

Family Reunion

*A newsletter for descendants
of Joseph Mobley, Albert McAfee,
Henry Hodge and Burl Mason*

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The Year In Review

Life has not gotten any less complicated since our last visit together. My time has been stretched thin this year both on the home and job fronts and genealogy has been forced to take a back seat for much of the year.

But, while time constraints have forced the newsletter to become an annual edition of late, that doesn't mean there hasn't been some progress made in the ongoing quest for family history. What time I have been able to spend on research this year has produced some satisfactory progress.

In April, my research partner and I traveled to the Midwest and visited a major genealogical library in Fort Wayne, Indiana. After spending a few days there, we embarked on a road trip through Illinois and Indiana, visiting cemeteries, small town libraries, and historical societies, and acquainting ourselves with some of the places

our ancestors lived before coming to Texas.

In late October, we spent a week on a Caribbean cruise with about 160 other genealogists. In between island stops, we all met for classes with some of the nation's top genealogy teachers. We didn't do any specific research, but we sure came back with a load of new techniques to try.

Next year we plan another trip to Salt Lake City and we are contemplating our next road trip. There's a good chance we will be visiting the old haunts of the Huddlestons in Alabama and the Morgans and Mobleys in Georgia. We are determined to leave no (tomb)stone unturned.



Pike County, Indiana

The trip to Indiana and Illinois gave me the opportunity to visit areas where ancestors from both my paternal and maternal lines lived for

generations. One of our last stops was near Coe, Indiana, where the Mason family settled and where some of the descendants of William and Huldah (Almon) Mason still reside.

The Mason family was instrumental in founding the Blackfoot Church, a community church shared by several denominations. The church building is no longer in existence, but the cemetery that surrounded it includes more than a hundred graves of Mason family relatives, including Burl Mason's father John, his grandparents William and Huldah and several uncles. It was a very moving experience to walk the rolling green hills of the cemetery and to stand before the tombstones of my great-great grandfather and great-great-grandparents. As I stood in front of John Mason's grave, I was reminded of the stories that my grandmother told me that she had heard from her father. John Mason died in 1866 at the

age of 41 years. She had been told that he was one of the men selected to clean out the house where a family had died from cholera, or maybe typhoid. He became ill and died, leaving a widow and three small children. His widow remarried and moved with her new husband to Bastrop County, Texas.

I don't believe my grandmother knew her grandfather's name or where the family had lived prior to Texas. As I stood at John's grave, I had the distinct feeling that she was standing there with me, pleased that the connections had been made to lead me there to pay my respects.



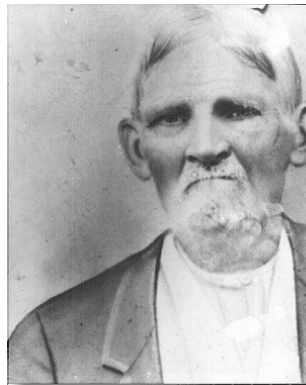
Gravesite of John Mason

Buried alongside John are two sons and a daughter who died in infancy. In the next row are John's parents, William and Huldah.



The tall central monument is a joint tribute to William Mason and his wife Huldah. On either side are older stones, William's on the left and Huldah's on the right.

Another Mason researcher recently acquired a photo of William Mason and posted it to her website.



William Washington Mason

I think you can see some similarities to his grandson Burl.



Burl Wilkes Mason

Before we left Pike County, we also visited the Davis Cemetery, where William's sister Nancy and her family are buried. Both cemeteries were surrounded by lush green hills. Crops were just beginning to make a showing in the area and the trees were in full bloom. It's beautiful country, at least in spring, and I found myself wondering why our group of Masons made the decision to move to central Texas. (Of course, if I had visited in January I might have a better idea.)

In the News

There have been great strides made this year in the world of online genealogical research. For the serious researcher, a membership to *Ancestry.com* has become a required line item in the yearly budget. Not so long ago, it was necessary to spend long hours cranking microfilm to gather census data, but this year all images are available via the Internet, and *Ancestry* has created indexes that have greatly assisted in finding those elusive ancestors.

Most of the time, that is. Even with all the new indexes, I still can't find Henry Hodge in 1880, and I still can't find Mary Mason and her children in

1870, and I still can't find Albert McAfee in 1860, 1870 or 1880. They all seem to have mastered the art of avoiding the friendly census enumerator.

The ever increasing data banks of historical newspaper images are proving to be a gold mine. I have located obituaries, tidbits of interest in personal columns and news articles. The archives of *The Dallas Morning News* have been particularly helpful in adding flesh to the bones of the family tree.

For instance, I uncovered the answer to why Burl Mason's brother-in-law William Ashley and father-in-law James Farris disappeared from all records just before the turn of the century:

Dallas Morning News

January 29, 1899

TWO MEN KILLED BY TRAIN

WERE CROSSING THE TRACK WHEN THE WAGON WAS STRUCK
Smithville, Tex. Jan 28

This evening at 5:30 o'clock William Ashley, James Farris and Charles Farris attempted to cross the Katy track in a wagon ahead of the south bound passenger train. They were struck by the train, killing William Ashley and James Farris and badly wounding Charles Farris. The team of horses was killed and the wagon demolished.



Dallas Morning News

February 4, 1899

SUES THE KATY

Bastrop, Tex., Feb 3

Mrs. Mary B. Ashley, widow of W. F. Ashley, killed at Smithville, Jan. 28, 1899, by a south-bound passenger train of the Missouri, Kansas and Texas yesterday filed suit in the district court of Bastrop county against said railroad company for damages in the sum of \$30,000.

(Mary was the second wife of William Ashley. His first wife Hulda Ellen was Burl Mason's older sister. James Farris was the father of Burl's first wife, Pinkie.)



Not only did I learn why these men dropped from view, I also learned why there are records in the office of the Bastrop County Clerk detailing the payment of large sums of money to the widow and children of William Ashley from the Katy Railroad.

Another family tragedy was detailed in the *Elgin Courier*, copies of which are being reproduced on CD by the Elgin Historical Society. The three girls in the story were the granddaughters of Hezekiah "Mack" Mobley:



Elgin Courier

July 6, 1916

TRIPLE DROWNING IN THE COLORADO NEAR BASTROP

Bastrop, Tex. July 2--Della, Edna and Lizzie Brewer, three sisters, were drowned Saturday morning while bathing in the

Colorado river about four miles west of Bastrop. They plunged into the water beyond their depth. The men of the party were fishing near and attempted to save them, but could not. One body was recovered at the spot and the other two some distance down the stream. Sheriff Perkins and others, with Judge J. N. Jenkins, went out to the scene and assisted in the recovery of the bodies.



An item found in the Dallas paper concerned Joseph Mobley's participation in the local Baptist association:



Dallas Morning News

May 31, 1896

FIFTH SUNDAY MEETING

Giddings, Lee Co., Tex, May 29—

The fifth Sunday meeting of the Western Branch association convened with the Giddings Baptist church Friday, May 27. The meeting was called to order at 10:30 a.m. Rev. J. S. Mobley was elected moderator.

An interesting programme has been carried out. "Since the Apostolic Era Has There Occurred a Holy Ghost Baptism?" was discussed at considerable length by Rev. Ed Moseley. "Epochal Points in the Life of Christ," was the subject of an interesting talk by Rev. Eugene Routh. "Inordinate Novel Reading," was discussed by Rev. N. Roberts, J. C. Hillsman and R. A. York. "The Difference Between the Law and the Gospel" was the subject of a spirited discussion by Rev. J. S. Mobley and Rev. J. Buchanan. "Do Galatians ix, 4 and Hebrews vi, 4-6 Establish the Doctrine of Apostasy?" was discussed at some length by Rev. J. F. Leak "Baptist Princi-

ples and What They Have Been Worth to the World," was the subject of an interesting and instructive discourse by Rev. J. F. Leak.

Devotional exercises, song services and sermons completed the programme.

There was quite a good attendance from other churches in the association. The next meeting will be held with the Burton Baptist Church the fifth Sunday in July.



I had to wonder when I read this article just how long it would have taken for Rev. Mobley to travel from his home in Paige to this meeting in Giddings in 1896, a distance of about 15 miles. Did he travel by horseback, wagon, or buggy? I also had to wonder just what constitutes "Inordinate Novel Reading" and if I'm guilty of having participated in that apparently distasteful activity.

The Austin papers are just beginning to make an appearance in the historical papers going online. Even with the limited editions available, I've started making some discoveries. For instance, an obituary for Great Aunt Sallie (Mobley) Fariss:



Austin American-Statesman
September 30, 1962

MRS. T. M. FARISS

BURNET—Funeral services for Mrs. T. M. (Nannie) Fariss, 90, who died Saturday in Burnet, will be held Sunday at 3 p.m. at

First Baptist Church with Rev. George Brown and Minister McCurin Harwell officiating. Burial will be in Pleasant Hill Cemetery under direction of Edgar Funeral Home.

Survivors include two daughters, Mrs. Walter Shilling and Mrs. Guy Zimmermann of Burnet; a son, Ira Fariss of Dallas; a brother, John Mobley of Peebles, Ohio; 29 grandchildren, 42 great-grandchildren and 13 great-great-grandchildren.



I am acquiring quite a number of items from personals columns and general local news items:



Rev. Ed Mobley of McDade has been preaching at Fair Oaks the last eight nights to full houses, and the meeting is still in progress and the people are taking considerable interest in the meeting and are keeping the best of order. There has been three professions up to the present, and quite a lot of the people from McDade are in attendance at each service during the week, but I failed to learn all the names of them; but Messrs. A. W. Wilson and wife, Homer Wilson and family, W. S. Watson, Joe Mobley, Mrs. M. A. Christian, Maggie Elkins, and Mrs. Joe Mobley and children of McDade, Mr. and Mrs. Noah Harris of Elgin and Mr. Will Gillaspay of Taylor, were at the service Sunday, and Mr. and Mrs. Watson and Mr. Herron Watson of McDade attended the service Sunday night. (*Elgin Courier*, July 20, 1916 *Almost all those named are family connections in the Hezekiah Mobley family.*)



Mrs. Charles Weber of Carmine returned to her home

Monday after attending the funeral of her mother, Mrs. McAfee, who died out at "the Lake" last week. (*Bastrop Advertiser*, February 9, 1917 – *item refers to Lillie McAfee Weber and to the death of her mother and Albert McAfee's second wife, Mary Brock McAfee.*)



Mrs. Mary Smith, died at Cedar Creek, December 18. (*Bastrop Advertiser*, January 18, 1918 – *item refers to Burl Mason's mother.*)



A telegram was received at noon Friday by Dr. W. M. Williams announcing the death of Dr. S. L. Mayo of Bishop. Dr. Mayo, who is a member of the State Board of Medical Examiners, died at Brownwood Friday morning. Burial will be at Belton, Dr. Mayo's old home, at 4 o'clock Sunday afternoon. He is a distant relative of Mayo Bros. of Rochester, Minn. He is survived by Mrs. Mayo and seven children. His daughter, Dr. Bessie Mayo, was graduated in 1923 from Baylor Medical College at Dallas and has been practicing at Bishop with her father. Two of his sons, Hubert and Oscar, are students at Baylor this year. (*Dallas Morning News*, September 20, 1924. *The surviving widow was Elmo Hodge's aunt, Dora Huddleston Mayo and Bessie was the Dr. Mayo who accompanied Rosa Hodge Burch when she visited the Horace Hodge family in the 1950s. The Dr. Williams mentioned was the husband of another aunt, Roxie Huddleston Littleton Williams.*)



J. H. Mobley, Mrs. M. A. Christian and Mrs. J. C. Smith visited Mr. Joe Mobley who is in a hospital in Austin, last

Sunday. They report that he is improving slowly. (*Bastrop Advertiser*, November 6, 1930)



Same old "Doxology" – Dan Cupid "stept" into McDade last Thursday evening, stealing from her midst one of her favorite sons, H. G. Hodge, wafting him on "Love's wings" across to Red Rock, and there was joined in the holy bonds of matrimony to Miss Lucy Mason, one of Red Rock's attractive daughters. Congratulations. (*Bastrop Advertiser*, November 30, 1930)



Mrs. Cora Hodge of McDade, sister of J. M. Mobley, is visiting in his home.

Mrs. J. M. Mobley and daughters, Cleo and Patsy, are visiting another daughter, Mrs. L.A. Kimbrough, in Ventura, Calif. (*Austin American-Statesman*, September 29, 1935)



Mrs. Sallie Farris of Burnet is a guest of her sister, Mrs. Cora Hodge, and attended the Mobley reunion Sunday.

Mr. and Mrs. Reese Mobley and children of Holland were recent guests of Mrs. Mary Christian and Joe Mobley and all attended the Mobley reunion. (*Austin American-Statesman*, July 28, 1940)



Mr. and Mrs. T. J. Branton and daughter, Josephine, and Mrs. Cora Hodge of Bastrop and Mr. and Mrs. Buddy Guentzel of Beaukiss were week-end guests of Mr. and Mrs. C. E. Branton. (*Austin American-Statesman*, May 10, 1942)



These are just samples of the kinds of things I am finding in area news-

papers. Newspaper research is not just about obituaries. Birthday parties, weddings, births, church events and family reunions were the fodder of the personals columns. I anticipate adding many more of these slices of life to the family archives.

I close with one last clipping obtained online that I include as a tribute to a cousin lost this past year. Just after last year's newsletter was mailed came word of the death of Cousin Ray Burch in California on December 23, 2005, at the age of 93. Ray was a dear man and I miss him very much.



Chicago Tribune

December 20, 1979

Ray Burch, the longtime marketing boss of Schwinn Bicycle Co., is stepping out at year-end, completing three decades with the company. Schwinn's management, recognizing Ray's avid interest in golf, gave him an electric golf cart [certainly a nice gesture] at a retirement dinner earlier this week. Does this mean that Ray will spend more time hoping to drop a few strokes off his 90-plus game at Westmoreland? Hardly. At 67, Ray is establishing a marketing and franchising consulting firm bearing his name out of his Wilmette home initially. "I've got a few leads [on clients]," says Ray, who recently was senior vice president and a director of Schwinn. Named to succeed him at Schwinn is Jay Townsley, VP-marketing.

When Burch joined Schwinn, the bicycle industry was a 2 million-unit annual business. Total industry sales this year will top 10 million, and Schwinn's sales will hit 1,100,000, says Edwin R. Schwinn Jr., recently appointed president-chief operating officer.



Voices From the Past

COLD CATTLE, PART 1

*From the memoirs of
Lucy Mason Hodge*

(After the death of Burl Mason, his widow Nettie and daughter Lucy lived alone on their place in Bateman, Texas. Young Lucy found herself having to cope with difficult situations.)

The winter of 1929 was a cold wet winter. Every morning I would have to climb up on the rick of hay, which had a layer of ice on it, and cut off enough to feed the cows. One bad spell that winter the tank stayed frozen over for 2 weeks. Every morning I would feed the cows then go to the tank and break the ice around the edge of the tank so the cows could get water. One morning I was a little late. One old cow walked out on the ice and it broke through with her. When I found her, she was stuck in the ice. Water was almost over her back. She couldn't move. I got a neighbor to come help get her out. He roped her horns and we got the mules and pulled her over backwards. I thought it would kill her, but she was going to freeze anyway. When we got her out she was so cold she could not get up. So we took 3 poles and stood them up and fastened them together at the top. Got a cotton sack and put around the cow and pulled

her up with the wire stretchers. Built a fire on [either] side of her and kept them burning all day. By night she had thawed out and I walked her to the barn. She made the winter but I bet she never got warm again in her life.



Our Hodge Line

Thanks to a cousin in Kentucky, I've acquired quite a few new records pertaining to our early Hodge ancestors. Marty Hodge lives in Marion, Kentucky, not far from where our Henry Hodge was born. Marty is in law enforcement and has spent much time prowling through local courthouse records, looking for elusive Hodge kinfolk. He has found deeds, probate records, photos, and has compiled biographical sketches, all of which he has generously shared with me. Many of these records have been posted online at www.wilcoxen.com/family. Having Marty on the hunt in the area where the Hodge family lived for several generations has added considerable documentation to my files that would have taken years and personal visits to unearth. I owe him a great deal of thanks for the

help he's given me this year. I'm proud to call him cousin.



The Elusive Ancestor

Merrell Kenworthy

I went searching for an ancestor,
I cannot find him still.
He moved around from place to place
and did not leave a will.
He married where a courthouse burned.
He mended all his fences.
And avoided any man who came to take
the U.S. Census
He always kept his luggage packed,
this man who had no fame,
And every 20 years or so,
this rascal changed his name.
His parents came from Europe.
They should be on some list
of passengers to the U.S.A.,
but somehow they got missed.
And no one else in this whole world
is searching for this man.
So, I play geneasolitaire
to find him if I can.
I'm told he's buried in a plot,
with tombstone he was blessed;
but weather took engraving,
and some vandals took the rest.
He died before the county clerk decided
to keep records.
No Family Bible has emerged,
in spite of all my efforts,
To top it off, this ancestor,
who caused me many groans,
just to give me one more pain
betrothed a girl named Jones.



Christmas is a bridge. We need bridges as the river of time flows past. Today's Christmas should mean creating happy hours for tomorrow and reliving those of yesterday.—Gladys Tabor, Still Cove Journal



The best of all gifts around any Christmas tree: the presence of a happy family all wrapped up in each other.—Burton Hillis

Voices From the Past
COLD CATTLE, PART 2

From the memoirs of Charles E. Huddleston (Charles E. Huddleston was the younger brother of Mary Frances Huddleston Hodge. In the late 1950s, he compiled a booklet of memories for his family. The following story from that booklet recounts an episode from approximately 1881, when the family lived near Harmony, Arkansas.)

The last winter we lived in Arkansas was very cold with lots of snow and ice, and the mountain in front of our house looked like a solid snow bank. Our cow lot was at the top of a small hill, and after milking the cows, we always turned the calves outside. One very cold day, one calf went down the hill and couldn't get back up to the gate. Father (*George Washington Huddleston*) held on to the rail fence to go down the hill, then caught the calf by one ear and tried to pull himself and the calf back up the hill by holding on to the fence. He and the calf were almost up to the gate when a whole section of the icy fence gave way and Father, the calf, and the fence section slid all the way back down the hill.



May we not "spend" Christmas or "observe Christmas, but rather "keep" it.—Peter Marshall



Memories

Linda Hodge Ging

(Editor: Earlier this year I found myself paying \$2.99 for a "personal" sized watermelon, barely larger than a cantaloupe. I had the thought as I did so that my grandfather would turn over in his grave if he could see what I was doing. Not long afterwards, my Aunt Linda emailed the following stroll down memory lane, which echoed some of my thoughts on the sad state of the produce one finds these days at the grocery. I remember well the pile of juicy watermelons under the tree. A big knife, a fork and a salt shaker and life was good.)

I've always loved watermelon.

The dog days of summer remind me of growing up on the farm in the 50's and 60's. My dad grew watermelons and peddled them to grocery stores in Austin.

Summer never meant lounging by the pool or cruising the mall or those other activities favored by today's teens. Summer to me was hot days of following my dad as he chose the melons that were ready for harvest, loading them on a trailer behind the tractor, loading them on the old International pickup, then taking them to Austin and making the rounds of the supermarkets to sell.

Sometimes we were successful and sometimes at the end of the day, we brought them home and unloaded them under a big oak tree in hopes that a buyer could be found to haul them away.

An endless supply of melons meant we never had to eat one that wasn't up to snuff. We could slice one open, cut a chunk out of the center, and if it wasn't sweet enough to suit, it was tossed over the fence into the hog pen where tastes weren't quite as discriminating,

and another was selected until we found one that was deemed satisfactory.

Being spoiled for only the best has made it almost impossible for me to buy a watermelon today. Too many times I've gotten that summertime watermelon hunger, bought a promising looking one at the store or from a road side stand, only to get home and find I've wasted my money on a "hog-melon".

Summer also reminds me of black-eyed peas. A blistering hot day and 6 or 8 bushels of peas waiting to be shelled was never my idea of summer fun. We depended heavily in the winter on food we canned in the summer, so there were a lot of days that involved doing things not high on my list of recreational activities.

Tomatoes are another example. My mother had a wood stove that, according to her, couldn't be matched for cooking. She would fire up that evil contraption and soon have a huge pressure cooker full of tomatoes going at full tilt. It was so hot the Devil himself wouldn't go near that kitchen! I smile to myself at the people who run from their air-conditioned cars into our air-conditioned office and moan about how hot it is. Folks, I know "hot" and this ain't it. "Hot" is canning tomatoes on a wood stove in July in Texas! It can also be defined by how many gallons of sweat rolled down your back as you stood over that stove and stirred preserves until that little woman pronounced them done. And you had better mind your stirring and not scorch them either! Her fuse could be a might short at times and dealing with a recalcitrant teen-age girl on a hot day of canning some-

times caused more than a pot to boil over!

I remember the "fun" we had putting up corn for the winter, too. The cute little ears of sweet corn you find in the supermarket today is just a distant cousin of the field corn we consumed. Sweet corn is relatively easy to clean. The corn silks don't put up much of a fight. Field corn, however, requires a bit of work. First you have to judge just where to hack off the end so as to not cut that big, juicy green worm in half, then once you get the shuck off, you must make a reasonable effort to get rid of the silk that somehow manages to grow down, around, and under the rows of kernels. One didn't want to face the ire of the Matriarch for leaving too many silks on the corn. Once the ears were properly cleaned, the real fun began if making cream-style corn was the day's objective. It was a job that had to be done outside because the mess was unbelievable. A large, sharp knife was used to slice a thin layer off the kernels, then the blunt side was used to scrape the remainder off the cob. At the end of the day, everything within a fairly wide radius of the work table (and especially the wielders of the knives and any dog or cat who carelessly wandered too close) was covered in sticky, glutenous corn gunk.

The really odd thing, though, is that I once considered these chores to be odious and the bane of my childhood. Now, I'm never happier than when I have a huge bucket of figs to be preserved, or peas to be shelled, or beans to be canned. I'll bet somewhere in God's kitchen there is a short little woman haranguing the angels and laughing herself silly.

