cattle and horses, and the size of his cotton and corn fields. He organized his slaves for the various kinds of work. Ralph (or “Rafe”) was the general manager of all of the work, and Mordello held him responsible. Ralph issued instructions to two main foremen—one had charge of the stock and one had charge of the farming operations. Ralph would get the workers started, and then would go hunting or fishing. While cotton and corn were the major crops, Sarah’s diary mentions the setting out of tobacco and potato plants and the growing of wheat. A cotton gin was built in a field that came to be known as the “gin-house field.” Cotton was sold to the brokers in Columbia and Brazoria, including the Underwood firm and the Adriance firm. It brought varying prices on the New Orleans market, but the sale price was practically clear profit, as Mordello owned the land and his slaves supplied all of the labor.

Sarah similarly organized the household work. One slave was trained to cook and serve the family and the “company meals.” Her diary shows that family members, neighbors, the minister, friends, and “drop-ins” were very frequent visitors. Slaves scoured and carded the wool, carded cotton, and did the spinning. Others were trained to dye the thread and weave it into cloth, and some were trained seamstresses and made clothing. Still others did the washing and ironing. Soap and candles were homemade. As the babies came, a slave was trained as a nurse. Almost every entry in Sarah’s diary tells of making clothing—including shoes, coats, and deerskin vests—for some member of her family. Sometimes cloth was purchased from Brazoria, Columbia, or Houston.

It is obvious that Mordello and Sarah were well on their way to building their large plantation, and it is obvious that his law practice was flourishing. In later years his son Milam Stephen remarked that his father’s activities as lawyer, stockman, and planter were so closely intertwined that he could easily be classified as any one of the three. At some time he opened additional law offices in Houston and in Galveston. His reputation as one of the finest land title lawyers in Texas, and at the same time honest and trustworthy, brought him clients from many sections of the United States. At some time he was in partnership with A. L. Lathrop and later with H. T. Garnett, and an H. H. Shepard once wrote asking to be admitted into his office.

¹⁹¹ While it is not known for sure, it seems probable that their third child, Emma, born on February 26, 1855, was also born at “Hard Castle,” since records state that their new home, Ridgely, was built in about the year 1855.



Family records relate that in about 1855 Mordello and Sarah built a long, rambling ranch house—four bedrooms, a living room, a dining room, and a kitchen. The story is told that one spring day they were walking through the woods when a wild turkey hen suddenly flew up from her nest. They decided then and there that this would be the location of their new home. It was about three-quarters of a mile to the west of “Hard Castle” on their newly acquired 300 acres. The house backed up to Mill Bayou, and they named it “Ridgely.” Always careful and apprehensive of fire, they housed the kitchen in a separate building nearby, connected to the main house by a covered walkway. A smaller separate building with two rooms was added as Mordello’s office, and this later became the “boys’ room.” Mordello and Sarah moved their family to the new home and lived there the rest of their lives. The house burned a few years after Mordello’s death in 1903, and the lands were divided among their children in 1907. Almost all of these particular lands are still owned by their descendants today.

Two daughters were born to Mordello and Sarah during these years: Emma on February 26, 1855, and Sarah Kimbrough II on June 9, 1858. It is not known why they chose the name Emma, but Sarah Kimbrough, always known as “Doll,” was named for her mother. On May 22, 1861, their fifth child, Joseph Waddy was born. He was named for Sarah’s favorite uncle, Joseph Kimbrough Waddy (“Uncle Jo”) of Collierville, Tennessee.

In April of 1852, Ann and James P. Caldwell and children Robert Milam and Mary Jane moved from Oakland Plantation to Hays County near San Marcos, Texas. Oakland remained a family enterprise with Mordello as “Curator” and Gerard as the resident manager. The annual profits were divided among all members of the family. In October of 1856, James, Ann, and Mary Jane Caldwell were visiting in Brazoria County, possibly for the marriage of Gerard and Ann Westall, when James Caldwell became ill in the yellow fever epidemic of that year and died on November 16, 1856, at the Bailey’s Prairie home of Mordello and Sarah.

Mordello’s Participation in the State Legislature and Secession¹⁹²

In 1857 Mordello was elected to the Seventh Texas Legislature as the representative from District 52, which was Brazoria County, and served two terms from 1857 until 1861. When Mordello was first elected in 1857, the contest for governor was between then United States Senator Sam Houston and Hardin R. Runnels. The vote was 32,552 for Runnels and 23,628 for Houston. Houston had served as president of the Republic of Texas for two terms and had led Texas to statehood. In 1846 he was one of the first two U. S. Senators elected from Texas (along with Thomas J. Rusk), in which capacity he served for twelve years. Certain of his moderate votes on the slavery issue were unpopular in Texas and led to this defeat as governor. He ran for governor again in 1859 and defeated Runnels by a vote of 36,257 to 27,500. Thus Mordello’s two terms were served under the governorships of Hardin Runnels and Sam Houston. During these years the two-year legislatures usually met only one time for about two months. The Seventh Legislature under Governor Runnels was in session only from November 2, 1857 until February 16, 1858. The Eighth Legislature under Governor Houston, which struggled with secession from the Union, was in regular session from November 7, 1859 until February 13, 1860 and in extra session from January 21 until February 9, 1861. Governor Houston refused to take the new oath

¹⁹² The accounts of Texas history in this section are taken from John Henry Brown, *The History of Texas*.

of office required by the Secession Ordinance which became effective on March 2, 1861, so Lt. Governor Edward Clark assumed the office of governor and called the Eighth Legislature into adjourned session from March 18 until April 9, 1861.

During the early years of these sessions the legislature dealt with the problems of Mexican and Indian raids on the Texas frontiers, efforts to attract railroad building in the state, and the settlement of fiscal matters with the United States. Texas attracted railroads to the state by granting large amounts of public land to the railroad companies in return for their building railroads. Today many Texas land surveys carry the names or initials of these early railroad companies, as the H.T.&B.R.R. Survey at Bailey's Prairie, which became a part of Mordello's Ridgely Plantation.

The legislature frequently appropriated money to send armed expeditions against the raiding Comanches, Apaches, and Lipans in west and north Texas; and the Mexicans along the Rio Grande. In 1859 Governor Houston appealed to the federal government in Washington to take steps to stop the raids of a band of Mexicans under the leadership of Juan Nepomuceno Cortina. The U. S. government acted promptly by directing Colonel Robert E. Lee, then in command of federal troops in the Department of Texas, to adopt the most energetic measures to destroy Cortina and his band. Colonel Lee, with his regular army men and a group of Texan volunteers under the command of Colonel John S. Ford, occupied Fort Brown (now Brownsville) and defeated Cortina in a battle on December 27, 1859. The raiders were dispersed, leaving the country in comparative quiet.

The overwhelming issue of these sessions was the ever-rising national threat to the institution of slavery, which was the very life-blood of this southern agricultural society. Most of the citizens had never known anything else and would give slavery up only by the force of arms. The heart of the national debate then centered on the status of slavery in the new states rapidly entering the Union. When California entered as a slave-free state in 1850, this gave the free states control of the U. S. Senate and the House of Representatives. Attention then turned to the rapidly growing Kansas-Nebraska Territory, where armed conflict soon broke out over the question of the eventual slave status of these future states. The southern states felt severely threatened. In 1858 the Texas Legislature, of which Mordello Munson was a freshman member, passed the following resolution:

Resolved, That the Governor of the State is hereby authorized to order an election for seven delegates to meet delegates appointed by the other southern States, in convention, whenever the executives of a majority of the slave-holding States shall express the opinion that such convention is necessary to preserve the equal rights of such States in the Union, and advise the Governor of this State that measures have been taken to meet those of Texas.

General Sam Houston was inaugurated as governor on December 21, 1859, and Mordello Munson was re-elected as a member of the Eighth Legislature. This session was consumed primarily with constant state military action against the Indians and the lengthy considerations leading to secession from the Union. In late 1859, South Carolina, the leader in the secession movement, passed a resolution calling for a convention of the southern states to consider such action. In the Texas Legislature a Committee on Federal Relations was appointed to consider the call. On February 7, 1860, during the regular session of the Eighth Legislature, Mr. M. S. Munson, for the majority, read the following report to the legislature:

To the Hon. M. D. K. Taylor, Speaker of the House of Representatives:

The preamble and resolutions passed by the legislature of the State of South Carolina, and submitted for our consideration, have been deliberated upon by the Committee on Federal Relations, and your Committee respectfully submit to the House for its action the following resolutions:

1st. Resolved. That the State of Texas declares that whenever one section of the Union presumes upon its strength for the oppression of the other, then will our constitution be a mockery, and it would matter not how soon the Union was severed into a thousand atoms and scattered to the four winds.

2nd. Resolved. If the principles of confederation upon which the American Union was consummated are disregarded, there will be for Texas neither honor nor interest in the Union; if the mighty, in the face of written law, can place with impunity an iron yoke upon the neck of the weak, Texas will be at no loss how to act or where to go before the blow aimed at her vitals is inflicted. In a spirit of good faith Texas entered the Federal fold. By that spirit she will continue to be influenced until it is attempted to make her the victim of Federal wrong as she will violate no Federal right, so she will submit to no violation of her rights by Federal authority.

3rd. Resolved. That the Legislature of Texas assure South Carolina and all her sister states, that she will not submit to the degradation threatened by the Black Republican Party for, sooner than subject herself to the ignominy ensuing from sectional dictation, she would prefer restoration to that independence she once enjoyed. Sorrowing for the mistakes which she committed in sacrificing her independence upon the alter of her patriotism she would, if there were none others to act with her, unfurl again the banner of the Lone Star and re-enter upon a national career, where, if no glory awaited her, she would at least be free from a subjection by might, to wrong and to shame.

4th. Resolved. That we pledge ourselves to any one or more of the states to co-operate with them, should it become necessary, to resist Federal wrong, and claim that it is not only our right, but imperative duty, at all times to aid any member of the Confederacy in protection of property, in preserving the lives of women and children and in resisting fanaticism and treason.

And that the Governor is hereby requested to transmit a copy of the above preamble and resolutions to the governor of South Carolina, and to the Executives of the various states of the Union, and to our Representatives and Senators in Congress.

John H. Manly of the committee submitted a minority report stating that none of the evils complained of were ascribable to the legitimate operations of the federal government, that the dissolution of the Union would cure none of the evils complained of, that it behooved those who had been faithful to the Constitution to maintain the government against its enemies, that the doctrines that a state had a right to secede from the Union or to practice "nullification" was dissented from, that it was inexpedient to send delegates to such a convention as that proposed by South Carolina, and that no sufficient cause existed for taking the incipient steps for a dissolution of the Union.

The resolution was adopted by a majority of the legislature, and early in the year 1860 Governor Houston ordered a canvass of the citizens of the state to ascertain their views on this matter. The resolution was ratified by an overwhelming majority of the voters as the country convulsed over the issue.

Amidst this furor a president of the United States was to be elected in the fall of 1860. For the last eight years the office had been in the hands of Presidents Pierce and Buchanan, both elected by the Democratic Party. The Democratic Party was the major national party, but a division sprang up in the party concerning the details of the determination of slave-holding rights in the territories and in new states. The party became so divided that when the 1860 nominating convention met in Charleston, South Carolina, it was unable to make a nomination between the leading candidates, Stephen Douglas and John Breckinridge. The contentious, stalemated convention adjourned to Baltimore, where the delegates split and both men were nominated by their factions. A third splinter group, the Constitutional Union Party, put forth the nomination of John Bell of Tennessee. After the Democratic Party, the next most powerful party was the new Republican Party which nominated Abraham Lincoln from Illinois. In Texas only two tickets were run, those listing Breckinridge and Bell. Public furor and suspicion were rampant when Lincoln was elected by a minority of the national voters and without the support of a single southern state.

In Texas popular excitement became intense, and throughout the state public meetings were held at which a great majority of the people felt that Texas had only the alternatives of withdrawing from the Union or awaiting the destruction of her domestic institution of slavery. Even as this was the dominant popular impression of the time, Governor Houston sought by every means within his power to stay this tide and preserve the Union. In December of 1860, promptly after Lincoln's election, South Carolina passed the Ordinance of Secession. Within two months five other states had joined her and had agreed to an assemblage of delegates at Montgomery, Alabama, for the purpose of forming a new Confederate Union. Governor Houston declined to support a call for a convention in Texas to consider secession. However, when mass meetings over the state called for such action, a call was issued, signed only by the lieutenant-governor and numerous state officers and distinguished citizens, requesting the people in all counties to assemble on January 5, 1861, to elect delegates to a Secession Convention to assemble in Austin on January 28. Such convention was to have the authority to determine the future course of Texas on this grave question.

To face this issue, Governor Houston issued a proclamation convening the legislature in extra session on January 21, 1861. Mordello Munson was a member of this legislature. Governor Houston transmitted his message detailing the condition of the state. It dealt heavily with matters of protection from Indian raids. He then concluded with his message on secession, which read in part as follows:

The Executive feels as deeply as any of your Honorable Body the necessity of such action on the part of the slave-holding States as to secure to the fullest extent every right they possess. Self-preservation, if not a manly love of liberty... prompts this determination.

But he cannot feel that these dictate hasty and unconcerted action, nor can he reconcile to his mind the idea that our safety demands an immediate separation from the government, ere we have stated our grievances or demanded redress...

While deploring the election of Messrs. Lincoln and Hamlin, the Executive yet has seen in it no cause for the immediate and separate secession of Texas...

Whatever may be the course of Texas the ambition of her people should be that she should take no step except after calm deliberation.

...The time has come when, in my opinion, it is necessary to invoke the sovereign will for the solution of this question affecting our relations with the Federal government. The people, as the source of all power, can alone declare the course that Texas shall

pursue, and, in the opinion of the Executive, they demand that the legislature shall provide a legal means by which they shall express their will, as free men at the ballot-box...

The legislature then passed an act recognizing the pending convention as a plenary body and representing the sovereignty of the people of Texas, but with the restriction that a proposal to secede would have to be submitted to the people.

The Secession Convention assembled at Austin on January 28, 1861, with 177 delegates. The five delegates elected from Brazoria County included Mordello Munson. On February 1, 1861, the convention passed the Secession Ordinance, dissolving the relations of the State of Texas to the federal government and declaring that Texas resume her position as an independent government. The ordinance was adopted by a vote 166 to 8.¹⁹³ Mordello Munson's name is not among the signatures and is not among those who abstained. For reasons unknown, it appears that he did not participate in this phase of the convention.

On February 2, 1861, the convention adopted an "Address to the People of Texas," which set forth the reasons which impelled its action. The numerous reasons listed included the following: "...leaders of the North had preached such strange doctrines as 'the equality of all men, irrespective of race or color?'"

On February 23, 1861, by a vote of 44,317 to 13,020,¹⁹⁴ the voters of the state approved the Secession Ordinance. In its final session, called to canvass that vote, the convention approved the Provisional Constitution of the Confederate States of America adopted in Montgomery, Alabama. It also modified the Texas Constitution of 1845 into the Constitution of 1861, substituting "Confederate States" for "United States" wherever the latter term occurred. The president of the convention declared Texas out of the Union on March 2, 1861, the twenty-fifth anniversary of Texas independence.

Of the 177 members of the convention, about 145 served in the Confederate army, the exceptions being mostly men who were too old to serve. Seven became generals, thirty became colonels, and about thirty were killed in battle or died in the service.

The convention then assumed that secession was an accomplished fact, and that Texas had become one of the Confederate States. An ordinance was passed requiring all officers of the state to take a new oath in accordance with these changes. This placed Governor Houston in a most trying position. When the appointed hour for such oath occurred, at noon on March 16, 1861, Houston and six other state officers did not appear for the oath, and when they did not appear by the next day, Lieutenant-Governor Edward Clark entered upon his duties as acting governor. A few days later Governor Houston retired to his home in Independence and later in Huntsville, where he died on July 26, 1863.¹⁹⁵



¹⁹³ Vote figures given here and below are from *The Handbook of Texas*. Other sources give differing figures.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ This distinguished leader of Texas was born in Virginia on March 2, 1793, just a few weeks after Henry William Munson's birth in Mississippi on January 15, 1793 and James P. Caldwell's birth in Maryland on January 6, 1793. Stephen F. Austin was born on November 3, 1793.

The first shots of the Civil War took place at Fort Sumter, South Carolina, on April 12, 1861. The first serious battle was at Bull Run, Virginia, on July 21. A state of war was proclaimed by the governor of Texas on June 8, and energetic measures were adopted for raising and drilling troops. On July 8, 1861, the port of Galveston was blockaded by a federal fleet and soon thereafter all of the ports of the Texas coast were blockaded, leaving Texas shut-in from the rest of the world. Mordello Munson's term as a legislator ended in the fall of 1861, and in January of 1862 he enlisted as a private in the Confederate Army at Galveston, Texas.

Chapter 19

Mordello Stephen Munson and Sarah K. Munson The Civil War Years — 1862–1865¹⁹⁶



Mordello enlisted as a private in the Confederate Army in January of 1862 at Galveston. He was discharged in April of that year and re-enlisted as a captain in July. His army service took him through the early campaigns in Louisiana and Mississippi and finally to the decisive campaign at Vicksburg which ended on July 4, 1863. In the Confederate defeat at Vicksburg, Mordello was captured, released, and returned home, having signed a parole agreement that he would never again take up arms against the Union. In the spring of 1864, and again in 1865, he was back in the Confederate army engaged in the late campaigns in Louisiana and Arkansas. On May 23, 1865, he returned to Ridgely Plantation to face a new society and a new life.



On January 23, 1862, Mordello enlisted for six months as a private “in Captain D. D. Atchison’s Company G, Mounted Battalion, Colonel Nichol’s Regiment, under Lieutenant-Colonel T. J. DeBray” at Galveston. He was listed as “36 years old, six feet two inches high, light eyes, dark hair and by profession a planter.” He took his horse, “Reel,” and his brother George P., who had enlisted eight months earlier and was serving on the Texas frontier, received a transfer to the same unit the day after Mordello enlisted. Mordello’s letters from Galveston often mention George’s presence. One can surmise from his early letters that he felt that he was going not very far from home and for a limited stay. The extent of the impending war had probably not been perceived by anyone.

When Mordello left home he left behind his large plantation with many slaves, his five children under the age of eleven, and his 29-year-old wife, Sarah. To her fell the responsibility to manage the whole affair, and manage it she did—all alone, except for the occasional help of relatives, for most of the next three years. Their oldest child, Henry William III, was ten, the youngest, Joseph Waddy, was eight months, and a sixth, Hillen Armour, was to be born during the war years, in 1863.

Most of the information on these Civil War years comes from the papers in Mordello’s own collection. These include the original copies of letters exchanged between Mordello and Sarah

¹⁹⁶ All letters and quotes in this chapter are from the *Munson Papers*, see Appendix I.

during the war, other notes and records from his war files, and a daily diary that Sarah kept in penciled handwriting during some of these years. With knowledge of the military operations of the two armies and the information contained in his letters, one can trace most of his path during the war.

His letters are addressed to “Dear Sarah” or in endearing terms such as “My Beloved Wife,” and always signed M. S. Munson. Her letters are always addressed to “My dear Husband” and signed Sarah, but she always referred to him in her diary and in correspondence to her mother and others as “Mr. Munson.” This was the custom of those times. In correspondence they always referred to oldest son Henry William III as “Son,” to second son George Caldwell as “Bud,” to eldest daughter Emma as “daughter” or “daughter,” and to second daughter Sarah as “Dol” or “Doll.” Mordello’s letters always expressed warm love and affection for his wife and children, for his and Sarah’s mothers, and for their brothers, cousins, and neighbors; concern and warmth for the slaves (“remember me to the negroes”); and an inquiring interest about the horses, cattle, dogs, and crops. He often sent instructions for Ralph, who must have been the slave-manager of the plantation.



The Union plan for conquering the Confederacy, formulated in 1861 and 1862, was three-fold: first, to blockade their ports; second, to capture the Mississippi River strongholds and cut the Confederacy in half; and third, to drive upon and capture the Confederate capital at Richmond, Virginia. By April of 1865 all of these goals had been achieved.

On July 2, 1861, the port of Galveston was blockaded, and soon thereafter all of the ports on the Texas coast shared the same fate. Galveston was under constant threat of attack. On February 14, 1862, Mordello wrote to Sarah from Galveston:

When the enemy will attack, or whether they will do so at all, no one here can tell, though we keep our arms loaded and are ready at a moments warning. I have received every courtesy from Commanding Officers - have had positions offered me, night before last when an engagement was believed inevitable, about 3 o'clock, I received orders to report myself at headquarters - and was retained for the occasion upon the staff of the Commanding Officer. If it can be avoided I will not take office during my present term of enlistment.

In May of 1862 Commodore Eagle of the blockading squadron made a demand for Galveston’s surrender. Knowing that Eagle had no land force to occupy the city, the defending commander refused the demand. In October of 1862 the demand was renewed, and after some delays the city was occupied by Federal forces on December 25. Confederate forces under Major General John B. Magruder attacked on the night of December 31 and recaptured the city on the following day, and Galveston remained in control of the Confederates for the remainder of the war.

Mordello received a furlough from the “15th to the 27th of March [1862] unless sooner recalled” to visit his family and attend to details of business. A letter from Sarah dated only “March 31st” may have been written to him soon after his return to duty at Galveston. It refers frequently to her expectation of his early return. For reasons unknown, he was honorably discharged from the “Army of the Confederate States” on April 25, 1862. His discharge papers read:

By reason of imperatives of Term of Service and by virtue of Special Order No. 520, Headquarters Dept. of [?] Houston, Apl 17/62. Said M. S. Munson was born in Liberty County in the State of Texas, is thirty-six years of age, six feet two inches high, light complexion, blue eyes, dark hair, and by occupation, when enlisted, a farmer.

On or before July 28, 1862, he had again entered the army with the rank of captain in Waul's Texas Legion, Colonel T. W. Waul commanding. He possibly had been offered a commission as captain and strongly urged to join the war effort. Major-General John G. Walker was placed in command of the entire Texas Division in the summer or fall of 1862. On this assignment, Mordello took one of his slaves named Henry as his personal servant and orderly. His letters home often mention Henry, for instance, "Henry is fine and is invaluable to me. I could not have a better boy."

Mordello's duties with Waul's Texas Legion were initially as finance officer and later assistant adjutant general in the Quartermaster Department, responsible for ordering and dispersing funds for supplies and payroll. He sometimes mentions taking a gun to the front lines and participating in the battles. Records from his files show vouchers for the purchase of many varied supplies including guns, ammunition, tents, blankets, uniforms, mules, mule collars, harnesses, tar buckets, grain sacks, etc. One voucher for such supplies shows a total value of over \$36,000. He also issued payroll checks for the men.

In late July of 1862 Waul's Legion moved by rail to Louisiana and on to Mississippi to engage the Federal troops attempting to capture the southern strongholds of Vicksburg, Mississippi, and Port Hudson, Louisiana, and thus to split the South. On July 31 Mordello wrote from Alexandria, Louisiana:

...reached here this morning at day light, having traveled day and night without intermission since leaving Camp Waul without once undressing or going to bed... We leave today at eleven o'clock for Natches, there to try our fortunes at crossing the river. The enemy have broken up all the ferrys, all small boats, etc.

And later in the same letter:

I never parted with you, My Wife, and with our little ones, under similar circumstances before, nor can I tell what my emotions were, it is difficult to know the future, let us hope them for the best. Should I not return alive, Sarah, have me buried with the rest of my family where my Father and Brother are [i.e. the Peach Point Cemetery near Oakland Plantation].

A letter from "Natches" dated August 2, 1862, reports:

I reached here this evening crossing the river just as the sun was setting, it was a glorious sun set... The news is cheering every where, our troops in the heart of Kentucky & Tenn. and moving in every direction. There may soon be a fight at Tupelo [Mississippi], if so I may see it.

It is evident that Mordello received a furlough and returned to his home in late October of 1862. His later letters indicate this, and further evidence is that son Hillen Armour was born on July 31, 1863.

Mordello's next letter is dated "In Camp, North Miss Nov 23rd." He had apparently just recently returned from Texas by way of Louisiana and had visited with his Pearce relatives at Cheneyville. The letter reports:

...the Feds distant but a few miles, separated by a narrow stream, fordable in many places. Our Legion is distant from [our] Chief Command some 20 miles, watching the enemy and protecting his approach in this direction. Our pickets skirmish with them almost daily and prisoners are often brought in. We are in expectation of a battle daily, yet it may not take place for some time. The enemy are in large force greatly outnumbering us and reinforcing all the while. Their object is to take Jackson, flank and take Vicksburg, and unless heavy reinforcements, with a good General, is soon sent here, they will succeed... Our Legion occupies a position where the enemy are expected to make their first advance, and we are ordered to hold it. The Command will do good fighting if attacked. I expect to start on a skirmish in a few days and if I am fortunate enough to capture a Fed will write you about it... I am glad that Stephen Perry did not come with me. No man should now leave Texas, if the enemy succeeds here we will be entirely cut off, though I will in that event if alive come to you.

On the back of this letter is a note, handwritten by Sarah, reading:

Dear Ma, Thinking you will be interested in hearing from Mr. Munson, I send you his letter... perhaps it may be the last one I'll get. I expect they have had a great battle since it was written. We are having ugly weather for Christmas. Are not some of you coming over...

Mordello's letter dated "Granada [Mississippi] Jan 1st. 1863" reports:

...Our Division have been left to hold this place, an outrage upon us, for I feel that it is our right to be in Vicksburg - for several days fighting has been going on there with uniform success upon our side The news from Tenn. is superb... everywhere God has caused our arms to prevail. We will soon be a Nation, free indebted alone to Heaven.

His January 12 letter to brother George reads:

Here we have been for more than a month, yes two of them, with desperate battles in front and rear of us, but not once have we been permitted to meet the enemy. A six days and nights retreat, harrassed incessantly by the Feds, (whom we could have thrashed at any time)... Grant with his sixty thousand men has at length quit the chase and himself retreated... At Vicksburg our troops thrashed the enemy at every point... Many here believe that peace will come with early spring. Our recognition by France is looked for daily...

On February 25, he wrote to Sarah:

We are now on the Yazoo River, near Greenwood, in the swamp, our purpose to prevent the enemy from flanking Vicksburg... Our Cavalry are below Vicksburg... Vicksburg will never be taken.

In March he was in the midst of heavy fighting around Fort Pemberton, Mississippi, from where he wrote:

Ah, Sarah, when this ever ends I shall have much to live for, other men may seek high places that their ambition may be gratified, but my highest ambition will be to spend the residue of life with you, our little ones, and friends, no temptation can cheat me of this high pleasure. I will not barter it for anything the world can give... It seems to me that years have passed since I felt all of you. .

In April he wrote from Greenwood, and on May 9 he wrote from Sniders Bluffs, Mississippi, as follows:

We march early in the morning for a point below Vicksburg in the presence of the enemy and expect a battle very soon. I may not survive it, though I feel that death will not be my sad fate. Sad because I have a Dear Wife and little children - were this not so, it would be almost a pleasure to die in such a cause and for ones country. Should I never meet you again, Sarah, know that I have not ceased for one moment to love you, and of you and our Dear babies I constantly think. Educate our children, give them practical, if possible thorough educations... Those silver spurs of my Fathers give to Son when he is grown, not for use... teach them to love goodness and abhor vice, to have proper self respect and whilst kind to all to have but few confidants outside of their own family. Write to Mother, tell her if it is necessary for me to die that I will do so as becomes her Son.

Two letters from Vicksburg on May 13 and May 31, 1863, give a vivid, on-the-scene description of the battles raging at Vicksburg. The Confederacy had achieved numerous victories in the various military campaigns until their crushing defeat at Gettysburg on July 3, 1863, and their surrender at Vicksburg on July 4, 1863. After those defeats, in retrospect, their position was hopeless, even though they continued to fight determinedly for another two years.

On May 13 Mordello wrote:

We left Fort Pemberton on the 6th - have been here several days about 6 miles from Vicksburg. The enemy have taken Grand Gulf, thrown a heavy force across the river, are now moving up Big Black in the direction of Jackson, another effort to flank this place. We hear the roar of artillery from morning until night, heavy skirmishing yesterday. We are without waggons, tents or baggage of any kind, the clothes that I have on is all that is with me. Three days of rations cooked, and expecting marching orders at any moment. Unless the enemy retreat heavy fighting must soon take place... I feel confident that we will be victorious... Gen Lee's splendid victory, no question you have heard of [at Chancellorsville, Virginia, May 2-4]. Sad though that we have lost our matchless Stonewall Jackson, he is dead, but died for his country... A victory here complete would greatly hasten peace. .

And on May 31, from "Inside the trenches around Vicksburg," Mordello wrote this profound letter:

Whilst I write shot and shell, like hail, is rushing and falling around me. There is one continuous roar of artillery and musketry. Day before yesterday the enemy with much spirit charged our left. They met repulse and heavy loss. On Monday evening last they commenced the assault, this is the fourth day continued fighting. Our loss up to this time has been small in killed and wounded, today they will it is thought make an advance, endeavoring to carry our entire line, in this I feel sure they will fail, for our men will never be driven from their entrenchments. Before reaching this place on Big Black, we met with reverse and heavy loss, which has greatly crippled, but not in the least dispirited the

troops. If the enemy succeeds here it will cost him very dear. Gen. Johnston has retaken Jackson. We look for him hourly, his attack upon the enemy's rear will relieve our men from the trenches, when the safety of Vicksburg will soon be determined. There is a wild sublimity in the storm that now rages on all sides around me. Space as if by enchantment seems filled with the most reckless revelry, the rushing, hissing, screaming, bursting of heavy missiles and incessant hum of minnie balls, leads one almost to fancy that nature, not man, was seeking to exhaust all her elements of destruction.

The Union siege on Vicksburg under General Ulysses S. Grant succeeded, and the Confederate forces capitulated on July 4, 1863. The defenders were out of rations, were reduced to eating dogs and mules, and had to surrender or starve. Mordello was taken prisoner, and his parole, dated July 5 and signed by him, contained the following oath:

That I will not take up arms again against the United States, nor serve in any military, police, or constabulary force in any Fort, Garrison or field work, held by the Confederate States of America, against the United States of America, nor as guard of prisons, depots or stores, nor discharge any duties usually performed by soldiers against the United States of America until duly exchanged by the proper authorities.

It is not known what transpired immediately thereafter, but it appears that Mordello barely missed reaching home to join his beloved wife for the birth of son Hillen Armour on July 31, 1863. An entry in the diary of Sarah's mother dated July 6 reads, "We have heard of Motts [Mordello] death but sincerely trust it is not so," and on August 3, 1863, "I went to the cars for Mordello on his return from Vicksburg. I was glad he was permitted to return." An entry in the diary of Sarah dated July 31, 1864, reads, "The babe's birthday. A pleasant Sabbath, and on August 4, 1864, "This day a year ago my Husband came from Richmond."



By the summer of 1863 the Union Army had gained full control of the Mississippi River and had cut the western states of Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas off from the remainder of the Confederacy. With the simultaneous blockade of the gulf ports, the residents of Texas must have been very short of news of the war as well as supplies for war and for living.

It appears that Mordello respected his furlough agreement and remained at his plantation home until early March of 1864. West of the Mississippi River, the Union had occupied all of Missouri, most of Arkansas, and the eastern part of Louisiana. President Abraham Lincoln had personally given an order through Major General Henry W. Halleck directing a two-pronged invasion of East Texas. Union General Nathaniel P. Banks and his army of the "Department of the Gulf" was to proceed from Baton Rouge up the Red River to Shreveport, Louisiana, where he would meet with the forces of General Frederick Steele of the "Department of Arkansas," who would be moving down from their headquarters in Little Rock. Together they would invade East Texas and neutralize the Texas area. It appears that Mordello answered a call to resist this invasion of Texas.

A letter from Mordello to Sarah from Huntsville [Texas?], dated March 10, 1864, states: "Already I feel as though I had been from home a month." It is thought that he had been gone only a few days. He had apparently again volunteered to join Waul's Texas Legion in General J. G. Walker's Army, as he reports: "Gen. Waul left Navisota the morning of the day that I reached it but I am in advance of him. He will possibly reach here this evening or tomorrow." He also states: "There is no definite news from across the river though many reports." This surely refers

to the Sabine River, as Union troops at that time controlled much of Louisiana, and the forces of General Banks were moving up the Red River toward Shreveport. He again took a servant named Ben, whom he refers to in his letters, and his horse named Dick.

On April 6, 1864, Mordello wrote from "Near Mansfield, Desoto Parish." Mansfield is just south of Shreveport and about ten miles from the Texas border. He had just received word from Sarah of the death of Gerard at Oakland. He wrote:

Sarah, you may imagine, but cannot know the crushing influence of this sad intelligence upon me. Had Gerard been killed in battle or died a natural death, it would have been severe enough, but to be murdered I know not how, that his murderer still lives almost deprives me of reason. . . My Brother's murder shall be avenged if I live. Write to Anne tell her how much I feel for her, that she must regard me as her own Brother that Gerards children wilst I live shall be to me as my own... Write me for Gods Sake whether the assassin is in custody, it is my duty and should be my privilege to kill him. There is no phisical suffering that I would not gladly endure to accomplish it—.

And further in this letter, regarding the war, he wrote:

I can give you no intelligence as to the movements of this army. We were in line of battle on the 3rd, but the enemy declined to engage us. We may have a battle any day, the enemy are in strong force, both gun boats and transports have passed the falls above Alexandria. They threaten Shreveport. The State below this is mostly in their hands... This is one of the best armies I have ever seen, almost all of them from our State. Many of my old friends are here. The men are cheerful - the discipline excellent. Whenever you hear that they have engaged the enemy, you may be sure that a victory has been won.

The Confederate Army of the Trans-Mississippi under General E. Kirby Smith did immediately thereafter engage the enemy and win two decisive battles, both very near Mansfield—one at Sabine Cross Roads on April 8 and one at Pleasant Hill on April 9, 1864. The Union forces under General Banks, employing troops and gunboats, had moved up the Red River past Alexandria and Natchitoches and were approaching Shreveport when they were met by the Confederate forces. The reported casualties in these two battles, in dead, injured, and missing, were 4,000 Union soldiers and 3,500 Confederates. These Confederate victories sent General Banks' forces retreating back toward the Mississippi River, and no further major encounters were to occur in Louisiana.

The Union army under General Frederick Steele had departed Little Rock on March 23 and was proceeding toward Shreveport. General Kirby Smith sent a small force under Major General Richard Taylor to pursue Banks, while he lead the major part of his army against Steele. Apparently Steele heard of Banks' defeats and ordered a retreat, for he reversed his march and was moving back toward Little Rock when the Confederates engaged his forces at Jenkins Ferry on the Saline River south of Little Rock, near Tulip, Arkansas.

The next and last letter from Mordello to Sarah is dated, "In Camp near Tulip, Ark. March 2nd 1864." For several obvious reasons the date could not have been March 2, but probably May 2, 1864, and this is confirmed by the date of the battle—April 30. The confusing dates plus the message in the letter suggest that Mordello may have been suffering from fatigue. The letter reads in part:

We have been upon forced march since the 25th of March, fighting thru severe battles [including those at Sabine Cross Roads and Pleasant Hills}, the last one on the 30th of April, marching that day 20 miles in the midst of a heavy rain, then moving upon the enemy whose lines rested upon the west bank of the Saline river [the Saline River in Arkansas]. We fought in fields and a swamp almost impassible, men never fought more obstinate than did the enemy, they were crossing the river, we would drive them, and they rallying would force us back, then the battle raged for most of the day. The enemy crossed the River and fled leaving his train, said to be 4 miles in length, they have gone to Pine Bluff, where I presume we will fight him again.

This was the Battle of Jenkins Ferry, fought on April 26-30, 1864. The reported casualties were, for the Union, 200 killed and 955 wounded; and for the Confederates, 300 killed and 800 wounded. General Steele's army did not proceed to Pine Bluff, but returned to Little Rock where entrenched fortifications protected them. Mordello's letter continues:

Gen Randle I hear this morning is dieing. Our loss in officers was severe indeed. Gen. Scurry was a great loss. Col. Overton Young was wounded in the wrist... I will use my utmost efforts to return home, so soon as the present work is fully done... God grant the necessity of my being a soldier may soon cease - then the residue of life will be spent with you.

The tone of this last letter indicates that Mordello was ready to return home. General Kirby Smith's army immediately set out for the Red River to join General Taylor's forces in an effort to destroy Banks' army. These forces never joined, and Banks' army retreated to the Mississippi River and safety. The war continued for another year, but no further significant battles took place in the Louisiana-Arkansas theater.

An entry in Sarah Munson's diary dated July 24, 1864 reads: "Thanks be to our Heavenly Father, my dear Husband returned today about 12 o'clock, in health and uninjured from the Louisiana Wars. I do thank the Lord for his care over him and all of us." An entry dated November 22, 1864, reads: "Mr. Munson received orders to leave for the war today." He departed for General Waul's army in Louisiana on January 19, 1865.

The more significant aspects of the war in 1864 and 1865 were centered in Virginia and Georgia, where the Confederate cause rapidly deteriorated. On March 9, 1864, General Grant had been given command of all of the Union armies. While Grant undertook the capture of the Confederate capital of Richmond, he assigned General Sherman the task of defeating General Joseph E. Johnson's troops in northern Georgia. These goals were accomplished as Sherman captured Atlanta and made his famous march of destruction through Georgia in late 1864, and Grant finally defeated General Lee at the Battle of Petersburg, Virginia, on April 1, 1865. Grant took Richmond on April 3 and accepted Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865.

A statement in "Home Life on Early Ranches of Southwest Texas" by Myrtle Murray in the November, 1940, edition of *The Cattleman Magazine*, credited to Mordello Munson (and surely supplied by his son, Judge Milam Stephen Munson, who was interviewed for the article) states, "I started with the war and I was with General Lee at the surrender." The distance from Texas to Richmond, Virginia, was far and conditions in the South were chaotic, but this writer has no other evidence to support or refute this statement.

Lee's surrender at Appomattox was on April 9, 1865, and an entry in Sarah's diary on April 25 reads: "I received a letter from my husband wanting me to meet him in Houston. Joyfully I go, busy getting ready." Sarah returned home on May 1, and Mordello on May 23, 1865. Throughout his later life Mordello was known as Colonel Munson, so it is likely that during these last months he was promoted to that rank.

Scattered skirmishes in Arkansas and Louisiana continued until the news of Lee's surrender reached there. The Confederate armies then rapidly dwindled away, and the surrender of the forces of the Trans-Mississippi Department by General Kirby Smith on May 26 and the resulting treaty of peace on June 2, 1865, were mere formalities. The soldiers returned home—discouraged, confused, and worried about the future of their state and their society.

Chapter 20

Mordello Stephen and Sarah K. Munson and Their Eight Children and Seven Stepchildren at Ridgely Plantation 1865–1903¹⁹⁷



When Mordello Munson returned from the Civil War, he again took up his occupations of stockman, farmer, lawyer, and legislator. He and Sarah raised their eight children and took brother Gerard's four and brother George's three children to raise when these children's parents died prematurely. Sarah died at Ridgely Plantation in 1887 at the age of 55, and Mordello in 1903 at the age of 78. They are both buried in the Munson Cemetery near their home at Bailey's Prairie.



On May 23, 1865, Mordello returned from the Civil War to his home, his plantation, his wife, and his six children. Conditions were not as he had envisioned on that day three years earlier when he had left with such enthusiasm and hope for an independent Confederacy. His slaves were free, and the political and economic situation was chaotic and uncertain.

Entries in Sarah's diary during the preceding month include the following:

The War news is all bad now and the aspect of things quite serious. La. & Johnson having surrendered - if the Lord be with us all will be right. His omnipotent will alone be done, altho we may be houseless and homeless in a few days.

The cannonading [which they had heard] was a funeral observance of Mr. Lincoln.

All feeling melancholy at the probable fate of our Bleeding Confederacy. Well, we will have to submit if this is God's will.

I wonder what our fate will be in a month hence. I trust to a Kind Providence.

My Dear Husband came this morning about sunrise. Oh joyful day, but sad to think of the Confederacy... Oh unhappy country and people.

The fact that Sarah had managed so capably during Mordello's absence meant that they had a home, their livestock, their fields, and a nucleus of loyal black workers. Some of the slaves left

¹⁹⁷ When not otherwise indicated, information in this chapter is taken from the *Munson Papers*, see Appendix I.

from time to time, and some of these later returned. Entries in Sarah's diary in 1867 and 1868 report the following: "Freedman Tom left today," and "Mary deserted us today." Nine days later an entry says, "Mary came back to the kitchen today." Another says, "We washed today and without any negroes." She later reports, "This was the Freedman's great Jubilee day." As late as 1881 an entry says, "Charles and Malinda left today - moved off." Many did not leave, and Ralph (or "Rafe") chose to "stay at home with my white folks." Mordello had warned in his later letters that economic times would be very difficult after the war, and that Sarah should sell all inventories, collect all debts, and pay all bills. This policy probably helped them maintain economic stability. Mordello and Sarah returned to their occupations and activities of the years before the war—Sarah to managing the household and raising the children and Mordello to his law practice, his farming and ranching, and to the Texas state legislature.

The returning soldiers appear to have been prepared to reconstitute the state government as it had been before the war. In retrospect, it appears that the assassination of President Lincoln on April 14, 1865, just five days after Lee's surrender, ended any chance of this. Despite the South's bitter opposition to him, Lincoln's ideals were based on "malice toward none and charity for all," and it has been written that his plan for reconstruction of the South was unmatched in history for its generosity to a defeated foe. A revengeful Congress in conflict with a weaker president (Andrew Johnson) was less generous.

Texas Politics after the War¹⁹⁸

In late May following the general surrender of Confederate forces, a large contingent of federal troops was landed at the ports of Texas—at Sabine, Galveston, Indianola, Corpus Christi, and at the Rio Grande. Troops were hurried to Austin and San Antonio and detachments were scattered widely over the countryside. A total of 51,000 federal troops arrived in Texas in 1865, but only about 5,000 remained in 1866. A proclamation was issued announcing the freedom of all slaves, the suspension of all authority of Texas as a state of the Confederacy, and the restoration of the authority of the United States over Texas.

The new United States president, Andrew Johnson, issued an amnesty proclamation prescribing an oath to be taken by the people before they should be allowed to vote in the restructuring of the state government. He also appointed Andrew J. "Jack" Hamilton as provisional governor. Hamilton had left Texas in 1862, and being loyal to the Union had been commissioned a brigadier-general by President Lincoln. He returned to Texas and assumed the duties of provisional governor on July 25, 1865.

Governor Hamilton ordered an election to be held on January 8, 1866, to elect members to a convention to write a new constitution for Texas. Only those who would take the oath prescribed by President Johnson were allowed to vote, and the vote was exceedingly small. The convention worked until April 2 and wrote a constitution which, if ratified by the people, was to restore Texas to statehood in the Union. The convention provided for an election on June 4, 1866, for adoption or rejection of the constitution and the election of state officials to serve if the constitution was adopted. In the election there were 48,519 votes for the constitution and 7,719

¹⁹⁸ Information in this section is from John Henry Brown, *The History of Texas, Members of the Texas Legislature 1846-1962*, published by the Texas Legislature, 1962; and the *Munson Papers*, see Appendix I.

against.¹⁹⁹ James W. Throckmorton defeated Elisha M. Pease for governor by a vote of 48,631 to 12,051, and Mordello S. Munson was elected as a member of the Eleventh Legislature, representing District 35, which included Brazoria and Galveston Counties. This two-year legislature was in session only from August 6 to November 13, 1866.

The legislature assembled in Austin and enacted such laws as were deemed necessary to place Texas in harmony with the Union and the new constitution. Among the actions of this legislature was the creation of the Bayland Orphan's Home in Galveston, inspired, no doubt, by the many war orphans. Mordello Munson was a trustee and a long-time supporter of this home. Governor Throckmorton, who possessed the confidence of the people, devoted his energies to the restoration of confidence and harmony and hoped to avoid any further interference, civil or military, by the government of the United States.

The governor and the people were soon to realize the fallacy of these hopes. A political disagreement in Washington between President Johnson and Congress, chiefly on a bill granting the right of suffrage to Blacks, caused a new ordering of affairs in several southern states. In February of 1867 Congress declared "the present pretended state governments" of these states to be null and void, as "they are under the control of unrepentant leaders of the Rebellion." It was declared necessary that peace and good order should be enforced by the military until loyal and "Republican" state governments should be legally formed. Texas and Louisiana were combined into Military District No. 5 under the command of General Philip Henry Sheridan with headquarters at New Orleans. Texas was placed under the command of Major General Charles Griffin with headquarters at Galveston. This threw political control to recently arrived northerners, who were called "carpetbaggers," and to their southern collaborators, who were called "scalawags."

On July 30, 1867, General Sheridan removed Throckmorton and other Texas officials from office on the grounds that they were "impediments to Reconstruction." The defeated candidate, E. M. Pease, was appointed governor, and there was no lieutenant governor nor legislature until February of 1870. Sheridan's harsh policies of Reconstruction met with the disapproval of President Johnson, who removed Sheridan from office as a tyrant.

In due time, after much confusion and many changes of commanding generals and appointed state officials (and with concerted efforts by Union officials to guarantee enfranchisement of black voters), a new state constitution was again adopted. The vote for calling a Constitutional Convention in compliance with the U. S. Congressional Reconstruction Acts of 1867 was 39,932 black votes for and 818 against; 4,757 white votes for, 10,572 against, with 41,234 registered white voters failing to vote. This Constitutional Convention of 1868-1869, dominated by ultra-liberals, carpetbaggers, and Blacks, broke up without completing a constitution. Its work was gathered up under orders of the military officers and published as the Constitution of 1869. It was adopted by the voters with many white voters either disenfranchised or abstaining, and finally, on March 30, 1870, Texas was reaccepted as a state in the Union. *The Handbook of Texas* says: "This constitution, formulated under pressure from Washington, did not represent the sentiment of native Texans. It was the longest and most unsatisfactory of Texas constitutions,

¹⁹⁹ These figures are from John Henry Brown, *The History of Texas*, Vol. II, p. 445; *The Handbook of Texas*, Vol. 1, p. 398, appears to give this vote as 28,119 for and 23,400 against.

but the greatest dissatisfaction of the people living under it came from abuses by state officials elected under it rather than from constitutional defects.”²⁰⁰

Mr. E. J. Davis, a leader of the ultra-liberal faction, was elected governor and the new Twelfth Legislature was called into regular session on April 26, 1870. Mordello S. Munson was not a member of this legislature, possibly in protest or disenfranchisement as a result of the reconstruction politics, or possibly at his wife’s urging to remain at home with the family. Brazoria County was placed in District 12 together with Galveston and Matagorda Counties, and their representative was B. Rush Plumly of Galveston. This legislature met in four sessions during 1870 and 1871. It was stormy and had an unusually large turnover—out of thirty seats, seven members were declared ineligible, eight resigned, and four died while in office.

John Adriance (see Chapter 22) was the representative from District 12 in the Thirteenth Legislature, still under Governor Davis, which was in session only from January 14 to June 4, 1873. W. S. Moody of Galveston was the elected representative from District 12 for the Fourteenth Legislature under Governor Richard Coke. Upon Moody’s resignation, Mordello S. Munson replaced him as representative. This legislature was in session from January 13 to May 4, 1874 and from January 12 to March 15, 1875. Mordello Munson was thus a four-time member of the Texas legislature.

These new legislatures passed many new acts. Quoting from *The Handbook of Texas* regarding conditions in Texas: “Everyone agreed that lawlessness was endemic in much of the state, but parties could not agree about the cause. Certainly much of it could be attributed to the postwar breakup. Bands of brigands roamed along the Red River and in the Big Thicket country. Gangs... preyed upon the people of northeastern Texas. Though their targets were often freedmen or federal soldiers, these murderers and horse thieves could hardly be called political activists. On the other hand, much violence clearly had racial or political overtones . . .” To counter the above conditions, these legislatures passed laws to disarm the people and to create a state police, a state guard, and a reserve militia to protect the frontiers. They also passed acts to regulate the registration of voters; to regulate elections; to levy and collect taxes; to establish free public schools; to build public school houses; to encourage the building of railroads; to regulate public printing; to establish thirty-five official newspapers; and to encourage further settlement of the state through the homestead law. Texas was finally on its way to stability, growth, and progress again.

With his education having served him so well, Mordello was especially active and influential in the establishment of a permanent public higher-educational system. He was one of the legislators most instrumental in securing the passage of the law creating the University of Texas at Austin and the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas at College Station. Thus he appropriately carried on for future generations his father’s deathbed plea, “Educate my children.” Many dozens, perhaps a hundred, of his descendants have obtained educations from these institutions.

There was such widespread disapproval of the Constitution of 1869, that the Twelfth Legislature of which Mordello Munson was a member provided for the Constitutional Convention of 1875. The House of Representatives had killed a proposed plan for a so-called Commission Constitution, which was to be framed by a joint committee of the legislature and

²⁰⁰ *The Handbook of Texas*, Vol. 1, pp. 401-402.

then submitted to the voters. This convention drafted the Constitution of 1875, which was approved by the voters in 1876 and remains in effect today.

Mordello was a candidate for the Texas Senate in 1874, and he was urged to run for governor on several occasions, reportedly in 1878 and 1890, but he never held either office. He was, however, occasionally referred to thereafter as “Senator,” just as he was frequently referred to as “Colonel Munson,” although no records have been found showing that he held that rank. It seems likely that he may have been promoted to that rank in the final months of the Civil War.

In 1878 an ad appeared in a Texas newspaper (source unknown) promoting Mordello for the office of governor of Texas, and a letter dated April 13, 1878, from J. D. Stephens, Comanche, Texas, reads: “I see your name mentioned for governor and nothing would give me more pleasure than to see you in the Executive office.” At this time, and apparently again in later years, Mordello declined to run for governor, very possibly because of the hardships on Sarah and his family caused by his long absences. In a letter to Mordello in Austin dated October 29, 1866, during the session of the Eleventh Legislature, Sarah wrote:

I have been disappointed so much until I am almost heartsick... You are needed here very much at this time... I hope, Dear, after this, if we are deprived of everything else that would add to our comfort in a worldly sense, we may have the happiness of being with each other the balance of our lives, for here to fore I have had but little of your assistance in governing our children as well as in other things... and tis unaccountable what losses you have sustained in a pecuniary point of view, these though may all be buried with the past and let us hope for better in the future.

Plans to Emigrate to Mexico

Returning from the war with a fear that his future in Texas was going to be difficult, unsettled, and possibly untenable, Mordello looked to Spanish-Mexican territory for a new home as his father and grandfather had done before him. In 1792 his grandfather Jesse had moved his family from the new state of South Carolina in the new nation to the Natchez District of New Spain; and in 1824 his father, Henry William, had moved his family from the new state of Louisiana to the Trinity River in the Mexican state of *Coahuila y Tejas*.

During the War Mordello had apparently met and befriended Farrell Vincent of Kentucky. Together they formed the Tuxpan Land Company and purchased land in Mexico where the Tuxpan River is joined by the Yapatal River, about five miles west of the town of Tuxpan. They planned to develop sugar plantations and tropical fruit orchards and move there if conditions became intolerable. Farrell Vincent handled the purchase of the property and, with others, moved to live there. He was living in Mexico in May of 1867, when he sent a letter to Mordello telling of the advantages of living in Mexico and urging him to move down as soon as possible. An entry in Sarah’s diary under the date of January 1, 1868, reads: “Mr. Munson left for his Mexican land on Saturday last, 28 Dec.... Mr. Munson is still in Houston attending to some business there, expects to leave Galveston on Jan. 6th... I received a note from him yesterday.” Mordello had not returned by January 20, at which time began a five-month gap in the diary.

The first white child born in the Tuxpan Colony was born to Farrell Vincent and his wife, Laura Jane Alexander, and was named Mordello Vincent. One of this man’s sons, Mordello Vincent II, was as late as 1975 an attorney in Mexico City, and more recently a resident of Louisiana in retirement. Others who joined the Tuxpan Colony were the R. Willys from Brazoria

County, Dr. Collins, John Drayton, Andrew Alexander, W. H. Young, W. S. Smith, and John Oscar Smith.

The schooner *Annie G. Webber* sailed from New York on October 29, 1870, Captain Ogle in command, with freight for Indianola, Texas. From there she sailed to Tuxpan and back to Galveston with a load of fruit from the American settlement. Records indicate that about July of 1873 Colonel Munson bought the schooner from Mr. Will H. John for \$6,000. On July 6 of that year the vessel sailed from Galveston to Tuxpan with one of the Munson sons (surely Henry William III, aged 21) and a friend aboard. The purpose of the trip was to attend to his father's business in Tuxpan. While owned by M. S. Munson, the schooner was operated by a Captain Mosley. It made many trips between Galveston and Tuxpan, taking machinery for the sugar mill and other supplies to Mexico and returning with tropical fruits, plants, birds, and many things of interest for the Bailey's Prairie plantation, in addition to commercial cargo. Some of the birds were described as being about the size of a large turkey and very beautiful, a most unusual sight in Brazoria County. An entry in Sarah's diary in 1868 reports, "We received a barrel of fruit from Tuxpan from Mr. Smith," and a later entry reports, "We have a lot of pineapples, oranges & lemons now." A few days later she reported that Mr. Smith was leaving for Tuxpan "this morning." The Munsons planted bananas, oranges, lemons, limes, and other tropical fruits on their Texas plantation, but none of these would thrive in the Texas winters. At one time Mordello valued his Mexican property at \$30,000.

The Munsons never moved to Mexico. Mordello was probably dissuaded both because he was working in the legislature to reorganize the state government and because he and Sarah had recently taken Gerard's four orphaned children to join the eight of their own. Eventually the schooner was sold and the plantation was never fully developed. Several sons and grandsons made trips to the Tuxpan plantation in the early 1900s, and investigations on the status of ownership were again pursued in the 1940s. Chicle produced on the land paid the taxes for many years, but the land was eventually confiscated by the Mexican government under one of its many land reform programs.

A final, curious chapter to this story was the marriage in Austin, Texas, in 1972 of Carolyn Williamson, a great-great-granddaughter of Mordello Munson, to Alejandro "Alex" Lubbert, a great-grandson of John Oscar Smith, who, as a young man, rode on horseback to the Tuxpan Colony from Seguin, Texas.

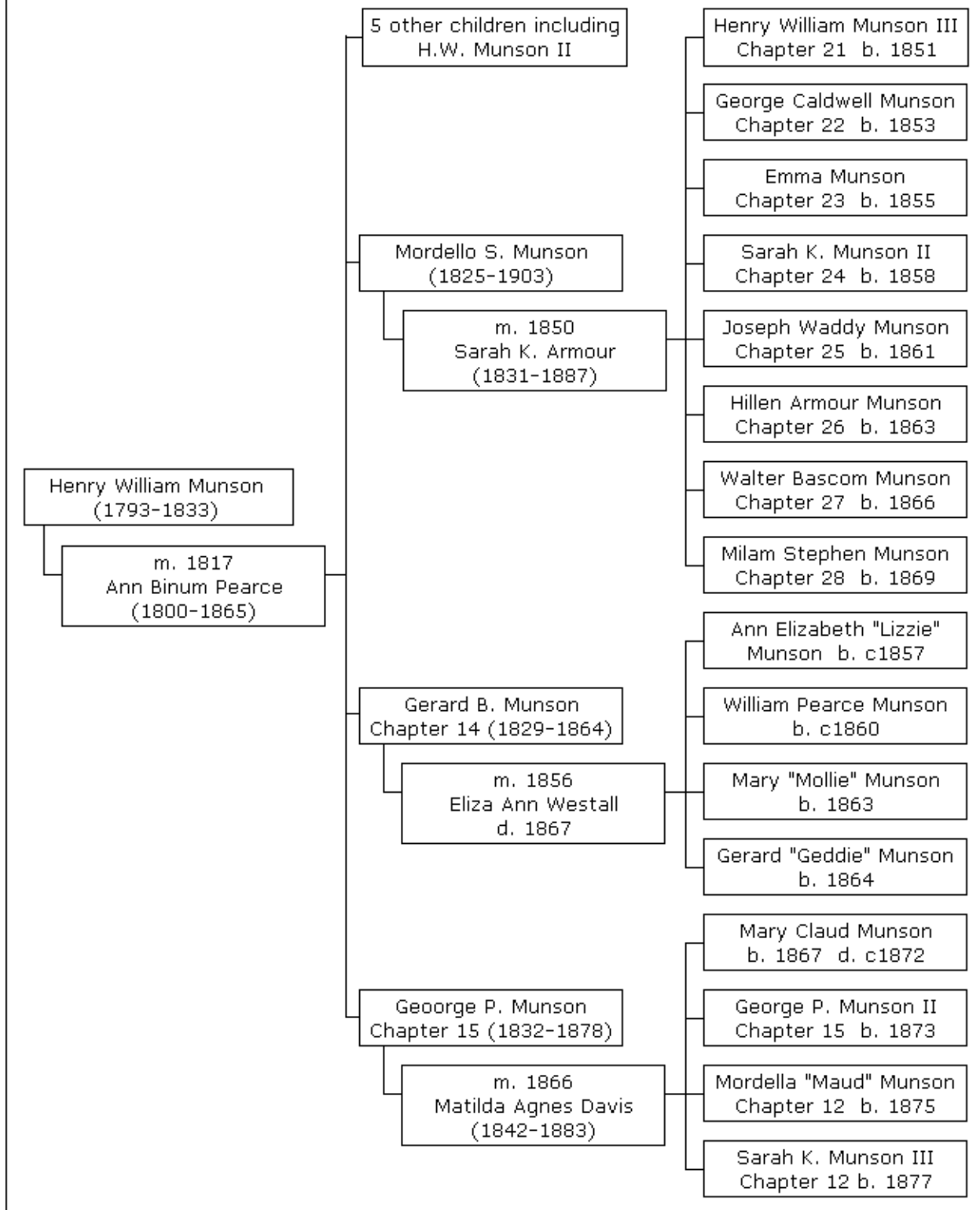
Family Life at Ridgely Plantation²⁰¹

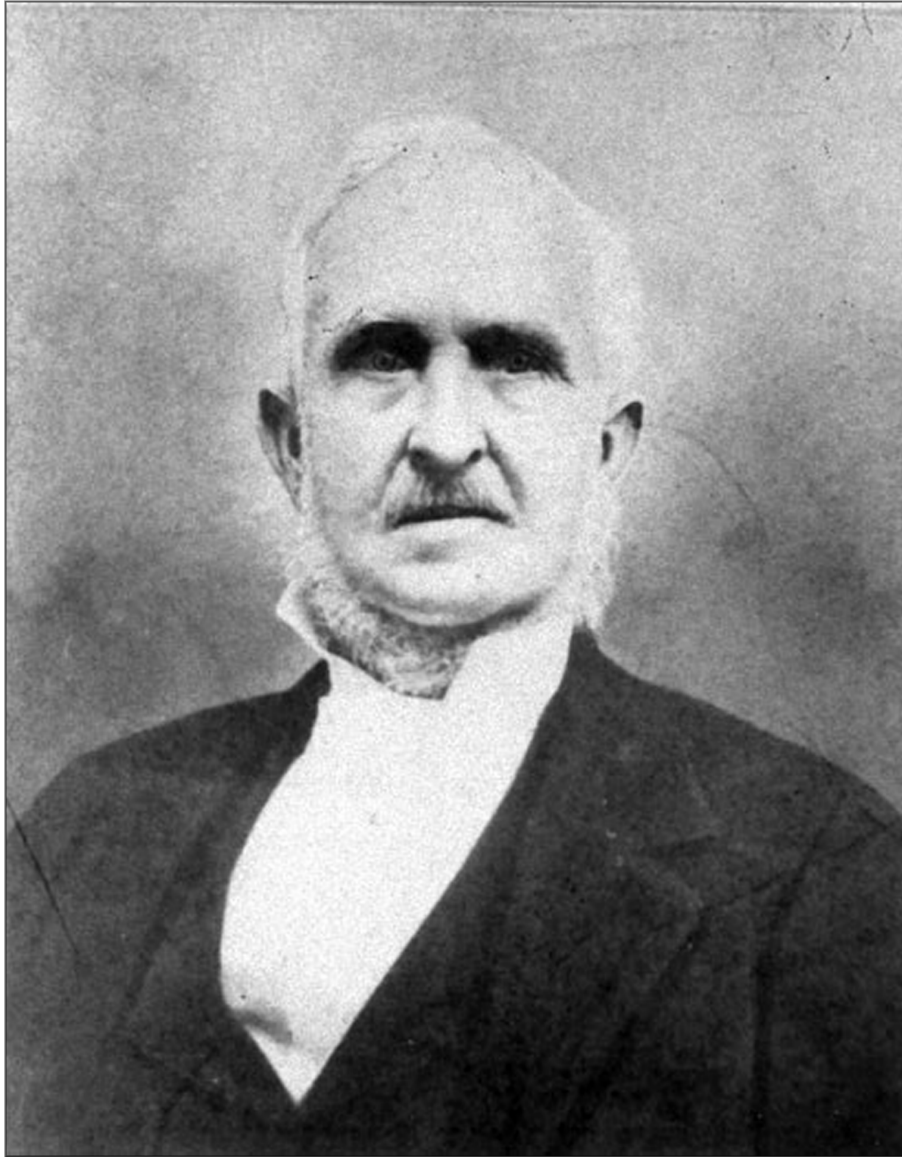
During these years, Mordello must have been extremely busy with his law practice, his plantation at Bailey's Prairie, his Mexican enterprise, his large family, and his legislative duties. And Sarah? She was managing the household and the plantation during Mordello's absences, giving birth to two additional sons, and raising her family of eight children and seven of Mordello's nieces and nephews! Seventh child Walter Bascom was born on February 6, 1866, and the eighth, Milam Stephen, on September 26, 1869.

Mordello's brother, Gerard, had been killed by a Confederate soldier in 1864, leaving his widow, Annie Westall Munson, pregnant and with three small children. Annie died in September of 1867, and Mordello and Sarah took the four children—William P. (aged 9), Lizzie (aged 7),

²⁰¹ Information in this section is taken from the *Munson Papers*; from the diary of Sarah Munson; and from Myrtle Murray, "Home Life on Early Ranches of Southwest Texas," *The Cattleman* (Magazine), November, 1940.

Chart 14
The Fifteen Munson Children Raised by Mordello and Sarah Munson
at Ridgely Plantation





Mordello Stephen Munson



Sarah Kimbrough Armour

Molly (aged 5), and Geddie (aged 3)—into their home at Ridgely Plantation and raised them as their own. At that time Walter Bascom was just one year old and Milam Stephen was yet to come, and their other children were Henry William III (aged 16), George (aged 14), Emma (aged 12), Sarah (aged 9), Joseph Waddy (aged 6), and Hillen Armour (aged 4).

Mordello's only remaining brother, George Poindexter, died in 1878, and his wife, Agnes, died in 1882, at which time Mordello and Sarah took their three children—George P. II (aged 8), Mordella Stephen "Maud" (aged 6), and Sarah Kimbrough "Bittie" (aged 5)—into their family. By this time many of their own children and Gerard's were grown and had left home, and their youngest, Milam Stephen, was twelve years old. Thus Mordello and Sarah raised fifteen children at Ridgely, and fourteen of them grew to adulthood. As Sarah died in 1887, Mordello, with the help of his other children, must have raised George's children alone.

And lest we forget, just imagine that all of this was done with no running water, natural gas, electricity, bathrooms, nor inside toilets; the kitchen was set apart from the house; cooking and heating were done with wood-burning stoves and fireplaces; lighting was by candles and lanterns; and clothes were handmade. For many years there were twelve family members at each meal, plus the work-hands to feed. There were few schools, no grocery stores, no nearby neighbors, no telephones, no movies, and no television. There were no antibiotics, few vaccinations, and few medicines of any kind; no clinics, no hospitals, and few nearby doctors. Letters and diaries frequently described illness or fever in the children, the slaves, or the adults. Sarah, like Ann Pearce Munson before her, appeared to be ill much of the time. A typical entry in her diary reads, "I have been very sick with Cholera, Flux or something dreadful. Son is quite sick. Mr. Munson and Bud too are complaining with it. This is the tenth week [of] my confinement." Another says, "Henry is quite sick... we fear he has pneumonia." This type of report is almost constant throughout her diary. All of Mordello's brothers and sisters-in-law died young, and Sarah, her mother, and her daughter, "Doll," all died at or about the age of 55. It is surprising that all eight of her children grew to adulthood. The only transportation was by horseback or horse-drawn buggy, and the dirt roadways were often muddy quagmires. The five-mile trip to Columbia and back could be a major trip, as shown by Sarah's letters to her mother there. Nevertheless, Sarah or her mother made this trip by horseback almost every week to visit each other. This may have been only a hundred years ago, but it was truly another world.

Mordello and all his sons loved to hunt. He kept a string of horses and a pack of well-trained dogs. Sarah's diary is full of comments of Mordello (or his brother, George, or one of her two half-brothers, Lon and Will Black) taking the boys hunting or fishing. They hunted for ducks, geese, partridge, wild turkey, bear, deer, squirrel, wild hogs, and "wild cats." Sarah's diary has frequent reports of the men bringing in fish, birds, or game. Mordello especially liked to hunt "wild cats" at daybreak.

Sarah's diary entries relate the story of their extensive gardening. The garden was started in January, with planting and later harvesting of peas, beans, butter beans, beets, radishes, turnips, parsley, cabbages, peppers, eggplant, cauliflower, tomatoes, cucumbers, watermelons, muskmelons, pumpkins, potatoes (sweet and Irish), and others. Reference is made to peach, pear, plum, and fig trees. Sarah's diary tells of frequent and busy gathering of wild dewberries, blackberries, grapes, plums, pecans, and persimmons in season. She tells of making grape and plum jelly, fig and peach preserves, and citron from the rind of watermelons. The diary gives

Sarah's recipe for sponge cake, blackberry cordial, grape jelly, and calf foot jelly.²⁰² One entry relates, "Mr. Munson, Mr. Smith sweetened their wine... more than a barrell."

They raised chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, pigeons, guinea hens, bees, sheep, and many hogs. One diary entry says, "Have 70 odd little chickens and about 20 little turkeys." A frequent entry is, "I set a turkey hen today." At slaughtering time, they would often slaughter twenty or thirty hogs in a few days' time, and all were busy preparing hams, sausage, and bacon for the smokehouse. Dairy cows produced milk, butter, and cream. About the only foods purchased were flour, sugar, coffee, and tea; flour and sugar were always purchased by the barrel.

There was a tremendous amount of travel by horseback—the Munson family members going to Brazoria, Columbia, the Oyster Creek station, or the "Van" place and relatives or visitors coming to Ridgely for business or social visits. Visitors very often spent one or several nights there. In the extreme, one entry in Sarah's diary reports, "All busy. Mr. Quigly and Mr. Moore came... Walter, Mrs. Walker and the children came. About 22 persons here to dinner today and tonight." While this was extraordinary, it appears that a dozen or more for dinner was normal. Almost every entry tells of Mr. Munson or one of the children leaving, and of one or several visitors arriving at the home.

The Munson family, led by Sarah, were devout Methodists, and Sunday was truly observed as the Sabbath day. During the week Sarah played with her children and entered into their sports with a zest that equaled theirs. Horseback riding, walking on the prairie, and fishing were her favorite sports. On Saturday the entire family got ready for Sunday. The servants pressed clothes, shined shoes, and baked hams or turkey, cakes, and pies. The children put away their toys and other play equipment. They could play games on Sunday only if they did not require equipment. Even into the 1900s some older members objected to card playing on Sundays. If possible, they all attended church services at Columbia or Brazoria, about five miles away.

All of the children's early education was at home with Sarah and live-in teachers. "Aunt Zena" (Sarah Alzenith Black, wife of William Waddy Black, Sarah's half-brother) was for a time the children's teacher, living with the family at the plantation. School was held at a certain time each day and in a certain room. The studies stressed were reading, writing, arithmetic, and the Bible. Sarah taught the children their "ABC's" from the capital letters of the beginning of the chapters in the Bible, then they were promoted to the "Blue Back speller." She read to them from *Pilgrim's Progress* and fairy story books. An entry in Sarah's diary dated February, 1882, reports, "I commenced my school again. Had an addition in George, Maud and Bittie [Sarah]." These were the orphans of Mordello's brother, George, who had arrived with the family on March 2 of that year. As the children grew older, their education was continued in private schools, church schools, Texas Military Institute, Southwestern University, Texas A. & M. College, and the University of Texas.

Mordello's son, George Caldwell Munson, attended school in San Marcos, and then at Texas Military Institute in Austin with his brother, Henry William. Henry also attended Texas A. & M. College for special military training. He became captain of the Prairie Rangers in Brazoria County, with Joseph Waddy as lieutenant and George C. Munson and Walter Kennedy as members. Mordello's sons, Hillen Armour, Joseph Waddy, and Walter Bascom, and his nephew,

²⁰² The recipe for calf foot jelly: "For each foot take three pints of water and boil it... then let it cool and strain off the fat. It must then be boiled for two or three minutes with the rind of a lemon and spice, when it should be removed from the fire, strain through a bag and flavored with a glass of wine added."

George P. Munson II, attended Texas A. & M. Sons Walter Bascom and Milam Stephen attended Southwestern University at Georgetown, where their mother's cousin, the Reverend Hillen Armour Bourland, was minister of the Methodist Church. Bascom, Stephen, and Waddy graduated from the University of Texas Law School at the same time, in the Class of 1888—Stephen graduating with highest honors and being the youngest student (at the age of 18) to graduate from the law school up to that time. Some of the boys would stay at home to help manage the plantation while others were away at school. The girls were sent to Houston to private schools for young ladies.



Mordello continued through the years to improve his red Durham cattle and enlarge his herd. He was one of the early stockmen interested in the Brahman breed for the Gulf Coast and it has been stated by family members that he owned the first Brahman cattle in Brazoria County. He owned fine horses including some good race horses. On November 10, 1863, he purchased from George A. Feris of Richmond, Texas, for the sum of \$3,000, “the colt Nadir Shah from the Feris Arabian ‘Ab-Del-Kadir’ and Dam Nadir, by Eclilptic G.- Dam Alice by Authentic... by Importer Larpedon.” And it was further written on the bill of sale, “The American Stud book will show the close relationship of the colt Nadir Shah to the great racers of America and England on the side of his dam.” The Munson boys had great fun racing the horses on privately owned tracks and on the public tracks in Velasco and Columbia.

During the postwar years Mordello acquired many additional pieces of property. Some were in Brazoria County and adjoining counties, and some in areas of west and north Texas not yet organized into counties. Some were as far west as present-day Jones County, near Abilene. Deeds have been found showing purchases of land in almost every year from 1867 until 1893. Most were bought by the highest bidder at sheriff's sales on the courthouse steps. Economic conditions were depressed and many settlers, no doubt, gave up on their homesteaded land and it was sold for taxes. As there were few people with money and few bidders for this distant land, it could be bought for very little.

As examples, on June 6, 1868, Mordello purchased at sheriff's sale on the courthouse steps at Brazoria for the highest bid of \$71.00 all of 666 acres in Brazoria County lying between the Bernard River and Cedar Lake. In 1871 he purchased one-half interest in 1,476 acres on the Brazos River in Jones County for thirty-six cents per acre—total cost \$265.68. In 1883 he purchased 320 acres in Hamilton County, west of Waco, for delinquent taxes in the total amount of \$28.14, and also 480 acres in Jones County near Abilene for delinquent taxes in the amount of \$7.20 plus \$7.55 penalty for a total of \$14.75. In 1884 he purchased 350 acres in Brazoria County on the east side of Oyster Creek in the Sandy Point District for \$72.00, and in 1893 he bought 510 acres in Brazoria County in the H. T. & B. R. R. Survey for taxes and penalty of \$33.78. This last purchase may have been land adjoining and becoming a part of his Bailey's Prairie Plantation. During this period he purchased about two dozen different properties. It is not known what became of most of these.

During these years Mordello also had his contests in court, and he was not always victorious. A deed dated August 23, 1869, reads in part: “M. S. Munson has this day conveyed a certain stock of cattle in Matagorda and Brazoria Counties between the San Bernard River and Cedar Lake, numbering about 360 head, which cattle are branded L^; in full payment of the Judgment rendered in the District Court of Brazoria County on April 6, 1861, in favor of my deceased husband, F. M. Jackson against Thomas E. Hill and M. S. Munson for the sum of \$1,011.41 with

12% interest.” A handwritten note on the back, no doubt written by Mordello, reads: “This was for slaves bought by Gerard just before the war. I tried to dissuade him but he bought them with my guarantee.”

Mordello apparently replaced these cattle with two purchases made the next year, 1870. For \$2,000.00 he purchased “all that certain stock of cattle and horses (the latter estimated at about 150 head, more or less) formerly known as the ‘Winfrey Stock’ and branded W.I. now running in the counties of Fort Bend and Harris.” Also he purchased on December 29, 1870, for \$1,400.00, “All that herd of cattle ranging between the Brazos River and Galveston Bay estimated to be about 500 head, more or less, branded with the anchor brand and the circle V, formerly known as the ‘Collins Stock’.”

The Summer Home at Bryan Beach

It is well known to all who have lived in Brazoria County that the summers inland are usually miserably hot and humid, while the beaches on the Gulf of Mexico are usually delightful. On August 21, 1870, Mordello purchased for the sum of \$50.00 a plot of land on the gulf—44 1/2 acres “on the Mound” near the town of Quintana between the mouth of the Brazos River, to the north, and the San Bernard, to the south. In 1884 he added another twenty acres and in 1885 another eighty. All of this property became the beloved summer home of the Munson family. As his years advanced, he decided to retire from his law practice and devote his entire time to his cattle and farming interests, and he wanted to spend more time with his family.

At some date he built a large summer home on the beach property, about two hundred yards from the water. The original family home had five bedrooms, a dining area, living room, and two kitchens, one in front and one in back. Rain water was collected in a cistern which was covered by an extension of the roof of the house. The house was long and only two rooms deep, facing the gulf in order to take advantage of the gulf breezes, and it had a porch across the entire length facing the gulf. This was a summer home with sufficient room for his large family and many visitors. This description is taken from a drawing and description made by Mary Kennedy Giesecke, a granddaughter of Mordello. As a child she spent many happy summers at the beach house.

After his marriage in 1878, son George C. Munson built a house for his growing family just across the lawn fence, which had an old-fashioned stile over it.

Each year in early summer, members of the family, with employed farm hands, would drive dairy and beef cattle and take chickens and supplies to the beach house, plant a garden, and open the house for the summer. Supplies were carried in four-mule-team wagons, crossing the Brazos River at the ferry at Perry’s Landing. The entire family went in buggies and on horseback in June, and returned in October, in time for the harvest season. With the large family and visits from friends and relatives from Gulf Prairie, Columbia, Quintana, and Velasco, there were always plenty of participants for croquet on the front lawn, for boating, crabbing, fishing and bathing parties, dancing in the evenings, and entertainment for everyone. One of the happy memories of those summers was the boat rides up the San Bernard River to hear the “sweet, mysterious music of the San Bernard.” Many stories have been written in Texas history about this “music,” but none more interesting than those told in later years to the Munson grandchildren; and many other interesting stories have been told from the wonderful times at the summer beach-house.

These houses were destroyed by the hurricane of 1900. Two small cottages connected by a log beam from the old home were built and the grandchildren had some happy days on the same

land by the gulf. These, too, were destroyed by a hurricane in 1915. The land was then unoccupied and unattended for over thirty years.

In 1929 the Brazos River was diverted to the south to form the Freeport Ship Canal in Freeport, and the river then entered the gulf to the south of the Munson beach property. In the 1940s some of Mordello's grandchildren, all engineers, went to survey the beach property. After much puzzled searching to find the corners, they discovered that their land that had originally fronted on the beach now lay far inland. The silt from the diverted Brazos River had filled in the beach and added maybe a half-mile of land. State law held that when such beach growth occurred the new land belonged to the former owners of the beach front, so that the original 144 acres had expanded into approximately 320 acres. In 1975 the state of Texas condemned and purchased all of this land and much more to form Bryan Beach State Park.

From these early experiences the Munson family has retained an everlasting love for the gulf beaches. Even to this day, every June, several groups from the far corners of the nation rent cottages at Surfside Beach and enjoy a week at the gulf, just as their great-great-grandparents did over a century ago.

A story is told in the Munson family to the effect that, in 1884, Mordello sold to the Bryan brothers a part of his beach property. When the survey was later made it showed a deficiency in the number of acres that had been deeded in the sale, so Mordello added additional land including "the Mound" to complete the transaction, thinking that this land was of little value. In later years it was discovered that this was a "sulfur mound" containing a huge deposit of pure sulfur. This brought about the formation of the Freeport Sulfur Company, became its major asset, and proved to be worth millions of dollars.

Mordello and Sarah's Later Years

The first of Mordello and Sarah's children to marry was George Caldwell, who married Hannah Dyer Adriance on February 6, 1878. Her father, John Adriance, was a leading merchant in Columbia and a close friend and business associate of the Munsons. Their first child, Lydia, died in infancy. They also named their second child Lydia, and they raised six children to adulthood. Mordello and Sarah's daughter, Sarah, married Walter Kennedy from a neighboring plantation in 1881, and they presented Mordello and Sarah with eight grandchildren. Daughter Emma married Joseph Murray in 1882, and they also raised eight children. In all, Mordello and Sarah had thirty-two grandchildren who grew to adulthood.

After Sarah's children were older, she took two long trips to visit relatives. The first, in 1875, was to Austin and San Marcos to visit Mordello's half-brother, Milam Caldwell, and his wife, Mary House, who were called Mile and Millie in Sarah's diary. Accompanying Sarah were her children "Doll" and Stephen. They left Houston by train on Friday, July 2, 1875, and arrived in Austin that evening. Her son "Bud" (George) met their train in Austin and showed them the town. She reports that Milam sent a hack to drive them out to his home, a distance of about thirty miles. After five days in Austin, they "got into the ambulance with two fine mules & a negro man to drive." On the trip to San Marcos they passed the "deaf and dumb asylum" (still there), Onion Creek (still there), and many "wagons & ambulances & buggies" along the way. Sarah, "Doll," "Bud," and Stephen visited with Mile and Millie Caldwell and their children, Pearce, Willie, Mary, Della, George (daughter Georgie), and Milam, until September 12. Her diary of this trip ends as they prepare to leave for home.

In the summer of 1881, Sarah, with daughter Emma, made a trip to visit Sarah's Waddy aunts, uncles, and cousins in Collierville, Tennessee. They left Houston by sleeper train on June 27 (erroneously recorded July 27) and went by way of Palestine, Longview, Texarkana, Little Rock and Memphis. The trip took only a day and a half. Collierville is about twenty-five miles due east of Memphis. They visited (including Fourth of July celebrations) Uncle Jo and Aunt Jennie, Uncle Dave and Aunt Mattie, and cousins John Thomas, Mollie, Maggie, Hope, and others. Sarah reported on their attendance at the Methodist Church—that it was “Almost a Waddy congregation.” They were still in Collierville when her diary entries stopped after July 19. Letters report that they had a wonderful time. They brought back cuttings of a white climbing rose that came to be known in Brazoria County as the “Munson Rose.”

Sarah became ill in 1886, and Mordello's pleading letters to pharmacists in Chicago and New Orleans show his great love and concern for his wife, the seriousness of her illness, and the ineffectiveness of remedies of the day. The illness was chronic and centered in her throat and respiratory system. She slowly grew weaker and died on January 31, 1887. She was buried in the Munson Cemetery near her home under the live oak trees that she loved. This was undoubtedly a sad, sad day for Mordello and the entire family. In later years he wrote to a friend, “I had the best wife that any man in Texas could have,” and in historical retrospect that certainly appears to be true.

Mordello, then 62 years old, continued to live at Ridgely Plantation. One or another of his children lived with him at all times. First Emma and Joe Murray lived there, then Armour and wife Lilla, and later Sarah and Walter Kennedy lived with him until his death. With his sons, daughters, nieces, and nephews raised, educated, and rapidly getting married and having children of their own, he retired to his plantation. He had purchased additional property at Bailey's Prairie, and his plantation now covered well over 3,000 acres. Law business continued to come, but he referred the greater part of it to his three lawyer sons, who had formed a law firm named Munson, Munson & Munson. And at different times other of his sons, Henry William, George, and Armour, took over management of his land and cattle.



During the early 1890s Mordello, together with his good friend, John Adriance of Columbia, was influential in preventing the division of Brazoria County into two counties and in placing the county seat in Angleton. In 1891 a new railroad was built across the empty prairie directly north from Velasco to meet the Columbia Tap (which ran from Houston to Columbia) at Anchor. The Munson's mail, freight, and passenger station was the Oyster Creek station on the Columbia Tap. The president of the new railroad company was George Angle. Faustino Kiber and Lewis R. Bryan, major landowners along the railroad's route, laid out a townsite and donated a half-interest to the railroad company in return for their building a station there. They further named the town Angleton, and Mrs. Angle was the guest-of-honor at the dedication ceremonies.

The citizens of the new and fast growing town of Alvin were displeased with the county seat in Brazoria being so far away and so inaccessible in rainy weather. They were urging that a new county, to be named “Sealy County,” be formed with Alvin as the county seat. Several county-wide ballots were held, with Brazoria desperately trying to maintain the county seat and Alvin trying to dislodge it. The compromisers, Munson, Adriance, and others, finally won the day in 1896 by winning an election which named tiny but centrally located Angleton as the new county seat. Angleton was later incorporated and has grown steadily ever since.

In about 1896, when Angleton became the county seat, Mordello purchased for his family a large tract of land on the western edge of the new town. The street leading through this tract is now South Walker Street, but it was long referred to as “Munson Row.”

Soon after 1896, son Walter Bascom, who had married Adelaide Cotton from the wealthy Cotton family of Houston, built a lovely, large, two-story home on this property. It was located near what is now 726 S. Walker Street. Soon after occupying the home, their first child, Stephen Olin, died of scarlet fever in this house. Bascom no longer wished to live in the house, so he sold it to his brother, George C. Munson, and he built another home further back on the property, at what is now 517 Bryan Street. This house was later sold to the Stratton family and it was destroyed by fire.

While George and Hannah Munson lived in the original two-story house, it was a family gathering place. In 1902 and 1903, when Joseph Waddy Munson moved his family from Columbus to Angleton to enter the family law business, the four of them lived in the “parlor” of the house for almost two years while their new home was being built nearby. This lovely Waddy Munson home, located at what is now 910 S. Walker Street, still stands today.

In about 1899 Walter Kennedy and his wife, Sarah K. Munson (II), built a small home on the Munson property. It was located at what is now 600 S. Walker Street. This home was destroyed in the 1900 storm, and they rebuilt down the road at what is now 520 Bryan Street. This Kennedy home also still stands today.

In about 1902, son Milam Stephen, who married Carrie Diggs in 1901, built his lovely home on the site of the original Kennedy home at what is now 600 S. Walker Street. He and his family lived there for almost eighty years, and this original “Judge Munson home” stands there today.

During the severe hurricane of 1932, which occurred just after George Caldwell Munson had died, the original two-story house was damaged. It was thereafter torn down, and the lumber from it was used to build a house next door, at what is now 730 Walker Street, for George’s son, Mordello Stephen Munson II. Mordello and his wife Minnie Ella raised their family here, and Minnie Ella still lives there today.

In later years, Mordello’s grandson Joseph Waddy II and his wife, Myrtle, repurchased the Stratton lot and built a home at 517 Bryan Street; grandson Henry William IV and his wife, Elsie, built at 632 Walker Street; their son, George McCauley Munson and his wife, Martha, built next door at 620 S. Walker Street; and in 1950 Mordello’s granddaughter Ruth Smith and her husband, Frank, built their home at 700 Walker Street, very near to the site of the original two-story Munson home. The two huge live oak trees now growing in their front yard were brought as saplings from “the prairie” by farm hands and planted on “either side of the road to the barn” in about the year 1898. Many of these homes are still occupied by Munsons today.



Mordello spent his last years being honored by his political friends and enjoying his large family of children and grandchildren. In 1892 an unidentified newspaper article with his picture was published strongly supporting the nomination of Colonel M. S. Munson for governor of Texas. By this time, at the age of 67, he had retired from public and political life, and his reply to each such call was similar to one of his recorded replies: “I fully appreciate the confidence and kindness expressed by yourself and neighbors but assure you that no contingency is likely to transpire that will influence me to change my present purpose of never again becoming a candidate for office. To be brief, I have earnestly and faithfully in years gone by discharged my

share of official work and in the evening of life feel that I am entitled to an Honorable discharge.”

There were several fine biographical articles written about his career in books honoring early Texans of distinction.²⁰³ Excerpts from one reads: “In all his career, both private and public, not the slightest stain rests upon him, even the vile tongue of political scandal has passed him by as a mark too high and too purely honorable to be reached. In his private life he is looked up to and honored by all who know him, no person or party has ever attempted or desired to cast the least sign of disrespect at him. He is a lawyer by profession and stands at the head of the bar as a man of ability and integrity. Truly the word Honorable is in its proper place before the name of M. S. Munson.”

He continued to live at his plantation home and to spend his summers in the beach house on the gulf with as many of his sons, daughters, and grandchildren as could gather there. His two devoted daughters managed the summer home. In a letter to a friend he wrote that he was spending the summer on the beach surrounded by his grandchildren and that it was constantly “grandpa this” and “grandpa that,” until he felt like Old Father Abraham.

Mordello died at Bailey’s Prairie on October 13, 1903, at the age of 78. He was buried in the Munson Cemetery beside his beloved wife, where their gravestone stands today. Quotes from his biographers include the following: “It is to be doubted whether there is another man in the State who has lived in Texas anything like so long as the subject of this memoir.”; “No old Texian is better known”; and “The sage of Brazoria, the Grand Old Man and Patriot.” A list of the known biographies is given in Appendix VI.

But maybe the greatest tribute of all is found in a survey of the people who have named their sons and daughters after him. One can count six of his descendants, three members of the Caldwell family, and five members of other families who have borne the names Mordello or Mordella, or the popular nickname Della. One of his sons named a son Mordello Stephen Munson; and a daughter named a son Mordello Stephen Murray. His half-brother, Robert Milam Caldwell, named a daughter Mordella “Della” Caldwell (Minor), and Mordello’s first cousin, Sarah K. Munson Caldwell named a daughter Sarah Mordella “Della” Caldwell (Hanly). His brother, George, named a daughter Mordella Stephen (Maud) Munson; and his niece, Mary “Mollie” Munson (Gerard’s daughter who was raised at Ridgely Plantation) named a son Mordello Ray Brown. A nephew of Ann Pearce Munson in Louisiana named a son Mordello Pearce. Stephen S. Perry of Peach Point, a nephew of Stephen F. Austin, named a son Mordello Stephen Perry, and this Mordello Perry named his son, born in 1908, the same. Farrell Vincent, Mordello Munson’s Civil War friend and partner in the Tuxpan Land Company, named his first son Mordello Lee Vincent (Lee for Robert E. Lee). Some of these families have continued the name until today there is a Mordello Vincent II, a Walter Mordello Munson, a Mordello Stephen Munson IV, and a Luke Mordello Munson. How better can a man be honored and remembered?

Disposition of Mordello’s Lands

After Mordello’s son, Hillen Armour, married in 1890, Armour and his wife, Lilla Cox, and their family lived with Mordello and managed the house and fields for a number of years. At some time around 1901 or 1902 they moved to a house in Angleton because Lilla suffered badly

²⁰³ See Appendix VI for a listing of those that are known.

from asthma and did not wish to live in the country. Mordello's daughter, Sarah, and her husband, Walter Kennedy, and their family moved in to care for Mordello until his death in 1903, while Armour continued to work at the plantation. After Mordello's death, the Ridgely house was left vacant. For over fifty years Mordello and Sarah had carefully tended the house, but in about 1905 it was destroyed by fire. Its location can be easily spotted today by the location of the rain water cistern.

In 1907, in the settlement of Mordello's estate, the sons and daughters decided to divide certain of the various plantation properties among themselves and to leave other properties in the "M. S. Munson Estate." The Murrays were living on the "Murray Ranch" property just west of Angleton, and apparently this property became their share of the division. (The facts around this point are not known). The main body of Ridgely Plantation totaled 2,983 acres, and this was divided among the other seven families. All were then married and had children, and all lived in or near Angleton. Handwritten notes, dated March, 1907, on the back of a Munson & Munson envelope show the calculations for the division. The attached exhibit shows a map of the division. The deed of division is dated May 24, 1907, and is on record at the Brazoria County Courthouse.

During subsequent years, the Henry William III family, the George C. family, the Walter Bascom family, and the Kennedy family sold all or most of their inherited land. The Joseph Waddy family, the Milam Stephen family, the Murray family, and the Hillen Armour family (who have added to their holdings) have retained their lands up to this date. Three of Mordello's descendants have built homes and lived on their property.

It is not known what became of the dozens of other far-flung pieces of property owned by Mordello. Those outside of Brazoria County were apparently sold, either by Mordello or by his heirs—very possibly in the settlement of the estate. Many pieces in Brazoria County were held in undivided interest by his heirs, and either the entire property rights or just the surface rights were sold from time to time. The mineral rights on several of these properties in Brazoria County have been retained by the family. With several generations having passed, the ownership of such rights are so highly divided and difficult to determine for lease purposes that the rights are virtually worthless.



There are several assets from the life of Mordello, however, that have been carefully preserved. These include the Munson Cemetery, the Munson Family Reunion, his personal papers and records, and the Munson tradition of family love and pride. Mordello's personal records were removed to the attic of the Angleton home of son Milam Stephen Munson before the Bailey's Prairie house burned in 1905. In 1950 they were discovered there and removed by the dedicated family historian Erma Munson Rich. Without these records, these institutions, and these family feelings, this book, preserving the story for future generations of Munsons, would never have been written.

Chapter 21

The Life and Family of Henry William Munson III b. 1851 — d. 1924



Mordello and Sarah Munson's first child was born on August 16, 1851, and was named Henry William Munson. He is considered to be Henry William Munson III.²⁰⁴ He grew up on Ridgely Plantation at Bailey's Prairie. Being a child of the Civil War and Reconstruction years, he attended Texas Military Institute in Austin and then took military training at the newly opened Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas near Bryan. In the early 1870s he became captain of the Prairie Rangers of Brazoria County. At the age of 45 he married Sarah Kate Cabill, and they had one son, Joseph Waddy Munson II. Kate died in childbirth a few years later and Henry William never remarried. Joseph Waddy II grew up in Angleton and married Myrtle Bryan. Of their two children, Bryan and Jennie Kate, only Jennie Kate married and has descendants to carry on this branch of the Munson family.



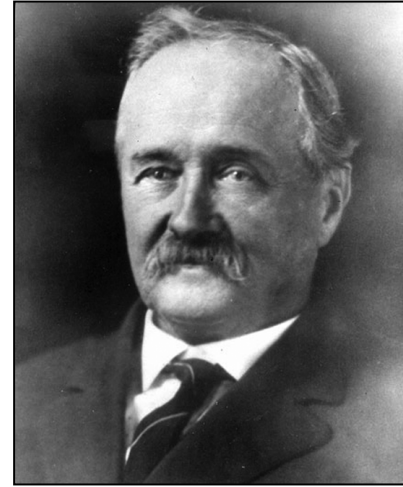
Mordello S. Munson and Sarah K. Armour were married on February 6, 1850, and moved into the “Russell Place” at Bailey’s Prairie. They named this home Hard Castle. Their first child was born on August 16, 1851, and records show that he was born at “the old home place near Peach Point.” This indicates that Sarah went to Oakland Plantation to be with Mordello’s mother, Ann, for the birth of her first child. Rather appropriately, being born at Oakland Plantation, he was named Henry William Munson. In his mother’s letters in later years, he was always referred to as “Son,” and a half-century later, when he was a widower and the loved and honored eldest member of the family, he was always called “Uncle” by members of the family. Today his few remaining elderly nieces always refer to him, very naturally and simply, as “Uncle.”

Henry William grew up at Ridgely Plantation, his first fourteen years during slavery times. This was the only social system his family had known for over three generations. He was eleven when his father left for the Civil War and fourteen when the war ended. This, together with his experiences during the difficult Reconstruction years, undoubtedly had a strong influence on his views for the rest of his life.

²⁰⁴ In 1820 the second son born to Henry William Munson and his wife, Ann Pearce Munson, was named Henry W. Munson. Though this son lived less than two years, he is considered to be Henry William Munson II.

Henry William Munson III was a tall, handsome man of fine physique, and like all his brothers he became an expert cattleman, horseman, rifleman, and hunter. There were no fences on the ranch lands and the cattle ran loose, and a necessary duty during the boys' younger years was to "go hunting" and "bring in the beeves" for food for the family. They also brought home deer, squirrels, ducks, and geese; and they hunted bobcats, possums, raccoons, and armadillos in the woods.

After his home education at Bailey's Prairie, Henry William attended public schools in Houston and the Texas Military Institute in Austin (moved from Bastrop to Austin in 1870), where his father was a member of the state legislature. He then attended the recently opened Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas at College Station for special military training. Texas A. & M. had opened its doors for students, after strong leadership support by Mordello Munson and John Adriance in the state legislature, on October 4, 1876, with an initial class of forty students and a faculty of six.²⁰⁵ As Henry William was 25 years old at that time, he very likely may have been a member of that first class. After completion of his training there, he returned to Bailey's Prairie and lived "at home," helping his father operate the plantation.



Henry William Munson III

Henry William spent much time during these years traveling back and forth between Texas and Tampico and Tuxpan, Mexico, by ship. Being single and free to do so, he was the overseer of the Tuxpan sugar plantation and mill, which operated under a local manager. During many of these years he was the only adult son who was not married or in school, and he apparently acted as his father's partner and manager. He continued to pay taxes on the Mexican property for many years, but after his death it was abandoned and eventually was taken by the Mexican government.

The following is a quote from his obituary in the *Angleton Times* in 1924:

Back in the early seventies, Mr. Munson had much to do with the organization of the Prairie Rangers, and was made Captain. This organization operated under the authority of Governor O. M. Roberts. Its purpose was to control a lawless element that was present in the county at that time. A criminal class of Negroes made cattle stealing a regular practice, defying all law, and boasting of their raids. The Prairie Rangers put fear into their hearts and forced respect for law.

It is reported by his nieces that Henry William was "quite a ladies' man," but he did not marry until the age of 45. He once aspired to marry Miss Terease Bryan of the prominent Bryan family, but a letter from him to his mother tells that she had decided to marry another man. An entry in Sarah's diary dated July 12, 1882 (just fifteen days after her daughter Emma's wedding to the Reverend Joseph Murray) states: "Poor son in deep trouble from the doing of an artful and heartless woman whom he had learned to love and trust. May God in his goodness protect him from falling into the snares of such again and bless him yet with a wife, worthy of so noble and confiding a heart is the prayer of his loving Mother." An entry five days later reports, "Son

²⁰⁵ Texas A. & M. records show a registry of seventy-six students during the first year.

lingered behind to see about a reconciliation,” and on July 25: “Son, his Papa and I talked until twelve. He is at last free from... woman pronounced by her own father a ‘heartless flirt’ and a girl full of deception. I read a very kind sympathetic letter from Mrs. Jimmie Perry to son, she says she could not have believed ‘one she thought so pure and noble would have proved so false and fickle.’ I hope our over ruling Providence is directing him and pray He will lead him in paths of pleasantness and Peace. Rec’d a letter from Emma. She will be home soon.”

Soon thereafter, possibly as a result of this disappointment, and at about the age of 31, Henry William moved with his brother George and family to live at the “Van Place” north of Bailey’s Prairie. After this, Henry William and brother George were lifelong partners, engaging in cattle ranching, rice farming, and other endeavors as “H. W. and G. C. Munson.”

Henry William was married at the age of 45 to 20-year-old Sarah Kate Cahill at her home near Chenango, Texas, on December 18, 1896. Kate’s father, Mr. J. J. Cahill, was manager of the Chenango Plantation which lay just to the east of the “Van Place” and adjoined the Kennedys’ Waverly Plantation. It was common practice for young men and ladies from neighboring plantations to marry, with the girls often being quite young. All of Henry William’s brothers and sisters except Milam Stephen had previously married.

No information is known about the Cahill ancestry. They had come to Texas from Louisiana. Kate had two sisters, Jennie and Ella, and two brothers, Stephen and Bonny. Ella and Bonny never married. Ella, known as “Aunt Ella” and as “Lollie,” lived all of her adult life with the Munsons as a member of their family, first with Bascom and Addie Munson in San Antonio and later with the Ellen Munson Fowler family in Fort Worth. She died there in about 1970. Stephen Cahill married Leona Barth in 1915, and they raised a prominent family of Cahills, whose descendants live in Angleton today.

Immediately after their wedding, Henry William and Kate made their home at the “Van Place” with George and his large family. Henry and Kate’s first child, a son, was born there on October 3, 1897, and was named Joseph Waddy Munson II for Henry William’s brother. This is one of many cases where early Munson men named their sons for their brothers, a practice which is rare today. Henry William and Kate had two additional sons, both of whom died at birth. The last was born in 1899 at the two-story Angleton home of George C. and Hannah Munson during a great flood, at which time Kate died in childbirth and the baby died a few days later. Henry William and Kate were married less than three years, and Henry William never remarried. Bonny, Jennie, and Mrs. J. J. Cahill may have died soon after the death of Kate, as they are buried beside her and her children in the Munson Cemetery. The cemetery lapsed into a condition of poor upkeep after about 1909 and was little used for the next thirty years.

Henry William and his son Waddy moved to Angleton after the death of Kate and first lived with George’s large family in the two-story house on “Munson Row.” He later purchased the second house which brother Bascom had built on “Munson Row,” at what is now 517 Bryan Street. There, engaged in the cattle, rice, and other farming businesses with brother George, he raised his only son with the loving assistance of his large family. Today the older members tell how, in later years, “Uncle” would spend every Sunday—finely dressed—riding his fine horse to visit all of the Munson relatives, and would always come to Sunday dinner at George and Hannah’s house. Following his mother’s leadership, he was always an active member of the local Methodist Church, first in Columbia, then at the Murray Ranch, and finally in Angleton.

Henry William Munson III died on July 1, 1924, at the home of his brother, George C. Munson, at the age of 72, and was buried in the Angleton Cemetery. His granddaughter, Jennie

Kate Ankenman, writes: "I was only three, almost four when he died, but I remember him. We lived in Port Arthur and he would take me walking and let me pick flowers out of all the neighbors' yards. He would also drink my milk (I am told that I hated it - and still do) and brag to Mother that I was such a big girl to drink all of it - not realizing that he had milk on his mustache! Mother says that she couldn't say a word, because, as far as he was concerned, I could do no wrong."

His obituary in the *Angleton Times* reads in part:

The attendance upon the funeral was very large, there being in the gathering an unusually large number of the older citizens from all parts of the county, men and women who knew Mr. Munson in the days of his youth and in his prime, and learned to appreciate to their full value the sterling qualities of his manhood.

In the passing of Mr. Munson, Brazoria County loses one more of that band of strong men who guided the county during days that were restless and dark, and brought her through the storms of adversity to her present state of peace and prosperity. To him and others of his class and type we owe a debt of gratitude that never can be repaid.

One impressive feature of the burial service was the appearance of five klansmen, robed in spotless white, reverently performing the last sad rites prescribed by the order at the grave of a deceased klansman. This touching service added to the solemnity of the hour.

The Descendants of Henry William Munson III

Henry William's only surviving child, **Joseph Waddy Munson II**, attended school in Angleton, first at the old Albert Sidney Johnston Free School and then at a variety of schools as storms destroyed the fragile school buildings. He graduated from Angleton High School and attended Houston Business College.

On August 22, 1917, at the age of 19, he married Myrtle Bryan, aged 18. Myrtle was born in Damon, Texas on February 14, 1899, the third child and second daughter of Jennie Adell Mock and Joseph Lafette Bryan. She had four sisters and two brothers. Jennie Mock was the granddaughter of John Smith from Virginia, a soldier in the Battles of Velasco and San Jacinto. Waddy and Myrtle first lived in the house on "Munson Row," now 517 Bryan Street, which his father had bought from Bascom. They sold that house to the Strattons and it later burned.

With the aid of cousin Frank Smith, Waddy took a job with the Texas Company, now Texaco, Inc., in Port Arthur, Texas, where daughter Jennie Kate was born October 12, 1920. Soon thereafter they moved to Houston, where Waddy worked for the Humble Oil Company. Son Bryan Cahill Munson was born there on October 3, 1925. In 1932 Waddy acquired the Humble Oil distributorship in Angleton, and they repurchased their former "Munson Row" lot (now 517 Bryan Street) and built a house there in which they lived until Waddy's death in 1951. Myrtle continued to live there until she moved to Houston in 1979. Myrtle Bryan Munson passed away December 2, 1993, at age 94, and is buried in the Angleton Cemetery.



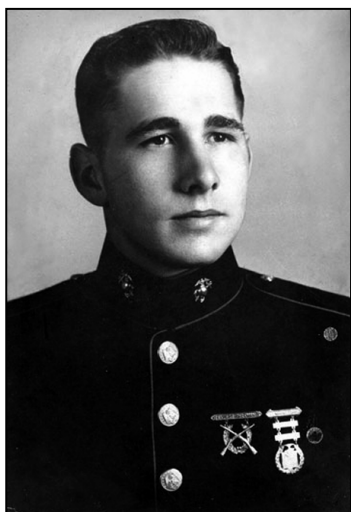
Joseph Waddy Munson II

Jennie Kate Munson attended Texas Women's University in Denton, Texas, and the University of Texas at Austin. In 1940 she married Sam L. Leal. Sam Leal had a baby son, Jerry, whose mother had died, and Sam and Jennie Kate had two daughters, Camille, born April 25, 1944, and Carolyn, born June 14, 1946. Sam Leal died in 1955 of a heart attack, and Jennie Kate married Eugene Watson. This marriage ended in divorce after six years, and in 1965 Jennie Kate married Wayne D. Ankenman. Camille Leal is married to John Paul Iglehart, and they have two daughters: Carolyn Ann (Carrie) and Susan Christina (Christie) Iglehart; and Carolyn Leal is not married. Wayne Ankenman died January 29, 1995. The others now live in Houston.

Jerry Leal married Juanita Murphy and they have two children: Camille, born in 1968 and Samuel Waddy, born in 1971. Jerry and Juanita were divorced, and in 1987 he was living in Abilene, Texas. He died January 6, 1993, in Houston.



Bryan Cahill Munson was a freshman at Texas A. & M. College when he joined the U. S. Marine Corps. He volunteered so that he could be a marine rather than be drafted into the army. He could have stayed out of combat service entirely because he had a severe ankle injury when he was a child and retained a slight limp all of his life. He felt that it was his duty to defend and fight for his country. He was six feet four inches tall, played football, won medals as an excellent swimmer and as an expert rifleman, and was an accomplished horseman. Horses and ranching were the love of his life, and he was also “the apple of his father’s eye.”



Bryan Cahill Munson

Bryan was very proud of being a Seagoing Marine and was assigned as an orderly to Admiral Raymond Spruance aboard his flagship, the heavy cruiser *Indianapolis*. The cruiser fought valiantly in several seas. As part of the Fifth and Third Fleets of Spruance and Admiral William Halsey, she raced far ahead of the carriers and battleships, screened only by the “cats whiskers” of destroyers.

The U. S. was in the final stages of the war against Japan when, on March 31, 1945, the first landings were to be made on Okinawa. *Indianapolis* and *New Mexico* were far forward in fire support when four kamikazes arched down out of a leaden sky. Navy planes got two and *New Mexico* splashed one. The fourth crashed into the port side of *Indianapolis*. The bomb tore loose and crashed through several decks, killing nine sailors and wounding twenty. Her number four propeller shaft was damaged. Spruance transferred his flag to *New Mexico*, and *Indianapolis* was forced to return at reduced speeds, zigzagging across the broad Pacific, to Mare Island Naval Shipyard in San Francisco Bay.

Bryan Munson, just 19 years old, was home on leave while his ship was under repair at Mare Island. When *Indianapolis* was ready, the Navy contacted Munson. The ship was shorthanded for an important mission, but Bryan did not have to report—a Seagoing Marine’s assignment was two years at sea and then two years stateside, war or no war. Bryan had served his two years at sea, but he chose to go back because he was needed. He said that he was “going back and hurry to get this war over with so everybody could come home.” He achieved this goal. His mission did lead to the prompt end of the war, all the soldiers and sailors came home, and Bryan Munson earned the Purple Heart, posthumously.

Indianapolis and Bryan Munson were ready on July 8, 1945. An atomic bomb was exploded at Alamogordo, New Mexico, on July 16. In Washington, President Truman and a few generals and admirals conferred and a decision was made. The U. S. had completed three atomic bombs and a big, fast ship was needed to carry the other two to Tinian Island, where B-29 bombers would deliver them to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. *Indianapolis* topped off her tanks as strange scientific civilians came aboard and huge, canvas-covered packages were placed on deck. Marines kept close patrol on the cargo and *Indianapolis* made a high-speed run to Tinian. The mysterious packages were delivered and the cruiser proceeded to Guam.

The port director at Guam ordered her to make a slow run – 15.7 knots – to join Rear Admiral McCormick’s units in Leyte Gulf in the Philippines. Captain Charles Butler McVay III of *Indianapolis* inquired about a destroyer screen but was denied. The Guam port director notified Admiral McCormick and Leyte Gulf to expect *Indianapolis* in seventy-four hours. Inconceivably, neither received the information. Slowly *Indianapolis* cruised flat, hot seas, zigzagging by day, not by night. What was left of the Japanese fleet was at bases on Honshu and Hokkaido, a thousand miles to the north.

On their second night out, July 29, 1945, moonrise was at 10 p.m. At 11 p.m., Japanese submarine *I-58*, under the command of Lt. Comdr. Mochitsura (Ike) Hashimoto, made a routine nightly surfacing. Lt. Comdr. Hashimoto could not believe his eyes. Something which appeared to be a battleship was approaching from the east, was not zigzagging, and would pass south of his position at a distance of 4,500 feet. He couldn’t miss. He waited, then fired six torpedoes. Two hit on the starboard side completely ripping out the side and the bottom of the big cruiser. In fifteen minutes *Indianapolis* headed for the bottom—7,200 feet down.

Of the 1,196 men aboard, about 850 got into life rafts alive. For the most part, these were the unlucky ones. One hundred men died the first night from burns. They were dropped off the rafts. The survivors blistered in the tropical sun. They died by twos and threes. No rescue units arrived. Four planes passed, but they kept going. Thirst and burns caused many to jump into the sea. Guam didn’t miss the cruiser—neither did Leyte Gulf. Unbelievably, no one in the Navy missed *Indianapolis*—no one was expecting her. After five days a Navy plane accidentally sighted an oil slick and spotted the rafts. At midnight, August 2, 1945, ships arrived. They saved 316 men including Captain McVay, but over 880 had died. Bryan Cahill Munson was among them.

On August 6, 1945, “the bomb” was dropped on Hiroshima, and Japan surrendered on August 10. The Navy did not release the news of the loss of *Indianapolis* until the following week, after Japan had surrendered. In the ecstasy of victory, the news was scarcely noticed. Captain McVay was eventually court-martialed for negligence, and *Time* magazine called this “the most colossal blunder of the war.” Bryan Cahill Munson was awarded the Purple Heart, posthumously, and also the World War II and the Asian Pacific medals.²⁰⁶



Joseph Waddy Munson II died in Houston on May 11, 1951 of a cerebral hemorrhage at the age of 53, but his daughter, Jennie Kate, writes, “I truly believe that he died of a broken heart, for

²⁰⁶ Information for this story was taken from Munson family files which include two newspaper clippings authored by Jim Bishop (source unrecorded) and a 1958 Newsweek magazine review of the book, *Abandon Ship! Death of the U.S.S. Indianapolis*, by Richard F Newcomb.

he never accepted my brother's death. His grief was so great that until the day he died he never gave up hope that Bryan would be found."

Chart 15

Descendants of Henry William Munson III



Henry William³ Munson III, b. 16 Aug 1851 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 1 Jul 1924 Brazoria Co., TX
 +**Sarah Kate³ Cahill**, b. circa 1876, m. 18 Dec 1895 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 1899 Brazoria Co., TX
 └─ **Joseph Waddy⁴ Munson II**, b. 3 Oct 1896 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 11 May 1951 Harris Co., TX
 └─ +**Myrtle⁴ Bryan**, b. 14 Feb 1899 Brazoria Co., TX, m. 22 Aug 1917 Brazoria Co., d. 2 Dec 1993
 └─ **Jennie Kate⁵ Munson**, b. 12 Oct 1920 Jefferson Co., TX
 └─ +**Sam Lee⁵ Leal**, b. 9 Aug 1910, m. circa 1940, d. 13 Dec 1955 Harris Co., TX
 └─ **Linda⁶ Leal**, b. 16 Dec 1942 Harris Co., TX, d. 1942
 └─ **Camille⁶ Leal**, b. 25 Apr 1944 Gray Co., TX
 └─ +**John Paul⁶ Iglehart**, b. circa 1944, m. 19 Sep 1970 Harris Co., TX
 └─ **Jennie Kate⁷ Iglehart**, b. 28 Apr 1971 Harris Co., TX, d. 5 May 1971 Harris Co., TX
 └─ **Carolyn Ann⁷ Iglehart**, b. 7 Sep 1972 Harris Co., TX
 └─ **Susan Christina⁷ Iglehart**, b. 23 Sep 1975 Harris Co., TX
 └─ **Carolyn⁶ Leal**, b. 14 Jun 1946 Brazoria Co., TX
 └─ +**Eugene⁵ Watson**
 └─ +**Wayne Douglas⁵ Ankenman**, d. 29 Jan 1995 Harris Co., TX
 └─ **Bryan Cahill⁵ Munson**, b. 3 Oct 1925 Harris Co., TX, d. 30 Jul 1945

Chapter 22

The Life and Family of George Caldwell Munson b. 1853 — d. 1931



George Caldwell Munson, the second child of Mordello and Sarah Munson, was born on January 12, 1853. He was raised at Bailey's Prairie and obtained a law degree in Austin, but he was a farmer and rancher in Brazoria County all his life. He married Hannab Dyer Adriance on February 6, 1878, and they lived long, happy lives together. They have the largest number of descendants of any of the eight children of Mordello and Sarah. They had seven children, twelve grandchildren, thirty-seven great-grandchildren, and, to this date, sixty-two great-great-grandchildren.



George Caldwell Munson was born January 12, 1853, while his parents lived at “Hard Castle,” their small original home at Bailey’s Prairie. Family records tell that he was born at Bailey’s Prairie, so he was probably born in that home. Older brother Henry William had been born at Oakland Plantation, but James and Ann Caldwell had left Oakland for San Marcos, and Sarah apparently had her second child at home. He was named for his uncle, George Poindexter Munson, and his father’s stepfather, James Caldwell. In the naming of his first two children, Mordello gave recognition to his father, his stepfather, and both of his closest brothers. He had a total of six sons, but he never named one for himself.

George C. Munson was raised at Ridgely Plantation with his seven brothers and sisters and some of the seven cousins that his father and mother raised. He was grown before the children of Gerard and Annie came to live at Ridgely. In all his mother’s letters he was always referred to as “Bud.” His older brother was “Son,” his sister Emma was “Daughter” or “Daught,” and the next, Sarah, was “Doll.” All of the later children were called by their given names: Waddy, Armour, Bascom, and Stephen.

George, like the others, got his elementary education at home from his mother and private governesses. George attended a school in San Marcos (probably because his grandmother, Ann Caldwell, lived there until her death in 1865), and then “a school in Austin”—surely Texas Military Institute—with older brother Henry William. From these early days onward, George and Henry William were partners in many of their endeavors, doing business as “H. W. and G. C. Munson,” and their families lived together as one family for many of the early years.

George aspired to be a lawyer and was admitted to the Texas Bar by examination in Travis County (Austin) on March 22, 1876, at the age of 23. He returned to the Bailey's Prairie home and for a short time practiced law with his father, who had offices in Brazoria, Houston, and Galveston. George may have worked in the Houston office, as a letter from him in Houston to his father, dated 1877, describes George's investigations of the early legal quarrels regarding their Bailey's Prairie land. In 1878 he was married; he gave up his practice of law to help manage his father's plantation; and he spent the remainder of his life as a rancher, farmer, and manager of family affairs. An entry in Sarah's diary on January 12, 1881, reads: "This is Bud's birthday, just to think he is 29. He is certainly a noble man and one of the best of sons . . ."

His daughter, Sarah Munson Stevens, wrote of her father:

My father... was the son of a brilliant lawyer and early expressed a desire to follow the same profession, as did three of his younger brothers. He graduated from law school and received his license to practice, but married as soon as he came home from school, so decided to try farming and cattle raising until such a time as he should feel able to begin his career as a struggling young lawyer. This time never came and he continued along these lines the rest of his life.

George was the first of the children of Mordello and Sarah to marry when he married Hannah Dyer Adriance on February 6, 1878, at Christ Episcopal Church in Houston. This date was the twenty-eighth wedding anniversary of Mordello and Sarah. George was 25 years old and Hannah was 20. The Munson family of Bailey's Prairie and the Adriance family of Columbia had been close friends and business and political associates for many years, and they remained so for the rest of their lives.

George and Hannah lived and worked with his parents at the Bailey's Prairie home for about four years. During these years they lost their first child, a daughter named Lydia, and they had a second daughter, whom they also named Lydia. Living at Ridgely Plantation in these years were Mordello and Sarah, their daughter Emma, their oldest son, Henry William, and two or three of their younger sons, plus George and Hannah and their baby daughter, and four of brother Gerard's children. It appears that for most of this time there were ten or twelve at the table for each meal.

Hannah was pregnant again, and George and Hannah wanted a home of their own. About 1881 John Adriance sold some land and divided the money among his children. That part which he gave to daughter Hannah enabled her and George to buy the "Van Place," a 2,000-acre plantation some miles north of Columbia and Bailey's Prairie. It covered all of the land between the Brazos River and Oyster Creek. Today much of this land lies beneath the waters of the Dow Reservoir.

Entries in Sarah Munson's diary tell some of the early story of the "Van Place." Several entries in January and February of 1882 tell of various of the men leaving for the "Van Place" and then returning. They were apparently getting it ready for occupancy. On February 23, 1882, an entry in the diary says, "Well Bud [i.e. son George] has at last moved 'Bag and bage', wife and children from the old Parental roof. He says he doesn't so consider it and that this is Home still. He, Hannah, Lydia, Emma left this morning for Peach Lake, since quiet rains supreme. Oh how much I miss Lydia's sweet little prattle and footsteps."

When the George Munson family moved from Bailey's Prairie to the "Van Place," George's brother, Henry William III, moved with them, and they operated the plantation together. Family tradition tells that as they were leaving the Bailey's Prairie home—the first children to move away—their mother, Sarah, told them, "You may go to live there, but remember, this is always your home." Since then that Bailey's Prairie location has always been known as the "Old Home Place."

Mary Kennedy Giesecke wrote about the "Van Place:"

With fondest [memories] I remember the "Vann Place," situated near the banks of Oyster Creek. In this home lived my mother's brothers, Henry & George. The latter's family consisted of our dear Aunt Hannah Adriance & children, Lydia, Sarah, Adriance, Henry, Mordello & Ruth. Henry later brought his wife Kate Cahill here & their son Waddy was born in "Uncle's room," later George moved to Angleton so the children could be in school. Henry remained till 1898 [actually 1899] when his wife died at a son's birth, then he & little Waddy lived with different relatives. Lydia spent some years at school in E. Columbia, staying with her grandfather. Later [at the "Van Place"] it became necessary to have a governess. The first was Miss Margaret Horn from N. Carolina, a wonderful woman. The other was Miss Lilly Fremer from Quintana. School was held in the "girl's room." Our plantation, Waverly, was 3 miles n. west and every day, weather permitting, my oldest sister, Sarah, Emma & I came to school in a "jolter" pulled by old "Dapple." "Aunt Melinda" was the faithful cook & Wm. Thomas helped out. Up the road from the house was the "store" & west the old brick sugar mill & barns on the bank of the Lake.

In many personal conversations, Mary Giesecke and Ruth Smith have told of the happy times that the children had playing on the banks of the horseshoe-shaped lake—beautiful in springtime and wonderful fun in summertime—about swimming and boating in the lake and riding a swing out over the lake from a huge weeping willow tree and plunging into the cool, fresh water. They also told about the ducks and geese, chickens, turkeys, dogs, cattle, hogs, and horses; about Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter; and about family and visits from friends—it was a happy family on an early Texas plantation. The major products of the plantation were cattle, hogs, cotton, corn, and sugar.

The George C. Munson family, the Henry William III family, and the Kennedy family all lived at the "Van Place" and nearby Waverly Plantation until about 1898, when they all moved to Angleton. During these years there was constant travel among the three plantations by many family members.

George and Hannah's next child was born at Ridgely on August 29, 1882, and was named Sarah Kimbrough Munson (IV). An entry in Sarah's diary on that date tells of the event, "Has certainly been a day of surprises for Daught's [Emma] coming and the 'little Stranger's advent'. Hannah and Babe both doing well. It was born about ten o'clock." And an entry the next day says, "Bascom went to the Peach Lake to carry Bud the tidings . . .," and on August 31, "Hannah & Babe still doing well. I wrote Mrs. Adriance today. Bud has been cutting grass in the garden."

George and Hannah's fourth child was also born at Ridgely, on November 24, 1885, and thereafter they had three additional children, all born at the "Van Place." At Bailey's Prairie they had had Lydia (who died at birth), Lydia (again) who married Ralph Johnson, Sarah (who married Frank K. Stevens), and Adriance. At the "Van Place" they had Henry William IV, Mordello Stephen II, and Ruth (who married Frank T. Smith).

In December of 1896, Henry William III, at the age of 45, married 20-year-old Sarah Kate Cahill of nearby Chenango Plantation, and he brought his bride to live with George and Hannah and their six children. Economic times were very bad, the price of cotton “had dropped to nothing,” and the plantation was probably not supporting these families satisfactorily.

George and Hannah, in about 1897, moved their family to the new town of Angleton, reportedly in order to place their children in the newly opened school there. They moved first to a house just to the west of Angleton (either the Jamison or the Cannan house), with the intention of building on the Munson land nearby. At about this time the first child of brother Bascom and Addie Cotton died of scarlet fever in the big two-story house that Bascom had just completed on the Munson land. Bascom did not want to live there any longer, so he said to George, “I want you to have this house and I’ll build another for my family,” and Bascom gave George the house, for which he later received a small consideration.

Henry William III remained at the “Van Place” briefly, possibly managing its last days, but he also left in 1899 when his wife, Kate Cahill, died at childbirth at George and Hannah’s home in Angleton. He and baby Waddy lived with George’s family briefly while he had a home built for himself nearby. It is thought by some family members that the “Van Place” may have been lost from financial hardships.

George and Hannah raised their family in the large, two-story Angleton home, and it became the center of the Munson family activities. They always had bountiful meals and a warm home for their large family, their many, many drop-in visitors, and their frequent live-in brothers’ and sisters’ families. Some family groups lived with them for several months or several years as the families resettled on “Munson Row.” This happy home was the site of a large family dinner every Sunday, on holidays, and especially at Christmas.

George and Henry William III were partners in farming and ranching—raising, among other things, beef and dairy cattle, hogs, chickens, turkeys, cotton, corn, vegetables, potatoes, and fruit. Among other ventures, Henry and George were among the first to raise rice in Brazoria County, beginning in 1903 or 1904. They irrigated their first rice fields out of Oyster Creek with steam-powered pumps. The old brick pump foundations are standing on this Munson land today. During the pumping season in those early days, wagon loads of firewood could be seen going and coming from all directions around the pumping station.

George and Henry William III were always active in community affairs and in local, conservative, Democratic politics. Both were members of the Methodist Church. Hannah Adriance was an active member of the Episcopal Church, as her father had been a life-long, lay reader in this church, and all of the children were raised as Episcopalians. The first small building of the Holy Comforter Episcopal Church was built in Angleton with the active participation of Hannah Munson, and many members of the Munson family have been active members of this church during its ninety years.

George C. Munson was also a supporter of the University of South Texas, which was started in Angleton in about 1897 or 1898. A printed stock certificate issued to him by this university remains among his papers. Ruth Munson Smith, his daughter, can remember the two-story college building on the south side of the road west of Angleton, approximately across from the Murray Ranch. Ruth Smith’s recollections tell that the university’s organizer lived in the building and was the president and the only teacher. The institution ended when the building was totally destroyed in the 1900 storm.

George Caldwell Munson died at home after midnight on Christmas night, December 26, 1931, at the age of 78, and is buried in the Angleton Cemetery.

The large home was severely damaged in the 1932 storm and was soon thereafter torn down, and the material was used to build a home for George's son, Mordello Stephen Munson II, next door. This home, at 730 S. Walker Street, is still occupied by the family today. The original two-story home was located near the site that is now 726 S. Walker Street, and the two giant live oak trees in the front yard next door, at 700 S. Walker, "were brought from the prairie and planted on either side of the road to the barn" almost ninety years ago.

Hannah Adriance Munson died in Port Arthur at the home of her daughter, Ruth Smith, on December 15, 1937, at the age of 80, and is buried in the Angleton Cemetery beside her husband.

Daughter Sarah Munson Stevens wrote about her parents:

My father was always keenly interested in every concern of his fellow man. Himself of exemplary habits, he could never tolerate excesses of any kind, and was ready always to help in any reforms which were undertaken.

He was loving, kind and generous to a fault, never thinking of himself to the exclusion of others.

He was rarely ever ill, until the later years of his life, when he suffered to a considerable extent with headache, caused, we understood, by hardening of the arteries, which led to his death at almost the age of 79 years

My mother... living, as her family did, in a new country with poor educational advantages, did not have a college course, but had the advantage of a cultured, gentle, dignified home environment and splendid private teachers.

As a consequence she always loved the uplifting things of life, and had the highest ambitions for her children and grandchildren. In fact, my mother's whole life was wrapped up in her family and friends, and she was never happier than when surrounded by them in her home...

For a number of years, she was afflicted with angina pectoris, but in spite of her tortured suffering at times, she always kept the keen interest in every concern of her friends and loved ones.

Her Church was her main interest outside of her home, and she never missed services or work in any of its organizations if humanly possible... until her poor heart was stilled.

The Adriance Family

Hannah Dyer Adriance was descended from a distinguished colonial family on both her mother's and her father's side.

Her mother was Lydia Ann Cook, whose grandmother was Lydia Brewster. Lydia Brewster's father was Elisha Brewster, a great grandson of Love Brewster, who came to America on the *Mayflower* with his father, William Brewster. William Brewster was a leading figure in the little band of Pilgrims who came to America on the *Mayflower* in 1620. Thus, all descendants of Hannah Adriance are eligible for membership in the organization known as Mayflower Descendants.

The Adriance family traces its ancestry in America back to the settling of New Amsterdam, now New York City. Hannah's grandfather, George C. Adriance, was a hatter and fur dealer there. Hannah's father, John Adriance, was born at Troy, New York, on November 10, 1815. At

the age of 12, John was left fatherless and was raised by an uncle. At the age of 20, he decided to go to Texas for his health. He left on October 25, 1835, on the schooner *Julius Caesar* and arrived at Bell's Landing, Texas, on November 25. He did not expect to remain, but he settled at Bell's Landing (as the town of Marion was commonly known), subsequently named Columbia, and later East Columbia, and he remained there for the rest of his long life.

Though a very new arrival, John Adriance, aged 20, participated in the final actions of the Texas Revolution in the spring of 1836. He joined Captain Jacob Eberly's Volunteer Company of thirty-five mounted men at the time that General Sam Houston and his Texas Army were retreating eastward across Texas before the vastly superior army of General Santa Anna. As Houston crossed the Brazos, he detailed Captain Eberly's Company to remain at Marion until all of the families fleeing in "The Runaway Scrape" had crossed the river. Thus cut off from Houston's army at San Jacinto, they then made their way to San Luis Pass on the gulf and on to Galveston.

Captain Eberly and fifteen of his men, including John Adriance, volunteered to board the steamboat *Laura* as guards, as the ship was to make an effort to reach the Texas Army with provisions and volunteers. On April 21, at Redfish Bar, they met the steamer *Cayuga* with Mexican prisoners and the news of the Battle of San Jacinto. Returning to Galveston Island, they embarked for the battleground on the steamer *Yellowstone*. When Santa Anna and his officers were placed aboard *Yellowstone*, John Adriance was one of their guards while the ship lay in the stream and during the cruise to Galveston Island. There the party was transferred to the steamer *Laura*, which proceeded to Velasco, where the treaty of surrender was signed on May 14.

John Adriance returned to Columbia, where the first Texas Congress assembled on October 3, 1836, and entered the mercantile business. Columbia, at that time, was the trading center for much of the Republic of Texas, and there is little doubt that James Caldwell at Oakland Plantation and Mordello Munson at Ridgely did regular business with the Adriance firms for several decades.

On September 24, 1846, at the age of 30, John Adriance was married to Miss Lydia Ann Cook in Watertown, New York. They had three children: Sarah Bush Adriance, who never married; Hannah Dyer Adriance, who married George Caldwell Munson; and Duncan M. Adriance, who married May Webb and who was an early professor of chemistry at Texas A. & M. College. Duncan and May had one son, Guy Webb Adriance, who also taught at Texas A. & M. College.

Lydia Adriance died in 1871, and John married her widowed sister, Mrs. D. E. Nash.

John Adriance had a large home at Bell's Landing situated on the northeast side of Varner's Creek near its junction with the Brazos. His firms had warehouses and wharves on the river's bank south of Varner's Creek. They were importers and warehousemen of supplies for the colonists and brokers for cotton, corn, sugar, and other export produce. A Texas State Highway historical marker in East Columbia, describing Bell's Landing, stands near the location of the Adriance businesses, and another describing the historic Nash-Wright house, built in 1847, stands just across Varner's Creek from the location of the Adriance residence. William Nash, through his mother, Kitty Cook, was a first cousin to Hannah Adriance.

John Adriance and Colonel M. L. Smith were the first owners of the Waldeck Plantation, where they engaged in the manufacture of sugar. They bought 1,255 acres from William G. Hill on May 19, 1841. The land lay north of the Patton Plantation on the west bank of the Brazos

River. It was named for Count Joseph de Boos Waldeck, a Texas visitor and land buyer from Germany in 1843. A copy of his calling card still resides in the Munson-Adriance files. The estate remained in possession of the firm of Smith & Adriance until March 16, 1847, when Adriance sold his interest to Smith for \$24,800.50. At that date the plantation had 37 slaves, 12 yoke of oxen, 13 mules, 3 Spanish horses, 1,230 head of cattle, and 65 hogs. After 1847 Morgan L. Smith continued to operate Waldeck and it became one of the largest sugar plantations in Texas and produced the first refined white sugar in the state. Its ruins stand among fine cattle grazing on the fertile banks of the Brazos near Columbia Lakes Country Club.

John Adriance was one of the first to volunteer for the Confederate Army but was not accepted due to his age. His warehouse in Columbia served as a conscription center for volunteers and a warehouse for the Confederate commissary department. It has been written that he lost heavily during the war, at the end of which his warehouse held trunks full of worthless Confederate money. A biography written during his later years states: "Merchandising has been his principal business in life and as he is a man thoroughly trustworthy and reliable, and possessing a true appreciation of all the requirements of his line, he amassed quite a fortune previous to the war."

As one of the foremost businessmen after the War, John Adriance was active and influential in the formation of the Galveston and Brazos Canal Company; in the organization of the Houston Tap and Brazoria Railroad running from Houston to Columbia and on to Wharton (in which he owned a twenty-five percent interest); in working for a deep-water port at Freeport; and in the selection of Angleton as the county seat of Brazoria County.

John Adriance was a member of the Thirteenth Texas Legislature from 1872 to 1874, nominated at Galveston without his knowledge. He was often solicited to run for the same office in later years, which he declined, preferring, as he wrote, "the quieter paths of life." During their formative years, he took a deep interest in the welfare of the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas, where he was a member of the Finance Committee for five years, and in the Prairie View State Normal School for black students, where he was a member of the Board of Directors.

For all of his active life, John Adriance was a lay reader in the Episcopal Churches in Columbia and Brazoria. Like his father, he was a prominent Mason, becoming Grand High Priest of the Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Texas and as such was well known throughout the state. A large picture of John Adriance hangs today in the Grand Lodge of Texas Temple in Waco, Texas.

John Adriance died on December 7, 1903, at the age of 88, just seven weeks after the death of his good friend, Mordello Munson (October 13, 1903). He is buried in the Old Columbia Cemetery in West Columbia.

The Descendants of George C. Munson and Hannah Adriance

George and Hannah were married on February 6, 1878. Their first child was a daughter, whom they named, or planned to name, **Lydia**, for her grandmother, Lydia Cook. This child died at birth (possibly prematurely).



Their first child to survive was another daughter, also named **Lydia Munson**, born on November 20, 1880, at Bailey's Prairie. This Lydia Munson grew to adulthood and lived all of her life in Angleton. She was married on November 5, 1923, at the age of 42, to Ralph Johnson, who for many successive years was elected and served as sheriff of Brazoria County. They purchased

from Mrs. Joseph Waddy Munson (Woodie) the house on “Munson Row,” now 910 S. Walker Street, built by Joseph Waddy Munson in 1903. Lydia was a favorite of all and is remembered as one of the “sweetest” members of the Munson clan. She had no children, but was a delight to her many nieces and nephews—playing games endlessly with them. She died on December 25, 1969, at the age of 89. Lydia and Ralph are buried in the Angleton Cemetery.



The third child of George and Hannah Munson, born on August 29, 1882, at Bailey’s Prairie, was named **Sarah Kimbrough Munson**. She was Sarah Kimbrough Munson IV. Her daughter Eleanor writes: “She was beautiful inside and outside, sweet, kind and gentle, an absolute angel here on God’s earth.” On June 8, 1910, she married Frank Kirkland Stevens of Angleton after a courtship of eight years.

Frank K. Stevens had been born in Brazoria on September 24, 1885. His grandfather, Hennell Stevens, was the co-founder, in Quintana in 1873, of the Brazoria County Abstract Company. Frank’s father, Frank Wilson Stevens, had moved the offices from the town of Quintana to the new county seat at Angleton. Frank K. was beginning his training for a career in architecture when he was persuaded to join his father in the abstract office. He and his family operated the abstract office for the remainder of his life, and it is still operated by his descendants. In 1962 Frank K. Stevens wrote an autobiography entitled *Memories of Seventy-Eight Years in Brazoria County*.

Frank and Sarah Stevens lived for fifty-five years in a large house at 503 West Myrtle Street in Angleton, where they raised their four children: Lydia, Eleanor Adriance, Frank Wilson II, and George Munson Stevens. Sarah died in Angleton on January 1, 1965, at the age of 82, and Frank K. on January 1, 1975, at the age of 89. Both are buried in the Angleton Cemetery.

Lydia Stevens was a person of many talents, including writing, singing, photography, and art. She married David Edwin Shepherd and they both worked in the abstract office until his retirement. They had three children, eight grandchildren and, to this date, eight great-grandchildren. Lydia died on October 16, 1979, of heart arrest and is buried in the Angleton Cemetery. Edwin died March 17, 1990 in Brazoria County.

Eleanor Stevens studied architecture at Rice University but did not pursue that career. Instead, she married Herschel McCarver Vaughan, whose career as an executive with Gulf Oil Company led them to live in Port Arthur, Texas, for nineteen years and in Pennsylvania for four years. Their last nine years together were spent in England, until his untimely death from cancer in Houston on November 10, 1970, at the age of 58. He is buried in the Angleton Cemetery. Eleanor and Herschel have four children and, at this time, five grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. Eleanor now lives in Angleton.

Frank W. Stevens II studied chemical engineering at Rice University for two years but switched to law and received a law degree from the University of Texas. During World War II, he had a distinguished career in the Air Force. From Aho Gunnery Base in Arizona he was sent to Karachi, India, to train other pilots. He then served as a fighter pilot in the famous *Flying Tigers* under General Claire Chennault in China. He returned home in 1945 with the rank of lieutenant colonel. After his return to Angleton he married Barbara Ann Bailey, practiced law, and worked with the abstract office in Angleton until his retirement. Frank W. followed the family tradition of active commitment to civic and church affairs, and among his many awards was the coveted



Lydia Munson



George Caldwell Munson



**Sarah Kimbrough
Munson**



Adriance Munson



**Henry William
Munson IV**



Hannah Dyer Adriance



**Mordello Stephen
Munson II**



Ruth Munson

Angleton Community Service Award. Frank W. and Barbara have three sons and, at this time, six grandchildren.

George Munson Stevens, from an early age, had a burning desire to help his fellow man. He attended the University of Texas at Austin and received an M. D. degree from the University of Texas Medical School at Galveston. There he met and married Elizabeth Matchett, a surgical nurse. He served as medical officer in the Navy during World War II, going to the Mediterranean, to Formosa, and Japan. After the war he practiced medicine in Lake Jackson, Texas, for a number of years before doing his residency in psychiatry at the Veteran's Hospital in Houston. He was in private practice there until his sudden death from a heart arrest on October 8, 1978, at the age of 58. He is buried in the Munson Cemetery at Bailey's Prairie. George and Elizabeth have four sons and, at this time, seven grandchildren.

These couples have given Frank K. and Sarah Munson Stevens fourteen grandchildren and twenty-seven great-grandchildren at the time of this writing.



The fourth child and first son of George and Hannah was named **Adriance Munson**. He was born on November 24, 1885, at Bailey's Prairie. Adriance graduated from Angleton High School, then from Texas A. & M. College with a degree in engineering. He was a surveyor all his professional life. His first job was in Abilene, but he soon returned to Angleton and married Lolita Reese from the Reese Plantation near Brazoria on January 3, 1917. He was then employed by the Freeport Sulfur Company and they lived in Freeport. When newborn twin babies—a boy and a girl—came up for adoption, Adriance and Lolita adopted the girl and named her Robin, and their next door neighbors adopted the boy and named him Chris. Later, Adriance and family moved to Angleton where he was elected county surveyor.

Robin Munson first married Richard Weems and they have a son, Chris Haslund Weems. Later she married Wilbur Lee Womack, and they have a daughter, Jeanette Womack. Both have grown to adulthood and have married, and Chris Weems has two children.

Adriance Munson was killed in an automobile accident near San Antonio on May 31, 1957, at the age of 71. Lolita continued to live in Angleton where she practiced and taught china painting for many years. She died August 2, 1994 at age 99.



The fifth child and second son of George and Hannah Munson was named **Henry William Munson IV**, always known as Henry. He was born on January 4, 1888, the first of the family to be born at the "Van Place." This is the best indication available to date the family's move to the "Van Place." He was raised at the "Van Place" and in Angleton, and he graduated from Angleton High School, then Texas A. & M. College with a degree in engineering. He returned to Angleton and was married in Hustburg, Tennessee, to Elsie McCauley on June 4, 1914. Henry and Elsie lived temporarily with his uncle, Henry William III, while their new home was built at what is now 632 S. Walker Street. They lived there the rest of their lives. Their grandson, Henry William Munson V, and his family live there today.

Henry worked all of his years as an engineer—as an independent surveyor, as county surveyor for many years, and finally with the Briscoe Irrigation Company of Alvin. Briscoe was engaged primarily in the design and construction of irrigation canals for rice farming and the Texas City water reservoir. He also raised cattle on his Bailey's Prairie land. Henry and Elsie had

two children: George McCauley Munson, who married Martha Mabelle Clyburn, and Elizabeth Munson, who married Leroy Marvin Gibson. For over twenty years, three generations of Munsons—Henry William IV, son George McCauley, and grandson Henry William V—ranchled together on their property between Oyster Creek and Bailey's Prairie.

George McCauley Munson attended Texas A. & M. College, then Southern Methodist University, where he graduated with a degree in journalism. He worked as a sports editor for a newspaper in Tyler and then as editor of the *Angleton Times* for a few months before going to work for Dow Chemical Company in Freeport in May of 1942. He remained with Dow until his retirement. His Dow career was interrupted by his army service in World War II. He was first a member of the 124th Cavalry—probably the last of the horse cavalry units. Later he was a member of the Mars Task Force that took the Burma Road from the Japanese in the China-Burma-India Theatre. In 1947 he built a home beside his parents' home, at what is now 620 S. Walker Street. George and Martha have two children and five grandchildren. Cauley Munson died June 14, 2000. Martha lives in Angleton.

Elizabeth and Leroy M. "Roy" Gibson have lived in Austin, Albuquerque, Tyler, Harlingen, Waco, and Denton. They had three children, one of whom died in infancy, and five grandchildren. Elizabeth died on February 6, 1971.



The sixth child and third son of George and Hannah, born February 22, 1893, at the "Van Place," was named **Mordello Stephen Munson II**. He was always known as "Del" and was a Brazoria County cattleman, as were so many of his Munson uncles, brothers, and nephews. Mordello graduated from Angleton High School and San Antonio Academy, then returned to live "at home" and work with his father, George C. Munson, at farming and ranching.

On June 3, 1925, Mordello married Minnie Ella Moore. They lived with his parents for a short time, then moved to what the family called the "Ranch House" at Bailey's Prairie. Lydia and Ralph Johnson were visiting them when the 1932 storm started moving in. Mordello and Minnie Ella went home with Lydia and Ralph to weather the storm and the "Ranch House" was destroyed. They stayed with Lydia and Ralph while they built a new home on "Munson Row." The large two-story home of his parents (George and Hannah) had been badly damaged by the storm and George had died in 1931, so the lumber and materials from this house were used to build a house for Mordello and Minnie Ella next door, at what is now 730 S. Walker Street. This is where they raised their family. Mordello died on November 17, 1960 at age 67, and Minnie Ella died August 12, 1992 at age 89.

Mordello and Minnie Ella raised two children: Walter Mordello, who married Betty Painter, and Sarah Moore, who married John David Broussard. Walter Mordello built a home just to the north of his parents' home, at what is now 726 S. Walker Street; and Sarah Moore and her husband built just to the west, on Bryan Street. John David died in 1985, and in 1989 Sarah Moore married Jack Buice. She inherited her mother's home, and she and Jack are living there today. Walter Mordello and Sarah Moore have between them five children, ten grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. One of Walter Mordello's sons was named Mordello Stephen Munson III, and this Munson's first son, born in 1980, a great-great-great-grandson of Mordello S. Munson I, was named Luke Mordello Munson.



The seventh and last child of George and Hannah was daughter **Ruth Munson**, born October 19, 1895. As this is written in October of 1987, Ruth has just celebrated her 92nd birthday. Ruth attended Albert Sidney Johnston Free School in Angleton, then Angleton High School. There she met Frank Thomas Smith, whom she later married on December 29, 1915, at the Holy Comforter Episcopal Church in Angleton. Frank was 23 years old and Ruth was 20. They celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in 1965 and their 62nd in 1977. Both sets of their parents had also observed 50th wedding anniversaries.

Frank was born in Petty, Texas, on December 5, 1892, the son of the early Brazoria County doctor, Josiah G. Smith, and Fannie Glasscock. The family moved to Brazoria County in 1898 when Frank was just six years old. His father was port quarantine doctor at what was then Velasco but is now known as Surfside. Because he lived there, he was also employed as manager of the mammoth, luxury Surfside Hotel. In summer, visitors from Houston, other points in Texas, and from the north came to this resort hotel for vacations at the popular beach. The original hotel was badly damaged in the 1900 storm and was rebuilt. As a young boy, Frank was a carriage driver and porter at the new hotel. He was there when it burned in 1905, and his stories of the hotel and the fire have entertained many Munson gatherings.

Frank was employed for sixteen years by the Texas Company (now Texaco, Inc.) in Port Arthur, Texas. It was there that Frank and Ruth raised their family of three children: Hannah Frances, Frank Thomas Jr., and Melvin Munson Smith. In 1942 Frank took a job as the first administrator of the new Dow Hospital in Freeport, from which he retired in 1968. In 1950 Frank and Ruth built a home near the location of the original two-story Munson house on “Munson Row,” now 700 S. Walker Street, right between the two large live oak trees “on either side of the road that led to the barn.”

A unique characteristic of the Munson clan in years past has been the acceptance and integration of the Munson-in-laws into the family. No better example exists than that of Frank T. Smith—one of the most loved and admired of all the Munsons. Frank died in a Houston hospital on May 5, 1978, at the age of 85. Ruth died in Angleton on March 20, 1995, at the age of 99. Both are buried in the Angleton Cemetery.

Ruth Munson Smith was very active in family and community affairs for all her life. As one of the most active historians in the Munson clan, Ruth had a tremendous file of Munson and Adriance genealogical papers, documents, pictures, and information. She was a member of the Brazoria County Historical Society and the Brazoria County Museum Board. She was chairman of the committee for gathering data and organizing the publication of *A Narrative History of Brazoria County, Texas* by James A. Creighton in 1975. She was a member of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, the Daughters of the American Revolution, and the Texas Chapter of the Mayflower Descendants, in that order of importance.

Hannah Frances Smith married Carl Vaughan in Port Arthur. They have four children, and, at this date, seven grandchildren. She is now married to J. Ray Gayle Jr. of Angleton, and they were living at Columbia Lakes Country Club in 1987. Hannah Frances now lives in Wimberley.

Frank T. Smith Jr. received an M. D. degree from the University of Texas Medical School at Galveston in the same class with his cousin, George Stevens, and has practiced medicine in Sealy, Texas, for many years. In 1945-1948 he was a captain in the U. S. Army Medical Corps in occupied Korea. Frank Jr. is married to Geraldine Irene “Jerry” Thompson. They have six children and, at this date (2006), twelve grandchildren.

Munson Melvin Smith received a law degree from the University of Texas and has practiced law with the firm of Anderson, Smith and Null in Victoria, Texas, since 1950. During World War II he served in the U. S. Navy. After the War he married Evelyn Davis, who had a son, Michael Davis, from a previous marriage. Michael Davis Smith was adopted by Munson, and Munson and Evelyn also have a daughter, Marcia Smith, who is married and lives in Denver, Colorado.

Chart 16
Descendants of George Caldwell Munson



George Caldwell³ Munson, b. 12 Jan 1853 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 26 Dec 1931 Brazoria Co., TX
+Hannah Dyer³ Adriance, b. 9 Jul 1857 Brazoria Co., TX, m. 6 Feb 1878 Harris Co., TX, d. 15 Dec 1937

- **Lydia⁴ Munson**, b. circa 1879 Brazoria Co., TX, d. circa 1879 Brazoria Co., TX
- **Lydia⁴ Munson**, b. 20 Nov 1880 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 25 Dec 1969 Brazoria Co., TX
 +**Leonidas Ralph⁴ Johnson**, b. 13 Nov 1880, m. 5 Nov 1923, d. 1957
- **Sarah Kimbrough⁴ Munson**, b. 29 Aug 1882 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 1 Jan 1965 Brazoria Co., TX
 +**Frank Kirkland⁴ Stevens**, b. 24 Sep 1885 Brazoria Co., TX, m. 8 Jun 1910, d. 1 Jan 1975 Brazoria Co.
- **Lydia⁵ Stevens**, b. 30 Sep 1911, d. 16 Oct 1979 Brazoria Co., TX
 +**David Edwin⁵ Shepherd**, d. 17 Mar 1990 Brazoria Co., TX
 - **David Edwin⁶ Shepherd Jr**, b. 21 Aug 1937 Brazoria Co., TX
 +**Jane Elizabeth⁶ Harris**
 - **Laura Kathryn⁷ Shepherd**, b. 19 May 1960 San Patricio Co., TX
 +**Curtis Ray⁷ Heath**, b. circa 1959, m. 21 Aug 1982 Brazoria Co., TX
 - **William Tyler⁸ Heath**, b. 3 Jun 1988 Bexar Co., TX
 - **Hannah Margaret⁸ Heath**, b. 1 Apr 1992 Brazoria Co., TX
 - **Lianne⁷ Shepherd**, b. 11 Dec 1962 Nueces Co., TX
 - **Meredith Jane⁷ Shepherd**, b. 13 May 1967 Wharton Co., TX
 - **David Mark⁷ Shepherd**, b. 2 Oct 1968 Wharton Co., TX
 - **Sarah Munson⁶ Shepherd**, b. 14 Jan 1939 Brazoria Co., TX
 +**James Dewayne⁶ Bostick**, d. 24 Mar 1994 Brazoria Co., TX
 - **Sarah Kathryn⁷ Bostick**, b. 9 Mar 1970 Harris Co., TX
 - **James Dewayne⁷ Bostick II**, b. 7 Jul 1972 Harris Co., TX
 - **Anne⁶ Shepherd**, b. 4 Dec 1940 Brazoria Co., TX
 +**Zeno Rudolph⁶ Cooper**, m. circa 1957
 - **Lloyd Dean⁷ Cooper**, b. 27 Feb 1960 Brazoria Co., TX
 +**Lisa Lynn⁷ Boazman**, b. circa 1964, m. 14 Aug 1982 Brazoria Co., TX
 - **William Michael⁸ Cooper**, b. 29 Aug 1989 Brazoria Co., TX
 - **Lauren Elizabeth⁸ Cooper**, b. 21 Dec 1994 Brazoria Co., TX
 - **Sandra Lynn⁷ Cooper**, b. 12 Jun 1962 Brazoria Co., TX
 +**Wesley Allyn⁷ Sewell**, b. circa 1962, m. 28 May 1982 Brazoria Co., TX
 - **Caitlyn Ilise⁸ Sewell**, b. 1 Apr 1992 Brazoria Co., TX
 - **Ryan Allyn⁸ Sewell**, b. 12 Jan 1994 Brazoria Co., TX
 - **David Brady⁷ Cooper**, b. 15 May 1964 Brazoria Co., TX
 +**Wendy S. "Toni"⁷ Barber**, b. circa 1965, m. 6 Jul 1985 Brazoria Co., TX
 +**Susan Maria⁷ Scott**, b. circa 1970 Brazoria Co., TX, m. 22 Mar 1988 Brazoria Co.
 - **David Colin⁸ Cooper**, b. 5 Jul 1988 Brazoria Co., TX
 - **Haley Adara⁸ Cooper**, b. 12 Apr 1991 Brazoria Co., TX

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Eleanor Adriance⁵ Stevens, b. 17 May 1916 Brazoria Co., TX
+Herschel McCarver⁵ Vaughan, b. 31 Jan 1912, d. 10 Nov 1970

- Herschel McCarver⁶ Vaughan Jr**, b. 14 Jan 1940 Jefferson Co., TX
+Gladys Jane⁶ Sick
 - Laura Jane⁷ Vaughan**
+Michael⁷ Mangan
 - Matthew Thomas⁸ Mangan**
 - Brian Patrick⁸ Mangan**
 - +Scott⁷ Murphy**
 - Sarah Jane⁸ Murphy**, b. 7 Oct 2005 New Castle Co., DE
 - Craig Allen⁷ Vaughan**
- Frances Adriance⁶ Vaughan**, b. 14 Oct 1942 Jefferson Co., TX
+Donald David⁶ Reed, b. circa 1937, m. 11 May 1977 Brazoria Co., TX
 - Gregory Alan⁷ Reed**
+Andrea⁷ Weston
 - Patrick George⁸ Reed**
 - Brenda Jane⁷ Reed**
+Dr. Paul⁷ Cloke
 - Anna Josephine⁸ Cloke**, b. 2004
- Jay Allen⁶ Vaughan**, b. 17 Jan 1957 Jefferson Co., TX
+Debby⁶ Marshall
- Judy Cay⁶ Vaughan**, b. after 1957
+George Michael⁶ Woodley, m. 27 Aug 1994 Dallas Co., TX
 - Eleanor Elizabeth⁷ Woodley**, b. circa 1997

Frank Wilson⁵ Stevens, b. 18 Dec 1917 TX, d. 28 Sep 1997 Brazoria Co., TX
+Barbara Ann⁵ Bailey, b. 27 Nov 1926

- James Wilson⁶ Stevens**, b. 27 Jul 1947 Brazoria Co., TX
+Caroline Jane⁶ Taylor, b. circa 1948, m. 7 Jun 1969 Brazoria Co., TX
 - Laura Jane⁷ Stevens**, b. 22 Oct 1973 Harris Co., TX
 - Sarah Munson⁷ Stevens**, b. 26 Aug 1976 Harris Co., TX
- John Adriance⁶ Stevens**, b. 19 Jul 1949 Brazoria Co., TX
+Cindy⁶ Laird, b. circa 1951, m. 4 Oct 1969 Brazoria Co., TX
 - Robert Laird⁷ Stevens**, b. 1 Dec 1972 Brazoria Co., TX
 - Susan Adriance⁷ Stevens**, b. 7 May 1974 Brazoria Co., TX
- William Bailey⁶ Stevens**, b. 23 Jul 1952 Brazoria Co., TX
+Dianne Lynn⁶ Savage, b. circa 1956, m. 14 Jan 1976 Galveston Co., TX
 - Michele Anna René⁷ Stevens**, b. 9 Jan 1976 Galveston Co., TX
 - Michael Anthony⁷ Stevens**, b. 30 Jul 1980 Galveston Co., TX

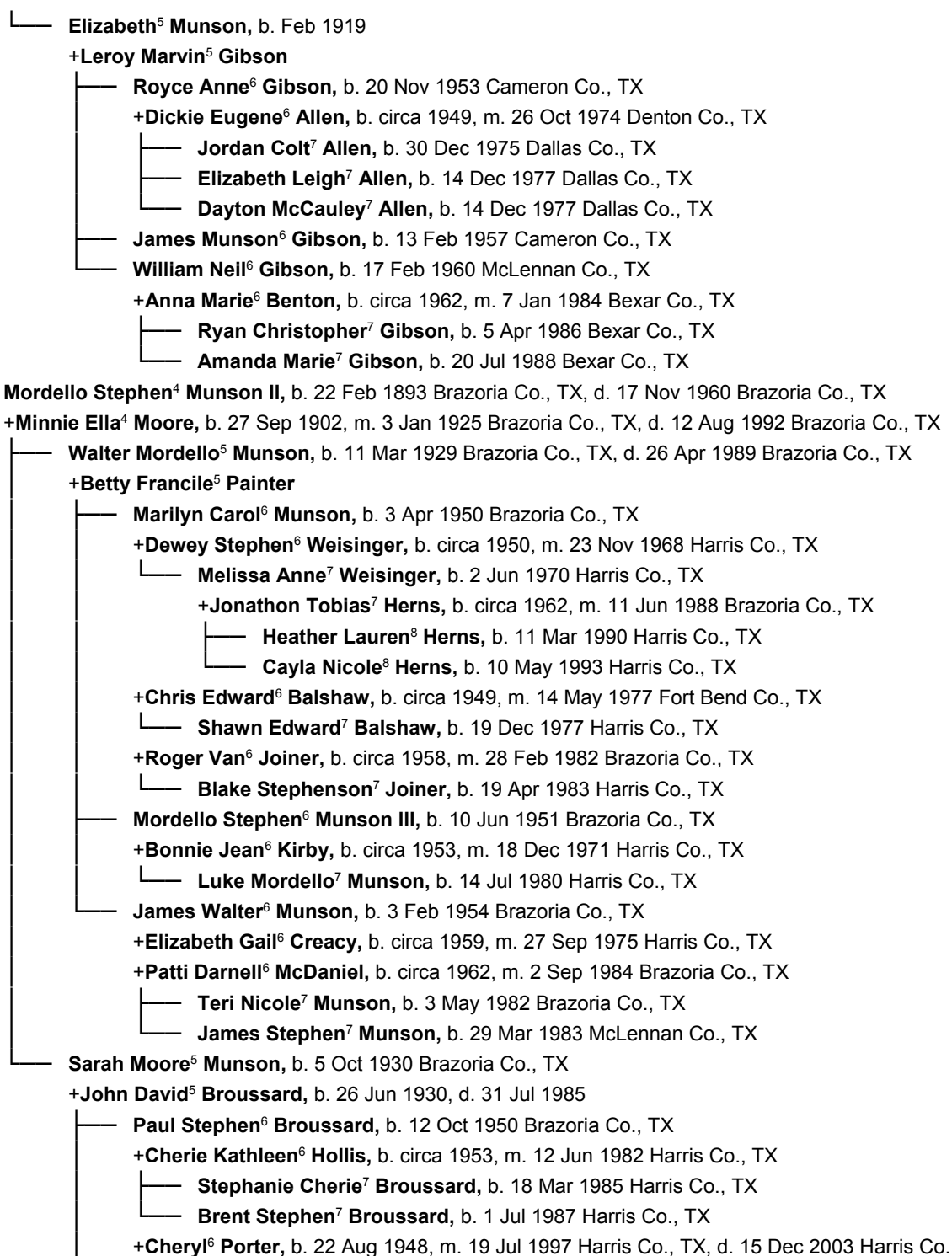
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- └─ **George Munson⁵ Stevens**, b. 25 Sep 1920 TX, d. 8 Oct 1978 Jasper Co., TX
 - +**Elizabeth Sibba⁵ Matchett**, b. 1920, d. 2000
 - └─ **Charles Lewis⁶ Stevens**, b. circa 1949
 - +**Linda Rosell⁶ Calhoun**, b. circa 1950, m. 25 Jan 1969 Hays Co., TX
 - └─ **Leigh Elizabeth⁷ Stevens**, b. 4 Aug 1969 Harris Co.
 - +**Jackie Lynn⁶ Vick**, b. circa 1949, m. 17 Dec 1976 Hays Co., TX
 - └─ **John Houston⁷ Stevens**, b. 19 Jan 1978 Guadalupe Co., TX
 - └─ **Guy Hennell⁶ Stevens**, b. 28 Sep 1950 Brazoria Co., TX
 - +**Linda Marie⁶ Olivier**, b. circa 1951, m. 29 Sep 1970 Harris Co., TX
 - └─ **Noah Hennell⁷ Stevens**, b. 18 May 1972 Harris Co., TX
 - └─ **Otis George⁷ Stevens**, b. 2 Aug 1976 Cameron Co., TX
 - +**Claire⁷ Langford**, m. 8 May 2004 Travis Co., TX
 - └─ **Philip Munson⁶ Stevens**, b. 25 Aug 1952 Brazoria Co., TX
 - +**Becky Lynn⁶ Chatfield**, b. circa 1962, m. 9 Apr 1988 Comal Co., TX
 - └─ **Lowell Matchett⁷ Stevens**, b. 20 Feb 1989 Travis Co., TX
 - └─ **George Kirkland⁶ Stevens**, b. 2 Sep 1954 Brazoria Co., TX
 - +**Mary Susan⁶ Parsons**, b. circa 1954, m. 4 Jun 1977 Harris Co., TX
 - └─ **Laura Elizabeth⁷ Stevens**, b. 21 Mar 1986 Harris Co., TX
 - └─ **Ross Hill⁷ Stevens**, b. 6 Mar 1989 Harris Co., TX
- └─ **Adriance⁴ Munson**, b. 24 Nov 1885 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 31 May 1957 Bexar Co., TX
 - +**Lolita⁴ Reese**, b. 22 Mar 1895, m. 3 Jan 1917 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 2 Aug 1994 Brazoria Co.
 - └─ **Robin⁵ Munson**, b. 23 May 1924, d. 8 Jan 1990 Harris Co., TX
 - +**Richard⁵ Weems**
 - └─ **Chris Haslund⁶ Weems**, b. circa 1944
 - +**Marilyn Linda⁶ Studdard**, b. circa 1945, m. 24 Jan 1964
 - └─ **Allen Russell⁷ Weems**, b. 8 Jun 1965 Brazoria Co., TX
 - └─ **Jeannelle Elaine⁷ Weems**, b. 10 Aug 1967 Wharton Co., TX
 - +**Barbara⁶ Hammond**
 - +**Wilber Lee⁵ Womack**
 - └─ **Jeannette⁶ Womack**, b. circa 1951
 - +**Michael Lee⁶ Masar**, b. circa 1953, m. 4 Jul 1981 Fort Bend Co., TX
- └─ **Henry William⁴ Munson IV**, b. 4 Jan 1888 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 6 May 1977 Brazoria Co., TX
 - +**Elsie⁴ McCauley**, b. 23 Jan 1888, m. 4 Jun 1914 Humphreys Co., TN, d. 22 Feb 1980 Brazoria Co., TX
 - └─ **George McCauley⁵ Munson**, b. 10 Nov 1916 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 14 Jun 2000 Brazoria Co.
 - +**Martha Mabelle⁵ Clyburn**
 - └─ **Chloe⁶ Munson**, b. 22 Mar 1947 Brazoria Co., TX
 - +**Stephen Lee⁶ Taylor**, b. circa 1941, m. 5 Jan 1974
 - └─ **Shae Conroy⁷ Taylor**, b. 20 Dec 1975 Tarrant Co., TX
 - └─ **Deidre Munson⁷ Taylor**, b. 14 Aug 1978 Tarrant Co., TX
 - └─ **Henry William⁶ Munson Jr**, b. 6 Jul 1950 Brazoria Co., TX
 - +**Karyn Leigh⁶ McCoy**, b. circa 1953 Brazoria Co., TX, m. 8 May 1977 Brazoria Co., TX
 - └─ **Tara Leigh⁷ Munson**, b. 7 Oct 1980 Brazoria Co., TX
 - └─ **Loren René⁷ Munson**, b. 1 Jan 1983 Brazoria Co., TX
 - └─ **Karley Nicole⁷ Munson**, b. 30 Oct 1984 Brazoria Co., TX

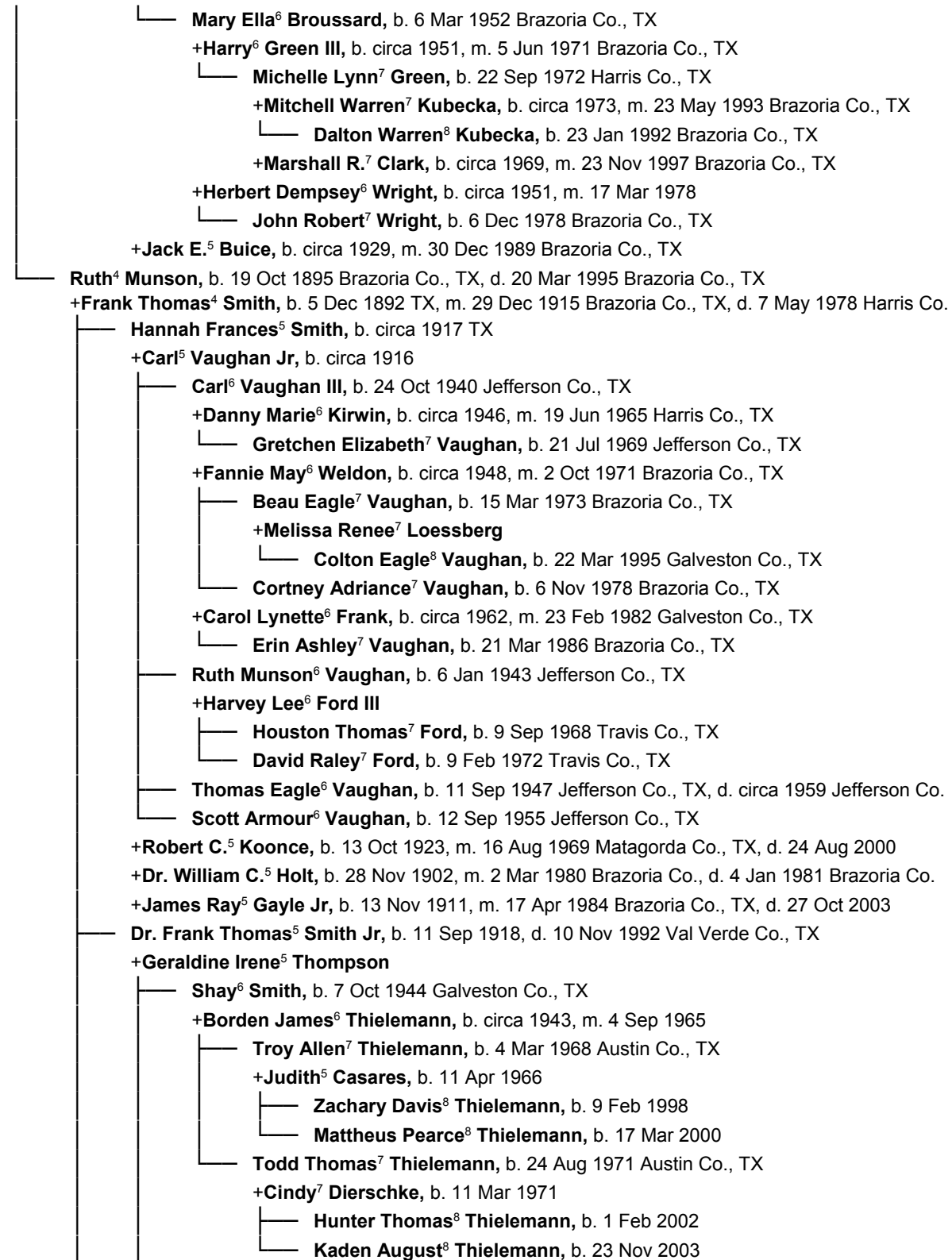
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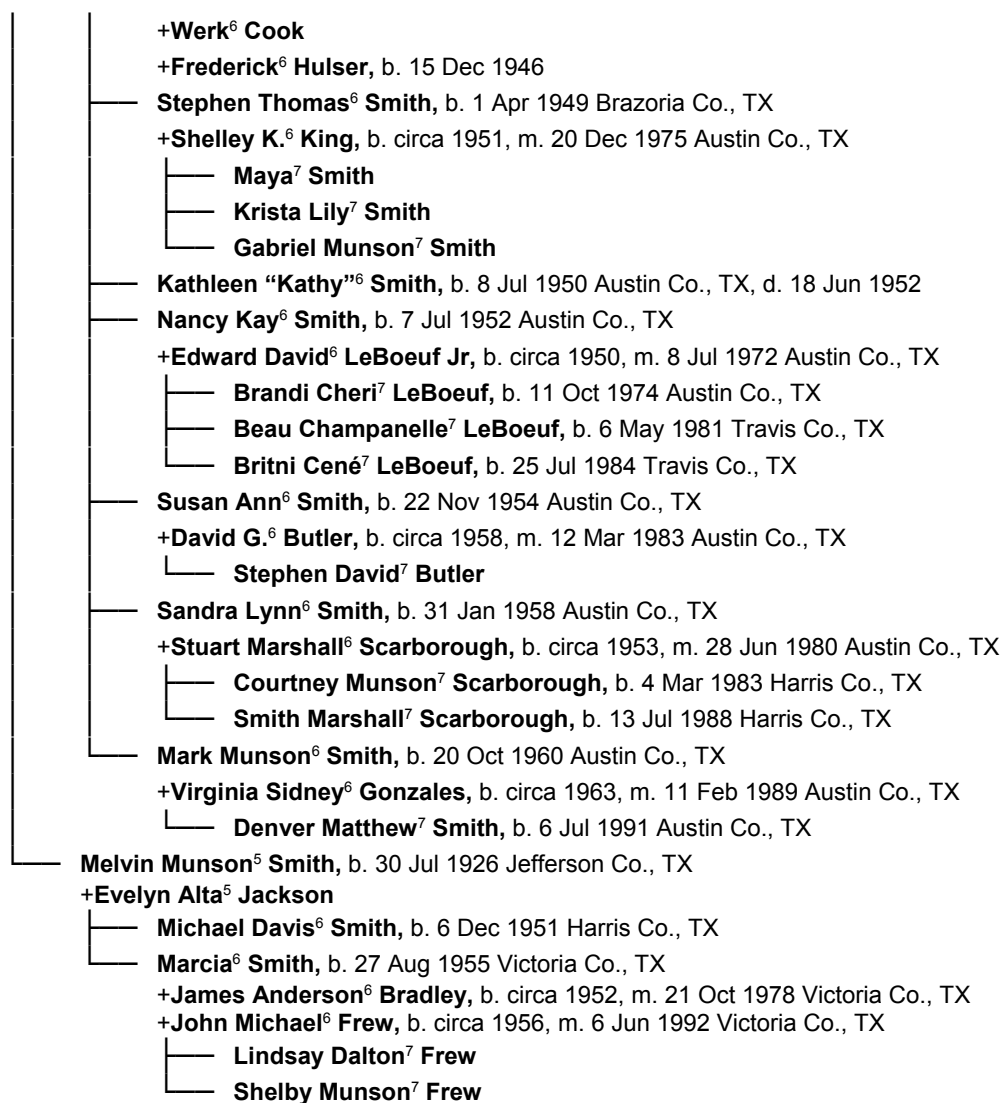
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Chapter 23

The Life and Family of Emma Munson Murray b. 1855 — d. 1936



Emma Munson, the third child and first daughter of Mordello and Sarah Munson, was born on February 26, 1855, at Bailey's Prairie. The origin of the name Emma in the Munson family is not known. Emma was raised at Bailey's Prairie and was married to the Reverend Joseph Lapsley Murray on June 27, 1882. Emma and Joseph had ten children, eight of whom grew to adulthood. Seven of these married and had children, thus accounting for the large Murray segment of the Munsons of Texas.



Emma was a child while her father was away during the Civil War. She was always called "Daughter" or "Daught," and her sister was called "Doll." She was educated at home by her mother and hired teachers, as were all of the children. Family letters tell of her visits to the Adriance home in Columbia and of social gatherings and beach parties during her youth. In 1881, when Emma was 26, she accompanied her mother on a trip to Tennessee to visit her mother's Waddy aunts, uncles, and cousins.

When Emma was 27 years old she was married to the Reverend Joseph Lapsley Murray, a Methodist minister. Her mother, Sarah, was a devout Methodist, and the family was active in the early Methodist church in Columbia. This may account for the acquaintance of Emma and Joseph Murray. The story of the courtship and marriage are related in the entries in Sarah's diary. On May 2, 1882 she wrote, "Mr. Munson went to Brazoria and Emma entertaining Mr. M.... this will be one of the memorable nights, perhaps in our catalogue and particularly to the 'Stranger that is within our gates.'" On May 3 she wrote, "Mr. Murray left us today - is to be back tomorrow." On the fourth she wrote, "Mr. Murray came back and took dinner & left for good this evening." On May 21 she wrote, "Emma had to stay and get dinner. She rec'd a letter from Mr. M. today and has a very serious proposition under consideration." On June 2 she wrote, "Mr. Murray talked over his & Emma's affairs today." On the twelfth, "The boys went to the depot to get Emma's dresses, Hat, etc. She is much pleased, all fit nicely." Her last entry before the wedding, on Saturday, June 24, reads, "Mr. M. came this evening. They commenced baking cakes." Her next entry is July 2, "First Sabbath after the wedding, and if I can will try to recount some of the sayings and doings of the past week..."



Reverend Joseph L. and Emma Munson Murray

The following notation is inscribed in the front of the Murray Family Bible: "Joseph Lapsley Murray of the Texas Conference and Miss Emma Munson of Brazoria County, Texas, were united in marriage at the residence of Colonel Mordello Stephen Munson, June 27, 1882, by the Reverend T. W. Rogers, Presiding Elder of the Galveston District, Texas Conference."

It appears that they took a honeymoon trip to his parents' home in Missouri, as they were gone until July 27, and on July 2 Sarah wrote, "I imagine her yesterday passing through the Indian Nation. Some of us spoke of this at the table."

Joseph Murray was born in Missouri on August 11, 1849. He was one of seven children of David J. Murray and Eveline Mary Bradley. Marriage records in Johnson County, Missouri, list their marriage date as February 9, 1843. The Bradleys had come from Kentucky and the Murrays from Virginia, where David was born. The 1860 census of Johnson County lists David 38, Eveline Mary 37, Baker

16, Penelope 14, George W. 12, Joseph Lapsley 10, John C. 8, and Lulu D. 4. The 1870 census also lists Fannie Lee 9.

Joseph Murray came to Texas from Columbus, Johnson County, Missouri, in 1880 as a circuit rider for the Texas Conference of the Methodist Church. His young bride, Sallie Powell Murray, died soon after their arrival and was buried in the Phair Cemetery near the future town of Angleton.

Immediately after their honeymoon, Joseph and Emma traveled to La Grange, Texas. Sarah wrote in her diary, "Daught off again. They left for Lagrange. Tis hard to have one family so torn to pieces that has been together so long and so happily. Got a letter from Doll today saying she would be home soon to stay with me some." This and other trips were probably in connection with Joseph's ministerial duties.

Sometime after their marriage, Joseph and Emma made their home on a 620-acre tract of land given to them by Emma's parents. Murray family tradition tells that this was given to them as a wedding gift, but no mention of it or of their living there is made in Sarah's diary. It was possibly given at a somewhat later date. This land was purchased by Mordello from Andrew Roberts, who had received it as a land grant from Stephen F. Austin. It was located about four

miles to the east of Bailey's Prairie on the dirt road to Alvin. This land now lies about one mile west of the center of Angleton, but it was purchased about eight years before Angleton was established. On this property Joseph Murray established a small Methodist church, that was attended by the Munson family. This property, long known as the Murray Ranch, is owned by descendants of the Murray family.

All ten children of Joseph and Emma Murray were born during the nineteen years that the family lived at the Murray Ranch, and all were born at Emma's parents' home at Ridgely Plantation. It was a common practice for a daughter to go to her parents' home for the birth of her children. The children were:

1. Mordello Stephen Murray, born August 22, 1883, died November 22, 1923.
2. James Lee Murray, born December 7, 1884, married Lula Catherine Pattison, died February 17, 1962.
3. Emma Mary Murray, born July 18, 1886, married George Allen Guild, died September 10, 1909.
4. Sarah Murray, born December 13, 1887, married Edwin Hobby Chesnutt, died October 25, 1974.
5. Frank Dimmitt Murray, born January 4, 1890, married three times, died January 27, 1953.
6. George Bascom Murray (1), born January 22, 1892, died February 10, 1892.
7. George Bascom Murray (2), born December 22, 1892, married Ella Elizabeth Walling, died May 4, 1963.
8. Fannie Louise Murray, born September 12, 1894, died December 13, 1897.
9. Lina Murray, born May 22, 1897, married Andrew Joseph Taylor, died January 8, 1984.
10. Lola Murray, born May 22, 1897, married Edmund G. Minor Jr., now lives in Clover, S. C.

Sometime after the establishment of Angleton in 1890, a Methodist church was established there, and it is assumed that this eventually replaced the church on the Murray Ranch. The history of the present First Methodist Church of Angleton shows that the first full-time pastor was the Reverend C. M. Thompson and the second, in 1898, was H. G. Williams. The third preacher for the little congregation was the Reverend Joseph Lapsley Murray, who was pastor during the terrible 1900 storm. A story in the *Angleton Times* published on September 14, 1900, reports as follows:

During the lull in the storm the editor of the *Times* went to secure the services of Dr. Smith for Mr. Stamper, who had been badly hurt, and as he passed the heap of rubbish where formerly had stood the neat Methodist parsonage, Reverend Murray was humbly kneeling on the top of the pile, offering thanks to God for his mercy in sparing his little flock, all of whom were saved as by miracle . . .

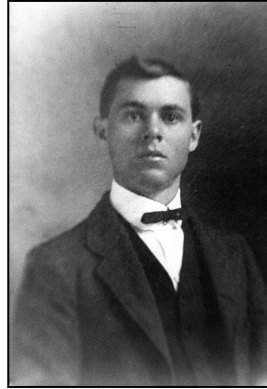
Another family story adds that a wealthy businessman whose property was also destroyed passed by this scene and remarked, "I fail to see what you've got to be thankful for."

Since the church and the parsonage buildings were completely destroyed, the church bought a house which had partially survived the storm, just one block east of the former church, to house the Murrays. The Reverend Murray worked diligently to have a new church built. A year later, in the fall of 1901, he was transferred to the *Montana Conference* (assumed to also be in Texas), and by the time the new pastor, the Reverend E. L. Ingram, arrived with his new bride, the new church was ready for use.

A program from the Sixtieth Anniversary of the First Methodist Church of Rosenberg, Texas, lists the Reverend J. L. Murray as the pastor there from 1903 to 1905.



Mordello Stephen
Murray



James Lee Murray



Emma Mary
Murray



Murray children with their mother Emma - left to right.:
George Bascom, Emma Mary, Sarah, Lina and Lola Murray



Sarah Murray



Frank Dimmit
Murray



Lina and Lola Murray

In about 1905, Emma, Joseph, and their eight surviving children moved to Houston to a two-story house on Harvard Street in The Heights. Their oldest son, Mordello Murray, went to work at Lumberman's National Bank, and son Lee Murray enrolled at Texas A. & M. College. At home were children Emma Mary, Sarah, Frank Dimmitt, George Bascom, and the twins, Lola and Lina. In 1915 the family was living at 3108 Caroline Street, having moved some time after 1910.

While they lived in Houston, the Murray Ranch was kept in operation by two Mexican families, the Damians and the Sorias. These two families were very loyal and valuable to the Murrays and the Munsons, and their descendants still live in Angleton.

Joseph Murray died in Houston on December 25, 1919, at the age of 70. Emma moved back to the Murray Ranch, where the Mexican families cared for her during her last years. She was at the ranch during the 1932 storm. She died there on February 15, 1936, eleven days before her 81st birthday. Both Emma and Joseph are buried in the Munson Cemetery at Bailey's Prairie, as are most of their children.

The Descendants of Emma Munson and Joseph L. Murray

Emma Munson and Joseph Murray were married on June 27, 1882, and their first child, named **Mordello Stephen Murray**, was born on August 22, 1883 at Ridgely Plantation. He grew to adulthood on the Murray Ranch near Angleton and never married. In his early twenties, he moved to the Heights in Houston with his family and worked for many years as an officer of Lumberman's National Bank, today part of Bank of the Southwest. He helped obtain jobs at the same bank for his twin sisters, Lina and Lola. Mordello Murray died in Houston, from a brain tumor, on November 22, 1923, at the age of 40, and is buried in the Munson Cemetery at Bailey's Prairie.



The second child of Emma and Joseph Murray, born December 7, 1884, was named **James Lee Murray**. His early schooling was at home with his mother and a governess, Miss Lina Hamilton. He later enrolled in the new public school in Angleton and attended Texas A. & M. College. While living in The Heights in Houston, he met a neighbor, Lula Catherine Pattison, and they were married at the home of her parents on September 11, 1915.

Lula Pattison was born on September 16, 1889, the daughter of George Madison Pattison and Lavinia Chilton, long time residents of Houston and of Pattison in Waller County. *The Handbook of Texas* states that the town of Pattison was named for George Madison Pattison, "who gave land for the townsite... in 1877." Members of the Murray family tell that it was named for Lula's grandfather, James Tarrant Pattison.

Lee and Lula Murray made their first home in Houston, where he was employed by Carter Music Company; but the call of the country was too strong, and in 1918 they moved to the Murray Ranch near Angleton, where he engaged in ranching. This was the birthplace of their first child, a daughter named Lavinia Chilton, born April 6, 1918. In 1921 the family moved to Pattison, near Sealy in Waller County, to help Lula's parents with the large farming and ranching operation which they owned there. In Pattison, a second daughter, Mary Emma, was born on July 11, 1921. In about 1925 the family moved back to Angleton with their cattle, because an epidemic of anthrax was causing the cattle in Waller County to die by the hundreds.

Mary Emma graduated from Angleton High School and attended Rice University for two years. In 1938, at the age of 16, she was the Queen of the first Brazoria County Fair. Mary Emma

married Victor Willard Stasny on July 19, 1940. They lived first in Baytown, Texas, where Victor worked for Humble Oil & Refining Company and Mary Emma for Citizens National Bank. In 1958 they moved to the Murray Ranch, where they engaged in farming and ranching. Victor died April 4, 1989 at age 69, and Mary Emma died July 26, 2002 at age 81. Both are buried in the Munson Cemetery at Bailey's Prairie. Mary and Victor Stasny have two children, five grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. The first of their great-grandchildren, Joshua Lee Morehead, born on September 4, 1983, in Austin, Texas, was the first great-great-great-great-grandchild of Mordello and Sarah Munson.

During the years when the Murrays lived in Houston and Mordello Murray worked at the bank, he borrowed money and mortgaged the ranch in order to make improvements. When his health failed, his brothers Lee and Frank Dimmitt assumed the mortgage and became owners of the ranch, which they later divided. Lee's portion was 323 acres of pasture land, and Dimmitt's, which was later sold, was 293 acres with home, barns, and pens. Lee Murray kept his part, added 115 acres in 1930, and purchased several adjacent tracts in the years that followed. This large property on the western edge of Angleton, still known as the Murray Ranch, is still owned and operated by his descendants.

Lee Murray died on February 17, 1962, at the age of 77, and Lula Pattison Murray died on February 12, 1981, at the age of 91. Both are buried in the Munson Cemetery.



The third child of Emma and Joseph Murray, born July 18, 1886, was **Emma Mary Murray**. She married George Allen Guild and they lived near her parents in Houston. Emma Mary died the day of the birth of her first child, a son, Marion Murray Guild, on September 10, 1909. George Allen Guild died January 15, 1915. Marion Murray Guild was raised by his grandparents, Emma and Joseph Murray, and his aunt, Sarah Murray Chesnutt. He married Cordelia Palmer, but the marriage was annulled, and he died on October 15, 1939, at the age of 30.



The fourth child of Emma and Joseph Murray was **Sarah Murray**, born December 13, 1887, at Bailey's Prairie. Sarah married Edwin Hobby Chesnutt, a claim agent for Missouri-Pacific Railroad Company, on June 3, 1915, at the Murray family home at 3108 Caroline Street in Houston. One child, Emma Lee Chesnutt, was born to this marriage on September 8, 1926. Sarah Murray Chesnutt died on October 25, 1974, and is buried in the Munson Cemetery at Bailey's Prairie. Edwin Hobby Chesnutt died June 6, 1932, and is buried in Hollywood Cemetery in Houston.

Emma Lee Chesnutt grew to adulthood in Houston and married Willard Garland Falls on June 28, 1969, at West University Church of Christ in Houston. Willard Falls is the founder and owner of A-1 Trash Service, Inc. Emma Lee and Willard live in the city of West University Place and have no children.



The fifth child of Emma and Joseph Murray was **Frank Dimmitt Murray**, born January 4, 1890. Dimmitt was in the armed forces during World War I, and then was employed by Firestone Tire and Rubber Company in Houston. Dimmitt was married three times. He and his first wife, Raymond Belle Harris from Forney, Texas, lived in Houston. They adopted a son whom they

named Frank Dimmitt Murray Jr. The marriage did not last, and the boy's mother remarried and changed the boy's last name to Landers. Dimmitt moved to the Murray Ranch near Angleton to live with his mother and again married, this time to Mrs. Josephine Peveto. After this marriage also failed and his mother died in 1936, Dimmitt moved to Corpus Christi, where he married Clara Ester Collins. He died in Corpus Christi on January 27, 1953, and is buried in the Munson Cemetery.



The sixth child of Emma and Joseph Murray, born January 22, 1892, was named **George Bascom Murray**, named for his two uncles, George and Bascom Munson. He died February 10, 1892.



The seventh child of Emma and Joe Murray was also named **George Bascom Murray**, born December 22, 1892. He married Ella Elizabeth Walling of Houston. The Walling family lived next door to the Murrays on Caroline Street. George Bascom Murray worked for forty-seven years with Texaco, Inc. in Houston. George died on May 4, 1963, and Ella on November 22, 1985. Both are buried in the Woodlawn Cemetery in Houston.

George and Ella Murray had three children: Mordello Stephen Murray II, born October 27, 1915; George Bascom Murray Jr., born November 28, 1917; and John Alfred Murray, born August 5, 1923. All three of these Murray sons served in the armed forces in World War II. Mordello Stephen II, a corporal in the 19th Engineers, was captured by the Germans in the North African campaign. George Bascom Jr. was a member of the Seabees, and John Alfred was a member of the U. S. Navy.

Mordello Stephen Murray II did not marry. He died on August 17, 1945, at the age of 29, and is buried in Woodlawn Cemetery in Houston.

George Bascom Murray Jr., who grew up in Houston, married Mary Louise Billups on January 6, 1941, and they now live in Bossier City, Louisiana. They have four children and twelve grandchildren. This family represents the largest group of descendants from Emma and Joseph Murray.

John Alfred Murray married Barbara Ann Buie on January 2, 1947. He was an architect in Houston and is now retired to ranching at Red Rock, Texas. They had one son, John Alfred Murray Jr., who married Kelly Bennett Bradley. They have one daughter, Kelsey Irion Murray.



The eighth child of Emma and Joseph Murray, born September 12, 1894, was named **Fannie Louise Murray**. She died on December 13, 1897.



The ninth and tenth children of Emma and Joseph were twins, **Lina** and **Lola Murray**, born on May 22, 1897. Lina, Lola, and their mother spent much time with the George C. Munson family at their large house in Angleton and at the beach, and they became very close to this family. Lina and Lola worked at Lumberman's National Bank in Houston with brother Mordello Stephen during World War I when most of the male personnel were called to serve in the war.

Lina and Lola Murray had a double wedding in Houston on October 27, 1926. Lina married Andrew Joseph Taylor, who was employed by Gulf Oil Corporation in Houston for twenty years and was a member of the U. S. Air Force during World War II. They adopted one son, Joseph Murray Taylor, who was born on November 22, 1945. Lina's husband, Joseph Taylor, died on July 17, 1946, and Lina raised their son alone. He lives in Houston and is not married. Lina Murray Taylor died in Houston on January 8, 1984, at the age of 86, and both she and her husband are buried in Forest Park-Lawndale Cemetery in Houston.

In the double wedding, Lola married a half-second cousin, Edmund G. Minor Jr. Edmund, born on August 25, 1896, was a great-grandson of Ann Pierce Munson Caldwell and James P. Caldwell. Both Lola and Edmund had Ann Munson Caldwell as a great-grandmother. Lola and Edmund lived in Lake Charles, Louisiana, where he was employed by T. T. Word Oilfield Supply (later Republic Supply Company). They adopted one daughter, Lola Ruth Minor, who was born on June 25, 1936. She was named Ruth for Ruth Munson Smith, who had always been very close to the twins. Lola Ruth Minor married John Wilson Faulkner on December 27, 1956. They live in Clover, South Carolina, and have two daughters. Edmund Minor Jr. died on November 23, 1980, and is buried in the Munson Cemetery. Lola Murray Minor, at the age of 90 in 1987, was living in Clover, S. C., with her daughter.



Curiously and regretfully, the Emma Munson Murray family, as with the family of her sister, Sarah Munson Kennedy, has had many members who do not have any living descendants. Emma and Joseph Murray had ten children. Of the eight who grew to adulthood, one never married, and another four who did marry and had children had no grandchildren. Today descendants of only three of the ten carry on the Murray line. All known descendants of Emma Munson Murray are shown on Chart 17.

Chart 17
Descendants of Emma Munson and Reverend Joseph Lapsley Murray

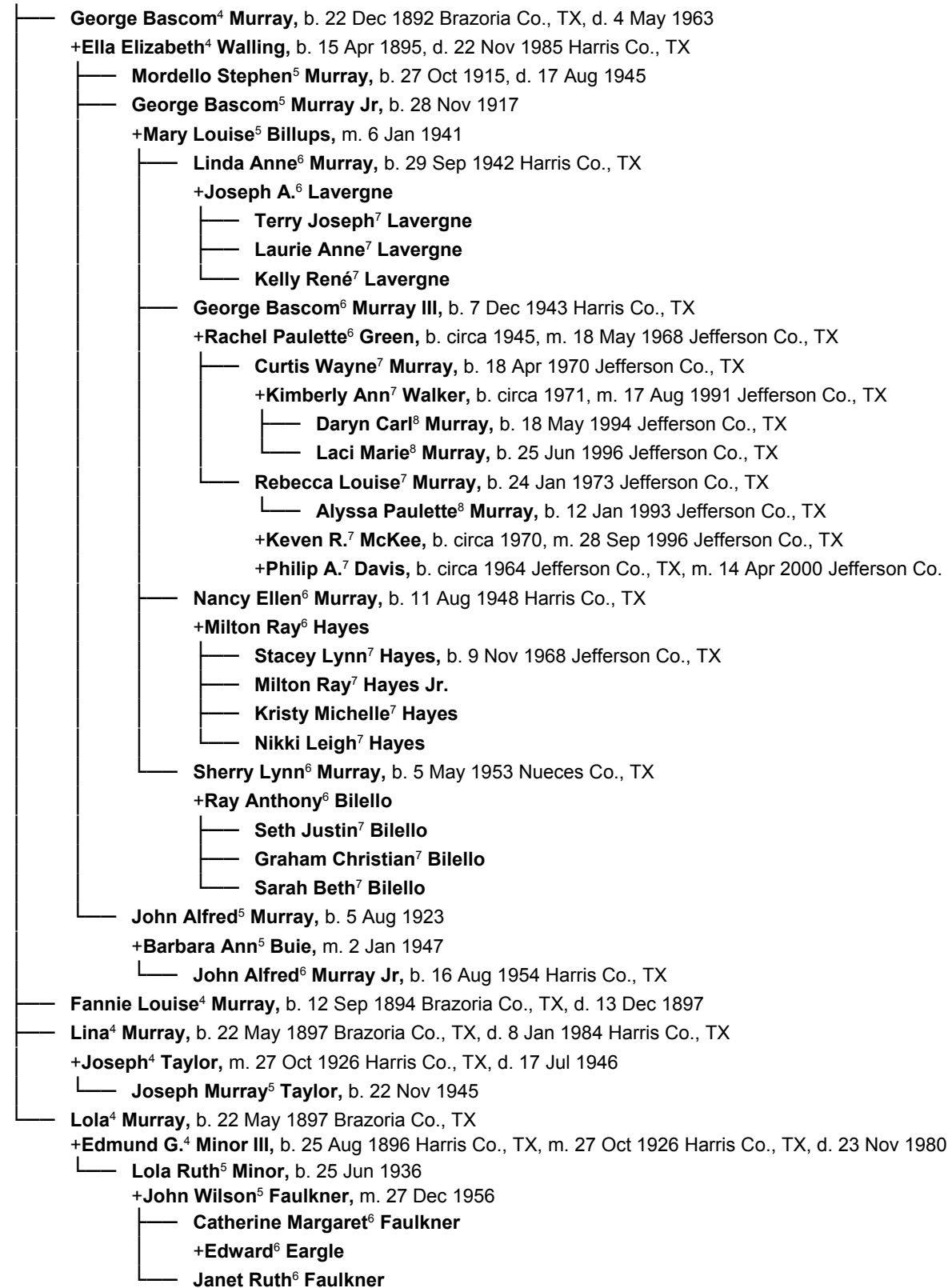


Emma³ Munson, b. 26 Feb 1855 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 15 Feb 1936 Brazoria Co., TX
 +**Reverend Joseph Lapsley³ Murray**, b. 11 Aug 1849 MO, m. 27 Jun 1882 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 25 Dec 1919

- **Mordello Stephen⁴ Murray**, b. 22 Aug 1883 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 22 Nov 1923 Harris Co., TX
- **James Lee⁴ Murray**, b. 7 Dec 1884 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 17 Feb 1962
 - +**Lula Catherine⁴ Pattison**, b. 16 Sep 1889, m. 11 Sep 1915 Harris Co., TX, d. 12 Feb 1981 Brazoria Co.
 - **Lavinia Chilton⁵ Murray**, b. 6 Apr 1918 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 17 Jul 1992 Brazoria Co., TX
 - **Mary Emma⁵ Murray**, b. 11 Jul 1921 Waller Co., TX, d. 26 Jul 2002
 - +**Victor Willard⁵ Stasny**, b. 10 Nov 1919, m. 11 Jul 1940, d. 4 Apr 1989 Harris Co., TX
 - **Victor Murray⁶ Stasny**, b. 3 Jun 1942 Harris Co., TX
 - +**Linda Elizabeth⁶ Grogan**, b. circa 1940, m. 28 Aug 1965
 - **Stephen Murray⁷ Stasny**, b. 4 Sep 1967 Wharton Co., TX
 - **Wesley Ryan⁷ Stasny**, b. 15 Aug 1971 Wharton Co., TX
 - +**Kathryn Leigh⁶ Backor**, b. circa 1953, m. 14 Feb 1976 Brazoria Co., TX
 - **Stephanie Lynne⁷ Stasny**, b. 7 Jun 1977 Wharton Co., TX
 - +**Grace⁶ Ekerstam**, b. circa 1946, m. 30 May 1987 Jones Co., TX
 - **Nedra Catherine⁶ Stasny**, b. 24 Sep 1944 Harris Co., TX
 - +**Middleton Dunn⁶ Morehead III**, b. 15 May 1944 Brazoria Co., TX, m. circa 1960
 - **Middleton Dunn⁷ Morehead IV**, b. circa 1961
 - +**Tammy Elizabeth⁷ Grier**, b. circa 1965, m. 27 Feb 1983 Travis Co., TX
 - **Joshua Lee⁸ Morehead**, b. 9 Sep 1983 Travis Co., TX
 - **Jessie Nichole⁸ Morehead**, b. 14 Mar 1986 Travis Co., TX
 - **Dusty Rose⁸ Morehead**, b. 14 Mar 1986 Travis Co., TX
 - +**Michael G.⁶ Schroeder**, b. circa 1950, m. 21 Mar 1980
 - +**Davis F.⁶ Davenport**, b. circa 1944, m. 9 May 1987 Hays Co., TX
 - +**N.N.⁶ Cunningham**, m. after 1989
- **Emma Mary⁴ Murray**, b. 18 Jul 1886 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 10 Sep 1909
 - +**George Allen⁴ Guild**
 - **Marion Murray⁵ Guild**, b. 10 Sep 1909, d. 15 Oct 1939
- **Sarah⁴ Murray**, b. 13 Dec 1887 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 25 Oct 1974 Harris Co., TX
 - +**Edwin Hobby⁴ Chesnutt**, m. 3 Jun 1915 Harris Co., TX, d. 6 Jun 1932
 - **Emma Lee⁵ Chesnutt**, b. 8 Sep 1926
 - +**Willard Garland⁵ Falls**, m. 28 Jun 1969 Harris Co., TX
- **Frank Dimmitt⁴ Murray**, b. 4 Jan 1890 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 27 Jan 1953 Nueces Co., TX
 - +**Raymond Belle⁴ Harris**
 - **Frank Dimmitt⁵ Murray Jr.**
 - +**Mrs. Josephine⁴ Peveto**
 - +**Clara Ester⁴ Collins**, m. after 1936 Nueces Co., TX
- **George Bascom⁴ Murray**, b. 22 Jan 1892 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 10 Feb 1892

(Chart 17 continued on next page)

(Chart 17 continued)



Chapter 24

The Life and Family of Sarah Munson Kennedy b. 1858 — d. 1913



The fourth child and second daughter of Mordello and Sarah Munson was born on June 9, 1858, and was named Sarah Kimbrough Munson for her mother. She was raised at Bailey's Prairie, and, at the age of 22, she married Walter Kennedy, the proprietor of a neighboring plantation. Sarah and Walter Kennedy had eight children. Five grew to adulthood and married, but among them they had only two children, and from these there is but one daughter in the next generation.



For all her life, Sarah Kimbrough Munson II was always called “Doll,” and she has always been known by her many nieces and nephews as “Aunt Doll.” Family tradition relates that at birth and as a baby she was called only “Doll,” and was not given a name until she was several years old, at which time she chose her mother’s name for herself. As a child and as an adult she was a small, slender, warm, and loving person and a favorite of all. She attended school at home on the plantation and later in Houston “at a school for young ladies.”

A handsome bachelor proprietor of a neighboring plantation, Walter Kennedy of Waverly Plantation, was a friend of the Munsons. He and his bachelor friend, Henry William Munson III, socialized and dated together. His letters to Henry’s sister were addressed to “Miss Doll Munson.” On February 2, 1881, they were married. He was 39 years old and she was but 22. She was the first Munson daughter to have married for at least three generations. One can imagine the joyous occasion at the Munson home at Bailey’s Prairie.

Walter Kennedy’s father, William Kennedy II, was born at Alexandria, Scotland, in 1800, and came from Edinburgh to Camden, South Carolina, as a young man. There, in 1831 or 1832, he married Mary Haile, who was born in Lancaster Creek, S. C., in 1812. She was the daughter of Benjamin Haile, an officer in the American Revolutionary War. In a letter to his sister in Scotland, William II wrote of his marriage to Mary: “. . . after six months of courtship, I married a handsome, accomplished lady whose father, Benjamin Haile, is a wealthy plantation owner.” He also said that he would like to visit his family in Scotland but wanted to “remain a citizen of this great new country.”

Walter Kennedy was born near Camden, South Carolina, on November 22, 1842, the fourth of eleven children. After a year in college and at the age of 18, he volunteered on July 21, 1861, as

a private in the South Carolina Volunteers of the Confederate Army. He was assigned to Company E, 9th Infantry Regiment. This was the exact date of the first battle of the war at Bull Run, Virginia. He was discharged due to illness on October 12, 1861, and soon thereafter volunteered as a “sharpshooter” in the 7th South Carolina Cavalry. He was assigned to Company H, 15th Squadron. This became General Longstreet’s Corps, which fought in General Robert E. Lee’s Army of Virginia until the end of the war. Longstreet’s Corp was engaged in battles at Bull Run, Antietam, Gettysburg, Fredericksburg, and Richmond. It is not unlikely that Walter Kennedy was with Lee at Gettysburg, at the final battle for Richmond, and at the surrender at Appomattox on April 9, 1865.

William Kennedy II had bought land in Texas in 1848, and in 1869 he moved his family to his Waverly Plantation, now the Ramsey State Prison Farm near Chenango. Son Walter Kennedy was 27 years old at the time. William Kennedy II died in 1869 and is buried in the Old Columbia Cemetery in West Columbia. His wife, Mary Haile Kennedy, died in 1894 and is buried in Stephenville, Texas, where another son, William III, then lived. Walter Kennedy inherited Waverly Plantation, where he and his bride, Sarah “Doll” Munson, made their home. Eight children were born to them there as follows:

1. Sarah – born November 10, 1881 – died at age 14.
2. Walter Munson – born October 8, 1883 – died in infancy.
3. Mary Haile – born October 23, 1885 – married Daniel Bell Giesecke in 1913, and died on September 10, 1986, at age 100.
4. Emma – born May 15, 1888 – married H. H. Sanders and died on October 28, 1969.
5. Helen – born March 23, 1890 – died as a young girl.
6. William Benjamin – born February 8, 1894 – married Eva Butler and died on January 22, 1985.
7. George Caldwell – born July 31, 1896 – married Hattie Bonner and died on April 26, 1981.
8. Adelaide “Addie” – born July 11, 1899 – married Cyril Yates and died in 1980.

In the 1960s Mary Kennedy Giesecke wrote a short account of her childhood memories which included the following:

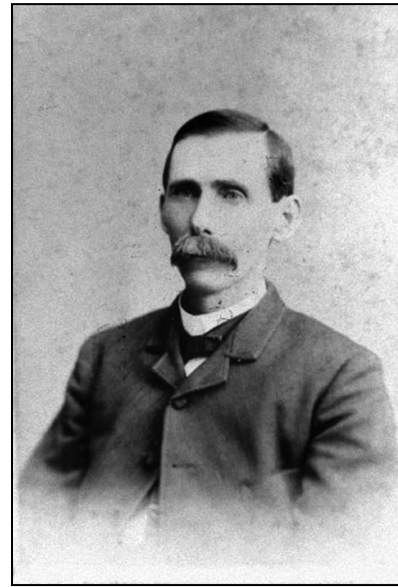
Our family spent each summer at Granpapa Munson’s large beach house which was a meeting place for his family. My mother, Sarah, was the hostess for the crowd. Many nights after supper, Granpapa and I would lie down on the gallery and talk. He told of the “pact” he and his brother, William, made, that, if possible, for the one who died first to come back if he could. He told how strict his step-father Caldwell was and said he had enough whippings for all future children and never wanted them so punished. The house on Bryan Beach was destroyed during the 1900 storm at which time the family spent the night at Perry and Octavia Bryan’s large home a few miles away. We lost two homes in storms. In 1902 we went to live with Granpapa Munson at Bailey’s Prairie. Uncle Armour had moved to Angleton. When Granpapa died in 1903 we moved to Angleton.

During their eighteen years at Waverly Plantation, the Kennedys were neighbors to the George and Henry William Munson families at the nearby “Van Place.” They visited often and the children all attended the private school at the “Van Place.” Walter and Sarah Kennedy’s last child, Addie, was born at Waverly Plantation in July of 1899, but they must have been planning to leave the plantation prior to that time. Economic hardships, together with educational opportunities for the children, may have been the reason for their move from the plantation to “town.” Apparently the same things were happening with the George and Henry William

Munson families at the “Van Place,” as they also moved to the Munson land in Angleton at about the same time.



Sarah Kimbrough Munson II



Walter Kennedy

Walter Kennedy built a small home on the Munson property in Angleton, at what is now 600 S. Walker Street, in about 1898 or 1899. He was in this house at the time of the 1900 storm. He was blown out of the house and crawled through the storm to the nearby home of George and Hannah Munson. The house was destroyed and his brother-in-law, Milam Stephen Munson, used this homesite to build a beautiful home for his bride when he was married in 1901. This was long known as “Judge Munson’s home,” and stands today at that address.

Walter Kennedy then built a new home “down the road,” on the same family property, at what is now 520 Bryan Street. This handsome home was long known as the “Kennedy home,” and it stands today under its eighty-five-year-old live oak trees.

In 1902 Armour and Lilla Munson moved from the Ridgely Plantation home into Angleton because Lilla did not like living in the country, and Walter and Sarah Kennedy moved to Bailey’s Prairie to take care of her 72-year-old father. When Mordello died in 1903, the Kennedys moved back to Angleton.

After 1903 Walter and Sarah Kennedy and their family lived in their new Angleton home, and he was engaged primarily in the cattle ranching business. At some date he apparently sold the Waverly Plantation, and his wife soon inherited her share of the Bailey’s Prairie plantation. Like her mother, “Doll” had borne eight children in eighteen years and was plagued by illness in her later years. Because of her ill health, they sold their Bailey’s Prairie property in about 1911 and moved to the drier climate and better medical facilities of San Antonio. There Walter built a beautiful home. He was then about 68 years old and Sarah was about 52.

“Aunt Doll” died in San Antonio on August 13, 1913, at the age of 55, the same age at which her mother had died. Walter Kennedy then moved back to his Angleton home and renewed his ranching activities. In about 1923, at the age of 81, he retired and moved to Port Arthur to live

with his son, William Benjamin. He died there on November 28, 1926, at the age of 84, following a lingering injury. While fishing, he had slipped on the bank and injured his leg, and he never recovered from the injury. Both Walter and Sarah Kennedy are buried in the Angleton Cemetery.

The Descendants of Walter Kennedy and Sarah K. Munson

The first child of Walter and Sarah Kennedy was named **Sarah M.** (possibly for Munson) **Kennedy**, born November 10, 1881. She died July 30, 1896, at the age of 14. According to the family Bible records, this Sarah Kennedy died one day before the birth of her parents' seventh child, George Caldwell Kennedy, who was born in the beach house at Bryan Beach on July 31, 1896. It is often told by those who were living then that she died the same day he was born, so maybe it was the same night. She was buried on the beach. Doll Kennedy wrote in her diary on November 10, 1896, "Sarah's 15th birthday, and she is in Heaven. O my God, why this great sorrow; Sarah, Sarah, Mama's precious darling."



The second child, **Walter Munson Kennedy**, was born October 8, 1883, and died in infancy.



The third child of Walter and Sarah Kennedy was **Mary Haile Kennedy**, born October 23, 1885, at Bailey's Prairie. Here again, the mother "went home to mother" for the birth of the early children. Mary was named for her South Carolina grandmother, Mary Haile. Her early education was with plantation teachers at the "Van Place," then she attended Angleton High School and graduated in one of the earliest graduating classes, in 1903. She attended Sam Houston State Teachers College in Huntsville for two years and earned a teaching certificate. For many years thereafter she taught in the Angleton schools.

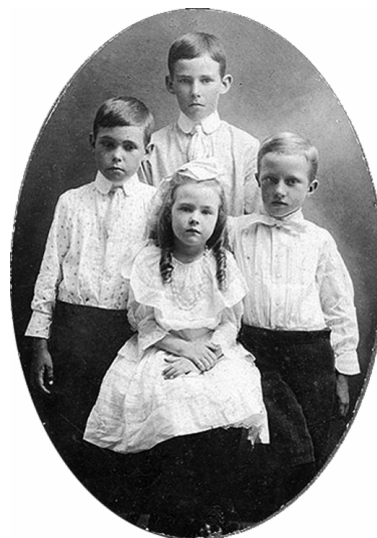
In 1913 Mary Kennedy married Daniel Bell Giesecke of Angleton. The wedding was held in Houston. They lived with his parents, the Cornelius Gieseckes, in Angleton, where they helped to operate Giesecke's Department Store, which later became Bowman's Department Store. Their only child, Walter Kennedy Giesecke, was born in 1917. His name illustrates the admiration that Mary held for her father. In personal interviews for this book, Mary Giesecke still expressed that deep admiration for her father, who, amazingly, was a soldier in the Civil War.

After Bell Giesecke's death on June 15, 1957, Mary Giesecke continued to live at 126 East Orange Street in Angleton in a small house which they had built there in 1920. She lived there for sixty-six years. On October 23, 1985, she celebrated her 100th birthday. She continued to be an active member of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Brazoria County Historical Society, and many ladies' clubs. She was a lifelong member of the First Methodist Church, which her grandmother, Sarah K. Munson, had helped to found. She died in Angleton on September 10, 1986, just six weeks before her 101st birthday, and is buried in the Angleton Cemetery.

Walter Kennedy Giesecke graduated from Texas A. & M. College with a degree in agriculture. He married Jean Anne Galloway and they have one daughter, Marijean Giesecke. When Kennedy enlisted in the U. S. Army at the beginning of World War II, he and his wife went to California for his first assignment. She worked in Sacramento while he was overseas, and after his return they remained there. Both died in Sacramento, Jean Anne on January 4, 1988, and Kennedy on January 27, 1992 at age 74. At last notice, Marijean, who is not married, was living in California.



Sarah, Emma and Mary Kennedy



From bottom clockwise: Addie, George and Bill Kennedy, and Waddy Munson II



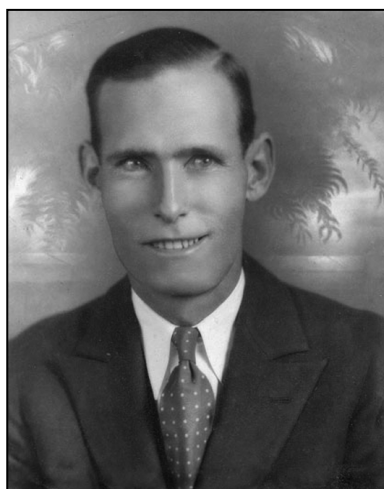
Mary Kennedy Giesecke and Bill Kennedy



Emma Munson Kennedy



Addie Kennedy



George Caldwell Kennedy



The fourth child of Walter and Sarah Kennedy was **Emma Munson Kennedy**, born May 15, 1888. Emma was named for her aunt, Emma Munson. Emma graduated from Angleton High School and worked most of her life at the Brazoria County Court House in Angleton, managing the office of the Texas A. & M. Extension Service for Brazoria County. She married Henry Hayward “Hy” Sanders in about 1955. Hy passed away June 29, 1957, and Emma on October 28, 1969 at age 81. Both are buried in the Angleton Cemetery.



The fifth child was **Helen Kennedy**, born March 23, 1890. She died on September 7, 1894, and was buried at Bryan Beach.



The sixth child of Walter and Sarah Kennedy was **William Benjamin Kennedy**, born February 8, 1894. He was named for his great uncle, William Benjamin Munson (the brother of Mordello) who bought the first land at Bailey’s Prairie in 1847. William Kennedy graduated from Angleton High School and attended San Antonio Academy. After leaving school he worked with Adriance Munson in civil engineering and surveying in Brazoria County. He then moved to Port Arthur with his brother, George, where Frank Smith had secured jobs for them at the Texas Company (now Texaco, Inc.). Later they operated a petroleum distributing business in Port Arthur, and finally William moved back to Angleton, where he raised cattle on land just west of Angleton. He married Eva Butler of Port Arthur and they had one child, William Benjamin “Buddy” Kennedy Jr., who died in 1949 at the age of 19 as an invalid. Eva died September 27, 1976, and William Kennedy Sr. died in Angleton on January 22, 1985, at the age of 90. Bill, Eva and Buddy are buried in the Angleton Cemetery.



The seventh child of Walter and Sarah Kennedy was **George Caldwell Kennedy**, born July 31, 1896, at the beach house on Bryan Beach. He was named for his uncle, George Caldwell Munson. George graduated from Angleton High School and attended San Antonio Academy where he played football. Upon returning to Angleton, he organized the high school’s first football team. George worked with his brother in Port Arthur where he met and married Hattie Bonner. They returned to Angleton, where he raised cattle on his land southeast of Angleton, and at Snipe near Retrieve State Farm. During the 1930s, he and his cousin Armour Munson, also a cattleman, owned a meat market in Angleton.

George Kennedy was always active in the annual Brazoria County Fair, and in 1955 was President of the Fair Association. For years he provided steers to boys and girls to raise and show at the Fair, and in 1953 he bred the Grand Champion Steer. The 1981 Brazoria County Fair was dedicated to his memory. George was also active in the Cattlemen’s Association and the Lions Club.

George and Hattie Bonner had no children, but were particularly close to Joe, Laura Jane and George, the children of George’s second cousin, Joe U. Munson Sr. Joe and Ruth Anna named their youngest son George Kennedy Munson. Hattie died November 6, 1978 at age 76, and George died April 26, 1981 at his home in Angleton at the age of 84. Both are buried in the Angleton Cemetery.



The eighth and last child of Sarah and Walter Kennedy was **Adelaide “Addie” Kennedy**, born on July 11, 1899. She was named for her mother’s sister-in-law, Adelaide Cotton, who had married brother Bascom Munson. Her mother, Sarah “Doll” Kennedy, was 41 years old at the time of her birth and had given birth to eight children in eighteen years. Addie, as she was always called, graduated from Angleton High School and attended Sam Houston State Teachers College in Huntsville where she earned a teaching certificate. She taught school in Angleton, in Port Arthur, and then again in Angleton, where she met and married Cyril Yates. They had no children. Addie died at her home in Angleton on April 17, 1980, at the age of 80. Cyril Yates died in Brazoria County November 30, 1999 at age 93. Both are buried in the Angleton Cemetery.



A regretful phenomenon in the entire Kennedy family is the small number of children that this family has produced. Of the eight Kennedy children, five grew to adulthood and all were married, but they produced only two children. These children, in turn, produced but one daughter.

Chart 18
Descendants of Sarah Kimbrough Munson II and Walter Kennedy



Sarah Kimbrough³ Munson, b. 9 Jun 1858 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 13 Aug 1913 Bexar Co., TX
+Walter³ Kennedy, b. 22 Nov 1842 SC, m. 2 Feb 1881 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 28 Nov 1926 Jefferson Co., TX

- **Sarah⁴ Kennedy**, b. 10 Nov 1881 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 30 Jul 1896 Brazoria Co., TX
- **Walter B.⁴ Kennedy**, b. 8 Oct 1883 Brazoria Co., TX
- **Mary Haile⁴ Kennedy**, b. 23 Oct 1885 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 10 Sep 1986 Brazoria Co., TX
 - +**Daniel Bell⁴ Giesecke**, b. 16 Aug 1885 Brazoria Co., TX, m. 1913 Harris Co., TX, d. 15 Jun 1957
 - **Walter Kennedy⁵ Giesecke**, b. 6 Jun 1917 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 27 Jan 1992 Sacramento Co., CA
 - +**Jean Anne⁵ Galloway**, b. 31 Mar 1918 TX, d. 4 Jan 1988 Sacramento Co., CA
 - **Marijean⁶ Giesecke**, b. 10 Jul 1950 CA
- **Emma Munson⁴ Kennedy**, b. 15 May 1888 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 28 Oct 1969 Brazoria Co.
 - +**Henry Hayward⁴ Sanders**, d. 29 Jun 1957 TX
- **Helen⁴ Kennedy**, b. 23 Mar 1890 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 7 Sep 1894
- **William Benjamin⁴ Kennedy**, b. 8 Feb 1894 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 22 Jan 1985 Brazoria Co., TX
 - +**Eva⁴ Butler**, b. 8 Oct 1901, m. Jefferson Co., TX, d. 27 Sep 1976 Brazoria Co., TX
 - **William Benjamin⁵ Kennedy Jr.**, b. 11 Oct 1930 Jefferson Co., TX, d. 8 Nov 1949
- **George Caldwell⁴ Kennedy**, b. 31 Jul 1896 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 26 Apr 1981 Brazoria Co., TX
 - +**Hattie⁴ Bonner**, b. 30 Nov 1901 TX, m. 1926 Jefferson Co., TX, d. 6 Nov 1978 Brazoria Co., TX
- **Adelaide⁴ Kennedy**, b. 11 Jul 1899 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 17 Apr 1980 Brazoria Co., TX
 - +**Cyril⁴ Yates**, b. 5 May 1906, d. 30 Nov 1999 Brazoria Co., TX



Chapter 25

The Life and Family of Joseph Waddy Munson (I) b. 1861 — d. 1917



Joseph Waddy Munson was the fifth child and third son of Mordello and Sarah Munson. He was born on May 22, 1861, most likely at the Ridgely Plantation home. He graduated from the University of Texas Law School and was a lawyer and judge all his professional life. In 1888 he married Mary Corinne West of Columbus, Texas. They lived first in Columbus and then in Angleton, where they raised three children: Thurmond Armour, Mary Mordella, and Erma. From these have sprung the large Joseph Waddy branch of the Munsons of Texas.



When Joseph Waddy Munson was born, his father was a member of the Texas Legislature, then heavily embroiled in the debates leading to secession and the Civil War. When Waddy, as he was always called, was one year old, his father left for the war and a four-year absence. Waddy was named for his mother's uncle, Joseph Kimbrough Waddy, of Paris, Tennessee. "Uncle Jo" made several visits to the then far-away Brazoria County, Texas, home of his niece. He was a much loved uncle.

Waddy grew up on the plantation with his many brothers, sisters, and "adopted" cousins—fifteen in all. In later years he told his children many happy stories about chases on their horses in the evenings trying to catch Bailey's Light (the ghost of Brit Bailey); about rowing up the San Bernard River on quiet evenings searching for the "mysterious music of the San Bernard"; and about the many "great" stories that were told at night when the children gathered in the "boys room" before bedtime.

His early education was conducted by his mother and by hired teachers who lived at the house and nearby. School was held in "the office," originally Mordello's law office at home. In 1877, at the age of 16, Waddy enrolled in the new Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas at College Station, then in its second year of operation. Conditions there are described in a letter home from his roommate, William R. Nash, of Columbia:²⁰⁷

²⁰⁷ *Munson Papers*, see Appendix I.

College Station Oct 3/77

My Dear Mother

You must not be surprised to see me at home any time. I am getting tired of this sort of business.

They have got Waddy and myself in a room with nineteen boys, and some of them are the worst sort of ones. The President says that he will move us as soon as he possibly can he is having a new house built now. They have about two hundred and sixty students.

I tell you what we have the worst sort of living we have for breakfast rools with a crust so hard that you can hardly bite them into, and beef sake half cooked, rice with flies all mixed in with it, and the blackest sort of molasses. For dinner we have beef stew, cornbread cut in pieces about an inch square, Irish potatoes, and rice. For supper rools like those at breakfast, with the worst sort of strong butter and sometimes stewed prunes with about half dirt.

We have to rise at six oclock make up our bed, and be at rool call in ten minutes. Then in about a half hour the drum taps for prayers, then in a little while the drum beats for breakfast.

And at half past eight the drum taps for study hours, and half past twelve for recess, and again at two for study hours.

I wish you would send me an order to come home the next letter you write so that if things dont change I can come home and please send me a little money in case I come so that I can pay my way. I have not spent any thing except for necessary purposes.

I must close Love to all.

Your Affectionate Son
W. R. Nash

Waddy returned home due to illness in January of 1878, and again with pneumonia in April of 1879. He apparently did not return to A. & M. College because for several years he remained at home helping with the operation of the plantation. His father had a thriving law practice with offices in Houston, Galveston, and Brazoria, as well as at his home, and was often away from home. Brother George was recently married, Henry was at A. & M. College for military training, and Bascom and Stephen were in school at Georgetown. It seems that the boys took turns staying home to help their parents with the plantation, and Waddy and Armour were there during these years. It was here that Waddy decided that he wanted to become a lawyer like his father, and he studied law under his father's tutelage when possible.

In 1886 Waddy joined his two younger brothers, Bascom and Stephen, at the University of Texas Law School in Austin. Soon after Waddy left home their mother died and their older sister, Emma, said that one of the most difficult things she ever had to do was to write the boys of their mother's death. The brothers lived together and wrote of the gala opening of the new Texas State Capitol Building on May 16, 1888. The three Munson boys all received their law degrees at the end of the spring semester of 1888. Bascom went to Houston to practice law, and Stephen returned home, but Waddy had other business on his mind.

On his way home from Austin, Waddy stopped at Columbus and, on June 25, 1888, married Mary Corinne West of that city. Waddy was 27 years old—Mary West was but 18. Mary West had been known as “Woodie” from childhood, and she was always known as “Aunt Woodie” and “Cousin Woodie” by the Munsons. Old letters tell that Waddy had stopped in Columbus on his trips to and from Austin to visit “Woodie,” whom he had first met about eight or ten years before at Ridgely Plantation (see Inset 16). After the wedding, Waddy took his bride to his

parents' home at Bailey's Prairie, and then to the beach house at Bryan Beach where they spent much of the summer. They then returned to Columbus to be with her parents, and Waddy entered the practice of law there in 1888.

Mary Corinne West's father was John Stephenson West from New York City, and her mother was Mary Elizabeth Naille from Tennessee and Texas.

Inset 16

The Story of the First Meeting of Waddy Munson and "Woodie" West



The story of the complex circumstances of the first chance meeting of Joseph Waddy Munson and Mary "Woodie" West has been told many times in family reminiscences.

Jane Elizabeth Houston, "Woodie's" grandmother, had a brother named Abner Houston. It seems that as a schoolboy in Tennessee, Abner killed another boy (the family stories say "accidentally"). He fled to Jackson County, Texas, and changed his name to Abner Ware. There he took a wife and had a daughter, who years later married Lon Black, the son of Sarah Ann Waddy and Amos Alonzo Black of Black's Ferry. Lon Black was therefore a half-brother to Sarah K. Munson. The Blacks had a daughter, Mary "Minnie" Black, who was the same age as her second cousin, "Woodie" West.

In about 1880, the Wares, with their granddaughter, "Minnie" Black, were visiting the Wests in Columbus, when Abner Ware announced that they were going on to Bailey's Prairie for some business with "Colonel Munson". "Minnie" Black pleaded for her friend, "Woodie", to come along, and Mr. Ware is said to have replied, "Why not, it's time for "Woodie" to meet her new relatives." New relatives? Sarah Munson was "Woodie's" mother's cousin's son-in-law's half-sister!

So "Woodie", at maybe about the age of 11, first met Waddy, at maybe about the age of 19, and apparently he never forgot that meeting.

The Story of the West Family

John Stephenson West was born in New York City in about 1828. His father, John, and his mother, Mary, were both born in New York, and he had a sister Mary and a brother Nathaniel Hale West.

John Stephenson West's father was a wealthy New Yorker and a friend of Cornelius Vanderbilt, and it is reported that he was descended from a member of the Green Mountain Boys of Vermont. In the earliest days of the American Revolution, the Green Mountain Boys, led by Ethan Allen, were famous as raiders against the British Army. Their most famous raid was at Ft. Ticonderoga on Lake Champlain on May 10, 1775. Because they operated as clandestine raiders (today known as revolutionaries), and were wanted by the British government forces, records of their membership were few. Among the listings on a roster of known Green Mountain Boys in the archives library in Montpelier, Vermont, there is the name of Wilkes West of Chester, New Hampshire. Further research on a possible relationship has not been done.

John Stephenson West appears to have been unsettled, adventuresome, and rebellious. In the late 1850s he joined General William Walker's expeditionary forces which were sent to Nicaragua

in the “banana war” to put down the local rebellion and to preserve the banana trade for Vanderbilt’s companies. His leg was broken and improperly set on this expedition, and he had trouble with it for the rest of his life.

John Stephenson West returned by way of New Orleans, where he contracted yellow fever and was detained during his recovery. On May 27, 1861, at the very beginning of the Civil War (the capture of Fort Sumter was April 13, 1861), John West enrolled at New Orleans as captain in the Third Louisiana Infantry, and he spent the next four years in the Quartermaster Corps of the Army of the Confederate States. For this action his father disowned him. At the end of the war in 1865, he was assigned to the Confederate hospital in Columbus, Texas. There he met and, on February 27, 1866, married Mary Elizabeth Naille Robson, an attractive young widow with two sons. He was about 38 years old, and she was about 24.

The Story of the Naille Family

Mary Naille’s father, William Naille, had lived in Tennessee, where he married Jane Elizabeth Houston. There Jane and William Naille had a family, including daughter Mary Elizabeth Naille. In later generations the Wests referred to the Texas hero, General Sam Houston, as “our own real cousin,” but research to date has not located a relationship between Jane Elizabeth Houston and the General.

At some date in the middle 1800s, the Nailles moved to join Jane’s brother, Abner Houston (alias Ware), in Jackson County, Texas. This was near Edna, not far from Gonzales, and was at the time heavy Comanche country. Family tradition tells of frequent Comanche raids on the homestead, and a family heirloom is an old milk crock which is said to be the only item saved by William Naille from one such raid. The Nailles soon moved to Columbus to distance themselves from the Comanches.

In Columbus, Mary Naille, at a very young age, married John Robson. They had two sons, William and John, but Robson soon died. Then entered the dashing John Stephenson West—they were married and settled on a farm near Columbus, in which vicinity they spent the remainder of their lives.

The Family of John Stephenson West and Mary Naille

The youngest Robson son, John, died in October of 1867. John and Mary West had two children: Thurmond Bowers West, born February 21, 1868, and Mary Corinne “Woodie” West, born March 8, 1870.

The name Thurmond was taken, as was Bowers, from the family surname of close friends in Columbus. Several families of Thurmonds have been located in early Texas history. Alfred S. Thurmond (sometimes Thurmand) was a participant in the early struggles for Texas independence including the “Black Bean” episode of the Somervell Expedition (see Chapter 16). He lived for some years thereafter in Victoria, Texas, where he married Julia McGrew. His career so closely paralleled that of Mordello S. Munson—a member of the Somervell Expedition at an early age, a participant in the Civil War, a member of the Eleventh and Thirteenth Texas Legislatures, and a prospective resident of the American Colony at Tuxpan, Mexico—that they

surely must have been close acquaintances. Columbus Lafayette Thurmond was also an early resident of Victoria County. There he married Maggie McGrew and they had four children.²⁰⁸

Yet another Thurmond family was that of J. J. Thurmond, who first married Helen Kennedy, a sister to Walter Kennedy, and upon her death married another sister, Mary Kennedy. A son of one of these several Thurmonds appears to be a good candidate for the West family namesake, but the exact origin of the name in the West family is not known. The name Thurmond has persisted in the West and Munson families to the present time.

John West was deputy sheriff of Colorado County in 1874. The 1880 census of Colorado County lists the West family as follows:

John S. West	aged 52
Mary E. West	38
Willie Robson	23
Thurmon West (sic)	12
Mary C. West	10
Jane E. Naill (sic)	69

Thurmond B. West married Erma Zumwalt and they had four children: Stephen, Oscar, Dorothy, and Thurmond Balzar West.

Joseph Waddy Munson and Mary Corinne West

Mary Corinne “Woodie” West was born on March 8, 1870, and was raised in or near Columbus. After her marriage to Joseph Waddy Munson in 1888, they lived with her parents in Columbus for the next twelve years. Waddy practiced law, first at Munson and Bittle and then at Munson and Wooten, and later he had his own practice. Nieces Lydia and Sarah Munson lived with them while attending school in Columbus.

Two children were born to Waddy and “Woodie” in Columbus: Thurmond Armour Munson on June 15, 1889, and Mary Mordella Munson on February 6, 1893.

Woodie’s mother, Mary Elizabeth Naille West, died on October 22, 1893, at the age of 51, and her father, John Stephenson West, in February of 1900, at about 72. He had been seriously ill for some weeks with pneumonia and at one time showed some improvement, but his son-in-law, Joseph Waddy Munson, wrote in a letter to his father, Mordello, that he did not think Major West could recover. He died at his daughter’s home in Columbus. An obituary announcement in the neighboring Weimar Mercury on February 24, 1900, reads:

Our community was very sorry to hear of the death of Major J. S. West, which occurred last Tuesday morning at the residence of Mr. J. W. Munson, of pneumonia. The funeral took place at the city [of Columbus] cemetery, Bishop Kinsolving officiating.

In December of 1900 the family moved to Angleton, where Waddy joined his two brothers, Bascom and Stephen, in the new law firm of Munson, Munson & Munson. Waddy, “Woodie,” and their two children lived in the parlor of brother George and Hannah’s big, two-story home for almost two years while their attractive home on “Munson Row,” now 910 S. Walker Street,

²⁰⁸ Stories of the lives of both Alfred S. Thurmond and Columbus L. Thurmond are contained in *The Handbook of Texas Online*. It is not stated whether they were brothers, nor whether their wives were sisters.

was being built. In their new home, on October 28, 1903, their third child, Erma Munson, was born.

Joseph Waddy Munson was county judge of Brazoria County from 1912 to 1916, the maximum term then allowed. In this capacity, he and Mrs. Munson were in the party that made the trip on *Skylark* from Freeport to Galveston for the opening ceremonies of the Intracoastal Canal on May 29, 1913. After Angleton suffered severe flooding following the hurricane of 1913, Judge Munson was a leader in the project to build the levees that have protected the city from the Brazos River ever since. A newspaper article at the time of his death included the following statement: "...due to J. W. Munson's efforts, the Brazos Valley Flood Control Association came into existence and he devoted much time to making its work a success." After his term as judge, he was a member of the law firm of Munson, Williams & Munson with brother M. S. Munson and W. T. Williams, and later Munson & Munson with his brother. During these years he was also an active cattleman and cotton farmer on his Bailey's Prairie land.

Joseph Waddy Munson died in the back yard of his Angleton home of a massive heart attack on Sunday afternoon, March 18, 1917, at the age of 55. His wife, "Woodie," continued to live in their home with their three children. By 1920, daughter Mary had married, Erma had gone away to college, and son Thurmond had gone to teach at Texas A. & M. College. "Woodie" sold their Angleton home to her first cousin, Lydia Munson, who had recently married Ralph Johnson, and moved to live with Thurmond in Bryan, Texas. Erma joined them the next year and worked at the college, where she met her husband, Lucian Rich. When son Thurmond married "Minnie" Hardwick in 1929, "Woodie" moved to live with Erma and her family in Stephenville. There she died on July 12, 1939, also of a heart attack, at the age of 69. Both Waddy and "Woodie" are buried in the Munson plot in the Angleton Cemetery.

The Descendants of Joseph Waddy Munson and Mary C. West

The first child of Waddy and "Woodie" Munson was **Thurmond Armour Munson**, born June 15, 1889, in Columbus, Texas. After graduation from Angleton High School, he attended Texas A. & M. College where he received the degree in civil engineering in 1910. In 1925 he received a masters degree from Iowa State University. Upon graduating from Texas A. & M., he held several jobs of short duration. After the 1913 flood, he established an engineering consulting practice in Angleton on flood control, drainage projects, highway surveys, land surveys, and subdivisions. He lived with his parents and worked at this until he was appointed to a professorship in civil engineering at Texas A. & M. College in 1920. During his career at Texas A. & M., he became Head of the Hydraulic Engineering Department.

On December 21, 1929, at the age of 40, he married Mary Emma "Minnie" Hardwick. Mary Hardwick had been born in Tusgegee, Alabama, on July 12, 1897, and was working at the college. They had two children: Thurmond Armour Jr. and Mary Jane.

Having graduated from Texas A. & M. College as a member of the Corps of Cadets, Thurmond Sr. was a member of the U. S. Army Reserve. During the depression years of 1935-1936, he was called into active service as a captain and helped with the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) in Lufkin, Texas, and briefly in San Antonio and Fort Worth.

During World War II, Thurmond Sr. was an officer in the United States Army, rising to the rank of lieutenant colonel as Inspector General for Fort Sam Houston near San Antonio. In 1946 he accepted a position as Chief of the Civil Engineering Department at the Dow Chemical Company plant at Freeport, Texas. His major function was to assist in land and right-of-way

acquisition in Brazoria County—the county that he knew so well. He built a lovely country home under the giant live oak trees on the family land at Bailey’s Prairie and lived there happily for the rest of his life. He died of a heart attack on October 6, 1958, at the age of 69. His wife, “Minnie,” then lived for many years in Angleton and later in College Station, where she died on February 5, 1987, at the age of 89. Both are buried in the Angleton Cemetery.

Their son, Thurmond Armour Munson Jr., obtained a degree in chemical engineering from Texas A. & M. College and has been employed by Dow Chemical Company in Freeport all of his adult life. He married Doris Marie Davidson of Houston and they have four children and three grandchildren. Their three Munson sons are among the dwindling number of male Munsons who can carry on the Munson name.

Mary Jane Munson married Teddy James Hirsch (named for Teddy Roosevelt and Jesse James). Teddy Hirsch is a professor of civil engineering at Texas A. & M. University, and Mary Jane is “the best math teacher” in the local high school, so her students say. They live in College Station, Texas, where they raised four children. They have nine grandchildren at the present time.



The second child of Waddy and “Woodie” was **Mary Mordella Munson**, born on February 6, 1893, in Columbus. She did not attend college because of persistent illness that resulted in eye trouble. In 1911, at the age of 18, she fell in love with a traveling salesman from the midwest and asked her parents for permission to marry. They refused, and her sister Erma remembers Mary screaming and crying in distress in her room all of the next day. In 1919 she met Byron Williamson at a Sunday service at the Holy Comforter Episcopal Church in Angleton. Byron, ranch manager of nearby Rancho Isabella, had recently lost his wife, Frances, and their first child at childbirth. Byron and Mary were married on February 16, 1920. He was 30 years old and she was 27. They had three sons: Byron Jr., Thurmond Arthur, and Richard Munson Williamson, all born in the Rancho Isabella ranch house. Arthur was chosen because it was a favorite name of his father, and Richard for Mary’s sister, Erma Rich.

Mary and Byron’s later lives are described in a moving memorial written by Mary’s cousin-in-law, Frank K. Stevens, at the time of Mary’s death from a heart attack on August 24, 1944, at the age of 51. Byron Sr. died from tuberculosis on March 2, 1940, at the age of 50. Both are buried in the Munson Cemetery at Bailey’s Prairie.

Richard, always known as Dick, served in the U. S. Navy in World War II. Thereafter he received a mechanical engineering degree from Texas A. & M. College and practiced engineering in Dallas and Fort Worth. He never married and died in Fort Worth on October 13, 1972, at the age of 46. He is buried in the Munson Cemetery.

Byron and Thurmond received Ph.D. degrees in chemistry from Columbia University in New York City. Byron married Diana Gordon on August 12, 1944, and Thurmond married Ruth Elizabeth Miller on June 19, 1948, both in New York City. Thereafter both worked for the duPont Company in the East for a few years. In 1949 they formed an agricultural insecticide manufacturing company in Dallas, Texas, under the name Thuron Industries, Inc. In 1970, after twenty-one years of operations, they sold the company to Zoecon, Inc. of California, and retired a few years later. Byron died of a cerebral hemorrhage on December 31, 1983, at the age of 62, and is buried in the Munson Cemetery. Ruth Miller Williamson passed away June 11, 2003, in California, at age 82, and is buried in the Munson Cemetery at Bailey’s Prairie. The two families

Inset 17
In Memoriam



A Tribute to the Memory of Mary Munson Williamson

...Byron Williamson was a pleasant mannered man of excellent character and an energetic & resourceful nature. Three sons... were born to their union, and some happy years were spent on the ranch [Rancho Isabella near Angleton] raising White Face cattle and White Legion chickens and hogs. But Byron's health began to fail and the Doctor ordered a dry climate for him, so in the fall of 1928 the family... moved to El Paso and... bought a small farm home near Canutillo, some 12 miles from El Paso and at the base of the majestic Franklin Mountains.

Here on this 40 acre tract, with its mesquite trees and large and comfortable adobe house, began a fight by a woman who is typical of all that is finest and best in the true American wives and mother's who have helped to build America; a fight to save her husband's life from tuberculosis, and at the same time to earn a living for the family of five, and to keep alive a cheerful and happy atmosphere . . .

Chicken houses and runs were built and the place stocked with White Leghorn chickens. Byron was unable to do any but the lightest work, and less each year. But the boys helped and Mary worked and at times had some Mexican help, and in a short time built up a select egg trade with choice firms and hotels in El Paso. Each egg was individually candled and guaranteed, and in the fall of 1940 when my wife and I visited her, Mary told us that she had not missed a scheduled delivery of eggs for 13 years. This hard work and high standard of product and service had succeeded in winning for the family a very comfortable living for these 13 years.

Byron had died shortly before we were out there. For all of these thirteen years, Mary had waged her fight, and had not only won a living for the family... but had also managed... to keep the home atmosphere bright and cheery and happy; and had given the three sons excellent educational advantages. . .

This summer Mary was delighted to hear of the engagement of her son, Byron Jr.... and went to New York to visit her sons and to attend the wedding, which went off happily on August 13th [actually August 12] (1944). After the long years of close confinement to her duties at home, it is probable that this trip was one of the happiest events of her life. . . Arriving in El Paso on an earlier train than expected, there was no one to meet her, and she got out and started walking down the trainshed to the station, and without warning crumpled and fell, a victim of heart failure.

And so ends a beautiful life. In a way she had completed her life work; her three sons all grown and well educated and imbued with her bright, cheerful, and practical nature. Of course it is hard for them to tell her goodbye so soon, but who can say that old age with its ailments would have added anything to her cup of joy, which was full to overflowing at the time of her death.

To me, Mary Munson Williamson was, in the finest sense of the word, a truly great woman.

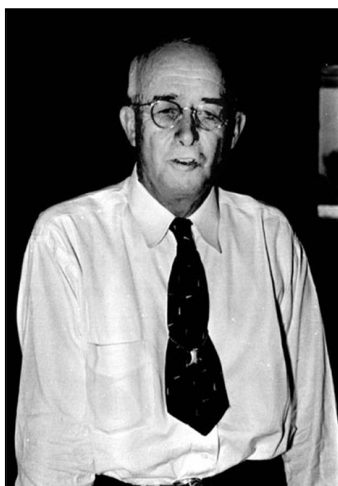
Frank K. Stevens



Joseph Waddy Munson



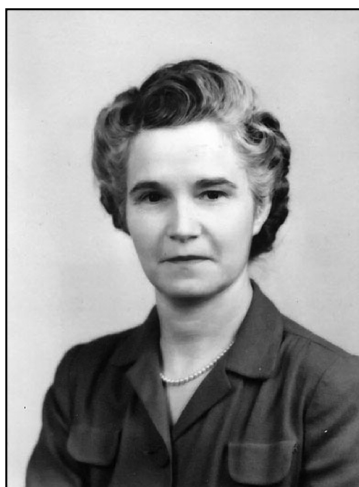
Mary Corinne West



**Thurmond Armour
Munson**



Mary Mordella Munson



Erma Munson

have between them six children, eleven grandchildren and five great-grandchildren at this time (2006).



The third child of Waddy and “Woodie” was **Erma Munson**, born October 28, 1903, in Angleton. She was named for her mother’s sister-in-law, Erma Zumwalt, wife of Thurmond Bowers West of Columbus. Erma graduated from Angleton High School and attended the College of Industrial Arts (now Texas State College for Women), in Denton, Texas, for one year. She then took a job as secretary to the dean of Texas A. & M. College in College Station, where she lived with her mother and her brother. At Texas A. & M. Erma met a graduate student, Lucian Rich, and they were married on May 29, 1926.

Lucian Guy Rich was born in East Texas in 1890 and graduated from Texas A. & M. College with a degree in agronomy in 1914. He was a member of the U. S. Army, awaiting shipment to France in 1918, when the armistice was signed. He was one of the first county agricultural agents in Texas, and was an early worker on the development of a cotton-picking machine. At some date in the 1920s he became an instructor at John Tarleton State Agricultural College in Stephenville, Texas, where he taught for over forty years. During the summers he attended Texas A. & M. College to work toward his masters degree. There he met and married Erma Rich.

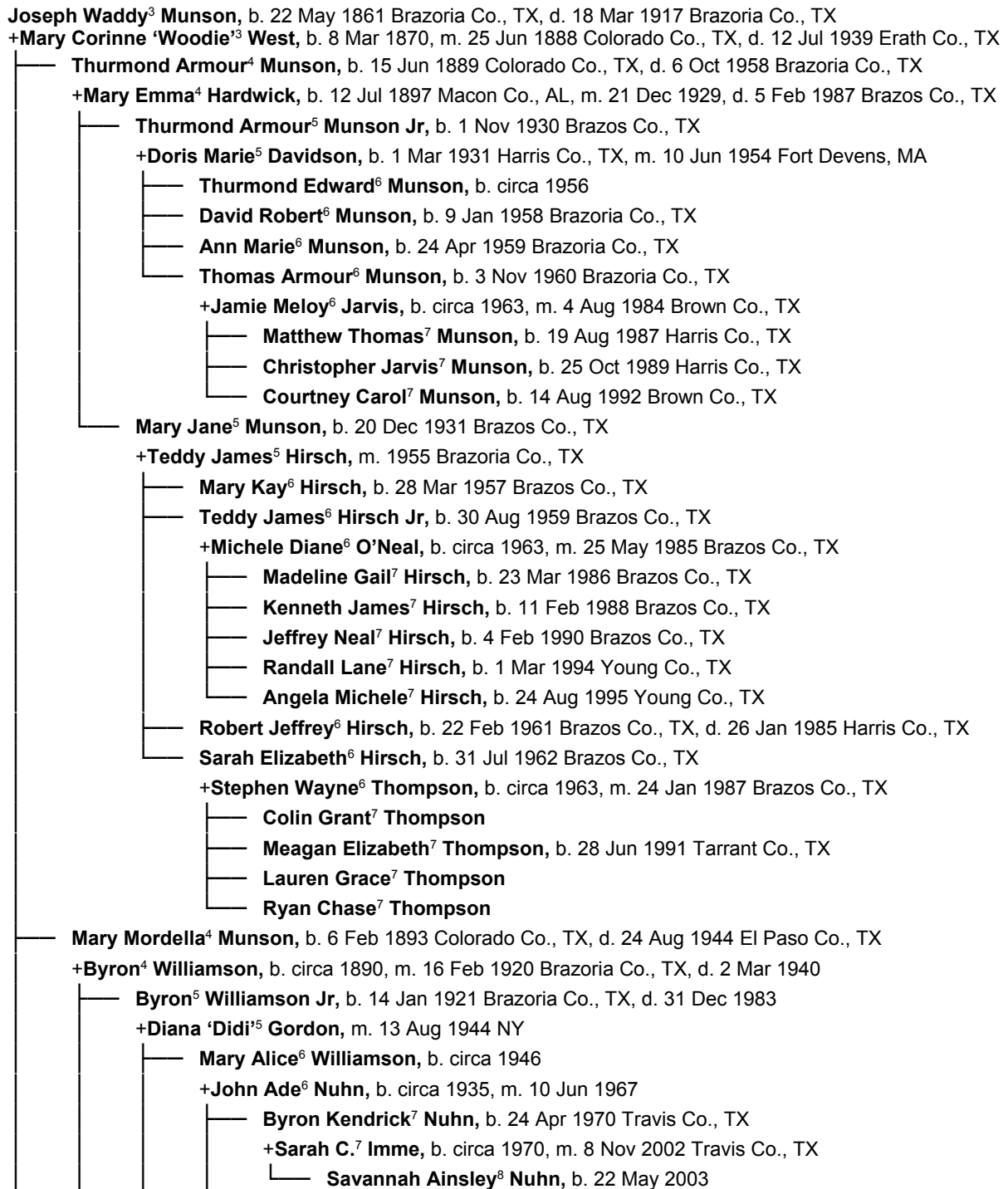
They built a home at 1055 W. Vanderbilt Street in Stephenville in which they lived for almost fifty years. Lucian served in the U. S. Air Force during World War II, and he and his family lived in many places in the States as he was moved from base to base. Lucian and Erma had two daughters, Mary and Erma Jo (Jo for Joseph Waddy, or “Uncle Jo”), both of whom graduated from the University of Texas at Austin. Mary married John Brownlee Wilson Jr. and they had five children—Jo married Thomas Hand and they had four. They now have between them nine children, fifteen grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. Lucian died in Stephenville in an automobile accident on November 30, 1971, at the age of 81.

After raising her five children, Mary spent over a decade in Carrizozo, New Mexico, working as editor of a newspaper, real estate broker, and in community affairs. She founded a school for mentally handicapped adults and a county dental service for the poor. Mary later married Charles Franklin Adams, an author and teacher, and lived in Riverdale, New York, where she worked as manager of a Manhattan commercial real estate firm. She and Charles did the saintly job of caring for her mother, Erma, who was suffering from advanced Alzheimer’s disease in 1987 at the age of 84. Erma died June 2, 1989, and Mary on August 3, 2005, at her home in Queensbury, New York.

After her divorce from Tom Hand, and while raising her four children, Erma Jo went to school in computer science and worked her way up to manager of a division of the computer department of the Arizona National Bank in Phoenix. She is now married to Hugh Watson and lives in retirement in Chandler (Phoenix), Arizona, enjoying her many children and grandchildren.

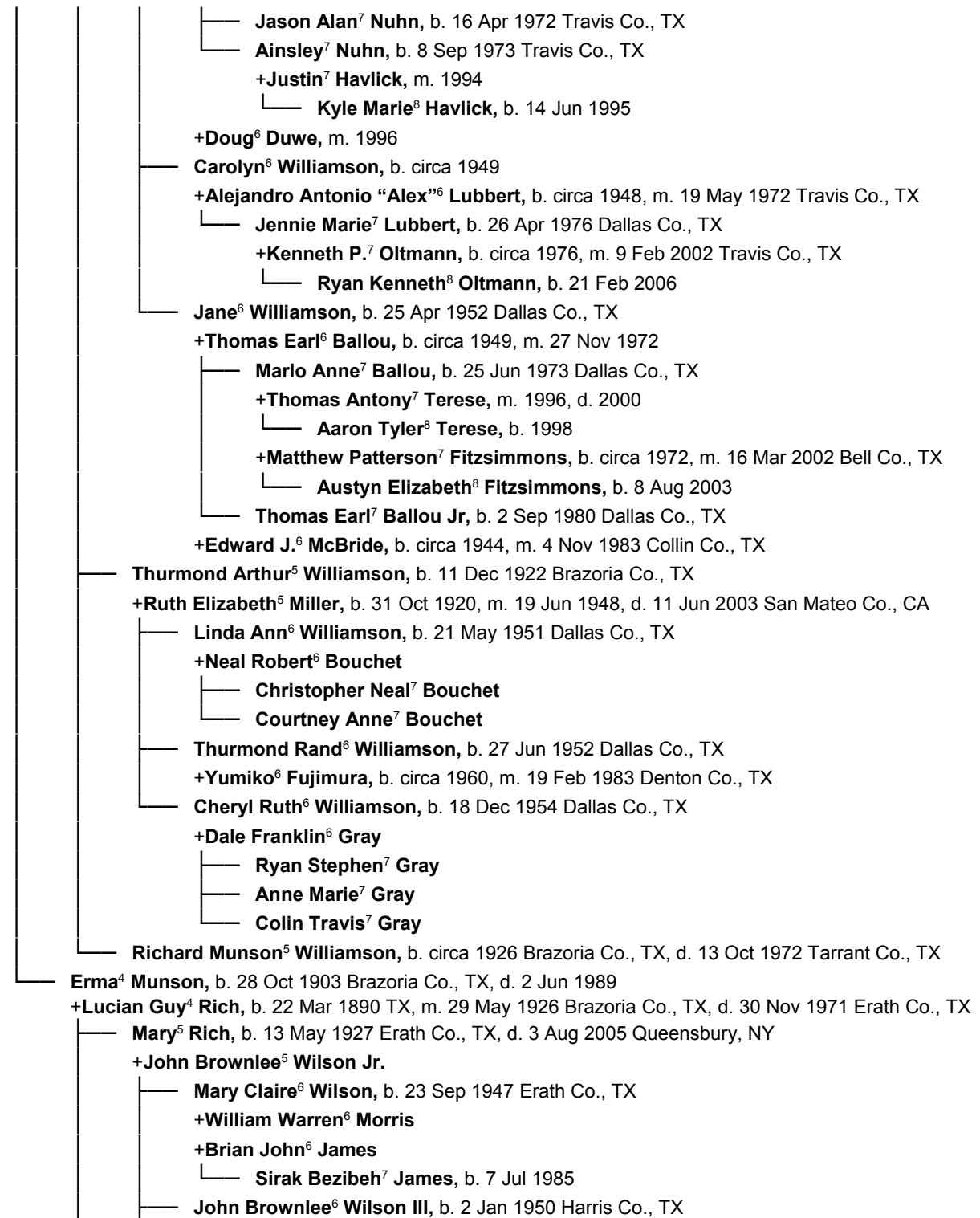
Erma Munson Rich was for years the official historian of the Munson Reunion Association. She diligently collected, studied, and transcribed all of the old Munson family records and did continual genealogical research for all of her active life. It is to her credit, with everlasting thanks, that the data and stories contained in this book are available to the Munsons of today and of future generations.

Chart 19
Descendants of Joseph Waddy Munson



(Chart 19 continued on next page)

(Chart 19 continued)



(Chart 19 continued on next page)

(Chart 19 continued)

— **Christopher⁶ Rich**, b. 16 Sep 1953 Dallas Co., TX
 +**Nancy⁶ Frangione**
 — **Mariel Emi⁷ Rich**, b. 15 Apr 1992
 +**Eva Halina⁶ Jesionowska**
 — **Lily Hannah⁷ Rich**, b. 29 Mar 2004
 — **Daisy Grace⁷ Rich**, b. 29 Mar 2004
 — **Lucy Erma⁶ Wilson**, b. 5 Feb 1955 Dallas Co., TX
 — **Aron Shane⁷ Wilson**, b. 15 Aug 1977
 +**Randall Melvin⁶ Chapman**
 — **Mark Darrow⁶ Wilson**, b. 4 Nov 1957 Dallas Co., TX
 +**Laura J.⁶ Phillips**, m. 14 Sep 1985
 +**Marci⁶ Morrison**, b. circa 1959, m. 4 Feb 1989 Dallas Co., TX
 — **Julia floy⁷ Wilson**, b. 4 Jan 1990 Dallas Co., TX
 +**Lyman Morgan⁵ Jones**, m. 9 Apr 1966 Dallas Co., TX
 +**Charles Franklin⁵ Adams**, m. before 1987
 — **Erma Jo⁵ Rich**, b. 4 Nov 1928 Erath Co., TX
 +**Thomas Edwards⁵ Hand Jr.**
 — **Jane Elizabeth⁶ Hand**, b. 22 Aug 1948 Harris Co., TX
 +**William⁶ Pennington**
 — **James William⁷ Humble**
 +**Charles E.⁶ Humble**
 — **Elizabeth Jean⁷ Humble**
 +**Trenton Thomas⁷ Lane**
 — **Ethan Thomas⁸ Lane**
 — **Genevieve Jo⁷ Humble**
 +**Cary R.⁷ Christensen**
 — **Eric Anthony⁸ Christensen**
 — **Sally Jo⁶ Hand**, b. 24 Jun 1951 Harris Co., TX
 +**James⁶ Deutschmann**
 — **Lucian Michael⁷ Hand**
 +**Bradley James⁶ McDonald**
 — **Stephen Bradley⁷ Hand**
 — **James Andrew⁷ Hand**
 — **Thomas Lucian⁶ Hand**, b. 24 Nov 1953 Harris Co., TX
 +**Judith⁶ Zywicki**
 — **Joseph Lucian⁷ Hand**
 — **Marie Annette⁶ Hand**, b. 22 Jan 1959 Harris Co., TX
 +**Bruce⁶ Alvers**
 — **Nicholas Benjamin⁷ Alvers**
 — **Kirk Samuel⁷ Alvers**
 +**Hugh⁵ Watson**



Chapter 26

The Life and Family of Hillen Armour Munson (I) b. 1863 — d. 1909



The sixth child and fourth son of Mordello and Sarah Munson, born on July 31, 1863, at Bailey's Prairie, was named Hillen Armour Munson. He was named for his maternal grandfather, Solomon Hillen Armour. Armour was raised at Ridgely Plantation and spent all of his adult life working there. His descendants inherited the site of the old home place and still own it and live there today. In 1890 Armour married Lilla Mary Cox of Alvin, and they had three children: Walter Bascom, Mary Alice, and Carrie Armour. Armour was shot and killed by a threatened black man in 1909 at the age of 46. Lilla died in Houston in 1934.



Hillen Armour Munson was born during the midst of the Civil War. Mordello had been home on leave in the fall of 1862, and he was again home as a released prisoner from the Battle of Vicksburg in the summer of 1863. It is possible that he was home for the birth of Hillen Armour, as the surrender at Vicksburg was on July 4 and Armour was born on July 31.

Armour, as he was always called, was educated at home like the other children and did not attend college. He apparently grew up on the plantation and remained there, always helping his father with the duties.

On October 22, 1890, at the age of 27, Armour married Lilla Mary Cox from Alvin, and they lived with Mordello at Bailey's Prairie. Three children were born to them: Walter Bascom, born at Bailey's Prairie on May 31, 1895; Mary Alice, born in Angleton on March 11, 1902; and Carrie Armour, born in Angleton on August 30, 1905. Armour, Lilla, and son Bascom lived with Mordello at Ridgely until 1901 or 1902, when they moved to a house in Angleton, and the Kennedy family moved from Angleton to live with Mordello. Family members tell that Lilla did not like living in the country but preferred living in town, while Armour liked living and working at Bailey's Prairie. Daughter Carrie recalls memories, when she was a small girl in Angleton, of her father arising in the dark of early morning, saddling his horse for the five mile ride to Bailey's Prairie, and returning late in the evening.

The details of the death of Armour Munson are recorded in an eleven-page typewritten manuscript by Mr. Joe Jamison, a participant in all phases of the bizarre episode.²⁰⁹ In September

²⁰⁹ From the *Munson Papers*, see Appendix 1.

of 1909 two black men named Otto Cooper and Charles Delaney escaped from the Angleton jail. Cooper was charged with breaking into Joe Jamison's house and stealing his wife's watch and ring. Delaney had been sentenced to life imprisonment for killing his son with an axe and was in jail awaiting transfer to the state penitentiary. With guns they fled north toward the Anchor and Chenango stations of the Houston Tap Railroad, hoping to catch a ride to Houston. At Chenango, about ten miles north of Angleton, the escapees came upon the stationmaster, Mr. J. T. Hardin. Hardin was a prominent rancher in the area, and he had been notified of the escape by the then new miracle of telephone. In a brief nighttime shoot-out, Hardin was fatally wounded and the fugitives fled.

As the news spread, many citizens were stirred to action and began forming posses to try to catch the fugitives. The sheriff sent some deputies together with some other young men to Sandy Point, north of Chenango, where he understood Charles Delaney had lived. On reaching Sandy Point, the men stopped by the saloon, had a few drinks, and inquired if Charles Delaney had any kinfolks nearby. They learned that a cousin of his named Steve Hays lived about three miles away, between Sandy Point and Rosharon. The deputies and the other men rode out to ask Steve Hays if he had seen or heard anything of Charles Delaney. Hays told them he didn't know anything about Delaney—that his home was several miles away on another plantation. The brash young white men, possibly under the influence of alcohol, threatened that they would come back later, and if Hays didn't tell them where Delaney was they would kill him.

Now quoting from the Jamison story:

As the news spread... Mr. Armour Munson, a rancher and member of one of the oldest aristocratic families of the County... heard of Mr. Hardin's death and decided to ride up to Sandy Point, 20 mi. from Angleton, to help catch the fleeing Negroes. He learned at Sandy Point that Steve Hays lived near and was a cousin to Chas. Delaney. He said he knew Steve Hays, as Hays used to work for him, so he, in company with the young men who had been out to the Hays' shack and knew the way, set out to see Steve again. They didn't tell Mr. Munson that they had threatened Hays. When they rode up, Mr. Munson took the lead and called to Steve to come out, that he wanted to talk to him about Chas. Delaney. The young men drew their guns, Mr. Munson told them to put their guns down, that he knew Steve and he would come out and talk to them, and he called again, "Come out, Steve, you remember me, don't you? You used to work for me." About that time the door cracked open just a little and a gunbarrel stuck out and fired, a load of buckshot hit Mr. Munson in the face and chest, killing him instantly, and he fell from his horse on his face to the ground.

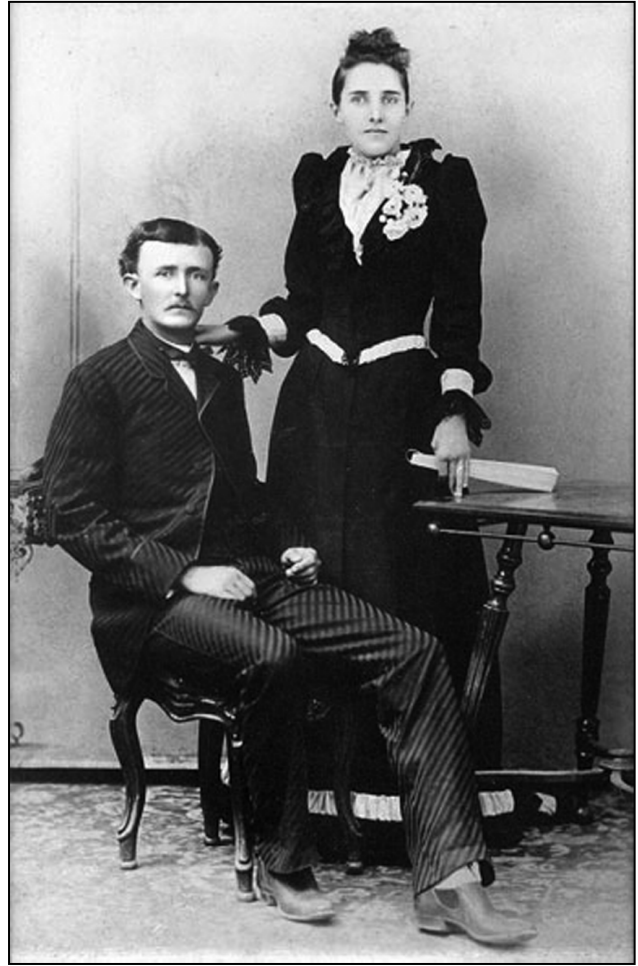
Family tradition tells that at that moment Steve Hays' wife cried out, "Steve, you just shot your best friend." This incident was followed for several days by a vigorous, armed search for the fugitives in the local woods, underbrush, and cane fields, accompanied by a drunken rampage by some of the searchers. Several men on both sides were killed—Steve Hays among them. Charles Delaney was captured and sent to prison. Otto Cooper was never apprehended.

Armour Munson was killed on September 15, 1909. He was 46 years old. He is buried in the Munson Cemetery at Bailey's Prairie, on the land where he had spent practically his entire life.

Lilla Munson, who had severe attacks of asthma, raised the children in Angleton. In about 1929 Lilla and daughter Carrie moved to San Antonio to live with daughter Alice and her husband, Jack Ball, in an attempt to lessen Lilla's asthma attacks. Lilla died in Houston on August 8, 1934, and is buried in the Angleton Cemetery.



Hillen Armour Munson



Armour and Lilla Cox Munson



**Clockwise from left: Lilla, Alice, Bascom,
and Carrie Munson**

When Mordello's children divided their father's estate in 1907, the property on which the plantation house had stood, together with 416 acres around it, was deeded to Armour. Armour then purchased the 380 acres that had been deeded to brother Bascom and thirty-five acres from brother Joseph Waddy. Additional small parcels were added later, and the family owns 939 acres of that land today.

The Descendants of Hillen Armour Munson and Lilla Mary Cox

The first child of Armour and Lilla was named **Walter Bascom Munson**, named for Armour's brother, Walter Bascom. He was born at Bailey's Prairie on May 25, 1895, and lived his young years there and in Angleton. He was fourteen when his father was killed. In young adulthood, Bascom worked in the oil fields of Louisiana and East Texas, and it is reported that he was a typical oil field "roughneck."

In Louisiana he met Jessie Rawls, and, when he was about 22, they were married in the First Methodist Church in Shreveport. Jessie was born on December 10, 1890. For a while Bascom owned his own drilling rig, and later he was employed by Reed Rollerbit Company in Longview and Kilgore, Texas. In later years he and Jessie lived in Houston and Angleton.

In 1955 Bascom and Jessie built a large, beautiful home under the live oak trees at Bailey's Prairie near the location of the original Ridgely Plantation home of Mordello and Sarah. Mordello and Sarah had built there just one hundred years before, and their home had been destroyed by fire in about 1905. The depression for the underground water cistern can still be found in the front yard of Bascom's house. Recent excavations of the site have uncovered farm implements, old china, household goods, and a Confederate belt buckle.

Bascom loved this home and his surrounding cattle ranch, which he named the Munson Ranch. Working with his long-time black employee, Taylor Hall, he greatly improved his land by clearing the underbrush and leaving the majestic live oak and pecan trees. Much of the work was done at night because Taylor Hall preferred not to work during the hot and humid days. Bascom was always proud to show off his ranch and his fine stock. He raised, at different times, quarter-horses and Santa Gertrudus, Red Angus, and Brangus cattle.

Bascom and Jessie had no children. Bascom died on October 20, 1973, at the age of 78, and Jessie on March 17, 1979, at the age of 88. Both are buried in the Munson Cemetery in the front pasture of their home.



The second child of Armour and Lilla was named **Mary Alice Munson**. She was born on March 11, 1902, in Angleton. She attended Angleton schools where she was a top athlete, the class beauty, and the valedictorian of her graduating class at Angleton High School. Her sister, Carrie, remembers how "all of the boys swarmed around her." Alice attended the University of Texas, where she met W. B. Jack Ball of Farmersville, Texas. They were married in the Methodist Church in Angleton in about 1920 or 1921. They always lived in San Antonio, where Jack Ball was a lawyer. He was also active in the Masonic Lodge and became the Most Worshipful Grand Master of the Masonic Lodge of Texas. Alice Ball died while visiting her sister, Carrie, in Angleton on February 28, 1945, at the age of 42. She is buried in the Angleton Cemetery. Jack Ball died on November 27, 1985, at the age of 89.

Alice and Jack Ball had one son, Thomas Armour Ball, who was born in San Antonio and graduated from the University of Texas Law School. He became a lawyer in 1950 and a Probate Court judge of Bexar County in 1963. He continued on the bench to at least 1987 when this was first written. Armour Ball married Claudia Hudspeth Abbey, whose family had large landholdings in West Texas and for whose grandfather Hudspeth County was named. They resided in a beautiful home on the headwaters of the Devil's River in Val Verde County and maintain a town house in San Antonio. Claudia managed the livestock and wildlife operations of the ranch, and Armour commuted to San Antonio for his work there. Armour died in Bexar County on December 14, 1990.

Armour and Claudia had two children: William Armour Ball and Mary Alice Ball, both of whom married. William Armour Ball died of lung cancer on May 29, 1985, at the age of 30. He had no children. Alice holds a law degree from South Texas College of Law in Houston. Information that was current in 1987 is that she had practiced law in Houston, Lake Jackson, and Angleton, and was divorced and living in the home built by Bascom at "the old home place" at Bailey's Prairie. She was then engaged in private law practice in Angleton. Alice remarried in 1989 and has at least three children, all born in Colorado County, Texas.



The third child of Armour and Lilla, born on August 30, 1905, was named **Carrie Armour Munson**. She was born in Angleton and was named for Mrs. Carrie Brock, a close family friend and a descendant of the Stephen F. Austin family. Carrie Munson was raised in Angleton and graduated from Angleton High School. She attended the University of Texas, where she earned a teaching certificate, and she taught school in Angleton. She married George Hobson Roberts of Houston on June 30, "in the early 30s." They lived in Houston, where Carrie completed her B. S. degree at the University of Houston.

George Roberts was a descendant of the Shepherd family, an early Houston banking family, and a widower with three children: George Jr., Stephen Lindsey, and Patsey Alice. Carrie and George raised these three, and they had no other children. All three children married and have children. George Roberts Jr. died in Miami, Florida, at the age of 26. Patsey Roberts married James Stratton Brock Jr., the grandson of Mrs. Carrie Brock.

In Houston George Roberts worked for the First National Bank, which was founded by his grandfather, Mr. B. A. Shepherd. During the late 1940s, Carrie and George used a small home on the Bailey's Prairie land near the site of the original Ridgely home as a weekend and holiday retreat. As the years passed, they enlarged this home until they retired there in a lovely, large home in the early 1950s. Bascom and Jessie built nearby a few years later, and for twenty-five years the two couples lived in retirement at "the old home place."

George Roberts died on November 22, 1976. Carrie died November 6, 1991, in Houston, Texas, at age 86. Both are buried in the Munson Cemetery at Bailey's Prairie.

Chart 20
Descendants of Hillen Armour Munson



Hillen Armour³ Munson, b. 31 Jul 1863 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 15 Sep 1909 Brazoria Co., TX
 +**Lilla Mary³ Cox**, b. 8 Dec 1872, m. 22 Oct 1890, d. 10 Aug 1934 Harris Co., TX

- **Walter Bascom⁴ Munson II**, b. 25 May 1895 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 20 Oct 1973 Brazoria Co., TX
 +**Jessie⁴ Rawls**, b. 10 Dec 1890, m. circa 1927 Caddo Parish, LA, d. 17 Mar 1979 Brazoria Co., TX
- **Mary Alice⁴ Munson**, b. 11 Mar 1902 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 28 Feb 1945
 +**William B. Jack⁴ Ball**, b. 21 Jun 1896, m. 27 Dec 1921 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 27 Nov 1985 Bexar Co., TX
 - **Thomas Armour⁵ Ball**, b. 3 Oct 1927 Bexar Co., TX, d. 14 Dec 1990 Bexar Co., TX
 +**Claudia Hudspeth⁵ Abbey**, b. 5 Nov 1930 Ellis Co., TX
 - **William Armour⁶ Ball**, b. 3 Dec 1954 Bexar Co., TX, d. 29 May 1985
 - **Mary Alice⁶ Ball**, b. 6 Aug 1956 Bexar Co., TX
 +**William Robert⁶ Strunk**, b. 18 Feb 1952 Colorado Co., TX, m. 14 Oct 1989 Brazoria Co.
 - **William Armour⁷ Strunk**, b. 19 Sep 1990 Colorado Co., TX
 - **Sarah Campbell⁷ Strunk**, b. 15 Aug 1992 Colorado Co., TX
 - **Claudia Abbey⁷ Strunk**, b. 11 Sep 1993 Colorado Co., TX
- **Carrie Armour⁴ Munson**, b. 30 Aug 1905 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 6 Nov 1991 Harris Co., TX
 +**George Hobson⁴ Roberts**, b. 18 Dec 1895, d. 22 Nov 1976 Harris Co., TX



Chapter 27

The Life and Family of Walter Bascom Munson (I) b. 1866 — d. 1949



The seventh child and fifth son of Mordello and Sarah Munson, named Walter Bascom Munson, was born February 6, 1866. He was raised on Ridgely Plantation and attended Texas A. & M. College, Southwestern University, and the University of Texas Law School. In the early 1890s he married Adelaide Cotton of Houston. They had three children, two of whom grew to adulthood. Bascom was very successful in business—ranching, real estate, oil, and banking—and became wealthy. For his wife’s health they moved to San Antonio in 1913, and his descendants have continued to live in San Antonio, Gonzales, and nearby areas.



Mordello returned from the last campaigns of the Civil War in Louisiana in May of 1865, and his son Walter Bascom was born on February 6, 1866. The origin of the name Walter Bascom is not known. The only clue comes from a letter from Mordello in 1842, while he was at the Methodist sponsored La Grange College in La Grange, Alabama. Mordello referred to a “Reverend Bascum,” whom he greatly admired, and who planned to visit the Caldwells at Oakland Plantation on his coming trip to Texas.

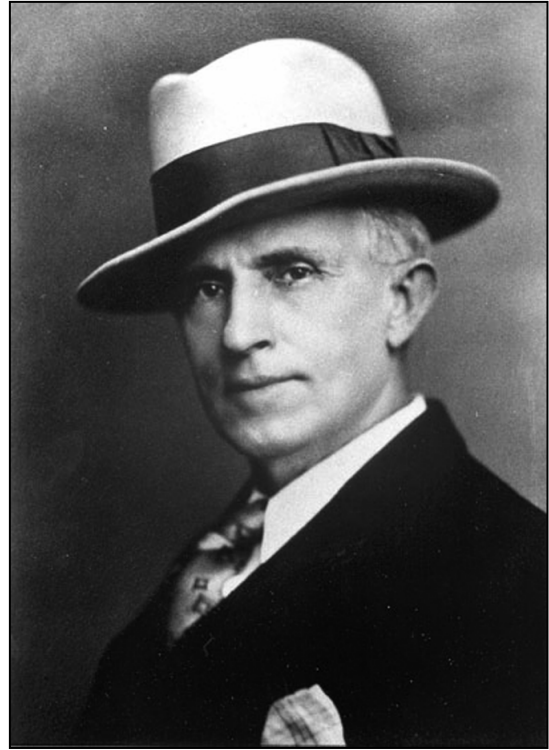
As were all of the children, Bascom was educated at home by his mother and hired governesses, including Miss Minnie C. Dewey (later Mrs. Stratton). In the spring of 1882, at the age of 16, he was living and boarding in Brazoria where he was attending a private school. He then attended Texas A. & M. College, Southwestern University in Georgetown, and the University of Texas Law School, where he graduated in 1888. He apparently then went to Houston to practice law, as a biographical sketch of Mordello written in the 1890s states that son Bascom was practicing law in Houston.

In Houston, on March 20, 1895, Bascom married Adelaide Augusta Cotton of the wealthy Cotton family. Adelaide and a brother, Houston Cotton, had grown up on a ranch near Coleman, Texas, but they now made Houston their home. Years later, the vague memories of an elderly daughter, Ellen Munson Fowler, recalled that an “Uncle Jim” was associated with the Cotton Hotel. Bascom and “Addie” Munson had three children: Stephen Olin Munson, Ellen Munson, and Houston Cotton Munson.

In about 1896 the family moved to Angleton where Bascom built a large two-story home on the Munson property there. It is reported that fine materials and furnishings were brought from Houston for the elegant home, reportedly built partly with Adelaide Cotton’s wealth. Ruth



Addie Cotton Munson



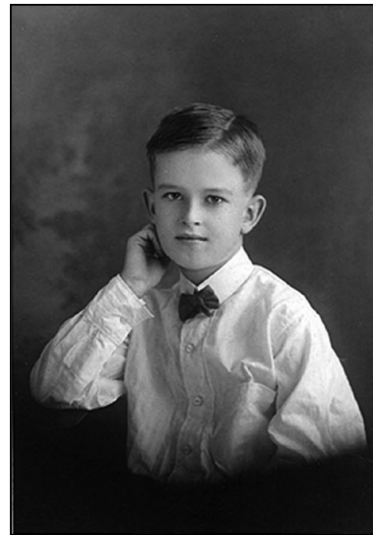
Walter Bascom Munson



Stephen Olin Munson



Ellen Munson



Houston Cotton Munson

Munson Smith, who was raised in this home, well remembers its seven porches, seven fireplaces, and elaborate staircase.

Soon after Bascom and Addie occupied their Angleton home, their oldest child, son Stephen Olin, died there of scarlet fever at the age of two or three years. Little Stephen was an indirect victim of the great 1899 overflow of the Brazos, one of the most disastrous floods in that river's history. To protect his family from the diseases that always followed flood conditions in those days, Bascom sent Addie and Stephen to San Antonio for an extended stay. It was on the train trip home in September, some two months after the flood, that Stephen was exposed to scarlet fever.²¹⁰ Bascom was so heartbroken that he refused to live any longer in that house. It is told that he said to his brother, George Caldwell Munson, who was then leaving the "Van Place" for Angleton, "George, we want you to have this house," and he gave it to George for his large family. Bascom then built another home "down the road," at what is now 517 Bryan Street. He later sold this home to another brother, Henry William III, whose son, Joseph Waddy II, sold it to the Strattons. At a later date it was destroyed by fire. Years later Joseph Waddy II and his wife, Myrtle, repurchased the lot and built the house which stands there today.

In Angleton, in 1901, Bascom joined the law firm of Munson, Munson & Munson with his two brothers, Milam Stephen and Joseph Waddy Munson I. Besides practicing law, Bascom was a very active businessman and leader in the community of Angleton. Together with Mr. John Faickney, he was the leading organizer of the Brazoria County State Bank, of which he was a major stockholder and the first president. The bank was chartered in 1908, and a new building to house it was built at the very center of town. The new bank building was opened in 1909, and the Munson law firm had offices upstairs. This handsome building still stands today at the corner of Mulberry and Velasco Streets. At a later date, Bascom sold his stock in the bank to Mr. J. C. Barrows, who then became president. In 1958 the bank's name was changed to the present Angleton Bank of Commerce. Bascom was also a leader in the project to construct a new building for the Angleton Methodist Church, the church which his mother had helped to found. This building is still in use by the church today.

Soon after the division of Mordello's estate lands in 1907, Bascom sold his inherited land at Bailey's Prairie to his brother Armour and purchased the "Bynum Place," a large tract of about 4,500 acres between Bailey's Prairie and Columbia. This land was originally known as the "Mills Plantation" (probably from the early land traders, R. and D. G. Mills), then it was owned by a Mr. Dyer, and still later it was known as the "Bynum Place." On this ranch, Bascom, and later his son, operated a large cattle ranch into the 1950s. Today this land is the Bar-X Ranch residential development on State Highway 35. Bascom clearly was a very successful lawyer, banker, rancher, oilman, and civic leader, and he became very wealthy.

In 1913, when Joseph Waddy Munson I became county judge, the Munson law firm dissolved and Bascom moved his family to San Antonio, where he built a large, beautiful home. Addie had contracted tuberculosis, a common and an incurable disease in those days, and the doctors' advice to such patients was to move to a drier climate. Bascom's family was the only one of Mordello Munson's children's families to leave Brazoria County permanently. Addie Munson died of tuberculosis in an El Paso sanitarium on February 11, 1916. Bascom died on August 9, 1949, in San Antonio at the age of 83. Both are buried in the Angleton Cemetery.

²¹⁰ Ellen Munson Fowler.

The Descendants of Walter Bascom Munson and Adelaide Cotton

The first child was **Stephen Olin Munson**, who died of scarlet fever at about age two in the original home in Angleton. He is buried in the Munson Cemetery. His aunt Doll Kennedy wrote in her diary, “Dear little Stephen is to-day an Angel with my Helen. O may all of us meet them in the ‘Bright Land’. Sep. 20, 1899 – Angleton.”



The second child of Bascom and Addie was **Ellen Munson**, born in Angleton in 1900. She was raised in Angleton and San Antonio, where she met Wendell C. Fowler. They were married in Angleton in 1928. Wendell Fowler had graduated from the U. S. Naval Academy in 1923 and was an electrical engineer. He was employed by Sangamo Electric Company (now a division of Schlumberger, Inc.) in San Antonio until 1935 and in Fort Worth thereafter. Ella “Lollie” Cahill, the sister of Kate Cahill, became a member of the Bascom Munson family and lived with them in San Antonio. She then lived as a member of Wendell and Ellen Fowler’s family in Fort Worth for many years. Ellen Munson Fowler died in an automobile accident in Ft. Worth in 1986 at the age of 85, and Wendell followed her in death seven months later from complications arising from the accident. They had no children.



The third child of Bascom and Adelaide, born in Angleton on April 16, 1906, was **Houston Cotton Munson**, named for Adelaide’s brother. After early childhood, Houston was raised in San Antonio. In school he was an excellent football player—he attended San Antonio Academy, Washington & Lee University, and the University of Alabama. In later life he raised race horses and was a rancher, an entrepreneur, and a man of wealth. He inherited the 4,500-acre “Bynum Place” in Brazoria County, and, in the 1950s, he sold it and purchased a ranch near Gonzales, Texas. He married Genevieve Hollman and they have three children: Houston Cotton Munson II, Ellen Genevieve Munson, and Wendell Hollman Munson. Houston Cotton Munson I died in San Antonio on December 26, 1959, at about the age of 54.

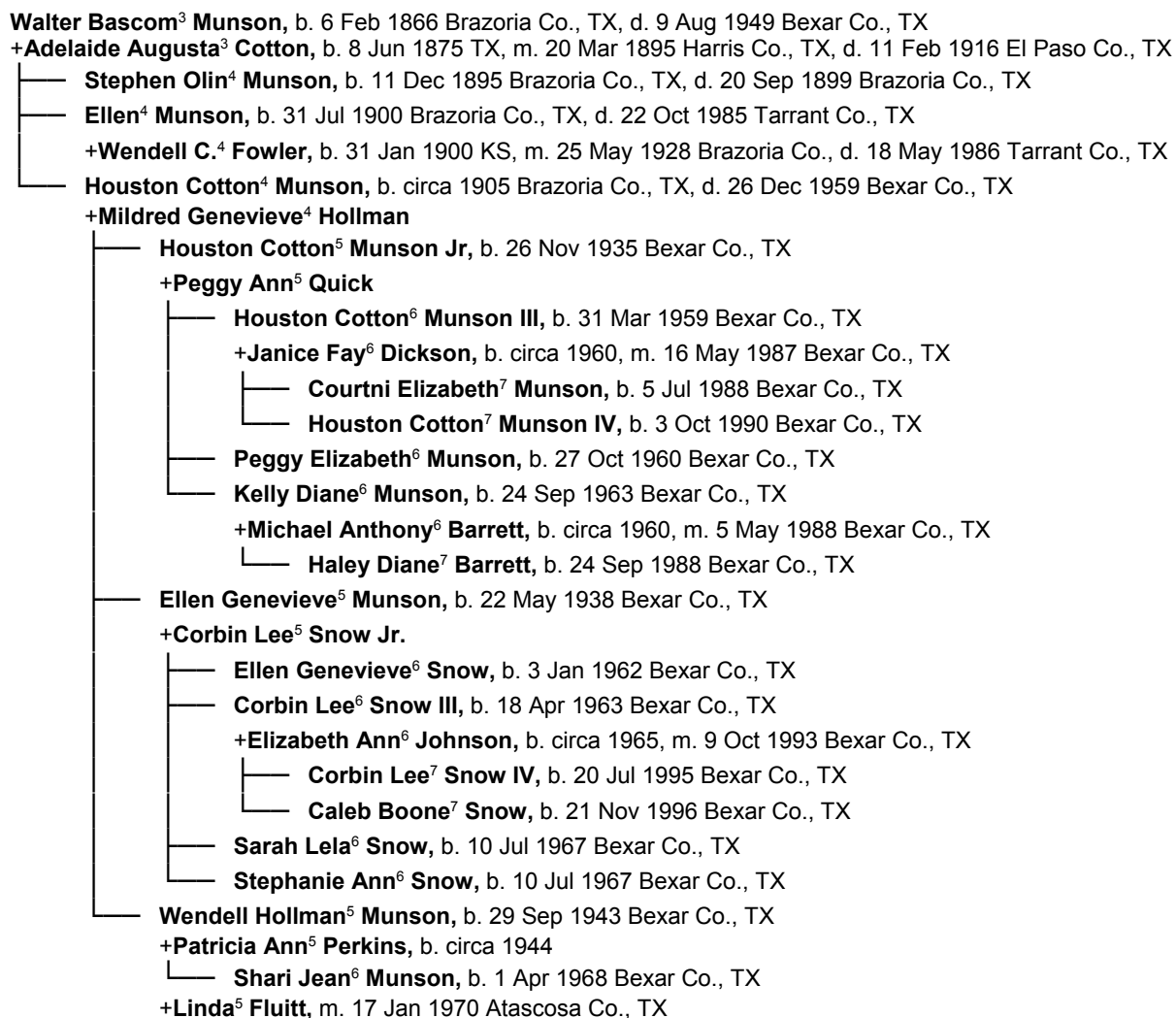
Houston Cotton Munson II obtained a law degree from the University of Texas and lives near Gonzales, where he maintains a law practice and a ranch. He has also served as district attorney there. He is married to Peggy Quick and they have three children and at least three grandchildren.

Ellen Munson is married to lawyer Corbin Lee Snow Jr. of San Antonio and they have four children and at least two grandchildren. Ellen holds a doctoral degree from the University of Texas.

Wendell Hollman Munson married Linda Fluitt and is a rancher near Jourdanton, Texas.

In these families, Walter Bascom and Adelaide Munson have three grandchildren, eight great-grandchildren, and at least five great-great grandchildren.

Chart 21
Descendants of Walter Bascom Munson



Chapter 28

The Life and Family of Milam Stephen Munson b. 1869 — d. 1950



The eighth and last child and sixth son of Mordello and Sarah Munson was named Milam Stephen Munson, born September 26, 1869, at Ridgely Plantation at Bailey's Prairie. He obtained a law degree from the University of Texas Law School at the age of 18 and practiced law in Angleton. From 1920 until his death in 1950, he was Texas State District Judge in Angleton. In 1901 he married Carrie Diggs, and they lived in the "Judge Munson home" on "Munson Row" for almost fifty years. They raised three sons and a daughter, and these have produced the M. S. Munson branch of the Munsons of Texas.



The name Milam in Milam Stephen Munson's name may have come from Mordello's half-brother, Robert Milam Caldwell, who was born June 25, 1836, and was always called Milam. His name, in turn, may have come from the Texas hero, Ben Milam, who died at San Antonio in an early battle for Texas independence, just six months before Robert Milam's birth. The Stephen in Milam Stephen Munson's name was for family friend Stephen Perry, who in later years left a house-lot at Quintana to his namesake. Sarah Munson was 38 years old when her last child, Stephen, was born, and she had had eight children in eighteen years. Stephen was raised on the plantation with his seven older brothers and sisters and his seven "adopted" cousins.

As with the other children, Stephen received his primary education at home and later at a school taught by Miss Minnie Dewey (later Mrs. Stratton) at the Dewey home near Oyster Creek Station. He attended Southwestern University in Georgetown with brother Bascom and then the University of Texas Law School. Sarah's diary describes the day that Bascom and Stephen left home for Georgetown. An entry dated September 21, 1882, when Stephen was just 12 years old, reads, "We have all been so busy getting the boys ready to start tomorrow." On the next day she wrote: "Mr. Munson & Emma and my 'darling boys' left. Oh how I have missed them and especially my Baby Boy. I feel as though I cannot stay home without him... even the sheep look sad and his pony little Button was anxiously looking for him this evening. I pray God to Bless my darlings." On September 26 she wrote: "'Tis Stephen's thirteenth birthday. I wonder how my darling Boy is tonight. So far far away from his Mamma. I wrote to him today."

Stephen received his law degree in the same graduating class as his two brothers in the spring of 1888, at the age of 18, the youngest graduate of the law school up to that time. Too young to be admitted to the Texas Bar, he returned to Bailey's Prairie and worked with his father. At the

age of 21 he was admitted to the bar and began practice with Lewis R. Bryan in Velasco. In 1901 he married, moved to Angleton, and entered the firm of Munson, Munson & Munson with his brothers Waddy and Bascom.

On April 9, 1901, at the age of 31, Stephen married Carrie Diggs of East Columbia. They built a home on the Munson land in Angleton. This handsome home still stands at 600 S. Walker Street. The house was built on the site of the original Kennedy home which was destroyed in the 1900 storm. Members of the M. S. Munson family occupied this home for about eighty years.

Carrie Diggs was born in East Columbia on April 20, 1876, the daughter of William Harry Diggs from Virginia and Laura Jane Underwood Diggs. William Diggs and his brother-in-law, Joe Underwood, operated the Underwood & Diggs store in East Columbia. Joe and Laura Jane Underwood's father was Ammon Underwood, who had come to Texas from Massachusetts and built the historic Underwood house, which stands today in East Columbia. One of Joe Underwood's daughters, Louise, married George P. Munson II. Thus Carrie Diggs Munson and Louise Underwood Munson were first cousins. (See Chapter 15 for the story of the Underwood family).

Milam Stephen and Carrie Munson had five children: Laura Munson, Milam Stephen Munson II, Joyce Munson, Hillen Armour Munson II, and Lewis Underwood Munson. Baby Laura died of typhoid fever while her father was away from home on a business trip, and Carrie packed the baby's body in ice in the bathtub until her husband returned. Laura is buried in the Munson Cemetery. All of the other children grew to adulthood, married, and have children.

Milam Stephen Munson I was a partner in the law firm of Munson, Munson & Munson from about 1901 until Waddy became county judge in 1913; and with Mr. J. T. Williams in the firms of Williams & Munson, and Munson, Williams & Munson from about 1913 until 1920. In 1920 Stephen was appointed by Governor William Hobby to fill an unexpired term as district judge of the Twenty-Third Judicial District of Texas, which included Matagorda, Fort Bend, Wharton, and Brazoria Counties. Stephen then held this elected judgeship until his death in 1950. He was so popular and respected in this position that he never had an opponent in any election during those thirty years. The old Angleton Courthouse in which he held court is now the home of the Brazoria County Historical Museum.

A letter received by Judge Munson in 1944 reads as follows:

Edinburg, Texas,
April 6, 1944

Judge M. S. Munson
Angleton, Texas

Dear Judge Munson:

Permit me to congratulate you upon having the finest record of any district judge in Texas.

When we first studied statistics, we thought that the 1st, 2nd, and 23rd districts were on a par and that three courts shared top honors equally. However, the revised statistics... show that your court has the best record.

Also, I want to thank you for your cooperation and help. We have revised our statistics to reflect the figures you sent us instead of those shown by the Reports of the Texas Civil Judicial Council.

With all good wishes, I am

Very respectfully yours,
L. Hamilton Lowe,
Chairman Com. on Judicial Re-
districting, State Bar of Texas

Milam Stephen Munson died on October 15, 1950, at the age of 81, and Carrie Munson died on January 12, 1965, at the age of 88. Both are buried in the Munson Cemetery at Bailey's Prairie.

The Descendants of Milam Stephen Munson and Carrie Diggs

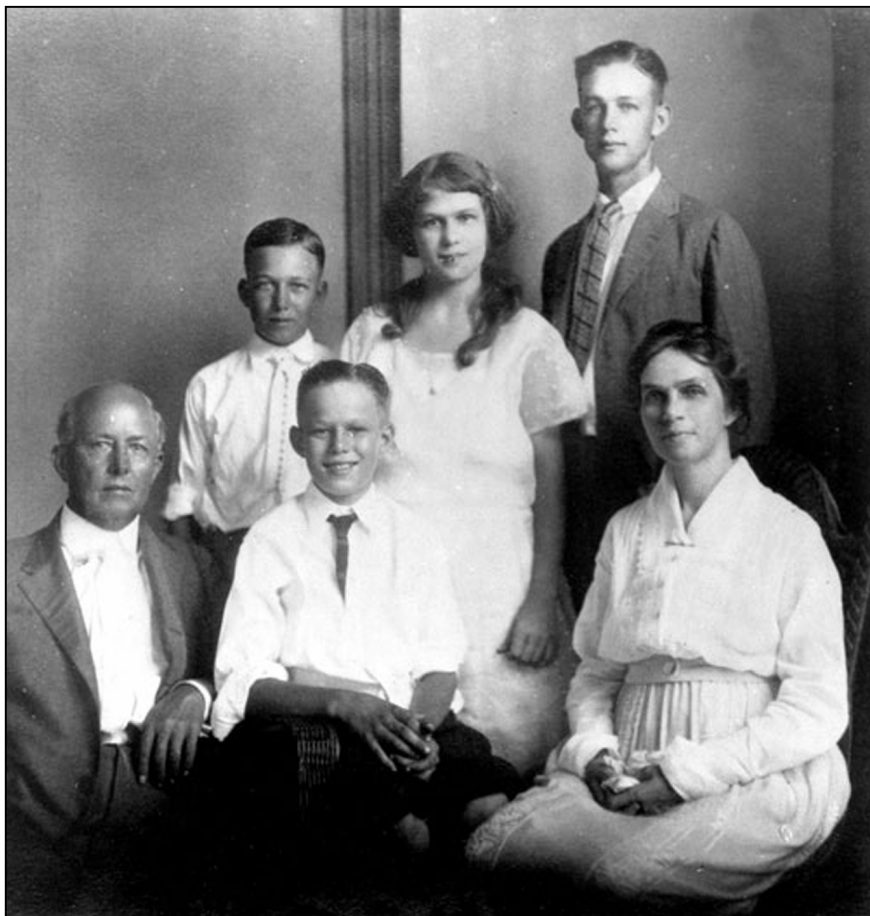
The first child of Stephen and Carrie was daughter **Laura Munson**, born in 1902. Laura died of typhoid fever in 1905 and is buried in the Munson Cemetery.



The second child was named **Milam Stephen Munson II**, born June 27, 1904. Also known as Stephen, he went through the Angleton schools and obtained a law degree from the University of Texas. He practiced law all his adult life in Wharton, Texas. He married Betty Burnaby and they have two children: Bettie Joyce and Burnaby Munson. Bettie Joyce married Lt. Ward C. Patton Jr. in Waco upon his graduation from flight school. She has spent her married life in the Midwest, first as a mother and officer's wife, and later as a rural pastor's wife. She and Ward have three children: Joyce Elizabeth Kavanagh, a public health nurse in Colorado, Stephen Michael, a patent attorney in Illinois, and Ward III, a consulting engineer in Wisconsin. Bettie and Ward celebrated their 54th wedding anniversary in 2006 and are enjoying retirement in Appleton, Wisconsin. Burnaby Munson studied chemistry at the University of Texas and the University of Wisconsin, where he received a Ph. D. degree. For many years he has been a professor of chemistry at the University of Delaware in Newark, Delaware. He is not married. After Betty Burnaby Munson died on November 4, 1946, Stephen married Sarah Estelle Hancock, and they lived in Wharton. Estelle passed away July 21, 1989 at age 77, and Stephen died December 27, 1993 at age 89. Both are buried in the Munson Cemetery.



The third child of Stephen and Carrie was **Joyce Munson**, born March 7, 1907. After high school in Angleton, she attended the University of Texas where she met and married Alton Eugene "Tony" Robertson from Lockhart, Texas. After working briefly in Lockhart and San Antonio, "Tony" Robertson formed his own firm of Robertson, Dewar & Pancoast—a firm which deals in stocks, bonds, and investment banking in San Antonio. Joyce and Tony had two children: Ann Robertson and A. E. "Robbie" Robertson Jr. Joyce Munson Robertson died in San Antonio on March 3, 1985. "Tony" Robertson died the following year, on October 28, 1986. Daughter Ann married Edward Yeager III, and they have four children. In later years she married John Carter, and she died in California in 1985. Son Alton Eugene "Robbie" Robertson Jr. married first Barbara Lee Huggins and they have two children, three grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. He married second Paula Anne Wells, and they have two children and two grandchildren. Robbie died in Aransas County, Texas, April 6, 1989.



Milam Stephen Munson family

Top: Armour, Joyce, Stephen Jr. **Bottom:** Stephen Sr., Lewis and Carrie



Laura Munson

Died of typhoid at age 3

The fourth child of Stephen and Carrie, born on March 13, 1909, was named **Hillen Armour Munson II**. He was named for his uncle Hillen Armour, who was killed just six months after his namesake's birth. Hillen Armour II graduated from Angleton High School and studied engineering at Texas A. & M. College for two years. Thereafter he returned to Angleton and engaged in cattle ranching for the rest of his life. He married Betty Bingham of Chenango, and they have three children: Hillen Armour Munson III, Betty Munson Gunn, and Mary Diggs Munson Sheeran. Betty and Mary are married, and Betty and her husband, Robert Gunn, have two children. Hillen Armour III is not married. He lives at the old Bingham homeplace in Chenango, Texas. Hillen Armour Munson II died of heart failure on November 27, 1969, at the age of 60, and is buried in the Munson Cemetery. Betty Bingham Munson Bryan passed away September 21, 2002 at age 88.



The fifth child of Stephen and Carrie was **Lewis Underwood Munson**, born October 23, 1911. He was the thirty-ninth (approximately) and last of the grandchildren of Mordello and Sarah Munson. Lewis graduated from Angleton High School and attended Schreiner Institute in Kerrville, Texas, for one year. He then returned to Brazoria County where, except for a brief time spent in Boerne, Texas, as ranch manager for his brother-in-law Tony Robertson, he was a part-time cattleman for the rest of his life. He worked for the Freeport Sulfur Company in Louisiana for a short time, then with the Texas Livestock Commission as an inspector in its cattle-fever-tick eradication program. From 1939 till 1972, he was employed by the Dow Chemical Company in Freeport, Texas, as a power-plant operator. After retirement he worked in the Brazoria County tax office as a tax appraiser from 1972 till 1977.

Lewis Munson married Mildred Mottesheard on April 14, 1937. In 1938 they built a house at 305 S. Walker Street, at the corner of Peach Street. They lived in this house until after the death of Lewis' parents, after which time, in 1971, they moved into the large home at 600 S. Walker Street. Mildred Munson was born on February 9, 1918, and died on April 9, 1977. In 1983 Lewis married Jo Nell Terry, formerly Jo Nell Scarbrough, and they were living near Brazoria, Texas, at the time of Lewis' death on March 15, 1986, at the age of 74. Both Lewis and Mildred are buried in the Munson Cemetery.

Lewis and Mildred had four sons: Lewis William "Billy" Munson died October 7, 1987 at age 46. Milam Armour Munson died 31 January 2006 in San Augustine, Texas, at age 61. James Stephen "Jimmy" Munson practiced law with his uncle, Milam Stephen Munson Jr., in Wharton, Texas, and passed away there on July 31, 1997 at age 51. Robert Carson Munson passed away in Brazoria County on 30 May 2002 at age 52. All married and among them had five children, including two sons to carry on the Munson name. All four boys are buried in the Munson Cemetery at Bailey's Prairie.

Chart 22
Descendants of Milam Stephen Munson



Milam Stephen³ Munson, b. 26 Sep 1869 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 15 Oct 1950 Brazoria Co., TX
 +**Carrie³ Diggs**, b. 20 Apr 1876 Brazoria Co., TX, m. 9 Apr 1901 Brazoria Co., d. 12 Jan 1965 Brazoria Co.

├── **Laura⁴ Munson**, b. 1902, d. 1905

├── **Milam Stephen⁴ Munson Jr**, b. 27 Jun 1904 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 27 Dec 1993 Wharton Co., TX
 +**Emily Elizabeth⁴ Burnaby**, b. circa 1907 TX, m. circa 1927, d. 4 Nov 1946

 ├── **Bettie Joyce⁵ Munson**, b. 18 Jun 1929 Wharton Co., TX
 +**Ward C.⁵ Patton II**

 ├── **Joyce Elizabeth⁶ Patton**
 +**Phil⁶ Kavanagh**

 ├── **Stephen Michael⁶ Patton**
 +**Sue⁶ (--?--)**

 └── **Ward C.⁶ Patton III**

 └── **Dr. Milam Stephen Burnaby⁵ Munson**, b. 20 Mar 1933 Wharton Co., TX
 +**Sarah Estelle⁴ Hancock**, b. 22 Oct 1911, d. 21 Jul 1989 Wharton Co., TX

├── **Joyce⁴ Munson**, b. 7 Mar 1907 Brazoria County, TX, d. 2 Mar 1985 Bexar County, TX
 +**Alton Eugene⁴ Robertson**, b. 8 Dec 1901, m. circa 1926, d. 28 Oct 1986 Bexar County, TX

 ├── **Ann⁵ Robertson**, b. 31 Aug 1931 Bexar County, TX, d. 10 May 1985 Los Angeles County, CA
 +**Edward⁵ Yerger III**

 ├── **Edward "Todd"⁶ Yerger IV**, b. 12 Feb 1956 Dallas Co., TX

 ├── **Stephen Robertson⁶ Yerger**, b. 7 Feb 1957 Bexar Co., TX

 ├── **Joyce Vickers⁶ Yerger**, b. 28 Sep 1958 Dallas Co., TX
 +**John⁶ Feeney**

 ├── **Edward Charles⁷ Feeney**

 └── **Patrick⁷ Feeney**

 └── **Ann Campbell⁶ Yerger**, b. 22 Mar 1960 Dallas Co., TX
 +**David Allan⁶ Etchell**, b. 6 Mar 1964

 └── **Jessica Ann⁷ Etchell**, b. 20 Nov 1989

 └── +**John⁵ Carter**

└── **Alton Eugene⁵ Robertson Jr**, b. 23 Jul 1936 Bexar County, TX, d. 6 Apr 1989 Aransas Co., TX
 +**Barbara Lee⁵ Huggins**

 ├── **Alton Eugene⁶ Robertson III**, b. 2 Sep 1957 Bexar Co., TX

 ├── **Laura Lee⁶ Robertson**, b. 28 Dec 1959 Bexar Co., TX
 +**Allen Wade⁶ Crane**, b. circa 1959, m. 14 Feb 1978

 └── **Allen Wade⁷ Crane Jr**, b. 6 Jul 1978 Bexar Co., TX
 +**Olivia Marie⁷ Gifford**

 └── **Tyler Wade⁸ Sekula**, b. 29 Jun 1995 Bexar Co., TX

 └── +**Jennifer Nicole⁷ Knoepfel (--?--)**, m. 6 Jan 1997

 ├── **Katelyn Brooke⁸ Crane**, b. 2 Jun 1997 Bexar Co., TX

 └── **Lauryn Ashley⁸ Crane**, b. 14 Jun 1999 El Paso Co., CO

└── +**Kelly D.⁶ Jones**, b. circa 1958, m. 30 May 1981 Bell Co., TX

 ├── **Shelby Lee⁷ Jones**, b. 17 Jan 1982 Bexar Co., TX

 └── **Shanelle Dee⁷ Jones**, b. 28 Jul 1983 Bexar Co., TX, d. 17 Sep 2000

(Chart 22 continued on next page)

(Chart 22 continued)

+**Paula Anne**⁵ **Wells**
 ├── **Travis Wells**⁶ **Robertson**, b. 18 Jul 1966 Bexar Co., TX
 ├── **Carrie**⁶ **Robertson**, b. 11 Dec 1969 Bexar Co., TX
 ├── +**Michael Anthony**⁶ **Bishop**, m. 17 Dec 1987 Collin Co., TX
 ├── **Michael Anthony "TJ"**⁷ **Bishop Jr**, b. 28 May 1988 Dallas Co., TX
 ├── **Nathaniel Taylor**⁷ **Bishop**, b. 15 Nov 1991 Dallas Co., TX
 ├── +**William Aaron "Bill"**⁶ **Lacey**, eng. 14 Sep 2007
 ── **Hillen Armour**⁴ **Munson II**, b. 13 Mar 1909 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 27 Nov 1969 Harris Co., TX
 +**Betty**⁴ **Bingham**, b. 24 Aug 1914, m. 18 Dec 1939 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 21 Sep 2002
 ├── **Betty Bingham**⁵ **Munson**, b. 9 Nov 1944 Brazoria Co., TX
 ├── +**Robert Edwin**⁵ **Gunn**, m. 4 Apr 1970 Harris Co., TX
 ├── **Mary Elizabeth**⁶ **Gunn**, b. 16 Oct 1971 Harris Co., TX
 ├── +**Brian Lawrence**⁶ **Foley**
 ├── **Sean Lawrence**⁷ **Foley**, b. say 2004
 ├── **Sarah Katherine**⁷ **Foley**, b. say Oct 2005
 ├── **Robert Armour**⁶ **Gunn**, b. 24 Aug 1979 Harris Co., TX
 ├── **Hillen Armour**⁵ **Munson III**, b. 1 Sep 1948 Brazoria Co., TX
 ├── **Mary Digges**⁵ **Munson**, b. 2 Jan 1950 Brazoria Co., TX
 ├── +**Joseph T.**⁵ **Sheeran**, m. 21 Apr 1979 Harris Co., TX
 ── **Lewis Underwood**⁴ **Munson**, b. 23 Oct 1911 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 15 Mar 1986 Harris Co., TX
 +**Mildred Fay**⁴ **Mottesheard**, b. 9 Feb 1918, m. 4 Apr 1937 Brazoria v, TX, d. 9 Apr 1977 Brazoria Co.
 ├── **Lewis William**⁵ **Munson**, b. 8 Apr 1941 Harris Co., TX, d. 7 Oct 1987 Brazoria Co.
 ├── +**Mary Clive**⁵ **Moller**, m. 27 Jul 1968 Brazoria Co., TX
 ├── **William Stratton**⁶ **Munson**, b. 7 Aug 1974 Harris Co., TX
 ├── +**Stephanie Marie**⁶ **Bevers**, b. 12 Apr 1973, m. Brazoria Co., TX
 ├── **Emily Elizabeth**⁷ **Munson**, b. 23 Dec 2005 Harris Co., TX
 ├── **Mary Elizabeth Mildred**⁶ **Munson**, b. 3 May 1985 Harris Co., TX
 ├── **Milam Armour**⁵ **Munson**, b. 7 Feb 1944 Harris Co., TX, d. 31 Jan 2006 San Augustine Co., TX
 ├── +**Connie**⁵ **Todd**, m. 15 Nov 1969
 ├── **Rachel**⁶ **Munson**, b. 5 Apr 1981 Harris Co., TX
 ├── +**Kenneth W.**⁶ **Goolsby II**, b. circa 1981, m. 23 Jun 2001 Brazoria Co., TX
 ├── **James Stephen**⁵ **Munson**, b. 11 Nov 1945 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 31 Jul 1997 Wharton Co., TX
 ├── +**Marilyn**⁵ **Colley**
 ├── **Carrie Winn**⁶ **Munson**, b. 23 Dec 1969 Harris Co., TX
 ├── +**Michael Scott**⁶ **Goss**
 ├── **James Scott**⁷ **Goss**, b. 2004
 ├── **James Stephen**⁶ **Munson II**, b. 27 Dec 1981 Wharton Co., TX
 ├── **Robert Carson**⁵ **Munson**, b. 14 Oct 1949 Brazoria Co., TX, d. 30 May 2002 Brazoria Co.
 ├── +**Delores Fay**⁵ **Ward**, m. 16 Jul 1976 Brazoria Co., TX
 ── +**Jo Nell**⁴ **Scarborough**, m. 12 Aug 1983 Brazoria Co., TX



Chapter 29

The Munsons of Today — 1987



The date was June 13, 1987. The occasion was the forty-second annual Munson Family Reunion. Over 150 descendants of Henry William Munson and Ann Binum Pearce had gathered for their annual reunion at the Brazoria County Fairgrounds.

Suspended on the wall were two giant charts on artist canvas, each four feet high and twenty feet long. One chart showed the descendants of Henry William Munson and Ann Pearce Munson through their son Mordello. The other showed the descendants of Henry William Munson and Ann Pearce Munson through their son George P. Munson, plus the descendants of Ann Pearce Munson Caldwell and James P. Caldwell through their son Robert Milam Caldwell. The second chart was so organized because there were two intermarriages between the children of George P. Munson and Robert Milam Caldwell.

The first chart contained the names of all the descendants of Mordello and Sarah Munson, (and their spouses), a total of approximately 430 names, and the second chart contained almost as many. There have been, therefore, approximately 800 members of the Munsons of Texas over eight generations beginning in 1793.

The Munson Cemetery

A letter dated April 30, 1857, from Sarah K. Munson to her husband, Mordello, who, as a state representative, was attending a session of the legislature in Austin, reads in part: “Mr. Strobel wrote me a note this morning asking permission to deposit the body of Mr. Stallworth, late overseer of the Retrieve Plantation, in the grave yard on our place. They bury him this evening at 4 o’clock.” No record of an earlier burial has been found, but the letter sounds as if this had previously been designated as a graveyard.

When James P. Caldwell died at the home of Mordello and Sarah on November 16, 1856, he was buried at the Peach Point Cemetery near his Oakland Plantation home. After the Civil War, however, and for the next forty-five years, when Munson family members died in Brazoria County they were usually buried at the Bailey’s Prairie burial plot. Before this the family burial grounds had been at Peach Point, where Henry William Munson I, William Benjamin Munson, Gerard Brandon Munson, and James P. Caldwell had been buried, as well as Stephen F. Austin and the early Perry and Bryan family members.

Possibly the first Munson family member to be buried in the Munson Cemetery was Claud, the young daughter of George P. and Agnes Munson, who died in about 1871 at about the age of four. The next may have been Lydia, the first child of George and Hannah, who died at birth.

During these years the cemetery may not have been a formal cemetery at all, but just an informal family burial ground on the plantation. An entry in Sarah Munson's diary dated March 13, 1882, states, "I went out to the graves this evening for the first time since we came from Tenn." She had returned from Tennessee in the summer of 1881. After George Poindexter Munson I was buried there in 1878, Sarah K. Munson I in 1887, Kate Cahill Munson in 1899, and Mordello S. Munson in 1903, it had certainly taken on more importance.

Many of the Munson babies who died in childhood—Laura, Stephen Olin, and the Kennedy and Murray children—were buried there around the turn of the century. Hillen Armour Munson and Emma Mary Murray were buried there in 1909, but thereafter, with no one living on the Bailey's Prairie property and with the new Angleton Cemetery having opened, the Munson Cemetery became a victim of neglect and fell into disfavor with most of the family. Many family groups purchased lots in the Angleton Cemetery and have continued to use this as their burial grounds. Family members who were buried in the Angleton Cemetery during these years include Sarah "Doll" Munson Kennedy in 1913, Adelaide "Addie" Munson in 1916, Joseph Waddy Munson I in 1917, Henry W. Munson III in 1924, Walter Kennedy in 1926, George C. Munson in 1931, Lilla Cox Munson in 1934, Hannah Adriance Munson in 1937, and Mary Corinne West Munson in 1939. Only the Murray family continued to use the Munson Cemetery during these years. The Reverend Joseph Murray was buried there in 1919 and his son, Mordello Stephen Murray, in 1923.

In 1935 some senior members of the Munson family took steps to improve the Munson Cemetery. On August 31, 1935, they filed a charter for a Texas non-profit cemetery corporation under the name "The Munson Cemetery Association." The signatures on the filing and the three initial directors were M. S. Munson, Mrs. Emma M. Murray, and W. B. Munson. It may have been at about this time, or earlier, that the sturdy cement wall was built around the small, original cemetery plot—no one seems to remember. After this date the use of the cemetery increased, with Emma Munson Murray being buried there in 1936; Mary Munson Williamson and her husband, Byron, (who had died in 1940) in 1943; George Poindexter Munson II in 1944, and his wife, Louise Underwood Munson, in 1946; Milam Stephen Munson I in 1950, and numerous others in later years.

On June 10, 1967, a Texas State historical marker designating and describing the Munson Cemetery was placed on State Highway 35 beside the cemetery. In 1971 George P. Munson III was elected president of the Munson Cemetery Association, and many improvements were made under his leadership during the next eight years. Additional land was added by a gift from W. Bascom Munson II; the entire grounds were surveyed, fenced, and platted for future use; regular maintenance was provided; and a financial fund was started with the aim of building the fund to a sufficient size to provide permanent care for the grounds. The sources of income for this fund were lot sales, gifts, and investments.

Thurmond Williamson was elected president in 1979, and the program of maintenance, improvement, and financial management has continued. The current directors of the Munson Cemetery Association, besides the president, are George McCauley Munson, George P. Munson III, Milam Munson, Henry W. Munson V, Mary Emma Stasny, Frank W. Stevens, Ligon Foster, Alice Ball, Frances Caldwell, Darren Morehead, and Mary Nuhn. The family is fortunate that a large number of interested young members serve on this committee.

The Munson Name

Even though Henry William Munson I had seven sons, his son Mordello had six, and his grandson George Poindexter Munson II had four, the Munson name is becoming rare among the younger generations of the Munsons of Texas.

In the George Poindexter Munson family, the youngest generation has sixteen members, but only two are sons with the Munson name. These are the two grandsons of Joe Underwood Munson—Joseph David Munson and Robert Powell Munson.

In the Mordello Munson family, in the fourth generation, there are 104 great-great-grandchildren, but there are only nine “sons” with the Munson name; and, at this time, only two great-great-grandsons named Munson. Of Mordello’s nine “Munson” great-great-grandsons, three are in the George C. Munson family: Henry William Munson V, Mordello Stephen Munson III, and Jimmy Munson. Also his two Munson great-great-grandsons are here—Luke Mordello Munson and James Stephen Munson.

Three of the nine Munson great-great-grandsons are in the Joseph Waddy Munson branch—Thurmond Edward Munson, David Robert Munson, and Thomas Armour Munson; one is in the Walter Bascom Munson branch—Houston Cotton Munson III; and two are in the Milam Stephen Munson branch—William Stratton Munson and James Stephen Munson Jr.

In another several generations, the Munson name could conceivably disappear altogether.

The Annual Munson Family Reunion

World War II sent many young Munson men and a few women to faraway parts of the world. One of these men, George McCauley Munson, was engaged on the Burma Road in the China-Burma-India Theatre. In 1945, during one of his many homesick moments, he wrote to his great-uncle, Judge Milam Stephen Munson, and to his aunt, Ruth Munson Smith, suggesting that the family have an annual family reunion after the war was over. Judge Munson, at the age of 77, adopted the idea and organized the first reunion on October 12, 1946. It was scheduled to be held at the old home place at Bailey’s Prairie, but inclement weather forced it to be moved to the Brazoria County Fair Grounds in Angleton. The second reunion was then scheduled for Bailey’s Prairie on April 25, 1947, in commemoration of Mordello Stephen Munson’s 124th birthday anniversary. It is thought that this reunion was held at the home of Judge Munson, probably due to inclement weather. This date was not convenient for out-of-town relatives, so the date was changed to twelve o’clock noon on the second Saturday in June. The reunion has since been held on that date each year, either at the old home place at Bailey’s Prairie, or the Brazoria County Fair Grounds in the event of rain.

Many young men of the family spend the entire night and morning before the reunion barbecuing beef over open coals, telling tales, and preparing the grounds for a barbecue dinner served picnic style under the live oak trees. The Munson ladies bring their favorite salads and desserts. This delicious, old-fashioned Texas barbecue and the selection of homemade pies and cakes made by some of the best cooks in the South is a treat never to be forgotten.

At the conclusion of each reunion meeting, a short business meeting is held at which a committee of twelve is chosen to manage the reunion arrangements for the next year. There has always been a solid corps of stalwart workers who participate each year. During the past decade, the annual attendance has varied between about 160 and 190, with Munson descendants coming from Boston, New York City, Delaware, Washington, D.C., Tennessee, Colorado, Arizona,

California, and Hawaii. It is a great time to visit old, dear relatives and to meet new ones. It is what holds this family, the Munsons of Texas, together.

Appendix I

The Munson Papers



The *Munson Papers* are a sizable collection of genealogical data on the Munsons of Texas. They are derived from two major sources: the personal papers of Mordello Stephen Munson and the research data of Erma Munson Rich.

The papers of Mordello Stephen Munson, including a few from his father, Henry William Munson, were no doubt held in his home, Ridgely Plantation, at Bailey's Prairie from 1850 until his death in 1903. His home is said to have burned in about 1905, and fortunately his youngest son, Milam Stephen Munson, had removed these papers to the attic of his home at 600 S. Walker Street in Angleton, Texas. The papers remained there for about forty-seven years, until they were discovered by Erma Munson Rich on a severely cold winter day in 1950. She was so excited that she carried them to her car until her family forced her to stop in fear of her becoming ill from the cold. To the last she regretted that she did not finish the job and retrieve them all. Erma kept, studied, and transcribed the documents for the next thirty years, and to her goes major credit for determining their content. When age forced Erma to give up her home, her daughters offered the papers to this writer.

During the 1960s and 1970s this writer, noting the severe deterioration of many of the older documents, urged Erma to give the Munson Papers to the Eugene C. Barker Texas History Library at the University of Texas at Austin for permanent preservation. This library contains the *Austin Papers*, the *Perry Papers*, the *Bryan Papers*, and the *Adriance Papers*, along with many other collections. In 1985 the *Munson Papers* were transferred to the Barker Library for permanent safekeeping. A copy of every document was returned to this writer for his further study and use. The original collection will reside permanently in Austin, Texas, where it is available for use by anyone at any time.

Appendix II**Munsons Found in the Early United States Census Records of the South****VIRGINIA**

1790 Census	No Munsons found
1800 Census	No Munsons found
1820 Census	John Munson

NORTH CAROLINA

1790 Census	Moses Munson	3 white males 16 & over; 3 white females; no children
1800 Census	No Munsons found	
1810 Census	No Munsons found	

SOUTH CAROLINA

1790 Census	Orangeburgh District	Martha Munson	with 2 white males under 16, one slave
	"	Patience Munson	with 2 white females, 4 slaves
1800 Census	Greenville County	Isaac Munson	1 male over 45; 1 female over 45
	Barnwell District	Wright Munson	2 males 26-45; 1 male 10-16; 3 females 26-45; 2 females under 10; no slaves
1810 Census	Richland District	Mrs. Munson	Alone
	"	William Munson	1 male 26-45; 1 male 16-26; 1 female 16-26; 1 female under 10
1820 Census	"	Robert Munson	
	"	William Munson Sr.	
	Lancaster County	Jonis L. Munson	
	Sumter County	R.V.W. Munson	(work hand)

1830 Census	Richland District	William Munson	
	"	Robert Munson	
	"	Rob Munson	
	Lancaster County	Gaynus L. Munson	(Jonis in previous census)
	Charleston County	Jesse Munson	
1840 Census	Richland District	Robert Munson	(children given in will as Jesse, William, John, James, Thomas and Elizabeth)
	Charleston County	Jane Munson	
1850 Census	Richland District	Jesse Munson	
	"	John Munson	
	"	Thomas Munson	
	"	William C. Munson	

KENTUCKY

1790 Census	Fayette County	Isaac Munson	
	"	Samuel Munson Sr.	
1800 Census	Bourbon County (formed from Fayette County)	Isaac Munson	
	"	Samuel Munson	
	Henry County	Allin Munson	
1820 Census	Bourbon County	No Munsons found	
	Scott County	Allen Munson	
	"	William Munson	
	Nicholas County	Doll Munson	

Appendix III**Petition by Mordello Munson to the Probate Court of Brazoria County
(March 27, 1848)**

1. Text of petition by Mordella S. Munson to the Probate Court of Brazoria County, March 27, 1848 (as transcribed by Erma Munson Rich):

State of Texas

County of Brazoria

To the Hon. Probate Court for said County.

The petition of Mordella S. Munson of said County respectfully requests [—]. Henry W. Munson [—] departed this life in this State sometime in the year 1833, intestate, possessed of considerable property and leaving a widow, Ann B., who has since intermarried with James P. Caldwell, and four children, viz. William B., George and Gerrard and your petitioner. That the said Ann B. intermarried with James P. Caldwell in the year 1835. That she is the mother of your petitioner and of the other children of said H. W. Munson. That the said William B. departed this life in said County in the month of March of the present year intestate and without issue, possessed of some property, real and personal – and [—] your petitioner with the said Gerrard and George, together with Milam and Mary Jane, children of said James P. & Ann B. Caldwell. That the said Gerrard and George are minors and [that] James P. Caldwell [—] duly [—] their guardian – [—] Milam and Mary Jane are also minors. That the estate of said Henry W. and Ann B. Munson have never been divided.

Wherefore the petitioner prays that the said James P. Caldwell and wife and said Gerrard and George by their guardian as well as the said Milam and Mary Jane be cited to answer this petition – that commissioners be appointed to make partition of said estate and of the other property held by the said parties. Other guardians be appointed to defend the interests of said minors in this suit and for [—].

March 27, 1848

M. S. Munson by his atty

2. Text of replies to the above petition (as transcribed by Erma Munson Rich):

State of Texas
County of Brazoria

The answer of Ann B. Caldwell assisted by James P. Caldwell, her husband, to the foregoing petition. She admits the truth of the allegations in the [petition] and says that the [property] of which her husband died possessed of, with the exception of the separate property named in the inventory, was community property of which she was entitled to one-half. She joins in the prayer for the partition of said estate.

March 28, 1948 Jas. P. Caldwell -by atty

James P. Caldwell - adm for Gerrard & George Munson admits the truth of the allegations in the petition and joins in the prayer for said partition.

March 28, 1848 J. P. Caldwell by his atty

Henry B. Andrews - Guardian as litera - Gerrard and George Munson, Milam and Mary Jane Caldwell admits the truth of the allegations in the petition and joins in the prayer for said partition.

April 1, 1848 Henry B Andrews Guardian

Appendix IV**Partition of the Estate of Henry W. Munson**

Text of partition of the estates of Henry W. Munson and William B. Munson, September 21, 1848 (from the records of the office of the Brazoria County Clerk):

State of Texas
County of Brazoria

Pursuant to the Order of the Probate Court of Brazoria County we James F Perry, Joseph M McCormick and William J Bryan met at the house of James P Caldwell in said County on the 21st day of September 1848 and having been first duly sworn proceeded to appraise and partition the Estate of Henry W and William B Munson between Ann B Caldwell and her children as follows—

First—we appraised the property of the estate of Henry W Munson viz: 554 acres of land situated in Brazoria County on which the said James P Caldwell and wife now reside, which we appraised without regard to the improvements made thereon since the death of Henry W. Munson—at the sum of	\$ 7632.00
1479 acres in Brazoria County part of the tract acquired from Wm J Bryan being the East End of the tract of 2479 acres situated on the ___ Bank of the Brazos River in this County, lying near Bolivar we appraised at \$3 per acre	\$ 4437.00
2222 acres on the Bernard - part of the Head Right of Gray and Moore at \$2.50	\$ <u>5555.00</u> \$17624.00
4444 acres on the Navidad the headright league of Henry W. Munson at seventy-five cents pr ac	\$ 3334.00
1000 acres on the East Bank of the Brazos River in this County part of the tract of 2479 acres purchased from William J Bryan - the said 1000 acres being the West End of said tract	\$ 5000.00

Second We then appraise the property belonging to the Estate of William B. Munson as follows viz

130 Head of cattle	at \$4 per head	\$520.00
1 Sorrell Horse	at	\$ 75.00
1 Ox Cart	at	\$ 30.00
— Stock of Hogs	at	\$100.00
Farming Utensils	at	\$ 30.00

Furniture &c at \$100.00
 Making the sum of \$26,825.00

The negro woman slave Maria mentioned in the Inventory we ascertained was dead and the boy Sam mentioned in the Inventory appears by the Bill of Sale produced to us to belong to Mordella Munson. The other slaves mentioned in the Inventory is the separate property of the Said Ann B.Caldwell. The other personal property mentioned in the Inventory (with the exception of the cattle) we could not appraise or divide, and as it was of a perishable nature, it may be supposed not to be in existence.

As the decree requires us to divide both estates, and to make certain allotments between the parties - we concluded that it would be more simple to appraise all the property and divide it between the parties, in the following manner to-wit - Suppose it to consist of sixty four shares

		64	
Mrs Ann B Caldwell will be entitled to shares	to	36	
Mordella Munson	to	9	
Gerrard Munson	to	9	
George Munson	to	9	
Robert Milam & Mary Jane Caldwell together	to	1	
Making in all sixty four shares		64	
Taking the whole property to be of the value of		— —	\$26 825,00

The said Ann B Caldwell will be entitled to		\$15 089.05
Mordella Munson	to	3,772.27
Gerrard Munson	to	3,772.27
George Munson	to	3,772.27
Robert & Mary Caldwell	to	419.14

We then allotted to Mrs Ann B Caldwell the said tract of land on which she resides

valued at	at	\$ 7632.00
An equal half of the tract of land on the Bernard	at	\$ 2777.50
The league of land on the Navidad	at	\$ 3334.00
130 head of cattle valued	at	\$ 520.00
1 Sorrell Horse	at	\$ 75.00
1 Gray Pony	at	12.00
1 Ox Cart	at	30.00
A Stock of Hogs	—	100.00
Farming utensils	—	30.00
Furniture	at	\$ 100. --
And to receive from Mordella S. Munson		\$ <u>808.59</u>
		15419.30
And to pay to George P and Gerrard B Munson		\$ 330.24
		\$15089.06

We then allotted to Mordella S Munson the tract of land containing 1000 acres being the West end of the tract of 2479 acres situated on the East Bank of the Brazos River in the County and purchased from the said Wm J Bryan \$ 5000.00

And he is to pay Ann B Caldwell	808.59	
And to pay Robert Milam Caldwell	209.57	
And to Mary Jane Caldwell	209.57	<u>\$1,227.73</u>
		\$3,772.27

And we then allotted to Gerrard B & George P Munson the tract
 1479 acres of land valued at \$4,437.00

And the undivided half of the half league of land on the Bernard valued	at	\$2.777.50
And each of them is to receive from Mrs Ann B.Caldwell	\$165.12	330.24
		\$7 544.74
We award to Robert Milam and Mary Jane Caldwell	\$209.57	
each to be paid by Mordella S Munson		\$ 419.14
We do further award that Mrs Ann B Caldwell pay to Gerrard B and George P Munson each the sum of	\$165.12	\$ 330.24
And that Mordella S Munson pay to Ann B Caldwell the said sum of		\$ 808.59

We do further award that all of said payments be made twelve months from the date hereof with eight per cent per annum interest thereon from this date until paid.

James F Perry
Wm J Bryan
J M McCormick

[Notarization present]

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 21st day of September 1848

M B Williamson Clerk C C B C

Appendix V

Division of the Slaves of James P. Caldwell and Ann B. Caldwell and Other Family Matters



Text of division of slaves of James P. and Ann B. Caldwell, and other family matters—(as transcribed by Erma Munson Rich. The document is dated “Decr. 27, 1860,” but other circumstances indicate that it was written about 1850 – See Chapter 16, page 190, footnote 187).

Know all men by these presents that we the parties to this Instrument have determined each to the other that we will carry out the provisions of this article in good faith as follows – 1st that all the Debts due from the Estate shall be paid & 2nd that we James P. & Ann B. Caldwell now partition off to each legatee the Negroes of said Estate. We James P. & Ann B. Caldwell come into said division equally taking a child's part.

Memoranda of Negroes & partition

Gerard B. Munson's part –				Geo. P. Munson's			
Negro	Jerry—	at	\$1000.00		Henderson		\$1000.00
	Manual—		1000.00		Melinda		1000.00
	Charlott		1000.00		Burrell		1000.00
	Adeline		600.00		3 children		600.00
			\$3600.00				\$3600.00
Robert Milam Caldwell's				Mary Jane Caldwell's			
	Stanford		\$1000.00		Joe	at	\$1000.00
	Ell—		1000.00		Easter	at	500.00
	Peter		1000.00		Allen	at	500.00
	An—& 2 chil		500.00		Maria	at	500.00
			\$3500.00		Sally		300.00
					Brat		100.00
							\$3400.00

Ann B. Caldwell's		James P. Caldwell		
David	\$1000.00	Abe	at	\$1000.00
G——	\$1000.00	Martha	at	\$1000.00
Deak	800.00	Arthur	at	1000.00
Eliz	500.00	Ann	at	700.00
Albert	200.00	Jack		300.00
Milly	500.00			<u>300.00</u>
	<u>\$4000.00</u>			\$4000.00
	Amount brought forward	\$22000.00		

M.S. Munson's

Ralf	\$1000.00	
Laura	\$1000.00	
Benjn.	300.00	
Joe	200.00	
	<u>\$2500.00</u>	this family with the Negro partition[ed] off years ago to Munson & passed in partition to M.S. Munson is received as full [—] satisfaction by this party – himself.

That at the death of Ann B. Caldwell her slaves as named above is hereby disposed of in the following manner, to wit—

to Gerard B. Munson	Boys Deck & Albert
to Geo. P. Munson	[—————]
to Rbt. Milam Caldwell	Boy Green
to Mary Jane Caldwell	Girl Milly & Eley

at death of Jas. P. Caldwell his moiety is hereby disposed of to wit —

to Gerard B. Munson	negro woman	Martha
to Geo. P. Munson	“	man Arthur
to Rbt. Milam Caldwell	“	“ Abe
to Mary Jane Caldwell	“	Ann & Jack

and should any of the Negros die or be lost by accident or otherwise it is to be distinctly understood that it shall be the loss of the party to whom they have been designated in this article so that at the demise of either parent, the property is so set apart that no difficulty can arise as each legatee will know his or her property without the aid of Courts or Court Officers to decide what belongs to each. The lands belonging to the Estate of H. W. Munson was divided by order of Probate Court of Brazoria County some years since (as the records will show) and we hereby direct that the lands so divided stand, and is to be so regarded by the parties to this Instrument - to say the land on Oyster Creek is the property of Gerard B. & Geo. P. Munson also [—/4] league on Bernard (this half league is known as the Gray & Moore Tract) is the property (by said division on the Court) of Ann B. Caldwell and therefore subject to the same terms of division as the other property as above, unless said party A. B. Caldwell should sell said [—/4] league of land during her life time; which privilege she retains & the parties guarantee to her – also the lands held in the name of James P. Caldwell in Bexar County [— road] 900 acres or thereabouts – 2100 acres in Goliad City - 220 acres on Brasos below Brazoria, 4 lots in town Richmond, 4 lots in Velasco, & 1 in West Columbia, one half of S. land & lots, etc. etc. are the property of Ann B. Caldwell & subject if not sold by her during her life time to same rule or [—] of division as above & any property not here mentioned shall be subject to the parties.

And the party M. S. Munson not having a title to his Bailey Prairie place from Robt Mills (or R & D. G. Mills) be it understood by the parties that should he never mature the title to Hard Castle place, that the parties hereto doth bind & agree to remunerate the said party of 7th part, so that no party shall suffer in the division, and to carry out the spirit of this [—] – be it understood by all the parties herewith that we waive any & all advantages that seem to promise success to either party and forever disclaim any other division of property than that which of right is embodied in this Instrument & to which we all pledge good faith.

Oakland plantation will be conducted by Gerard B. Munson, 1st party until be deemed proper to dispose of same to advantage, annually the said G.B.M. manager & M. S. Munson Curator, shall pay all expenses accruing to plantation & when debts are paid then shall a dividend be made annually, divided into seven (7) parts & paid over to each legatee – to say that each legatee shall receive a dividend from proceeds of plantation as are the hands of each employed to cultivate the place and in paying the debts the legatees shall pay more or less as their hands employed [—] – the negros Henry, Adam, Harriet & child not taken into this division will be a joint stock & subject to division amongst the first 6 parties named.

[signed]	Jas P. Caldwell	Ann B. Caldwell	
	Gerrard B. Munson	Geo. P. Munson	M. S. Munson
	R. M. Caldwell		

Decr 27 1860

Appendix VI

Biographical Articles on Mordello Stephen Munson



1. L. E. Daniell, Texas, *The Country and Its Men*, p. 609 (Texas State Archives).
2. John Henry Brown, *Indian Wars and Pioneers of Texas*, p. 573 (Texas State Library, Austin).
3. Myron Munson, *The Munson Record*, p. 1130, (1896).
4. Myrtle Murray, "Home Life on Early Ranches of Southwest Texas", Chapter XXXV, Col. M. S. Munson, Brazoria County, *The Cattleman Magazine*, November, (1940).
5. Junius Brutus, "The Sage of Brazoria, The Grand Old Man and Patriot," unknown Texas newspaper (1892), *Munson Papers*.