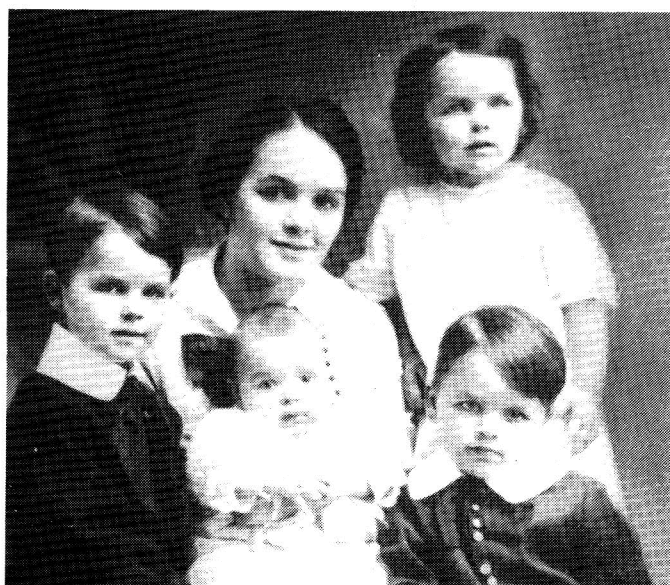




L-R: Billy Williams, Martha Franz Williams, Nancy Jane Williams Ryman, Mettie Williams Gillett, J. F. Williams



Mrs. W. W. Wilkinson, Sr., and children L-R: Walter, Jr., Virginia, John Paul, and Robert Jay

died on April 20, 1968, and was buried in Roselawn Memorial Park, Van Vleck, Texas.

The Wilkinsons were the parents of four children. Walter William, Jr. was born on May 18, 1910, the first boy born in Collegeport. He attended Schreiner Institute in Kerrville, and The University of Texas; and engaged in farming and the oil business. On September 27, 1933, he married Marjorie Jim Bruce, daughter of James Arthur and Lorena May Nolte Bruce, in St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Bay City. They were the parents of two daughters: Jean, born on March 21, 1935, married Dr. Gordon E. Richardson of Bay City (see Dr. Gordon E. Richardson Family); and Helen, born on August 17, 1936, resided in Corpus Christi and was married to Clyde H. Fitch, Jr. Walter and Marjorie Bruce Wilkinson had six grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

In the fall of 1911 the little family of three returned to Ohio by train where their second son, John Paul was born on October 25, 1911, at the home of his maternal grandparents at Bannock, Ohio. He was graduated from The University of Texas School of Law, and opened his practice in his father's offices in the Austin Building. He married Lydia Rasmussen on December 18, 1935. She was of Danish ancestry and a native of Nebraska. Their children were Carol Ann, born on October 29, 1937, who married Ray Basom of Tucson, Arizona; John Paul, Jr., born on November 6, 1939, who married Pamela Fannin on November 14, 1964, and resided in San Antonio; Marion Frances, born on March 16, 1944, who married Darrell Reaks Lester and lived in Fort Worth; and Janet Lucille, born on August 21, 1945, who married James Corbin Considine on

August 18, 1967, and resided in Midland, Texas. Due to the asthmatic condition of his daughter, Carol Ann, John Paul moved his family to Midland, Texas, in 1946 where he practiced law and was engaged in the oil business. He died in an automobile accident near Midland, Texas, on October 5, 1957. The posterity of John Paul and Lydia Rasmussen Wilkinson is their eleven grandchildren.

Frances Virginia Wilkinson was born on August 13, 1913, in Collegeport. She attended Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas, the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, Cincinnati, Ohio, and received her Degree in Music from Southwestern Louisiana Institute in Lafayette, Louisiana. On September 14, 1935, she married Lyle Lee Cummins, who died on February 20, 1970. Their son, Kent Wilkinson Cummins was born on January 11, 1942, and resided in New Braunfels.

Robert Jay Wilkinson was born in Collegeport on September 9, 1915. He held a Degree in Journalism from The University of Texas. Following his discharge from the Navy at the end of World War II, he founded the *Bay City News* of which he was owner-editor. He was later an independent oil lease broker. He married Luceile Huebner on December 28, 1939, at the First Presbyterian Church, Bay City. She was the daughter of Marion Taylor and Lillian Hurst Huebner. Their daughter, Martha, was born on December 7, 1946, married Clayton Edward Lake, and resided in Las Vegas, Nevada; and their son Robert Jay Wilkinson, Jr. was born on April 2, 1952, married Peggy Dianne Menke, and resided in Bay City. Robert Jay and Luceile Huebner Wilkinson had four grandchildren.

*Jean W. Richardson
Mrs. Bob Wilkinson*

JOHN AARON WILLIAMS FAMILY

John Aaron Williams immigrated from Denmark, and changed his name from Erasmusson to Williams because he had refused compulsory service, which he considered slavery, in the Danish Navy. He did not want to be traced to the United States. The date of his entrance is unknown, but he was in Matagorda, Texas, by 1846; that being the year that he married Catherine Franz (1828-1914), daughter of Johan Conrad and Elizabeth Franz, who arrived in Galveston from Nassau, Germany via the ship *Deluis* in 1845. They lived in the German settlement on the Matagorda Peninsula. In *A Texas Cowboy* Charles Siringo described the "Dutch" settlement on the peninsula as having a dozen houses. The John A. Williams family were kind neighbors to the widow Siringo and her two children; Charles being best friend to their son, Billy, until Billy married Charles' sweetheart, Martha Franz.



L-R: Billy Williams, Martha Franz Williams, Nancy Jane Williams Ryman, Mettie Williams Gillett, J. F. Williams

The 1850 census shows John Williams as a ships carpenter; he was also a stockman, raising cattle and sheep. During the Civil War he acted as a scout for the Confederate camp stationed at the mouth of Caney Creek, upon occasion stealing horses for the rebels from the Yankee contingent stationed at Decrow's Point on the peninsula. He was captured twice, sentenced to hang the second time, but released with a stringent warning, after the rope was placed around his neck. He was a Confederate sympathizer, but not with the slavery issue, and he helped several slaves escape. John Williams was killed shortly after the Civil War in an accident involving a cannon shell. He died in the Colorado House in Matagorda, and was buried on the peninsula. His grave site was lost.

Catherine Franz Williams was left to rear a large family alone. She bought property at Big Hill for fifty cents per acre and moved her family from the peninsula after the terrible storm of 1875. She was a good business woman and stockman, and was known in the community for good works and christian charity. She lived in her old age with her daughter, Jennie, and son-in-law, B. A. Ryman, in Matagorda. She died in the B. A. Ryman home at the age of eighty-six.

John and Catherine Williams had eleven children, all born on the Matagorda Peninsula: Ann Elizabeth (1847-1949), James F. (1849-1938), John A. (1851-1920), Wilhelmina (1853-), William (1855-), Lucy (1856-), Mary Ann "Mollie" (1858-1911), Laura Mettie (1859-), Sarah "Sallie" (1861-), Nancy Jane "Jennie" (1862-1947), and Henry P. (1864-1905). William was buried in Palacios, Laura Mettie and Henry P. were buried in Bay City, and the other children were buried in the Matagorda Cemetery.

Anne E. married William Baxter in 1868. (see William Baxter Family)

James F. married Caroline Yeamans (1852-1919), and their children were: Charles P. (1873-1950), a pharmacist, who married Daisy Phillips (1880-1941) and had Preston, James F. "Jimbo," and C. P.; Wil-

liam Elisa "Willie" (1875-1950), who married Margaret "Baby" Baxter (1880-1927) and had Dinsmore (1899-1977) and Louise; J. H. "Jimmy" (1877-1900), who was drowned in a shipwreck in Matagorda Bay in the hurricane of 1900; Laura, who married twice, her second husband, a Mr. Emill, adopted her daughter, Dorothy; Sadie, who married J. P. Pariss, and had J. P., Pat, and Irma; Annie (1886-1949) who married Gus Byers and had Margarite, and married second Mr. Maynard and had Ted; John May (1891-1918), who died overseas in the influenza epidemic during World War I; and Darwin (1893-1945) who married Virginia Foster and had one daughter, Shirley, and married second Jo Reed. The deceased were buried in the Matagorda Cemetery.

John A. "Johnny" was a cowboy who rode the Chisholm Trail. He married Rebecca Richmond and had Bryan and Henry.

Wilhelmina married first a Dr. Allen and had one son, Willie, married second a Kilbride and had Harry, and married third Henry Eidelbach, and had Eugene and Henry.

William "Billy" married Martha Franz. Their children were: George, Alvin, "Pete," Mabel, Lyda Gay, Lula, and Myrtle. They lived in Palacios.

Family tradition claims that Lucy and her sister Sally were murdered by their brother-in-law, Dr. Allen, who was in love with Lucy while married to her sister Wilhelmina. When Lucy became engaged to Henry Eidelbach, Dr. Allen poisoned her out of jealousy, and then poisoned Sally to divert suspicion. He fled the town with the Williams boys in hot pursuit, but he escaped. Later the family got a letter from him from Africa in which he told that the Williams boys had been all around him, but he had buried himself in the sand.

Laura Mettie married Jim Gillett and had Fred, Stanley, Walter, Catherine, Eloise, and Ann, who married W. T. Cox.

Sarah "Sally" and Lucy were buried on the Matagorda Peninsula. Their graves are lost.

Nancy Jane "Jennie" married Boltes Albert Ryman. (see Boltes Ryman Family)

Henry P. married Lyda Franz and had one child, Winnie, who married Stanley Rugeley. (see Rugeley Family)

The other descendants of John Aaron and Anna Katrina Elizabeth "Catherine" Franz Williams are too numerous to name; some will appear in other family histories. Those descendants living in Matagorda in 1984 were: Bess Moberley Brown, Vadyse Bedford Hood, James F. "Jimbo" Williams, Bessie Mae Baxter Owen, Oscar Rucks Moberley, Geraldine Ryman Havard, Wilma Ruth Nini Miller, Addie Lee Nini Johnson, Violet Baxter Smith, Clancy Baxter and children, Clancy and Julie, Catherine Lawhon Anderson, Jaqueline Baxter Newton, Marianne Serrill

Mathis, Richard R. Serrill and children, Richard R. III and Heather, Kenneth Baxter, Robert Baxter, and Barbara Baxter Stallings.

Geraldine Ryman Havard

THOMAS JEFFERSON WILLIAMS FAMILY

Thomas Jefferson Williams, whose father was also Thomas Jefferson Williams of northern Alabama or Georgia, came to Texas by way of Tennessee, Missouri, Arkansas, and settled near Austin, Texas, in 1819.

As a young man, Thomas Jefferson Williams was with a group of men from that Austin settlement who traveled down the Colorado River to the Gulf of Mexico to boil water for salt. In the vicinity of Cedar Lane, this group was attacked by Indians. All of the men except Thomas Jefferson and one negro slave were killed. They hid in the bushes and were not found by the Indians. It took the better part of two years for them to make their way back to the Austin settlement.

Thomas Jefferson grew to manhood, married, and moved to Waco. His home was near the Union Army Camp during the Civil War. His daughters were now of courting age, and were encouraged to be friendly with the soldiers so the community would be aware of Union activities. It was thought that the soldiers were also encouraged to be friendly with the settlers to learn their plans, especially concerning the movement of slaves. The girls soon discovered that the family was in danger of being arrested; so Thomas Jefferson packed up his family and fled their home. They drove the covered wagon all night and hid the wagon and family during the day. By this means the family arrived in Matagorda County at Ashby where Thomas Jefferson Williams purchased property from W. M. Kuykendall. The Kuykendalls had lost several of their children to fever, and he urged Thomas Jefferson not to live on the property, but Thomas J. decided that he would build his house on a hill, not on the water as Mr. Kuykendall had done—the hill was fifty feet above sea level! The Kuykendall family later moved to Clemville.

Thomas Jefferson had traded one negro slave, Ol' Cudge, for the property. Ol' Cudge ran away from the Kuykendalls several times and had to be returned to Clemville. Finally after having him returned one final time, Mr. Kuykendall told Mr. Williams to keep Ol' Cudge as he wasn't any good to either of them under the circumstances. So the land actually did not cost Mr. Williams anything. Mr. Williams gave the slave his freedom.

A school teacher had moved to the area and was accepting private students. Thomas Jefferson sent his oldest daughter, Annie Lunn, to be taught by this

teacher. She, in turn, taught the younger brothers and sisters and the children of the slaves all that she had learned. Annie Lunn wrote an account of the "Raid Away Scrape" which is in the State Archives in Austin.

The Williams' had slaves at the beginning of the Civil War. After the war, when the slaves were free, Mr. Williams' slaves and those of his cousin, Ben Moore, stayed with them. Other freed slaves of the area also came to stay, looking for food and safety. He realized that he couldn't care for all of them; so he and Ben Moore pooled resources. Ben Moore had \$50.00 and Thomas J. Williams had land; so they combined their money and the land and gave each negro family a small lot on which to build a house and the lumber to do so. This community was called "Negro Bend" and was the start of the Wilson Creek settlement.

Thomas Jefferson and his first wife had four or five children. When she died, he married her sister, who lived only eleven months. His third wife was Beck Bird from central Alabama. They had four children: Will D., Irene Williams Nappier, Thomas W., and Alice Williams Meeks. (See Will D. Williams Family)

May Williams

WILL D. WILLIAMS FAMILY

Will D. Williams was the son of Thomas Jefferson Williams. (See Thomas Jefferson Williams Family) He married Amy Wheeler, the daughter of Jack Wheeler, in 1890. Will D. bought 200 acres of land located on the Tres Palacios Creek from the brother of Shanghai Pierce, and moved to Ashby where he lived until he died in 1913. Will D. Williams was buried in the Williams Family Cemetery on the land purchased by Thomas Jefferson Williams from Mr. Kuykendall. His grave has a "Woodman of the World" marker. His wife, Amy, and his brothers and sisters are also buried there.

Will D. and Amy Williams had three children: John Thomas Williams, born on September 14, 1892; Willburn D. Williams, born in 1898; and Vida Ruth Williams Martin, born in 1895.

Among community activities in the early days on Ashby were the church services on Sunday. One Sunday community members would go south to the Ashby Community Church, spread dinner on the ground, and have preaching in the afternoon. The next Sunday they would go north to the Hawley Settlement Church and do the same. In addition to regular church they had a protracted meeting where they would camp out for a week. A preacher would come and they would have a week of meetings with preaching every day. It was remembered that Will D.'s son John Thomas broke up one of these meetings when he broke out with the measles!