



# Way back when..

Wiley Farrell Milam and Betty Fuqua Milam, posing for this photograph in the early 1900s, were 19th century settlers of Faulkner County. Wiley Milam, born in Tupelo, Miss., and Betty Fuqua, born in Richmond, Va., married in 1865 in Tupelo. They migrated westward and established a home near Greenbrier in the 1880s. The Milams were the parents of the late J. T. Milam of Springhill, and the grandparents of Modena Milam Beene, the great-grandparents of J. T. Beene, and the great-great-grandparents of Ann Beene Evans, the Log Cabin Democrat society editor, who all live in Springhill. (Photo courtesy of Modena Milam Beene)

Tupelo should be Pontotoc

## That's Entertainment!

LOS ANGELES — They were an unlikely pair, but actor SAM dinner until a fat waiter stood at Olivier's elbow and in an ear- have a personality," Liberace recalled in a recent interview nation's home screens again this year Alda is currently promoting t

# Way Back When

This picture of William Milam and Mary Parthenia Nixon Milam was a glass print (a painting on glass). William was born about 1817 in South Carolina and migrated with his family to Mississippi, where he met and married Mary Parthenia "Polly" Nixon, who was a sister of Burrell Nixon of Springhill.

William and Polly had five children, whom they brought with them in 1872 to Linder (near Springhill). The children are Millie Josephine (married to John Bowden Tilley), Sarah J. (Sally) (married to James Love), Mattie A. (married to Hiram Brown Love), Willie M. (married to J. E. Brannan) and John M. (married to the former Rebecca Ann Rhea).

William died in 1912 and his wife died two years later.

(Photo courtesy of David Nixon)



## A THOUSAND MILES TO WESTWARD

When the planters of Virginia and North Carolina received word that the Chickasaw lands were to be surveyed and put up for sale many of them turned their eyes westward across the Appalachian highlands to the new wilderness frontier almost a thousand miles away. They left behind them their houses and worn out lands and brought with them their families, their household furnishings, and a daring spirit.

As a rule, several families grouped together and formed a large caravan to make the journey, while other single families traveled alone. Covered wagons held cherished possessions and among the wealthier travelers carriages housed the family members. Adventurous nephews, cousins, and friends, accompanied the wagon train lending a hand as drivers and returning later to their homes in the East with glowing reports of the opportunities in the new territory. Teams of oxen pulled the loaded wagons, while horses were hitched to the carriages and ridden by some male members of the groups. Often servants drove the cattle and stock behind the wagons with the sheep and goats straggling in the rear.

Traveling was slow along the wilderness trails during the daylight hours and camp was made each evening in some selected spot. These caravans passed through the Cumberland Gap, the gateway to the West, where the states of Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee met, crossed the Tennessee River and down the Old Natchez Trace until they reached the crossroads of the Bolivar Trail and the Natchez Trace near Chesterville, then they took the Diversion Trail that led toward the Pontotoc Ridge.

From the sandy hills and coastal plains of South Carolina other families journeyed toward Mississippi eager to share in the acres of fertile plains and rich bottom lands being sold daily at the land office. They traveled through the Appalachian foothills of Georgia and Alabama and joined people from these states headed in the same direction. They crossed the Tombigbee and came toward the land office in Pontotoc either along the Cotton Gin Port Road

select as he came toward Pontotoc the very acres he wanted to buy. Leaving his family and possessions at a campsite he would hurry into town; and if he was successful in obtaining the deed to the land he wanted, he would rush back and begin the construction of shelter for his family and animals.

The pioneer built for the future a little empire all his own. First he built a simple log structure, then later a more imposing and durable building of hewed oaks which would stand the ravages of time. He brought along the things he needed to establish his home including the household furnishings that had been so carefully packed for the long journey; cattle, swine and poultry to supply food for the table; work animals to pull the plows; seeds for planting gardens and orchards, and in some instances plenty of slaves to carry on the work. Often a tutor or governess accompanied the family in order that the children's education would not be interrupted. So as not to neglect the spiritual needs of the family leading pioneers immediately established community churches which records show to have sprung up throughout the county.

One of the earliest settlements was Chesterville on the northeastern edge of the county. Located on the two well-worn trails mentioned earlier, it was an ideal location for many of these travelers. As early as 1832, the first landholders had come from Alabama and Chester District, South Carolina, thus the name Chesterville was chosen for the community. Many early pioneer names are still well known today: Shelton, Buggs, Wiley, Martin (forerunner of the Carruth family), and some years later, the Adams and Lilly families.

Farther west in the eastern section of the county there is a high hill covered with tall oak trees where the Oak Hill Baptist Church stands. When John Milam and William McCoy brought their covered wagon caravan along the old Tuscumbia Trail in 1842, there was only a rutted trail, the oaks and countryside. From Laurens County, South Carolina, this group had journeyed and stopped only when they reached the sheltering hills. Mr. Milam bought all the land around the big hill, and Mr. McCoy went a little farther northwest toward the Cherry Creek settlement. The people camped in the covered wagons until shelters could be built. The first houses were two room structures with a "dog trot" between. Floors of logs, split and smoothed by hand, were held in place with pegs and the cracks were daubed with dirt. Square iron nails, brought along from the old home place, were sometime used but often the logs were pegged and morticed together. One room of the original house (where Younger Pitts lives today) is still in use. The room was

ed in construction was chopped with an ax and never squared off later buildings were.<sup>2</sup>

The Reeder family and Robert and Henry Pitts came from Laurens County, South Carolina a few years later. Robert Pitts bought some of the Milam land, and Henry Pitts went on to the Cherry Creek community where he bought a quarter section of land from the Boston and Mississippi Land Company. The deed read something like this:

Boston and Mississippi Land Company of Boston, Massachusetts, sell to Henry L. Pitts for the sum of four hundred and eleven dollars a parcel of land in Pontotoc County — Southeast Quarter, Section Number 33, Township 8, Range 3 East of Base Meridian. The date was March 25, 1847, and signed — Henry Pitts SE ¼ S33 T8 R3E.<sup>3</sup>

One early settler who gave Cherry Creek its name was Colonel Owen R. Cherry, a lawyer from North Carolina who also served as county Probate Judge. Settlers in the area were: Colonel Shelton White, the Balls, Martins, Robinsons, Spencers, Stephens, Starks, Swmans, and members of the Pitts family.

Since the first settlers brought with them their religious faith, two of the early churches in the county were Cherry Creek and Oak Hill.

From Minute Book I (1843) — Cherry Creek Church — Agreeable to appointment met at the house of Father John Smith, a sermon was delivered by Reverend G.B. Waldrop. A presbytery was then formed by G.B. Waldrop, Elijah Smith, and Cokes Lisonbee. Charter members were Christopher Malone (the preacher) and his wife Elizabeth; James Smith, Sarah, his wife, and Hiram Smith who are acting deacon and deaconess. Jehu Pitts and wife Rebecca; Hannah Smith, Sarah Smith, Mary Smith, William Milam and Milly his wife, Partheny Milam, Elizabeth Milam, Mary Milam, John M. Milam, James C. Pitts, William C. Pitts, wife Margaret, Joshua Smith, Elijah L. Pitts, Emily Leavell, Okes Lisonbee. With Reverend Elijah Smith as the first Pastor. James T. Teague was elected Church clerk, and also chosen Musician Clerk. Another early member, E. Magehee gave four and one-fourth acres to be used for the benefit of the church.<sup>4</sup>

organized. The August 1849 minutes of this church read:

Agreeable to previous appointment met at republican meeting house sermon by Elijah Browning followed by Lewis Ball. A Presbytery was then formed consisting of Reverend E. Browning, C.C. Malone and L. Ball and proceeded to the constitution of the church. There were twenty members — William Young, the ordained minister and his wife, Francis, Mary and Luthana Nixon, Abner Nixon and wife Ritter, George W. Hill and wife Rebecca, Martha Clements, W.R. Lyons and wife Mary, Joseph Garner and wife Parthena, John Milam and wife Milly, John, Mary and Leake Milam (last five from the Cherry Creek Church) and William McDavid and his wife Agnes. It was designated as the Baptist Church of Christ at Oak Hill. The first church, located on land now known as the Jack Dillard farm, joined the Chickasaw Association.<sup>5</sup>

South of Cherry Creek and west of Oak Hill another community began to take form as the Bighams, Balls, and Warrens, and other families began to buy land and settle on the Pontotoc-Ripley Road. This settlement was later called Harmony. Samuel Bigham settled there in 1833 and Hugh Bigham a few years later. Hugh Miller also lived on this road, but nearer Pontotoc.<sup>6</sup>

A community called Friendship was formed west of Harmony, and March 8, 1848; a Baptist church was started there. From the history of Friendship church we have this paragraph:

After a sermon by Brother Martin Ball, a Presbytery was then formed by Brethren and Elijah Browning and the following Brethren and Sisters were constituted into a church, namely: Stephen Threlkeld, Elizabeth Jones, C. C. A. Bigham, J.J. Andrews, wife Susan, Hiram Pitts, wife Clarissa who are acting as deacons and deaconess, Nancy M. Pitts, Abner Shetler, George Thompson, B.B. Martin, Drury Pitts and wife Maria, J.S. Cobb and wife Melinda, R.L. Harris, William McCraw and wife Elizabeth. The date was March 18, 1848.<sup>7</sup>

Two adventurers from the North were responsible for the first settlement in the northwest area of the county. In 1841 Layman C. Draper and Charles H. Larrabee came to Pontotoc. Draper to work with Colonel Leland who was postmaster and editor of the local paper, *The Spirit of The Times*, and Larrabee to open a law office. Larrabee could not make a success as a lawyer because there were so

For a short time there was a post office in Cherry Creek with Cherry Creek as postmaster. Robert L. Brazille working during the time of its existence.<sup>27</sup>

Cherry Creek continued to be one of the larger post war villages. The school which Mr. Webb had established before the war between the States helped bring more people into the area. The post office, which opened there in 1851 remained in operation for more than fifty years. The post office was located in the White and Gauling store with Thomas J. Gauling as postmaster. Others employed in this capacity were James M. Roberson, William P. Hutchison, Enoch M. Stephens, William M. Berry, Nathan M. Berry, Joe M. Owen, Mattie Caldwell, John L. Spencer, and John W. Roberson. A Mr. Snider had the mail contract and carried mail on horseback between Pontotoc and New Albany. Other stores in this community were Berry and Stephens (where Elijah Shettles bought his shoes - Chapter 1); Joe M. Owen and Mr. Garner. William Spencer had a blacksmith shop and later added a woodworking shop where he made wagons, buggies and burialaskets.<sup>28</sup>

Dr. B.F. Leavell was a doctor in this community for many years. After finishing medical school about 1880 he returned to the place of his birth, Cherry Creek, to practice. He was married to Miss Allie Gambrell, sister of J.B. Gambrell, former editor of the *Baptist Record*. Dr. Leavell built his home in the Cherry Creek Community and there he and Mrs. Leavell reared a family of twelve children. Mrs. Leavell died in 1898 and Dr. Leavell died in 1912. (Mrs. Blanche Threlkeld Leavell, daughter-in-law of Dr. Leavell and wife of the late Halbert Leavell, still lives in the old Leavell home in Cherry Creek.)<sup>29</sup>

Another doctor who is remembered for his long years of service to the people as he traveled the country roads going from house to house in his buggy was Dr. Louis A. Ellison who lived north of Pontotoc and served a wide area of people. Dr. Ellison was a relative of the late Mrs. Julius Palmer.<sup>30</sup>

The town of Pontotoc was very fortunate in having several doctors who lived in or near the town and were faithful in meeting the needs of the sick. Dr. Matthew Redd Fontaine and Dr. Walter R. Minniece were two of these. Dr. Fontaine came to Pontotoc in the early fifties and spent the rest of his life here. He was a surgeon in the Confederate Army. When the war was over he returned to Pontotoc and practiced for about thirty years. Dr. Fontaine and his wife Elizabeth Green were the parents of three daughters. Friends who knew Dr. Fontaine said of him that "he was a staunch

good neighbor."

Dr. Minniece moved from South Mississippi to Pontotoc about 1870 and married Fannie Grisham, daughter of Captain John O. Grisham, prominent pioneer citizen. Dr. Minniece was a very popular doctor and townsman during his years in Pontotoc. Before the turn of the century he and his family moved to Meridian where he spent his last years.

Dr. Patrick Henry Fontaine, a native of Pontotoc, studied medicine in the office of his cousin, Dr. Matthew Fontaine, for a few years. He then went to Memphis to complete his degree in medicine and located in Pocahontas, Arkansas, where he practiced until his death in 1896. Though never married, Dr. Fontaine's friendly disposition and social graces endeared him to everyone.

Dr. Walter Bolton was another native son who spent only some of his years as a doctor in the town of Pontotoc. After graduation from the Memphis Medical College, Dr. Bolton returned to Pontotoc where he was both a popular and successful doctor. After his marriage to Pattie Fontaine, daughter of the Reverend Mr. Charles Fontaine, he moved to Okolona. At the death of his wife, he returned to Pontotoc for a few years but later moved to Missouri.<sup>31</sup>

Clarence Cullins was the first postmaster in the town of Pontotoc following the War Between the States and John L. Gormon followed him. The post office was located in the Carr block (on the east side of the square) in the late seventies when Isaac P. Carr was postmaster. Mr. Carr was followed by James W. Bell, Samuel Miller, W. Bell, Watt A. Weatherall, and again James Bell serving another term through 1900.<sup>32</sup>

For several years following the War Between the States there was no newspaper in Pontotoc, and then only a paper which proved to be unpopular, *Equal Rights*, edited by Colonel Flournoy. The paper, *The Folio*, which followed *Equal Rights* was published in 1876 by the sons of Dr. Dwight Witherspoon, a well-known Presbyterian minister and educator. Of short duration this paper was popular with the people because of its Democratic policies and views.

The *Pontotoc Democrat*, edited and published by John H. Crawford, was for more than a decade the family weekly newspaper read by most of the people in Pontotoc. Later N.W. Bradford became co-owner with Mr. Crawford, and changed the name to *The People's Banner*; it became primarily the paper for the People's Party Political Organization.

- 18. Harvey B. VERNER b c1821 Ala
- 19. Miss BOUTWELL
- 38. Mr. BOUTWELL d Fannin Co Tex
- 39. Ruth b 1801 NC, d Fannin Co Tex

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DEAR MRS. DUVALL: Do you or your family know anything of the TABER family of McAlester, Okla.? Jeremiah Taber, a brother to my ancestor, settled in McAlester after 1880. He was b 30 Sept 1835 Sangamon Co Ill, was raised in Taney Co Mo, served in the Civil War, and married Patsey (Martha) \_\_\_\_\_. Known children were: John, Segal, William, George, Archibald, Benjamin F. With all those sons, there must have been many descendants named Taber, if the family stayed in the area. --Editor.

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Chart compiled by Georgia Lee Banks Vasseur, 2693 Rest Haven Rd., Yakima, Wash. 98901

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- 4. Samuel Jesse BANKS b 1866 Ky, d 1953 bur Seymour Cem, Webster Co Mo, m 1891
- 5. Georgianna (SPICER) POSEY (raised by grandparents)
- 6. Roland Joseph MENDEL b 1877 Dearborn Co Ind, d 1952 bur Walnut Grove Cem, Douglas Co Mo, m 1906
- 7. Dora Anne JENNINGS b 1888 Douglas Co Mo
- 8. Stephen Garrard BANKS b 1828 Oldham Co Ky, d 1905 Mo, lived Douglas Co Mo, bur Seymour Cem, Webster Co Mo
- 9. Mariah Elizabeth DAILEY b 1839 Carroll Co Ky
- 10. Mr. SPICER
- 11. Emiley POSEY b 1856 Pike Co Ind, d 1876 Pike Co Ind.
- 12. Jeremiah M. MENDEL b 1833 Ind, d 1913, moved to Dougals Co Mo
- 13. Dora WALTERS b 1852 Prussia, coming to Ind c1853.
- 14. John Lewis JENNINGS b 1860 Mo, d 1931 Mo. bur Walnut Grove Cem, Douglas Co Mo
- 15. Margaret Jane EDDINGS b 1868 Mo, d 1910
- 17. Emily MARTIN b Va
- 18. Jesse DAILEY b Ky, m Elizabeth SLATER b Ky
- 22. John W. POSEY b c1824 Ind, m Malvina HALL b c1828 Ind
- 24. George MENDEL b Va, m Margaret b Va, lived Dearborn Co Ind
- 28. Squire JENNINGS b c1812 Ky, d 1885 Mo, m/1 Mary COOK, m/2 Jane E. PETIT 1848. Lived Lawrence Co Mo, Douglas Co Mo.
- 30. Josephus EDDINGS b c1835 Tenn, lived Greene, Taney, Douglas Cos Mo
- 31. Lucinda WILLIAMS b 1836 Tenn
- 60. John EDDINGS b c1808 NC, m Rebecca
- 62. John WILLIAMS b 1780-90, lived Marion Co Tenn

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Chart compiled by Mrs. Bryson Pulley, Rt. 1 Isle O'Pines, Waterlco, S. C. 29384. Chart starts with her grandmother.

- 1. Laura Jane BRYSON b 15 May 1852, d 4 Apr 1911, m Lewis Simmons MADDEN
- 2. Wesley BRYSON b 30 Dec 1824 Laurens Co SC, d 30 Dec 1895 Laurens Co SC
- 3. Nancy MILAM b 15 Apr 1826 Laurens Co SC, d 26 June 1902 Laurens Co SC
- 4. "Big" John BRYSON b 12 Jan 1788 SC, d 14 Nov 1870 SC, m 4 Aug 1812 Jefferson Co Tenn
- 5. Elizabeth Ann BATES b 1795 SC, d 17 Sept 1867 SC

- 6. John MILAM b 26 Mar 1772 Halifax Co Va, d 15 Apr 1857 Laurens Co SC (testate) 2
- 7. Sarah FULLER b 14 Dec 1783 Randolph Co NC, d 18 Feb 1845 Laurens Co SC 2
- 8. William BRYSON b Ireland, d 1807 Laurens Co SC (testate) 2
- 9. Sarah KIRK, dau of James Kirk 3
- 10. Bartlett MILAM b 1750 Va, d 11 Sept 1821 Laurens Co SC, m 3
- 11. Elizabeth GWINN d 18 July 1823 Laurens Co SC 3
- 12. Isham FULLER, son of Captain Jones Fuller of Randolph Co NC 4
- 13. Elizabeth ROBERTS, dau of Wm. Roberts of Halifax Co. 4
- 20. John MILAM m Judith BARTLETT 4

Chart of Mrs. Shirley Cawyer, 271 Harbin Drive, Stephenville, Tex. 76401

- 1. Shirley BRITAIN, b Ranger, Texas 4
- 2. William Lee BRITAIN b 5 May 1893 Yeager, I.T., d 22 July 1954 Graham, Texas, m 19 June 1920 Ranger, Texas 5
- 3. Luetta WEEKES b 26 June 1900 Ranger, Texas. Living, 1973. 5
- 4. James Leonard BRITAIN b 28 Oct 1864 Nevada, Mo, d 19 Nov 1934 Kilgore, Texas, m 13 Oct 1889 McAlester, I.T. 5
- 5. Clara Josephine HEIFNER b 22 Nov 1872 Shelby Co Ind, d 3 Feb 1966 McAlester, Okla 6
- 6. Benjamin Cicero WEEKES b 14 Nov 1861 Bosque Co Tex, d 26 Nov 1949 Ranger, Texas, m 13 Oct 1883 San Augustine, Texas 6
- 7. Rosa Harvey SNELL b 23 Oct 1867 San Augustine, Tex, d 27 Apr 1934 Ranger, Texas 9
- 8. William Lafayette BRITAIN b 18 Apr 1831 Boone Co Mo, d 21 Jan 1892 Indianola, I.T. 9
- 9. Henrietta CLINTON b 25 Dec 1835 Christian Co Ky, d 14 Mar 1909 Holdenville, Okla. 1
- 10. James HEIFNER b c1812 Ky, d after 1880 Shelby Co Ind, m 28 Nov 1866 Shelby Co Ind 1
- 11. Sarah Jane GUNNING, b 12 Apr 1830 Shelby Co Ind, d 14 Feb 1901 McAlester, I.T. 2
- 12. Benjamin F. WEEKES Jr. b 1831 Claiborne Co Miss, m 24 Sept 1853 Leake Co Miss 2
- 13. Mary Ann RAWLS b 1836 Monroe Co Ala, d 6 Mar 1876 Bosque Co Tex 2
- 14. Joseph Orlando SNELL b 10 Dec 1826 Emanuel Co Ga, d 25 May 1883 San Augustine Co Tex, m 29 May 1853 San Augustine Co Tex 0
- 15. Mary Ann HARVEY b 25 Feb 1833 San Augustine Co Tex, d 22 Nov 1893 San Augustine Co Tex 1
- 16. Lorenzo Dow BRITON b c1790-1800 NC, d c1832 Boone Co Mo 0
- 17. Armenta b 1790-1800 NC, d Camden? Co Mo 0
- 18. Bennett J. CLINTON b 28 Apr 1813 Henry? Co Tenn, d 22 Feb 1879 Vernon Co Mo, m 1 Apr 1835 Christian Co Ky 4
- 19. Harriett CUMMINS, d c1839 Pulaski or Camden Co Mo 0
- 22. John GUNNING b 26 Dec 1799 Va or Sullivan Co Tenn, d 29 Jan 1875 Shelby Co Ind, m 5 Feb 1829 Shelby Co Ind 0
- 23. Jane GOLDING b 1811 Hamilton Co Ohio, d 27 May 1830 Shelby Co Ind 0
- 24. Benjamin F. WEEKES Sr. b 1788 SC, d after 1860 Bosque Co Tex, m Aug 1830 Claiborne Co Miss to Sarah DUNCAN 0
- 26. Joel RAWLS b 1802 SC, d 20 Oct 1877 San Augustine Co Tex, m c 1825 Monroe Co Ala 1