WILLIAM E. SUMMERS
(1811-1836)

HISTORY & GENEALOGY

PIioneer
Revolutionary
Ranger
Alamo Hero
As
Member
Of the
Immortal 32

Harry Glen Windham
&
Delmer De 'Del' Groves
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PROLOGUE

With each succeeding year the haze of Obscurity removes more and more from our view the fast disappearing landmarks of the past. Oblivion sprinkles her dust of forgetfulness on men and their deeds, effectually concealing them from the public eye, and, because of the many living objects that claim our attention, few of those who have been removed from the busy world remain long in our memory. Even the glorious achievements of the present age may not insure it from being lost in the glare of greater things to come, and so it is manifestly a duty to posterity for the men of the present time to preserve a record of their lives and a story of their progress from low and humble beginnings to great and noble deeds, in order that future generations may read the account of their successful struggles, and profit by their example.¹

¹ Preface, Men of West Virginia (Volume I), Biographical Publishing Company, Chicago, Illinois, 1903.
OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this paper are to:

• recount the history of William E. Summers in Texas

• review the disposition of his 1835 Mexican land grant following his demise at the Alamo

• discuss his eligibility for land award(s) for service at the Alamo and the related subsequent claim by his heirs

• counter the long-held misconception he was born in Tennessee by demonstrating through genealogical records he was actually born in Edgefield District, South Carolina.
PART - I  HISTORY

William E. Summers is inextricably tied to Texas history but his currently accepted biography only recounts events from February 12, 1835 to March 6, 1836. We intend here to elaborate upon this period of his life and to augment his biography by exploring his life before these celebrated events. We will demonstrate his likely earlier arrival into Texas, his true birthplace in South Carolina and, his family history and genealogy.

William E. Summers' currently accepted biography encompasses several events documented in historical records wherein he:

- **12 Feb 1835** petitioned the Mexican government for a Land Grant.
- **01 May 1835** received a land grant by the Mexican government in the Martin de Leon colony. On the same day, an adjacent grant was made to Henry C. G. Summers.
- **01 Feb 1836** participated in the election of delegates to the Texas Independence Convention at Washington-on-the-Brazos.
- **23 Feb 1836** was mustered into the Gonzales Ranging Company of Mounted Volunteers.
- **06 Mar 1836** died at the Alamo as a member of the celebrated Immortal 32 of the Gonzales Ranging Company of Mounted Volunteers.

We take no issues with the events as supported by the historical record. We do take issue with an assumption that William E. Summers was from Tennessee. Rather, we demonstrate through genealogical research that he was actually born in Edgefield District, South Carolina, migrated about 1820 with his family to Clarke County, Alabama, and from there to Texas in 1832.

1. TEXAS PIONEER

William E. Summers likely arrived in Texas in 1832. However, his first appearance of record is in Guadalupe Victoria, Coahuila and Texas on February 12, 1835 when he petitioned the Mexican government for a land grant, to wit:

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[I,] William E. Summers, a native of the United States and single, before you in the best form of law say: That being as I am a settler in this colony admitted by the acting empressario, Citizen Plácido Venavides, to colonize the lands awarded to him by the Supreme Government of the state, I apply to you by virtue thereof so that in the exercise of the authority vested in you by law you may be pleased to order the survey and issue to me the corresponding title of a quarter-league of land allotted to me as a settler, which is situated on west bank of the Lavaca River, wherein I shall receive justice and favor.

Guadalupe Victoria, Feb. 12, 1835.

[a] William E. Summers

William’s petition was granted on May 1, 1835 consisting of a quarter league of land, per the survey by James Kerr of the Dewitt Colony. This land assigned by Martin de Leon's Colony was vacant and residing in the DeWitt Colony area and located approximately 12 miles southeast of present day Hallettsville, Texas. Surveyor Kerr stated:

The tract surveyed for William E. Summers is situated on the Lavaca River above that of G. C. Summers [sic] and below that of George Foley [Foley]; beginning at a stake set at the corner of the tract of G. C. Summers...a quarter-league of land, of which one and one-fourth labors are arable and the remainder is pasture land...

Henry C. G. Summers petitioned February 13, 1835 for a full league lying adjacent to or intersecting William's land. Henry's petition was granted the same day as William's petition. Henry's petition states he was 'married and with a family' indicating a wife and, at least, one child. We have not yet confirmed who were the wife or child(ren) but have identified likely individuals. We will demonstrate that Henry was William's brother.

2. SALE OF MEXICAN LAND GRANTS

It is unknown what measures, if any, were taken to ascertain any heir of William E. Summers following his death at the Alamo. James Kerr was the original surveyor of William's 1835 land grant and in 1839 petitioned Victoria County to be appointed the Administrator of William's estate. The Court granted Kerr's request and he later sold William's land at public auction December 28, 1842 for the sum of $91.35 to high bidder James Ingram, then County Clerk of Victoria County:

...being at the rate of eight and one quarter cents per acre...a certain tract or parcel of land situated lying and being in the Co of Victoria on the N. bank of the Lavaca River being the one quarter of a lea of land granted to the said Wm E Summers by the Mexican government ...

4 Lavaca County; Texas Abstract # 54, File No. SC-000098:33.
6 Victoria County, Texas Probate Records, Book 1, Page 10, Probate Court June(?) Term 1839
7 Victoria County, Texas Probate Records, Book 1, Page 50
8 Victoria County, Texas Probate Records, Deed Book 2, page 260-261; Book A, page 193

William E. Summers (1811-1836), History & Genealogy, by Harry Glen Windham & Delmer De 'Del' Groves, © 2011 Page 7 of 25
William E. Summers' land grant became a subject of subsequent legal disputes involving Henry C. G. Summers' sale of his own grant. Although Henry C. G. Summers died in 1853 the disputes persisted until 1901, at least.

Henry sold his land a mere five weeks after the fall of the Alamo perhaps fearing reprisal by the Mexican army. Henry may have believed he was a 'marked man' for his involvement in the Lavaca elections held earlier (briefly discussed further). In any event, he thereafter departed the area in the mass exodus called the Runaway Scrape.

Henry C. G. Summers sold his land on April 13, 1836 by title bond to Peter Wagener Grayson\(^9\), a former Texas Attorney General and Texas presidential contender who died in 1838. Apparently, Henry failed subsequently to provide Grayson or his estate with title to the property even though legally the title bond may have served to transfer ownership.

Grayson in his will appointed his friends as executors: brothers John Pettit Borden\(^10\) and Gail Borden, Jr.\(^11\), James Love\(^12\), and Oscar Farish. In 1845, the Borden brothers as executors brought suit in Victoria County against Henry C. G. Summers to compel him to deliver title; they obtained a judgment in 1849.

Subsequently, residual heirs of Grayson brought suit in Grayson v. Breckenridge\(^13\). The case proceeded to the United States Court of Appeals whose 1901 decision is excerpted below. The Court's decision highlights the underlying disputes and confusion involving the 1835 Mexican land grants of both Henry C. G. Summers and William E. Summers:

Plaintiff, as residuary devisee of a testator who died in 1838, brought action to recover certain lands in Texas, claimed by defendant...Among purchases made by testator in 1836 was one from Henry C. G. S., for which a title bond was given, reciting full payment of the consideration. By a decree entered in 1843, in a suit by the devisees against the executors, the purchases included in the specific devise were determined and enumerated, and among others one stated to have been made from “William S.”; but the purchase from Henry C. G. S. was not mentioned, and the executors were required to cause title to the tracts held by bond to be conveyed to such devisees. Subsequently the executors brought suit against Henry C. G. S., and in 1849 obtained a decree for the conveyance to them of the land embraced in his bond to testator...There was a William S. who owned a tract in the same county in 1836; but it did not appear that it had been purchased by

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testator, or that it was ever claimed by any one under him. By the law of Texas in force in 1836 a bond for a deed reciting payment of the consideration operated to convey the legal title to the purchaser, so that the will operated to pass title to the Henry C. G. S. tract directly to the devisees, provided the tract was embraced in the devise, although the effect of such bond was apparently misapprehended by the testator and all parties in interest, as well as by the court, which required the executors to procure conveyances in such cases. 

Held that, presumably, the court's decree through mistake used the name “William S.,” instead of “Henry C. G. S.,” in describing the tract intended to be assigned to the devisees, but that in any event it was clear, from all the evidence, that the tract in controversy was allotted to the devisees, either by the court or by agreement of the parties in interest, as being within the devise, and that the trial court did not err in directing a verdict for defendant...

The Court's opinion relates relevant and interesting facts in the history of the sale of Henry's land grant to Grayson:

...The land, the title to which is involved in this suit, was granted by the government to Henry C. G. Summers. On April 13, 1836, Peter W. Grayson purchased the land from Summers, paying cash and receiving a bond for title. On the 8th of June, 1838, Grayson made and wrote with his own hand his last will and testament. The testator died in 1838, and his will was duly probated in Galveston county, Tex., on April 24, 1840...

Of the executors named Gail Borden, Jr., and John P. Borden...continued in charge of the estate of the testator certainly until the 26th day of September, 1845. How much longer the testimony does not show. On the day last named they brought suit in the district court for the county of Victoria against Henry C. G. Summers, in which they prayed that he may be compelled...to convey to the petitioners...a good and indefeasible title to the land described in his bond for title. The plaintiff testified:

“Gail and J. P. Borden, executors of Grayson, had the estate in charge until about 1846. On May 25, 1843, the district court for Galveston county had rendered a decree, in a suit wherein Levi Jones and Albert T. Burnley were plaintiffs, and Gail Borden, Jr., and John P. Borden, executors of Peter W. Grayson, were defendants, in which it is recited that: “...the said plaintiffs are entitled to the lands specified, viz. All the lands purchased by said Peter W. Grayson of the following persons, to wit, ...William Summers,...and it also appearing that it was the intention of the said testator...convey the said lands to the plaintiffs, it is therefore adjudged, ordered, and decreed that the said defendants do convey...all the said lands...as soon as titles can be procured...to the said plaintiffs;...”

The action of Grayson's executors against Henry C. G. Summers proceeded to judgment and decree by default on March 14, 1849, in which Summers was required to convey the land to the complainants by a good and indefeasible title. A. T. Burnley had executed and delivered his power of attorney to Levi Jones (June 23, 1845), authorizing him to sell and convey, by or with quitclaim warranty only, all the lands belonging to or claimed by Burnley situated in Texas. On September 7, 1851, Levi Jones, acting under power of attorney from Burnley, conveyed to Fielding Jones (a brother of Levi Jones) the league of land (embracing the land in this suit) for a recited consideration of $5,000 in hand paid—....

The defendant shows a chain of title from Fielding Jones to himself, through mesne conveyances, for the land in controversy. The proof shows that taxes were paid in 1850 by Levi Jones for Burnley on the entire Henry C. G. Summers league; that from 1852 to 1859, inclusive, Fielding Jones assessed and paid the taxes on the entire league; that from 1860 to 1866 J. S. Turner,...paid the taxes on the entire league;....

...It is not only reasonable to suppose, but almost absolutely certain, that most of the purchases made in the spring of 1836 by Mr. Grayson on joint account for himself and Jones and Burnley
were made from persons who were leaving the country, or from those who did not then expect to be able to hold their lands...it is a matter of public history that Mr. Grayson died by his own hand, and very soon after the date of the execution of this will...

Among the parties in the decree as those from whom purchases had been made by the testator on joint account appears the name of William Summers, and the name of Henry C. G. Summers does not appear. This decree was made on May 25, 1843...It may be that Mr. Grayson had known both Henry C. G. Summers and William Summers, and by inadvertence or lapse of memory wrote the wrong name in the memorandum of vendors which he gave to Mr. Burnley; or it may be that the parties to the suit of Jones and Burnley against Grayson's executors, and the clerk who made the minute entry of the judgment, knew both William Summers and Henry C. G. Summers, and without accurately comparing the entry of the names in the decree with the names in the memorandum, by oversight or inadvertence wrote the name of William Summers in the decree...the land purchased by the testator from Henry C. G. Summers was...found to be part of the lands purchased by the testator...It is shown that a league granted to William Summers, located in the same county, is, and for many years has been, fully occupied by numerous settlers. There is no evidence tending to show that the plaintiff, or any person for him, has ever claimed any part of the William Summers survey.

...The proof satisfies us that a reasonable and impartial mind must conclude and presume therefrom that the league of land granted to Henry C. G. Summers, and by him sold by title bond in April, 1836, to the testator, was purchased by the testator on joint account for himself and Burnley and Jones...

3. REVOLUTIONARY FOR TEXAS INDEPENDENCE

Both William E. Summers and Henry C. G. Summers are listed as voting in the election held on February 1st 1836 to name delegates to the Texas Independence Convention that began on March 1, 1836 at Washington-on-the-Brazos. Henry C. G. Summers was also listed as a Clerk in this election.

4. TEXAS RANGER

William E. Summers is listed in the Muster Rolls of the Gonzales Ranging Company of Mounted Volunteers where he was mustered into service on February 23, 1836, by Byrd Lockhart, acting commissioner and Aide de Camp to the acting governor of Texas.

Author Groves contacted the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum and confirmed the men of the Gonzales Ranging Company of Mounted Volunteers are considered Texas Rangers.

14 Election for delegates to attend the Convention of 1836, Texas Department of State, Republic of Texas Election Returns, Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives Commission
5. IMMORTAL 32 – THE ALAMO

Men of the Gonzales Ranging Company of Mounted Volunteers rode to reinforce the Alamo defenders and perished March 6, 1836. This brave group are forever remembered as the Immortal 32 presumably because they must have sensed the odds of survival were not good but they went anyway. William E. Summers is listed as a member of this Company and as 'Killed' in the Muster Roll\(^{17}\) revised by Byrd Lockhart on June 20, 1838.

Amelia Williams' thesis entitled “A Critical Study of the Siege of the Alamo and of the Personnel of Its Defenders” was published in the Southwestern Historical Quarterly\(^{18}\). In this work she identified William E. Summers as one of the Immortal 32.

Ironically, William E. Summers' Alamo participation was the probable genesis of the idea he was from Tennessee versus South Carolina; resulting from an erroneous assumption linking him to David Crockett's group. Amelia Williams states the men comprising David Crockett's command of Tennessee Mounted Volunteers swore an oath of allegiance January 14, 1836 at Nacogdoches, Texas.\(^{19}\). Williams relates further:

Among the Comptroller Military Service Records, there are seven documents, all requisitions on the Provisional Government of Texas, signed by David Crockett and others of his band for board for a company of “Tennessee Mounted Volunteers” while they were resting at Washington and while they were on the way from that town to Bexar. These documents show that there were eighteen or more men in the company, including Colonel Crockett and Captain William B. Harrison, and that they went by way of Gonzales to San Antonio.

At the General Land Office, the Muster Roll Book, pp. 115-117, gives three separate lists which contain, altogether, the names of more than a hundred volunteers who took the oath of allegiance before John Forbes at Nacogdoches on January 14, 1836...

But Dr. Sutherland says that only twelve men arrived with Crockett at the Alamo...for there is evidence that for some reason B. A. M. Thomas was lagging behind “the squad” while on the way, and there were others, no doubt, who did likewise, for these 'young men were eager to “spy out the land” and find good locations for the headrights that they expected to apply for. We know that John Harris\(^{20}\) was a first cousin of David Crockett and that he came to Texas with Crockett and was a member of the Tennessee Mounted Volunteers, yet Harris's headright certificate designates him as a resident of Gonzales. The reason for this is that on his way to San Antonio he stopped at Gonzales and selected a location for his headright land...

William E. Summers' land petition is dated February 12, 1835 and months before Crockett's group was formed in January 1836. If Crockett and (some of) his men went to the Alamo “by way of Gonzales” where William was already living then likely someone

\(^{17}\) Index to Military Rolls of the Republic of Texas 1835-1845, Travis Command: Kimbell, George C. (Lt).


\(^{19}\) Amelia Williams.

\(^{20}\) Authors' Note: John Harris is listed as 'Killed' on the Muster Roll of the Gonzales Ranging Company of Mounted Volunteers reconstructed June 20, 1838 by Byrd Lockhart. No attempt here is made to investigate this apparent discrepancy to wit: did he come to the Alamo as a member of Crockett's group or not?
later presumed William was a member of Crockett's *Tennessee Mounted Volunteers*. We have not identified the source who decided William was from Tennessee, or their reasoning. Regardless, William was not a member of Crockett's group and, in fact, he may have been in Texas as early as 1832. We concede it is possible William had traveled to Tennessee, at some point, but the weight of evidence supports he was born in South Carolina.

Sources for Williams' data on William E. Summers include land documents for Bexar Donation #405\(^{21}\) and Bexar Bounty #406\(^{22}\). On examining these files we find they pertain to a William W. Summers rather than our William E. Summers; other archived records document William W. Summers' military exploits not associated with the Alamo.

6. **HEIRS' CLAIM FOR HEADRIGHT, BOUNTY & DONATION LAND**

On May 31, 1861 seven men, identifying themselves as brothers and heirs of William E. Summers, filed a petition\(^{23}\) with the Texas Court of Claims through attorneys Pitts and Neyland, as follows:

The State of Texas | Austin City Texas
County of Tyler | May 14\(^{th}\) 1861

To the Hon. Wm S Hotchkiss comr of the court of claims in and for the State of Texas.

Come (?) petitioners **John C. Summers, Jesse M. Summers, Caley G. Summers, H. C. G. Summers** and **Whitfield B. Summers, Albert C. Summers, Eldridge Summers**, respectfully represent that they are the brothers and sole heirs at law of the Estate of **Wm. E. Summers** Decd.

Petitioners aver that their said brother Wm. E. Summers removed to Texas some time in the year 1832. That he afterwards joined the army of the Republic of Texas, and fell at the battle of the Alamo about the 6\(^{th}\) of March 1836 under Col. W. B. Travis.

And petitioners further aver that their said deceased brother remained a citizen of Coahuilla and Texas afterwards the Republic of Texas, from the time of his emigration in 1832 up to the time of his death doing and performing all and every act required of a good and law abiding citizen. And that he as such citizen and soldier never in his lifetime received the quantity of land to which he was entitled, nor has the same been issued to his legal representatives since his said death. The premises considered petitioners pray that upon an examination of the claim in favor of their deceased brother & Estate, that they be granted as his legal representatives the balance of his said headright which remains unissued together with the bounty and donation to which his said Estate is entitled under the law. Grant all other relief to which they as heirs of the said Estate are legally and equitably entitled.

- Pitts & Neyland, Attys for Petitioners

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21 Lampasas County, Texas Abstract 633, District Class: Bexar Donation, File 000405, Grantee/Patentee: W W Summers; *Texas General Land Office, Land Grant Database online*: accessed June 27, 2011; [http://scandocs.glo.texas.gov/webfiles/landgrants/pdfs/1/5/2/152057.pdf](http://scandocs.glo.texas.gov/webfiles/landgrants/pdfs/1/5/2/152057.pdf)

22 Lampasas County, Texas Abstract 632, District Class: Bexar Bounty, File 000406, Grantee/Patentee: William W Summers; *Texas General Land Office, Land Grant Database online*: accessed June 27, 2011; [http://scandocs.glo.texas.gov/webfiles/landgrants/pdfs/1/5/2/152062.pdf](http://scandocs.glo.texas.gov/webfiles/landgrants/pdfs/1/5/2/152062.pdf)

23 Court of Claims; File No. 007922, Patent Date: Filed in Land Office – May 24, 1861; *Texas General Land Office, Land Grant Database online*: accessed June 27, 2011; [http://scandocs.glo.texas.gov/webfiles/landgrants/pdfs/1/9/7/197613.pdf](http://scandocs.glo.texas.gov/webfiles/landgrants/pdfs/1/9/7/197613.pdf)
Francis White, Commissioner of the General Land Office on December 6, 1861 certified:

...there is no evidence on file in this Office that William E. Summers has ever received a title for a Headright from the authorities of Spain or Mexico, or that any certificate of the 1st or 2nd Class has been issued to him under Special Act, recommended by the “Traveling Board,” confirmed by the District Court, or countersigned under the Act of February 9th 1850; nor does his name appear upon the “Lost Book of Harris,” except one fourth of league in Lavaca County, titled in De Leon Colony.

We note this 1861 petition by heirs of William E. Summers contains the names of three brothers who were by then deceased (Caley G. in 1845, Henry C. G. in 1853, Albert C. about 1857). Because deceased brothers were named in the petition, we were concerned about the authenticity of the document. Author Windham contacted the Texas General Land Office and discussed with their staff this potential discrepancy and they responded they believe the document is genuine.

We surmise the inclusion of all the brothers in the petition, including those deceased, was a wholesale method designed to protect the interests of any residual heirs (known and unknown), rather than identifying and separately listing each and every one.

We have not found any issuance(s) of land awards for which William E. Summers may have been eligible, neither previous nor subsequent to 1861. Possibly the onset of the Civil War deflected the interests of any heir in pursuing a claim.

The 1861 petition by William E. Summers' brothers confirms him as one of our ancestors as all are children of our Jesse Summers married Sarah 'Sally' Coate(s).

In Part II of this paper, we recount the genealogy of William E. Summers including a brief history of his family and ancestors.

24 Court of Claims; File No. 007922.
1. SUMMERS FAMILY TO AMERICA

The history of our earliest Summers was researched by Dodd & Holweck. John Summers I (c. 1646/55-1705) was transported 1671 to Maryland as an indentured person. We have not confirmed his country of origin but presume he emigrated from England. In 1672 he was paying rent on 120 acres in Maryland and in 1680 proved his right to 50 acres for having fulfilled the terms of his indenture. He married Rebecca (Dent?) in Maryland and four children have been identified: John II, Sarah, William, and a another daughter. His will was probated November 27, 1705 in Prince George's County, Maryland.

Note: We designate the earliest emigrant as John Summers I to distinguish him from John II and John III, his son and grandson, respectively. Researchers Dodd and Holweck do not provide a surname for wife Rebecca but many have ascribed the name DENT which we have not proven.

Dodd & Holweck include in their book the maps of various Summers held land plots. John Summers II owned and passed to his descendants parcels upon which portions of Andrews Air Force Base is currently situated.

2. SUMMERS FAMILY MIGRATIONS FROM MARYLAND

Migrations out of Maryland began with children of John Summers II after his death in 1769, Prince George's County, Maryland:

• Benjamin: to Kentucky & Pennsylvania
• Dent: stayed in Maryland but some children to West Virginia
• Jemina: to North Carolina
• Joseph: to South Carolina
• Thomas: to North Carolina
• William: to North Carolina

Authors Delmer De 'Del' Groves descends from Dent Summers and Harry Glen Windham descends from Thomas Summers. Mr. Windham and Mr. Groves are 7th cousins 1 x removed.

3. SUMMERS FAMILY IN SOUTH CAROLINA

Joseph Summers (c.1730-c.1808) married Eleanor Clary and they removed from Maryland to South Carolina between 1771-1774. Joseph Summers is the father of Jesse Summers (c. 1777-1837) born in South Carolina who married Sarah 'Sally' Coate(s). William E. Summers (1811-1836) was the son of Jesse and Sarah and thus, a grandson of this Joseph Summers.

25 Rosemary B. Dodd, and Helen Summers Holweck; The First Three Generations of John Summers of Prince George's County, Maryland, (Copyright by the authors: 1994).
William E. Summers is the 2nd cousin 5 times removed of author Windham and the 2nd cousin 6 times removed of author Groves. The common ancestors of all three are John Summers II and Mary Moore.

There are several recorded land transactions for Joseph Summers in Edgefield and Newberry Districts, South Carolina including one on August 2, 1774. In this transaction, Joseph Summers entered into an indenture in District 96, Newberry County, South Carolina with Robert Yealdall, of Bush River, for 300 acres between the Broad and Saluda Rivers, on the branch of Bush River called Palmetto.

Joseph Summers was a member of the Dunkard or Dunker faith and was well known in the environs of Newberry District, South Carolina. The following passage from The Annals of Newberry recites author O’Neall’s personal memory of Joseph Summers:

Passing for a moment out of the immediate range of country through which we have been sweeping, and sliding within the bounds assigned in No. 5 for the Quaker settlement, we meet with the only relics of the Dunkers or Dunkards, within my knowledge, in this State. Their settlement was mainly on the Palmetto Branch, north of Bush River. Of this persuasion were originally the Chapmans, Summers, Lynches, Prathers and Martins. David Martin, the father of the family here named, lived on Saluda, near Hewitt's ferry. Among these Dunkers, and the Quakers, without any definite participation in either, lived the Elmores, Mills, Hawkins, Brook, Atkins, McKinseys, Larges, Gilliards, Abernathys, Coates, Downs, Hillburns, Thweatts, Sheppards, Rameges, Nances, Gilliams, Coopers, Cates, Myers, Juliens, Rileys, Elsmores, Barretts, Cuetons, Harps, Hays.

The Dunkers are baptized by immersion: they kneel in the water, and are thus plunged three times under it; they neither shave their heads or beards. Most of the leading Dunkers, in the settlement to which I have alluded, became Universalists, but not to the extent now held by that body of Christians. Many retained the long flowing beard. Often have I seen the patriarch of that settlement, the good old man, Joseph Summers, with his white beard, extending to and resting on his breast. He was a native of Maryland. He introduced the wheat called the Yellow Lammas, by bringing, as much as he could, in a stocking leg, from that State. It was perfectly white, when it was first brought. In a few years it became yellow, and was much valued. I fear in the many changes we have undergone, this valuable variety of wheat has been entirely lost.

In the Chapman and Pugh Family History and Allied Families the author states this Joseph Summers was a Quaker preacher who came from Maryland:

Rev. Joseph Summers. A Quaker preacher came from Maryland to Ninety Six District...and settled on Bush River...His children were: William, Ellen Waters (married a Lee), Cassandra (married a Briggs), Anne (married a Wells), Dorcus (married a Coleman), John (married Rose Waters), Jesse (married Sarah Coate), and James, and Mary (wife of Rev. Giles Chapman).

28 Authors’ Note: Joseph Summers was a Dunker, rather than a Quaker; we have found no documentation that Joseph Summers ever served in a ministerial capacity.
Joseph Summers’ will\(^{29}\) was written February 3, 1802 and probated January 16, 1809. Among his bequeaths was to his son Jesse Summers:

In the Name of God Amen.

I, Joseph Summers, of the District of Newberry in the State of South Carolina, planter, being weak in Body but of perfect Mind and Memory, thanks be to God, therefore calling to Mind the mortality of my Body and knowing that it is appointed for all men to die do make and ordain this my last Will and Testament. That is to say principally and first of all, I give and recommend my Soul to the hands of the Almighty God that gave it and for my Body I recommend it to the earth to be interred at the discretion of my Executors. And as touching such worldly Estate wherewith it hath pleased God to bless me in this life, I give and dispose of the same in the following manner and form. That is to say first of all it is my will and I do hereby order that all my just debts be paid...

I give, devise and bequeath to my beloved son, Jesse Summers, one hundred and sixty-six acres of land on Big Creek in Edgefield District to him, his heirs and assigns forever...

...and the remaining part of my moveable estate to be equally divided between all my sons and daughters now living that is to say William Summers, James Summers, John Summers, and Jesse Summers, Mary Chapman, Ann Wells and Dorcas Summers...

4. SUMMERS FAMILY MIGRATION TO ALABAMA

Jesse Summers appears on the 1800 and 1810 Federal Census for Edgefield District, South Carolina; 1820 he is listed in Newberry District, South Carolina\(^{30}\) and; 1830 in Clarke County, Alabama.

Land transactions in 1817-1818 indicate the family was preparing to leave South Carolina and likely left in 1820 or early 1821 as Jesse Summers [sic] of Clarke County, Alabama was appointed an appraiser December 21, 1821 in the estate of William Bowler\(^{31}\)

5. SUMMERS FAMILY BIBLE

Some years ago, author Windham had a telephone conversation with another Summers descendant who disclosed the existence of a Summers family bible. Mr. Windham was told this bible was last in the possession of Thomas Arrell Summers (1881-1944), a great-grandson of Jesse and Sarah Coate(s) Summers.

Mr. Windham was informed this bible contains information on the Jesse and Sarah 'Sally' Coate(s) Summers family; and he was provided birth dates for their ten (10) children occurring between 1800-1816. These dates are generally corroborated in various census though not conclusive as names of spouses and children were not enumerated in census prior to 1850. This range of birth dates support that these children were born in South

---


\(^{30}\) County formation -1800: Edgefield & Newberry Co. from Old 96 District; 1896: Saluda from Edgefield District

\(^{31}\) Estate of Wm Bowler, Probate Record A, page 92, 21st Dec 1821, Clarke County, Alabama

William E. Summers (1811-1836), History & Genealogy, by Harry Glen Windham & Delmer De 'Del' Groves, © 2011

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Carolina prior to the family's move to Clarke County, Alabama. The following is a list of the children with birth dates per the family bible, as told to author Windham:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Birth Date</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Birth Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Butler</td>
<td>son</td>
<td>14 Sep 1800</td>
<td>Jesse M.</td>
<td>son</td>
<td>16 Dec 1809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John C.</td>
<td>son</td>
<td>05 Oct 1802</td>
<td>William E.</td>
<td>son</td>
<td>29 Mar 1811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry C. G.</td>
<td>son</td>
<td>13 Mar 1804</td>
<td>Eldridge</td>
<td>son</td>
<td>18 Apr 1812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caley G.</td>
<td>son</td>
<td>17 Jul 1806</td>
<td>Susannah</td>
<td>dau</td>
<td>06 Apr 1814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albert C.</td>
<td>son</td>
<td>07 Mar 1807</td>
<td>Whitfield Brooks</td>
<td>son</td>
<td>06 Feb 1816</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We have not seen the actual bible nor do we know its current whereabouts and thus, we cannot use the bible records as evidence or proof. On the other hand, the listed children are corroborated by empirical data consisting of census, will, obituaries, the 1861 court claim by heirs (brothers) of William E. Summers and, a published biography of Smith White Summers which we discuss below.

William E. Summers died March 6, 1836 at age 24, per his current biography which indicates his birth in 1811 or 1812. The bible purportedly lists his birth date as March 29, 1811 which is consistent and he died just short of his 25th birthday.

6. **DEATH OF PARENTS OF WILLIAM E. SUMMERS**

An obituary for Jesse Summers was published January 20, 1837 in the *Clarke County Post*32:

> Died on Monday the 16 of January at his residence in the county, in the 60th year of his age, Captain Jesse Summers, a native of Newberry District, S C whence he moved to the above place of residence twenty years since. The character of the deceased was proverbial, hospitality & honesty, and his charitable disposition was not restricted by party feelings. He left an aged widow to mourn her loss, and seven grown children to imitate his exemplary life.

Another obituary for Jesse Summers, age 60, was published February 4, 1837 in the *Columbia Telescope*33 stating he died January 16, 1837 in Clarke County, Alabama leaving a widow and seven adult sons. It also stated Jesse had left the Newberry District of South Carolina and moved 20 years earlier to Clarke County, Alabama.

The seven children/sons noted are consistent with those named in Jesse's will and in the 1861 claim by heirs (brothers) of William E. Summers. Jesse's widow Sarah 'Sally' Coate(s) Summers died on September 15, 1841 in Alabama, per her obituary in the *Mobile Commercial Register*34:

> Died at her residence near Coffeeville, Clark, Co., Ala., the 15th of Sept., Mrs. Sarah Summers, widow of the late Jesse Summers.

32 Obituary, Jesse Summers, January 20, 1837, Clarke County Post newspaper, Sugssville, Alabama, Clarke County, Alabama obituaries, microfilm Vol 1, #26.
33 Obituary, Jesse Summers, February 4, 1837, Columbia Telescope newspaper, Columbia, South Carolina.
7. WILL & ESTATE SETTLEMENT OF JESSE SUMMERS

Jesse Summers' will in Clarke County, Alabama is dated January 11, 1837 and explicitly named his sons Jesse Madison, Albert, Henry and Whitfield Brooks as heirs to his estate. Cala [sic] Summers and Jesse M. Summers are listed as executors. There is no mention in his will of an Eldridge or a John C. Summers, except that a John C. Summers signed as a witness and both he and Eldridge are noted in the distribution of the estate. Similarly, Cala as executor was not listed as an heir but did receive an estate distribution. These seven men are consistent with those listed in their 1861 claim as brothers and heirs of William E. Summers.

State of Alabama
County of Clarke

In the name of the Lord God, amen considering the frailties of human nature and the uncertainty of man’s life, I Jesse Summers of the above named State and County do make and ordain this my last Will and Testament. My soul I give to God, and my body I want to be decently interred. My worldly possessions I will to be amicably and harmoniously divided as follows vis First All my just debts I want to be first paid. Second the fall following after my death I will that all my hands be equally divided amongst my lawful heirs in such manner as they may deem most convenient among themselves. The Negroes and the perishable personal property I will to be sold, and the proceeds thereof equally divided amongst my heirs. My wife Sarah I will to have, beside her quota of land, viz. one equal share with the other heirs, not more, the following property to wit: her bed and furniture and all necessary culinary utensils on hand. I further will and ordain that my wife Sarah shall draw an annual sum of twenty dollars from each of my lawful heirs during her life time more of which heirs shall draw their or his quota of their or his legacy except he or they enter into bond with sufficient securities to the judge of the County Court of Clarke for the faithful payment of the above stipulated sum of twenty dollars which said bond or bonds shall be renewed every three years or sooner if necessary. I will that my son, Whitfield Brooks Summers have the horse Jeff or if said horse die, or other horse of equal value. I will that my sons Jesse Madison, Albert, Henry and Whitfield have each one bed and furniture. I will and ordain that the quota of land, mooed out to my wife Sarah shall after her death revert to the rest of my lawful heirs. I will and ordain that Cala [sic] and Jesse M Summers as the Executors and Administrators of this my last will and testament. In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal in presence of the undersigned witnesses this Eleventh day of January in the year of our Lord one thousand Eight hundred and thirty seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the sixty first year

Witnesses
John Beckham, John C. Summers
Joseph A. Huber, Hardy Fluker

The State of Alabama Clarke County. Personally appeared in open court John C Summers, Hardy Fluker and John Beckham who being duly sworn deposeath and saith that the will which has been produced to the orphans court of Clarke County State of Alabama is the will that they saw Jesse Summers the deceased sign and seal as his last will and testament and that he the deceased signed the same in the presence of the subscribing witnesses and that each of the witnesses signed the same in the presence of the testator and that the deceased was at the time of the signing and

35 Index to Book B Orphans Court Minutes 1829-1840, Clarke Co, AL, (Book A is missing) Volumes AL17-2 & 17-3 Jesse Summers estate p. 230, 234, 236, 238, 273, 276, 278, 284, 287, 288, 307, 350, 351, 352, 355, 367, 368, 369, 410; State of Alabama, County of Clarke County Probate Office, PO Box 10 Grove Hill, Alabama 36451

William E. Summers (1811-1836), History & Genealogy, by Harry Glen Windham & Delmer De 'Del' Groves, © 2011 Page 18 of 25
sealing of said will of sound and disposing mind and memory. Sworn to and subscribed in open court 6th day of February 1837. Hardy Fluker Attest

Terrell Powers, Clerk.

John Beckham
John C Summers

Jesse Summers Estate Settlement

Whereas by virtue of an attachment issued from this Court against Caley G Summers and Jesse M Summers Executors of Jesse Summers deceased on the 19th day of November 1839 and returned Executed and whereas Caley G Summers one of the Executors appeared on this day and did not make any showing which this court held sufficient to postpone any longer the settlement of his testators Estate. It is therefore ordered adjudged and decreed by this court that the following be the distribution to each legatee of said Estate in words and figures following to wit. The amount of said Estate after deducting all expenses up to this time is five thousand six hundred and sixty four 39/100 Dollars the amount of Thirty two dollars is deducted from the above amount and left in the hands of the Executors to pay the Court Cost on the final settlement for which amount Execution may issue against the Executors the above amount after deducting said thirty two dollars is $5634.39. includes the real amount of said estate it being $5468.48/100 and the amount of $165.71/100 interest apportioned to each legatee as their amounts require agreeably to the amounts and the time when each amount was paid respectively to each legatee by said executors as appears by their receipts on file in the County Clerks office.

Sarah Summers distributive share including interest is $722.27/100...
The distributive share of John C Summers is $691.14/100 including interest...
The distributive share of Henry Summers is $689.67/100 including interest...
The distributive share of Eldridge Summers is $706.48/100 including interest...
The distributive share of Whitfield B Summers is $714.57 including interest...
The distributive share of Albert C Summers is $743.14/100 including interest...

It appearing to the satisfaction of the Court that Caley G. Summers and Jesse M. Summers Executors of the last will and testament of Jesse Summers have received their full share of the real and personal Estate of said deceased and that said Estate has been fully settled and accounted for said Executors. It is therefore ordered adjudged and decreed by the court now here that when the foregoing amounts decreed and set off by the court to be paid together with the interest and costs that may accrue thereon the said executors be discharged except however this final discharge shall not be so construed as to conflict with the provisions of the last will and testament of the said Jesse Summers deceased.

8. ADDITIONAL SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Additional supporting data of William E. Summers’ genealogy is in A History of Texas and Texans 36, which contains a biography of Smith White Summers (1848-1914) who died February 1, 1914 in Dallas, Texas:

Born in 1849 near Bladon Springs, Choctaw County, Alabama, he was the son of Jesse M. and Marie M. (Dunbar) Summers, both of whom came from North Carolina [sic]. It is a matter of interest that the late Mr. Summers’ grand-uncle [sic], named William Summers, was one of the Martyrs of the Alamo massacre in 1836, and his name appears as such in the official records of the Texas Republic.

As sometimes happens, factual details are distorted through unintentional or uninformed persons or publishers. Although this biography contains two factual errors, it serves to confirm a familial relationship to William E. Summers, particularly because Smith White Summers' ancestry is otherwise documented.

One error is the familial relationship of Smith White Summers to William E. Summers. Smith White Summers' father was Jesse Madison Summers, a son of Jesse and Sarah 'Sally' Coate(s) Summers and, a brother of William E. Summers. It follows then that William E. was an uncle of Smith White Summers, not his grand-uncle.

The article contains a second error in stating Smith White Summers' father Jesse Madison Summers (1809-1881) was from North Carolina. To the contrary, the evidence supports that Jesse Madison Summers was born in South Carolina and prior to his family's migration to Clarke County, Alabama in 1820/21.

Jesse Madison Summers and wife Mariah Harrette/Harriet Dunbar are enumerated in Alabama from 1840-1870 (substantiating the 1848 birth of son Smith White Summers was in Alabama) and in Hopkins County, Texas in 1880. The census 1850-1880 lists Jesse Madison Summers' birthplace as South Carolina and not North Carolina.

Jesse Madison and Mariah Hanrette/Harriet Dunbar Summers both died and are buried in Hopkins Co, Texas, as are Smith White Summers and several other Summers and related family.

Further, there exists records of land transactions in Edgefield and Newberry Districts, South Carolina involving Jesse and Sarah 'Sally' Coate(s) Summers which provide evidence this Summers family was from South Carolina. These transactions also support that Smith White Summers' father was born in South Carolina.

- **Book E, pages 81-82:** Plat of 121 acres showing land adj. Rosannah Russell, Jesse Jenkins, Thos. Atkins, John Coate. John Coate of Newberry District for 63 lb sterling to Jesse Summers of Edgefield District, 121 acres on Scotch Creek, a branch of Bush River, likewise, four lots of ¼ acre each in the village of Newberry adj. lots of William Satterfield and others, 27 Jan 1800. Jo. Coate (Seal), wit: John Blalock Senr, Mary Coate. Susannah Coate, wife of John Coate, 27 Jan 1800 before W. M. Butler, J. Q. Proved by the oath of John Blalock Senr 27 Jan 1801 before W. M. Butler, J. Q. Recorded 11 Feb 1801


• **Book H, pages 293-294: Jesse Summers of Edgefield District** for $200 to Dorcus Summers of Newberry District, two lots, ¼ acre each in the village of Newberry, numbered 37 & 40 conveyed to me by John Coate, original proprietor of said village by deed dated 27 Jan 1800, dated 27 Jan 1800, dated 15 Feb 1805. Jesse Summers (Seal) wit: Patk Ardagh, David W. Thompson, James Oharro. Jacky Summers, wife of Jesse Summers relinquished dower in Edgefield District 15 Feb 1805 before John Pope, J. Q. Proved Edgefield District by the oath of Patrick Ardagh 15 Feb 1805 before John Pope, J. Q. Recorded 21 July 1806

The below additional land transaction in 1818 indicates the family may have been divesting of land in South Carolina in preparation for the eventual move to Clarke County, Alabama between 1820-1821:


9. **ANCESTRY CHART FOR WILLIAM E. SUMMERS (1811-1836)**

![Family Tree](chart.png)


William E. Summers (1811-1836), History & Genealogy, by Harry Glen Windham & Delmer De' Del' Groves, © 2011
PART - III  CONCLUSIONS

Our review of available documents conclusively supports that William E. Summers:

- was the son of Jesse Summers and Sarah Coate(s)
- was born in Edgefield District, South Carolina (not Tennessee)
- migrated about 1820/21 to Alabama with his family
- moved from Alabama to Texas in 1832
- received a Mexican land grant in Lavaca County, Texas in 1835
- voted in the 1836 elections to elect delegates to the convention for Texas independence at Washington-on-the-Brazos
- was a Texas Ranger mustered in 1836 into the Gonzales Ranging Company of Mounted Volunteers
- was a member of the Immortal 32 and perished March 6, 1836 at the Alamo
- was eligible for Military headright & donation land for service at the Alamo (and possibly Military bounty land)
- had heirs of seven brothers who in 1861 made claim for his eligible lands (but we have found no record of the issuance of any award)

William E. Summers is a member of a venerated group whose lives were cut short in selfless sacrifice. They were men typical of their time but who faced challenges that were anything but ordinary. Through the strength of their characters they have bequeathed to history an enduring legacy. And so, it was with reverence that we sought to learn more about one man of the many whom all regard as American Heroes.

We feel an honor and a duty to present this information for benefit of posterity.

Harry Glen Windham
Delmer De 'Del' Groves
POSTSCRIPT

We uncovered a probable further connection among Alamo defenders William E. Summers, William Barrett Travis and James Butler Bonham which is, they were all born in Edgefield District, South Carolina. We presume no one has previously investigated this connection because of the erroneous belief that William E. Summers was born in Tennessee.

William Barrett Travis (1809-1836)\(^{39}\), commander of the Alamo, who:

...At the time of his birth the family lived on Mine Creek near the Red Bank community, which centered around the Red Bank Baptist Church in Edgefield District, near Saluda, Saluda County, South Carolina....Travis's boyhood centered around the work of the family farm, attendance at the Red Bank church, home schooling, and playing with area children. James Butler Bonham, who also served in the defense of the Alamo, was one of these, but it is difficult to establish a strong relationship between Bonham and Travis in these early years. Alexander Travis, the family patriarch, traveled to Alabama in 1817 and decided to move the entire family to Conecuh County the next year...

James Butler Bonham (1807-1836)\(^{40}\) who:

...was born at Red Banks (present-day Saluda), Edgefield County, South Carolina, on February 20, 1807. Recent evidence indicates that he was a second cousin of William B. Travis...

We do not presume any familial connections among these men though it is possible. At the very least, it is probable they or their families interacted while living in South Carolina. An additional suggestion of close ties is in noting several families migrated to Alabama from the same area in South Carolina, including the Travis and Summers families.

We may never fully understand why these men came to Texas and later joined the cause of Texas independence. Perhaps among the reasons was a family bond or sense of kinship, or simply shared ideals. Further research may reveal facts and provide additional insights on the Alamo saga.


# TABLE OF FOOTNOTES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Footnote</th>
<th>Source</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Victoria County, Texas Probate Records, Book 1, Page 10, Probate Court June(?) Term 1839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Victoria County, Texas Probate Records, Book 1, Page 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Victoria County, Texas Probate Records, Book 2, page 260-261; Book A, page 193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Election for delegates to attend the Convention of 1836, Texas Department of State, Republic of Texas Election Returns, <em>Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives Commission</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Amelia Williams.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Authors' Note: John Harris is listed as 'Killed' on the Muster Roll of the Gonzales Ranging Company of Mounted Volunteers reconstructed June 20, 1838 by Byrd Lockhart. No attempt here is made to investigate this apparent discrepancy to wit: did he come to the Alamo as a member of Crockett's group or not?

Lampasas County, Texas Abstract 633, District Class: Bexar Donation, File 000405, Grantee/Patentee: W W Summers; Texas General Land Office, Land Grant Database online; accessed June 27, 2011; http://scandocs.glo.texas.gov/webfiles/landgrants/pdfs/1/5/2/152057.pdf

Lampasas County, Texas Abstract 632, District Class: Bexar Bounty, File 000406, Grantee/Patentee: William W Summers; Texas General Land Office, Land Grant Database online; accessed June 27, 2011; http://scandocs.glo.texas.gov/webfiles/landgrants/pdfs/1/5/2/152062.pdf

Court of Claims; File No. 007922, Patent Date: Filed in Land Office – May 24, 1861; Texas General Land Office, Land Grant Database online; accessed June 27, 2011; http://scandocs.glo.texas.gov/webfiles/landgrants/pdfs/1/9/7/197613.pdf

24 Court of Claims; File No. 007922.

Rosemary B. Dodd, and Helen Summers Holweck; The First Three Generations of John Summers of Prince George's County, Maryland, (Copyright by the authors: 1994).


Authors' Note: Joseph Summers was a Dunker, rather than a Quaker; we have found no documentation that Joseph Summers ever served in a ministerial capacity.


County formation -1800: Edgefield & Newberry Co. from Old 96 District; 1896: Saluda from Edgefield

29 Obituary, Jesse Summers, January 20, 1837, Clarke County Post newspaper, Sugesville, Alabama, Clarke County, Alabama obituaries, microfilm Vol 1, #26

27 Obituary, Jesse Summers, February 4, 1837, Columbia Telescope newspaper, Columbia, South Carolina.

35 Index to Book B Orphans Court Minutes 1829-1840, Clarke Co, AL, (Book A is missing) Volumes AL17-2 & 17-3 Jesse Summers estate p. 230, 234, 236, 238, 273, 276, 278, 284, 287, 288, 307, 350, 351, 352, 355, 367, 368, 369, 410; State of Alabama, County of Clarke County Probate Office, PO Box 10 Grove Hill, Alabama 36451