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Life History of Jesse G. Williams Written by himself from family history

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Life History of Jesse G. Williams

Written by himself from family history

July 7, 1937 and February 8, 1961 and completed

[NOTE: This history is taken from the book *The American Ancestry and Southern Posterity of Marmaduke and Mary Williams 1756-1986 / Henry Davis Family of Georgia and Florida*, by Irene Porter Williams and Berniece Williams Ricks.]

According to the best information we have, two brothers came to South Carolina from England and settled in Barnwell District not far from Barnwell, South Carolina. They may have settled at some other place before coming there but they raised their families there. They were land and slave owners and brought some to Georgia about 1852.

My great grandfather John M. (Whoopie) Williams married Catherine Myers, a daughter of a German emigrant. To them were born the following children: Allen Raymond (my grandfather), Martha, Martin, George J. Maryan Elizabeth who married William Alfred and raised their families in Baker County, Florida. William M. Williams died from typhoid fever leaving a wife and one son, John W., who married and raised his family at Jennings, Florida.

Allen Raymond Williams married Sarah Parker who was a granddaughter of William Parker and Sarah Lastinger who was a daughter of John, a German emigrant, who was a member of the Salzberger Klan who settled near Savannah. The above William Parker was with Oglethorpe Colony and drew land in Liberty County. To them were born three sons, Calvin Greenberry Washington Parker; a doctor, William (my great grandfather) and Joe Parker. When my Grandmother Sarah was a girl a few miles from Lakeland, Georgia, a band of Indians went to their house while they were down the hill at a spring of water washing clothes. They tore open a trunk and got more than \$300 and ripped open feather beds and emptied them in the well. They were pursued and some killed in Alapha River. Two were killed as they swam across Satilla River near the present site of the bridge on land owned since by my father and now by myself. To Allen Williams and Sarah Parker were born the following children: Calvin W., Mary Jane, Elizabeth, Marthan Matilda, George Albert, Emma, John Henry, and Charlie H. Calvin W. married his first cousin, Sarahan Davis, who was raised in Baker County, Florida. She had three children when she and my father married; William I. Davis, Joseph I. Davis, and Ettie Williams. To Calvin W. and Sarahan Davis were born the following: Lillie, Emma, Jesse Green, Anna,

Beadie, Pearl and Mattie.

I, Jesse Green, was born April 5, 1894, three miles northeast of McDonald, Coffee County, Georgia, now Axson, Atkinson County in the old home just across the branch where I now live and near Utah Church (now Axson Ward), Florida Stake, the old home being on the Nichols-Axson Highway. In 1900 when the first Mormon missionaries were in the community, my father rode his red mule (Bill) six miles to hear them speak, and he said he knew they had the gospel. After six months investigating, he, my mother and his parents and his sister Emma were baptized by Nephi Jenson, later Judge Jenson of Salt Lake City. Although neither my father or grandfather had ever joined any church, they were regular attenders at the Baptist (Mt. Zion) Church. Later my father and James Higgs rescued a pair of Elders from a mob who had a rope swung to a large oak tree to hang them by. My father gave the land and helped build a chapel in 1900 which was replaced by the present one in 1918. The Elders were Neilson and Nelson. Other early missionaries were W.E. Hamilton, Tyler, Andrew Brewer, Peter Van Oran, Decker and others. Hundreds of missionaries ate and slept in my father's home, including Ben E. Rich, Charles A. Callis, Melvin J. Ballard, James E. Talmadge, and others.

Being the only son of my father, I no doubt received special favors and was allowed to go to town along with my father. I went with him to have cotton ginned; also to the grist mill to have hominy or grits and meal ground as we never bought any back then. We raised our own meat, lard, syrup, potatoes, sometimes rice; milked plenty of cows and had plenty to eat. We usually bought flour by the barrel.

My parents never sent us to church and Sunday School but carried us instead, which was a pleasure. We were taught obedience, honesty and to respect older people. We usually had one or two grandmothers or some old person in our home and sometimes one or two hired hands. At night after we were old enough, we gathered around the organ and sang before retiring for the night.

I attended my first school (a one teacher) in the church. The teacher was John G. White; the next William Griffis. The county school superintendent refused to let us have a school one year on account of it being a Mormon community so President Charles A. Callis sent a missionary by the name of Moore to teach. At that time the rural schools were one teacher and usually three or four month terms in the summer months. We attended regularly when there was a school and sometimes the patrons hired a private teacher. We also had singing schools about every year which usually lasted for 10 to 20 days.

I was baptized in Satilla River just below the bridge on December 27, 1904 by James D. Stoddard and confirmed by D.R. Snow. I was ordained a Priest by Lester H. Campbell August 31, 1913; an Elder by Charles A. Callis May 26, 1918; a High Priest by Harold B. Lee January 22, 1947; a Bishop at the same time by Harold B. Lee.

At 18 years of age I had only finished the sixth grade as there were, as stated, poor opportunities for schooling. My Uncle John H. Williams who had just finished law school after having taught school for a number of years and had just been elected county school superintendent, persuaded me to live with him and my grandmother and attend school at Douglas, Georgia Normal College. This I did until Christmas 1912 and after Christmas went to live with another uncle, Charlie H. Williams, a Rural Letter Carrier. After school was over, I went to a little community in the lower part of the county, Hersey-Davis Community and taught a three

month term. Out of that I paid my board and went back to school, this time living in the dormitory until November when the county schools started again. I taught two schools at the McClelland School near Douglas which were four and five months through the seven grades with one teacher. When I was not in school teaching, I went to school. In the 1915-16 school year, I taught between Broxton and Ambrose in Jowers Community. There I had an assistant Mabel Bostwick. This was my last term and that summer Dan Kirland and myself left for the West by train. I believe it was August. We stopped at Springville at the home of H. S. Clyde, the parents of the present governor of Utah. His elder brother, Grover, was here on a mission for the Church. We arrived there the night before, leaving with a 44-car trip to Cache Valley, Motto to Learn. Although our particular crowd turned back at Logan, we had seen many sights of interest. After a few days, Kirkland went to Oregon to visit the Dyals, and I remained in Springville where I worked with the Clyde family on the farm. My youngest sister contracted typhoid fever the day after our departure for the West so I was called back home.

After returning from the West, I farmed with my father the following year. That year I went to Atlanta to enlist in the army but being too light for my height, I was turned down. After being examined and classified, I was placed in A-1 special limited service. In the spring of 1918 the Rural Letter Carrier, Mr. Oliver White, who had been carrier for nearly ten years, resigned. I received the temporary appointment and after a year received a permanent appointment. I carried the mail, lacking a few days, 41 years before retiring March 1, 1959. Until 1924, when I married, I continued to live with my parents. I was 30 years old when I married.

In 1918 I served both as finance chairman of the building committee for the present chapel, next Sunday School superintendent, and later as branch president for 16 to 18 years. For about a year Joseph N. Reville was district president with two local men, Orson Padgett and H. H. Cawley of Savannah, as counselors. During this time I served as district counselor, then was called to serve as the first district president with the same counselors. I filled this position for five years then because of ill health was released. Later I served again as district counselor for about a year until the Florida Stake was organized January 19, 1947. President Callis presented my name first to be sustained as bishop of the Axson Ward but since the membership had not been officially notified, they were not in attendance to sustain me so a date was set for Apostles Callis and Lee to come to Axson for that purpose. Apostle Callis died suddenly in Jacksonville so another date was set. Apostle Lee came and organized the bishopric. I was released in September 1960, after having served longer than any of the bishops in the stake-- 14 years.

After having dated many girls and the years piling up in a hurry, I had begun to wonder if I would ever get married. I was afraid of making a mistake. In the spring of 1923 near the close of the school year in the Stokesville Community, I had noticed a teacher who was boarding with her great uncle Tim Tanner, on Saturdays after leaving the mail box after depositing her letters. She was the type who would never be there when I came, but I thought she had the most beautiful hair I had ever seen. About that time she and some of the other girls and co-teachers attended church at Mt. Zion Church and went to the home of Mrs. Belle Gillis for dinner. I went also as well as a group of the other youngsters. Although no one introduced me to her, I did get a few words in. A few nights afterwards I was invited to the Tanner home for a dance, and we all had a wonderful time. A few nights later we were at a dance at the home of Mr. Dan Brooker. Quite a large number of the youngsters from all around were there, and I danced quite a bit with the

girl (Bertie Cole) who was to be my future wife. The widow who I took to the dance became impatient and was about to leave me before I was ready to go. Since Bertie was to go home the following day as school was out, I asked her to meet me at the mail box (which was near where she was boarding) the following day. As I was a little late, and so remarked, she took it that I was in a hurry, and I did not get to talk with her much. I corresponded with her and saw her a few times that summer. She came back to teach at the same school and did until Christmas after which she went to Nichols and taught in the Nicholas Grammar School and boarded with her Uncle Gray Meeks who was also a Rural Letter Carrier. Her folks, who were Primitive Baptist, liked me personally, but did not like me being a Mormon. We went together until school was out and on Friday, June 13, 1924, I went to her home near Nichols, and we went to Douglas to the home of my Aunt Emma Gillian, and we were married by Elder LeRoy Wahlquist. We spent the night there and the following morning drove to Willacoochee, Georgia, where the bank loaned me \$50. We used it mostly in buying used furniture to keep house with. We moved to the old school house and lived there until Christmas when we moved to Axson to the house now occupied by Mrs. Homer Gillis. Our first child Berniece was born there on October 4, 1925. Bertie had taught in the Axson school until Christmas when the principal quit or was fired. After living at Axson for a year, we moved to the farm to a log house which was formerly owned by William Royals. There on April 23, 1927, Jesse Grey was born. Byron Cole was born there on November 13, 1928. We built a house down the lane near the Higgs home and after a year moved there. It was there that Maryann was born on January 2, 1932. Dr. H.P. Smith was the attending physician when Berniece was born and Dr. J.S. Morris for the other three.

It was on January 1, 1932 (it being a holiday), I was in the creek snaking some old grist mill timber with a young mule, and she jerked a piece of timber and hit my leg and ankle against or between two pieces of timber. The bone in my right leg and ankle was cracked. Dr. Morris advised that I go to Dr. T.H. Clark, surgeon at Douglas to set it. I did this and was in a cast for five weeks. That night Bertie was confined and Maryann was born in the early morning of the second. About two days later, Bertie developed a high temperature, Dr. Morris called in Dr. Clark, a nurse was secured (a Miss Brown) from Nichols. After four or five days the fever receded and the nurse was released, but in a short time the fever rose again so this time we took her to the old King Doughters Hospital in Waycross. She received the best attention possible by a Dr. Raymond Johnson and Dr. Revis, a kidney specialist. In the absence of the modern-day drugs, the doctors were unable to determine the source of infection or how to handle it. Although her temperature rose to 106, she was still conscious to the last and made no complaint. She died on January 23, 1932 at Waycross and was buried the following day at Utah Cemetery.

Although she was active in the church, she wasn't baptized until three years after our marriage on August 8, 1927. Elders Lindsey of California and James A. Ott baptized and confirmed her a member. She was a good wife, mother and member. She tended her own business and left no room for criticism. Too much could not be said in praise of her character.

My father's mother, Sarahann Parker, was buried a week before her on a Sunday at the age of 91.

Bertie's mother offered to take Maryann or all the children, but feeling it my duty to keep them and raise them in the Church, I went to Palatka, Florida, and got my sister, Mattie and husband,

Jesse Moody, who kept house for me for about a year. Others were Bertie's sister, Nealia and Estelle Lee, Mrs. Fannie Morgan, Mrs. Carey White, Nora Thompson, Niece Vera Allen and others kept house at various times until on September 28, 1934, in the Salt Lake Temple, Lillie Irene Porter and myself married. Apostle Charles A. Callis, a friend of both Irene and myself, performed the ceremony. I was sealed to Bertie at the same time and on October 1, 1934 was sealed to the children. I had been a widower for 2 years and 9 months.

I had known Irene for several years having seen her at Conferences, etc. In 1934 Merrill Higgs, while on a short-term mission at Quitman, had been teasing her about me and she of course had laughed at the idea of marrying a widower with children. She had had an opportunity of marrying one or two missionaries, but her cousin Trudie Tison and Med Robinson of Savannah were to be married in June of 1934 so Merrill invited me over. When the wedding ceremony was over, Irene and I went to get something for the affair so after the ceremony we decided to ride around and failed to go to the reception as we both seemingly were enjoying ourselves. I made a few trips over there and then a mission convention was to take place in Jacksonville so we planned to go and be together. Irene came back from Jacksonville with me and others and spent the week at Axson and while here we became engaged. I took her home Sunday night. When we went to the Temple, we took Irene's mother, Bessie Porter, and the four children and were in Utah for 12 days plus time required to go and come. We arrived home on a Sunday night and the children started to school in a new building the following morning. I had been a local school board member for 10 years and until the building was finished. I served eight years as secretary of Satilla R.E.A. Board and secured electric service for our chapel and home in the county.

To Irene and myself were born the following children: at home Jackie Green, born April 14, 1936, Dr. Hall; at home Ronald Calvin, born November 5, 1937, Dr. Hall; at home Carol Joy, born December 28, 1939, Dr. Smith; at Douglas Hospital, Sharon, November 3, 1946, Dr. Jardine.

Carol Joy lived 18 hours, premature; Sharon was dead at birth.

The four older children were all married in the temple and to good companions.

Jackie baptized his wife a week before marriage, therefore hasn't been to the temple as yet.

Ronald is a law student and is still single.

At present 23 grandchildren and expecting another; two sets of twins.

We sold the farm on the creek about 17 years ago and rented at Axson for two years, then bought the old Dr. McDonald home where we lived until March 1, 1960. We built a nice home on my father's place where I was born and plan to remain. We plan to do a lot of genealogy work; Irene loves genealogy work, so that will consume most of our time in the future.

We have had the honor of entertaining in our home many of the General Authorities: Albert E. Bowen, George F. Richards and wife, LeGrande Richards and wife, Charles A. Callis and wife, also George Albert Smith.

Irene has been a great support and tireless worker and has helped to raise all the children and to build a home in which we are happy to have the family and friends come.