

## THOMPSON

I have assigned myself the task of writing what I know about the history of the Thompson family and its kindred branches. I wish I knew more about the ancestry of the Thompson family than I do, but my grandparents — like so many other people — didn't pass on much of the family history to their descendants. But members of the family did know that the Thompsons were of Scottish descent, and that, though merely a clue, would be something of a steppingstone on which research work might be started in tracing the lineage of a family of that name.



Now I'll return to Grandpa Thompson, who supposedly was born in Virginia; for he, while a young man, married Nancy Bacon, who was born in Virginia in 1809. It appears that they were married about 1829, for their first child, a boy, was born in 1830, and they named him Pleasant. And he eventually was Uncle Plez to us children. They had two other sons who were born in Virginia, and one of them was William, which was Grandpa Thompson's first name, and the other was Zachariah or Zacharias. We have the two versions of the name, and they are both in the Bible. We had thought that his name was Zachariah, but I corresponded with his youngest son, Elbert, in the last few years of his life; he told me that his father's name was Zacharias. So I suppose we will have to concede that Elbert was probably right, although he was barely four years old when his father died.

*And such research work was done, for Wayne ran onto an account in a paper telling about the name Thompson having been traced in Scotland and back to near the year 1250; and those doing the research work found a man living in the Shire of Argyll whom they believed to be the first person to bear that name. He was a member of the Campbell Clan, one of the most noted clans of that period.*

*But for now we will leave him in Argyll, and get back to him later.*

Grandma Thompson's father descended from the well-known Bacons of Virginia and England. He was wealthy and had a plantation, and he owned slaves, as so many wealthy people did in those times.

My grandparents seemed to feel independent and wanted to make it on their own, so they left Virginia with their three sons and emigrated westward to Missouri. I think they must have gone there in the forepart of 1838, for my father, Hardy Thompson, was born on the 16th of February, 1839, in the state of Missouri. And, from what evidence I have, I believe that three of his sisters were also born in Missouri,

before the family moved from Missouri to Texas in the spring of 1848. The names of the three sisters were Sirena (I'm not sure about the spelling of the name), Elizabeth, and Lucretia. Aunt Elizabeth became Aunt Lizzie to us children and Aunt Lucretia became Aunt Cretia to us.

Aunt Lizzie was born on the 7th of November, 1845, so she didn't lack much of being seven years younger than my father. Della and I, in talking over that space of nearly seven years of time, felt that Sirena or Sirenle (or however they spelled it) must have been next to our father in age, for we couldn't see any other space of time in the family of children where there could have been a sister. And Della felt sure that there was such a sister, for she had heard her spoken of in the family, and Aunt Julia Burns, in a letter to Della, mentioned having heard them talk about Sirenle, as they called her. If she were born within that space of time, she couldn't have been but scarcely more than 16 years of age when the rest of the family left Texas in the spring of 1856 to cross the

*When I was in Salinas a good many years ago, I went to the office in the Salinas Cemetery to try to learn just where Uncle Zack was buried. And they had his name written in their ledger "Zach" Thompson, which of course could be an abbreviation of either Zachariah or Zacharias.*



*"Grandma Thompson"*  
*Nancy Bacon Thompson Burns*

plains — as they called it — to California, for my father was only two or three months past 17 when they left Texas. She is said to have married a man in Texas by the name of Si Cotterell, who they said was not kind to her. She must have been quite young when she was married, surely not more than 15, if quite that.

I may have been a little too positive in stating that the family moved from Missouri to Texas in the spring of 1848, but the circumstantial evidence seemed to be so plain that they had done so. But I will mention the list of circumstances and let them stand on their own merits.



**Uriah Burns**

We knew that the Thompson family had migrated from Missouri to Texas, and that Grandpa Thompson had taken up a full section of land — a mile square — twelve miles south of the Red River which separates a large part of what is known now as Oklahoma from Texas. And it was in what is known now as Grayson County. And we know that the town of Sherman was founded on Grandpa Thompson's land claim sometime after the family had left Texas and gone to California in 1856. In one of my history books there is a brief sketch of the history of Sherman, Texas, which states that the first settlement was made at that place in 1848. And that, of course, was Grandpa Thompson and his family for he was the first one to file on that section of land. And we know, of course, that the war

between the United States and Mexico took place in 1846 and '47, and that the peace treaty ending hostilities was signed at Guadeloupe Hidalgo, a federal district in Mexico, on the 2nd of February, 1848.

And, we knew that after peace was established the Government offered people of the states free land to move into Texas and help settle it up — pretty much as was done in the Oregon Territory. A man could take up a full section of land, or less, which was called a "donation land claim" in Oregon.

Grandpa Thompson died in Texas and I feel that he couldn't have lived longer than the early part of 1850, for our grandmother married a man by the name of Burns when Aunt Lizzie and Aunt Cretia were still small. They had one child who was born on the 7th of May, 1852, and they named him Coke, after Bishop Thomas Coke of England, who founded the first Methodist churches in the United States, and the name was eventually passed on to me as a middle name.



**Coke Burns**

Uncle Plez was married in Texas and they had two children before they went with the rest of the family to California. And the children's names were Alexander and Martha. When they left Texas and went to California in 1856, our grandmother had sold the property and the three oldest boys had signed away their right to it, for they were of age. I don't know the dates of the births of Uncle Billy and Uncle Zack, but Uncle Plez was born on December 26th, 1830, so he was only twenty-five when they left Texas. And our father was seventeen, and Aunt Lizzie was eleven, and I suppose Aunt Cretia was about nine, and Coke Burns — or "Uncle Coke" as we children learned to call him — was about four, and Alexander — or "Aleck" as we called him though we spelled it Alec — was about three. But I don't know what Martha's exact age was.



***Uncle Plez***

I believe there were eleven of our relatives in the group who made the trip and they

traveled in a wagon train, as people did in those days because of the danger of Indian troubles. And I suppose, of course, the Thompson family traveled that way when they went from Missouri to Texas. Arthur Burns, one of Uncle Coke's sons, told me in a letter that his Grandfather Burns drove the lead wagon in the train and that he returned to Texas and piloted another wagon train to California.

The family went to the Salinas Valley, and most of them spent the rest of their lives there or near there. But Uncle Billy went up around Marysville, someplace where he raised something of a family, and the rest of the family didn't see him much after that, and we never saw him at all. Uncle Plez and Aunt Sarah Ann whom he married in Texas, had ten children, I believe, and their names were Alec, Martha, Phronia, Billy, Nancy, Martin, Nellie, Johnnie, Janie, and Francis. And Francis was a few months younger than I.



***Sarah Hamilton Thompson***

Aunt Isabella lacked just two months of being 102 years of age when she died. She was the great granddaughter of one of Gaspar de Portola's soldiers who accompanied the padres on their expedition in establishing the California missions. And the name of that young soldier was José Maria (Joseph and Mary) Soberanes. The Spanish Catholics didn't believe in separating Biblical names regardless of their significance. So Uncle Zack's and Aunt Isabella's children — who, of course, were our cousins — were great great grandchildren of José Maria Soberanes and his wife Anna Josefa (Josephine) Castro de Soberanes.

Uncle Zack Thompson and Aunt Isabella had seven children, but only four of them lived to be grown. And the four who lived normal lengths of lives were Arabella, William, Elbert, and Elaine. I corresponded with Elbert at intervals during the last few years of his life, and Della corresponded with Arabella and Elaine during the last few years of their lives.

Aunt Isabella's mother, Josefa Soberanes de Richardson, owned the Rancho Los Coches across the Salinas River south of Soledad. The rancho contained nearly 9,000 acres of land and it was granted to her in 1841 by Governor Juan Bautista (John the Baptist) Alvarado who was a cousin of her father's on the Castro side of the family. I have a copy of Elaine Thompson's "family tree" although it is only a partial history of the family for she only listed the Spanish part of the family — just the Soberanes and Castro members. But she and her brothers and sisters were grandchildren of my Grandfather William Thompson who was the grandfather of my three sisters and two half sisters and all of my full cousins on the Thompson side of the family.

Aunt Lizzie married Samuel Burnes in 1862. He was a good deal older than she, and had been a soldier in the Mexican War. They had four children, who were Alice who was born in 1864, Cretia (Lucretia) born in 1866, Irvine born in 1872, and Josie (Josephine) born in 1875.

Aunt Cretia married Austin\* Groves and they had two boys who were Erastus and Lee. I don't know the dates of their births.

Uncle Coke married Julia Tinnen and they had six children who didn't die young, and they were Nelson, Frank, Arthur, Eugene, Jessie, and Harold.

Our father was married twice. He first married the sister of Austin Groves, and they had two girls, Ada and Mary\*, who later became our half sisters. And they and Aunt Cretia's two boys were "double cousins" for, as I have mentioned, Aunt Cretia married Austin Groves.

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\* During the production of this book, I communicated with many people. One very helpful person who crossed my path was Doris A. Smith of Paso Robles, California. Doris is a niece of Hardy Thompson's two daughters from his first marriage, Ada and Mary. She sent me the following information, which she extracted from a book titled *Adelaida* by someone named McGilvary.

**GROVE, AUSTINE** — Born in 1834 in Illinois; married Lucretia, born in 1835 in Missouri; as of 1880 there were two sons: Erastus, age 17, a farm laborer, and Lee, age 13, a schoolboy; also included in the household were two nieces, Ada and Mary Thompson, ages 17 and 16, and William Cantrill, born in 1851 in Illinois. He was a boarder doing farmwork.

**THOMPSON, ADA** — Born in 1863; was a niece of Austine Grove and in 1880 lived in the Grove household. [Here, Doris has annotated: Married Charles D. Morehouse III in the Grove home in Adelaida on November 7, 1880. Austine Grove and William Cantrell were witnesses.]

**THOMPSON, MARY** — Born in 1864; was a niece of Austine Grove and in 1880 lived in the Grove household. [Doris annotated: Married Orton (first name unknown). They had two children, Hurlbert and Ada. Then she married Mr. Franz S. Morehouse at the home of her sister Ada Morehouse south of San Luis Obispo.]

**THOMPSON, HARDY** — Born 1839 in Missouri; a retired miner; married to Mary [Doris notes here "not the mother of Mary and Ada] born in 1855; as of 1880 there were four children — Lorena, age 5; Della, age 3; Walter, age 2; and Sarah, age 1; also included in the household was a servant/nurse, John Arnett, born in 1828 in Missouri.

[This is the only place I have ever heard Hardy Thompson's trade mentioned. I personally had a somewhat eerie experience after I received this which might lead me to suspect that he was a well-driller as well as a miner. But there's absolutely no foundation for that. Also, although Grandpa has said that his baby sister was named Annie, I suppose it is possible that either Sarah or Anne/Annie might have been her middle name.] — S.N.